

THE TELLIN' TAKES ME HOME

REMEMBERING THE CANYON COUNTRY...#3

By Jim Stiles

The One & Only TOOTS McDOUGALD



TOOTS at "Turnbow Cabin"

It's called "Wolfe Ranch" these days, named after the original settler of this barren piece of ground in Arches National Park. But for Toots, it was always "Turnbow Cabin," named for her step-dad, Marv Turnbow. Toots spent summers here when she was a littl' girl.

She was my neighbor in Moab for many years and it is hard to believe she's been gone for a decade.

I miss that gravelly voice.

She was born Marilee McDougald, but her Uncle Ab always called her his "little Tootsie" and the name stuck. Seven decades later she was still listed as "Toots" in the Moab phone directory. Whether Time sweetened Toots' memories or she just loved Life that much, only she can say for sure. But at 80, she could find little fault with her childhood.

"It was wonderful. We went on hikes and picnics and chicken fries. We had great watermelon busts; in fact, a man named Ollie Reardon planted a field of watermelons, just for us kids to steal. He said we could steal from that patch all we wanted, if we left his other patch alone...Everything was so free and easy. No pressures. No traffic. We didn't know anything about drugs. We thought we were pretty wild if we got a sip of homemade beer. My father's friend was a bootlegger...I'd tell you who it is, but they've still got family here."

Hardly anyone in Moab owned a new car in 1940. The Depression made sure of that. Old cars and trucks limped along, held together with baling wire (Duct tape had not been invented) and horses still provided conveyance for many. Toots depended on her feet to get her just about anywhere her heart desired. Hummers and SUVs and ATVs and ORVs and even Jeep 4WDs were beyond the realm of Toots' imagination.

Toots McDougald's summer nights were unfettered by credit card debt and staggering mortgage payments or time-share condo schemes. Or late night indigestion from a Big Mac, or a Whopper, or a Soft Taco Supreme, or a Lean Cuisine frozen dinner. Her evenings were spent with Dick, watching the twilight fall over their little town, listening to the croaking and humming of frogs in Mill Creek or the rustle of a summer breeze through the towering branches of a cottonwood tree and believing that it would be this way forever. Her life was a quiet adventure in the best sense of the word and the experience didn't cost her a penny extra. She was blissfully ignorant of a future she would live to see and it would all happen within the span of her remarkable life.

From *Brave New West*



THE RIVER ROAD IN 1973...ROUTE 128

The River Road, from its junction with old US Highway 6 near Cisco, to the Castle Valley turnoff was still a dirt road in 1973. But the new pavement from there into Moab was a portent of things to come.

By 1978, the entire 41 miles of State Highway 128 was covered with asphalt.



UPPER SPANISH VALLEY...1986

When this photograph was taken in the spring of 1986, the golf course still had only nine holes and there wasn't a hint of condominiums to be seen.

Today this view does not exist. If you were to hike to this location today, the only 'green' you'd find would be the expanded fairways of the 18 hole golf course.

The developers, of course, have done their best to landscape the multiple residential projects, but not so long ago, standing at the foot of these cliffs still allowed you to feel you were in the middle of nowhere. Today it feels like you are standing in the middle of A bunch of fake stucco condos.



THE COMB RIDGE DUGWAY

Until 1973, the only way to get from Blanding to Hanksville was via the old State Highway 95. To do that you faced a perilous but unforgettable ride down the one-lane Comb Ridge Dugway. The traveler had to wonder just what he would do if he encountered on-coming traffic. But it seldom happened.

Construction on a new road which completely bypassed the old dugway began in 1972 and was completed in 1976. Thus its name: The Bicentennial Highway.

*And I'll sing about an emptiness the East has never known,
Where coyotes don't pay taxes and a man can live alone,
And you've got to walk forever just to find a telephone.
It's sad, but the telling takes me home.*

*** "THE TELLIN' TAKES ME HOME"
By Utah Phillips**

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