

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HELEN AND RANDY
65 YEARS OF OUR LIVES

By Helen F. Baaso

Part I --DETROIT FROM 1934 TO 1955

On December 27, 1934, Randy and I were united in marriage in my mother's front room and adjoining dining room. It was the middle of the great depression. Detroit was suffering, as no one had the money to buy a car. The factories were shut down. We were very poor, and there wasn't enough money to buy film to take pictures of the bride and groom. Randy was working at a hardware store repairing radios. People needed radios for news and entertainment. We had rented an apartment for our bridal suite. It had a living room with a murphy bed, a kitchen with a table for eating, and a bath. I became pregnant in the spring, and had to move back into my mother's house after Randy's job was terminated. His shoes had holes in the soles and there wasn't money to repair them, and we didn't know how we were going to buy a new pair. He had hand bills printed to repair radios, and we got a little money. My brothers took them door to door. I had a job at Woolworth, as it was in walking distance, we saved 12 cents a day street car fare. Because of my pregnancy, I had to quit. I once again, became chief cook and day care for kids, etc. I had uremia poisoning, and had to wear an old pair of Randy's shoes, as my feet were so swollen. Don was born December 2 at Deaconses Hospital. They kept me there for ten days. The cost was \$50.

My brother Archie was working at Ford Trade School and bought a car. I taught him ??? how to drive, when I hardly knew how myself. There was a Hutcheson Reunion in Tennessee and my mother wanted me to go to help drive. Randy's mom kept Don. On the way down, Arch was driving and wanted a rest, so I took the wheel. I had never driven on mountain roads, and the first curve that I came to (going too fast), I squealed all the way around. Arch sat up, and said "What the &@#* was that."

When we got back, we moved down the street into a furnished house. One day, as I was on the porch with Donald, a lady came by, and started talking with me. She told me that the apartment next to hers was vacant, so we moved up in the world. Randy was making \$20 dollars a week working for Max Brose. Around this time, we took a trip to the Michigan Upper Peninsula with Randy's mom (she helped with the gas) and his sister Clarice. I heated baby food on the hot motor. I met a lot of Randy's relatives.

When we got back, my friend, Laura told me that she was moving, and wondered if we wanted to rent the house she was vacating. It was small, one room for living and eating, one bedroom, and a lavatory with out a bath tub. Randy talked me into it, saying that we could save some money---on \$20 dollars a week? He talked me into it. We had to visit relatives to take baths.

Two years later in 1939, we bought a house with \$200 down (Randy and his dad painted the interior for the rest). I begged to have a gas furnace in place of the standard coal furnace. It had been my job for years to keep the coal furnace going at my mothers house and I was in tears most of the time trying to get that fire going. Randy had mercy on me, and the plans were changed.

Don, now four, had scarlet fever and The Board of Health quarantined the house. The nurse told me that I had to take down the new curtains and wash them, and burn the Christmas tree. I asked, "do the germs float in the air?"; she said "no". So, I asked "Why do I have to do all of this?". With a huff and a puff, she said, "DO YOU WANT YOUR HUSBAND TO BE ABLE TO COME IN THE HOUSE?" It was our fifth anniversary, and of course I wanted him to come in. He came home with a sewing machine for me. I made some drapes and he made a valance covered with the material.

Randy got the best job ever. If he worked fast, he had lots of time for himself and also got bonuses. About this time, he built our first T.V. The screen was 9 Inches, Don had been standing on neighbors' porches, to watch their T.V.s Randy quit that job to go into police radio for more money. He was on a swing shift. One night, while he was at work, I heard someone rattling the doorknob. I called the police, and Randy was broadcasting the report. As he was saying, "go to 19375 Carrie," he said, that's my house. The police came, and the guy was drunk, and on the wrong street.

In 1942 the world war was raging. I volunteered to register the men for the draft. I also issued ration cards. Sugar, meat, and butter were rationed. There was talk of butchers using horse meat. One night for supper I made hamburgers. Later, as I took some trash out to the alley to our trash can, I saw one whole hamburger on the bottom of the empty can. Guess who?--Donald.

Randy was a Ham radio operator, and built a broadcasting room in the basement. I got very frustrated because he was always talking when supper was ready. He told me that he just couldn't stop without signing off properly.

Our first real vacation was in 1941. We went to Van Etten lake where we rented a cabin. Randy went out early in the morning, and stayed out late into the night, fishing and wishing.

After the war, our family started growing. Glenn was born in 1946 and Cathy in 1951. We had dogs, Teddy and Woofier. Teddy was so cute, but she got hit by a car, then Woofier started having fits. One day, during one of the fits, Don crawled out a window to get away from him.

Randy drew up plans and was busy building two houses. The first one, he dug the footing by hand with a shovel. The second one, he had enough money to hire a backhoe. I really thought that house was going to be ours, but Randy had other plans. He wanted to buy a trailer and head south. We bought one and took a trial run in Michigan, came home, and Randy made a "for sale" sign for our home. Our neighbor came over, asked "how much", and bought our house without any dickering. Randy was doing T.V. and radio repair, working out of the house at that time, and I was his answering machine. My brother thought that Randy was crazy to leave a good living, but we did it.

