

Chapter 8 - East Side Elementary School *(A new (old) school – located on East 5th Street.)*

I move on to fifth grade in a very old two-story building nearby on East 5th. Ms. Miller, my math teacher in fourth grade, is there. She often will not let me go outside to play. She says I look sickly. I have numerous episodes of strep throat. It is polio scary times. I feel that Ms. Miller is stealing away my best times outside at lunch and recess. She is so skinny. I think she is the one who is sick.

When in Miller's prison, I go to the second floor, open a big window, fold and throw paper airplanes all over the playground. Sometimes, I am required to go out and pick them up.

This old school is called East Side Elementary. It is only 2 blocks from MomMom's house. I walk to my favorite place after school. I spend Friday night and Saturday night. I am required to go to church on Sunday. I hate going to this "Church of Christ". It makes no sense to me. Often, I misbehave. I am sent to the little room in the back. I sneak out often.

MomMom sometimes lets me sleep in her bed. She tells me about her past life in Oklahoma. She remembers about being so afraid of Indians coming to the house. The dust storms are terrible, she says. Tornadoes are so frightening. Straw is driven into tree trunks. She remembers the fear of being in a storm cellar. I am mesmerized. I remember every word from this loving grandmother. I memorize the inside of the back bedroom so well as I fall asleep.

MomMom has four sons. Her husband leaves her alone with the boys and runs off with a 'Floosie' to Carlsbad. The two older sons have jobs as mechanics. Father, the third son, quits high school and goes to work to support MomMom. The fourth son stays in high school. Father gets his GED after returning from war.

The sons build MomMom a small apartment and laundry building on the alley of my favorite place. It has one bedroom, a kitchen with a small table, a restroom, and a laundry room about the size of a single garage. She has two sturdy washing machines with big power ringers on top and a drainage system of concrete canals. Along one wall is a counter for folding. On the parallel wall is a hanging rack, an ironing board, a big iron press and a foot treadle sewing machine. A radio is on the counter where we listen to Tennessee Ernie Ford and the Sons of the Pioneers. I learn and love the music.

Part 1 - Times and Places

Her patrons in Roswell bring her laundry to wash, starch, to dry, to press, to fold and to wrap in brown paper. Many are her church people

MomMom has what seems like miles of clothesline wire in the backyard. She stretches to pin the clothes on the wire. I try to carry back and forth the baskets of wet and dry clothes to her. Father and Uncles have built these clotheslines for her.

On Saturday mornings, after a great breakfast, MomMom and I walk west over the railroad tracks to Main Street. She goes into a beauty shop to get her "Go to Church" hair do. I walk down to Woolworth with about 15 to 25 cents to spend anyway I want. I spend away for about an hour. I see a guy put stuff in his pocket and watch him walk out. I return to the beauty shop to be with MomMom.

We walk towards home along Third St. We go into the small Safeway store. MomMom buys the groceries. I help her carry the paper sacks home. It seems a long way, but it is only about 2 blocks. I play the rest of the day climbing the big cottonwood tree, etching my initials many places in the bark with a spark plug. I know that it will be a big hurt if I ever fall out of that tree. I am lucky that I don't.

This is the last year East Side School was open.

