

That Old Gang of Mine

By Marilyn Reeves

During the years I was growing up in the small town of Salida, I was blessed with a number of friends, and doubly blessed that I didn't really have to work at it. The girls I went to school with just sort of automatically grouped together from first grade on up. While there were a couple of them I considered to be my very closest friends, there were at least a dozen of us who would "hang out" together over the years. We'd attend school events, celebrate each other's birthdays, walk to and from school together ... often in groups of three or four or more. So in 1960, it was with mixed emotions that we arrived at graduation day – each of us looking forward to the future, but each of us wanting to cling to one another for just a little bit longer.

Over the next few years, those of us who remained in Colorado would make the effort to get together from time to time. We attended each other's weddings and baby showers, and a few of us would gather at someone's home for an informal luncheon now and then. But gradually our lives took paths that veered away from each other. Our new best friends became our husbands and children, other friends the people we met at our places of work or worship. And most of us lost touch with those friends of yesteryear as our lives took on new focus.

But before we knew it, it was time for our 25th Reunion, a chance to catch up with one another and renew old acquaintances. I was surprised to see that the girls hadn't changed much, but what had happened to those skinny young boys we used to cheer for at the ballgames or dance with at the Saturday night hop? Some of them had grown beards, others beer bellies, and a few had started losing their hair. One had to look twice to figure out who they were. But after an evening of dining and dancing and getting to know each other all over again, it was time to head back to our individual lives. And once again we lost touch.

But one former classmate named Debbie has made it her mission to keep track of the Old Gang – both the guys and the gals. At the first of each year she sends out a newsletter, letting us all know what everyone else has been up to lately. What their successes have been. What challenges they've faced. Who flew to Bermuda for the Holidays. Who retired to Phoenix or Miami or to senior communities like Windsor Gardens. Who has passed away.

Lest auld acquaintance be forgot, thankfully there are people like Debbie who still keep in touch.