Part II A GALLIVANTING WE GO 1955

The saga of our mid-life adventure

Randy had been dreaming for years of moving up north to operate a motel or some such enterprise. So I didn't put much stock in his new dream of touring the U.S.A. in a trailer. But the summer before our twentieth anniversary, he came home and said that we were going shopping for a trailer. After looking them over we chose a rather small one (for a family of five) so that it wouldn't be too hard to pull. We took a trial run to various Michigan State Parks, spending a month in all. The smaller kids, Glenn eight, and Cathy three, loved it. Our oldest son, Don, eighteen, was noncommittal. He only spent one week in it, because he was to report to the National Guard at Camp Grayling. I still thought this was as far as we would go, but in November Randy made a sign, HOUSE FOR SALE, and hammered it in the front yard. Our neighbor came over and asked "how much" and said, "I'll take it" and didn't even ask to look through the house. January 27, 1955 was the day of our departure. That was the mid term end of school for Glenn. Don had graduated and had a good job at General Motors. Our furniture was sold, mostly to neighbors, with the provision that we could use it until time for our departure. I had hoped that the house wouldn't sell, but it did. As you can see, I wasn't too enthusiastic about the move. On a test, a person was asked what kind of animal you would like to be; I wanted to be a cow, and sit in my pasture, chew my cud and be content. Randy was now kidding me about my "cow like" tendencies.

Christmas was a problem, as the children had oodles of toys, and most of them would have to be given away. But I managed, despite my good intentions, to clutter up the whole front room. Time was running out. We were invited out to dinner at our friends, neighbors, and relatives' homes, The Mothers Club had a farewell party for me, and gave us a beautiful electric coffee pot. I was getting very apprehensive as the time drew near for our move. Finally, moving day arrived. It had been a mild winter up to then, but moving day was a beaut. It was below freezing, with snow and wind. The furniture did get moved but I can't say in what condition. All my canned goods and medicine in bottles that I had stored in the trailer got frozen and some burst.

Our neighbor had purchased our twin beds to be delivered the day we moved, so we would have a place to sleep. Don stayed at my mother's over night. Glenn slept at the Morton's. I was gazing mournfully at an array of boxes and junk, when Ada Morton called and told me that Glenn had fallen out of the top bunk bed, and knocked himself out. I went to see how he was, and he wanted to come home. He didn't feel too good. So he slept with me. During the night, he threw up all over the bedding, and me. It was cold and all the other blankets were on the bed in the trailer. I got to worrying about concussion, and called the doctor. He told me to keep an eye on him, and take him to a hospital if he showed signs of concussion. We went to my mother's for breakfast. I asked Ada to wash the blanket, which I promptly forgot about, and we left without it. After breakfast, we came back to finish up loading. What a hectic morning. What a mess.

The car was loaded, and we had to start giving things away. I had left the workbench in the basement for Randy to take care of. Imagine how I felt when I found out that he hadn't half emptied it. Finally, inch by inch the house was cleared. I went to the alley to throw some things away, and

imagine my surprise to see that the garage hadn't been touched. Our new owners inherited a lot of tools and junk. My mother's car was loaded, and we were half frozen. The neighbors made a pot of coffee for us. Everyone was calling out "good bye," "good luck," "come back," "sorry to see you go." Around noon, we were ready to leave. All farewells had been said, and we slowly started down the street.

Our first destination was Florida, where we would stay until summer and Glenn was out of school. We had a miserable trip down, wearing all the clothes that we could put on. We had blankets to wrap around us, but still chilled to the bone. It took us four days to get to Florida. When we got to Georgia, we started to warm up, and could take off some clothes. We started shedding long underwear, etc. There had been a cold wave over most of the country. In Bowling Green Kentucky, we couldn't get the trailer up the icy hills. Our oil-burner had sprung a leak, and we stopped in Nashville to have it fixed. Those poor people were buying coal from a street vendor, just a bucket full at a time. We finally reached Florida. What a change of scenery, flowers were growing all over. The houses were so clean and neat and colorful. We stayed in a trailer park for a dollar a night. We stayed at Dundee for a few days. We loved it. We went through Tampa, and St. Petersburg, then down to Fort Meyers, wow was it humid. The clothes would mildew in the closets.

At Homestead, we left our trailer and went into Everglades National Park, with our Penyan boat, that we had carried on the roof of the car. For three hours we didn't see another person. There were lots of tropical birds, and funny ducks that would disappear under the water, and resurface up stream. We were all very leery, because we had heard that rattlesnakes, alligators, and scorpions were there. A Ranger asked us if the pelicans had bombed us with their droppings. Guess we were lucky to have escaped that experience.

Miami was our next stop. Such a fabulous place. We were gawking at it all. We found a place to park the trailer. Randy was driving down Biscay Blvd. and everyone was gawking at us. We had to cross over a very narrow bridge, and met a BIG car, the driver was mad at us for taking up so much room. A canal divides the ocean front from the rear of the city, with bridges connecting the two. We stopped at a beach, and the kids were so happy to be able to run and play, Cathy saw a glob of purple stuff, and stomped on it, thinking it was a purple balloon. She started screaming and kept it up for a long time. I took her to a lifeguard and was told she had stepped on a Man O War which emits formic acid and burns very badly. She cried herself to sleep. the Man O War floats on the water and wraps their tentacles around any one who comes near.

We found a trailer park spot in the city of Hallandale, eighteen miles from Miami. It was the last spot they had. There were train tracks and a dog race track near the park; we could hear them saying there goes rusty (the rabbit that the dogs chased). Randy got a job as a TV repairman, and Don worked at a furniture store. Glenn was enrolled in school. So we tried to settle in. We loved the weather. Never before had we seen so much sunshine. The children talked about Carrie Street constantly, I was homesick. The trailer court had Orchids blooming and Avocado trees. Twice a week, I took the kids to the beach. Glenn loved to play in the waves. We had to shower off the salt water. When it rained, it really came down hard and fast, but was soon over.

Randy got a good job servicing airplane radios and equipment. My mother came down to stay with a friend who had a stroke. Don and her daughter Joan went to movies, etc. Don was allowed to drive his boss's MG. I played golf with Joan twice a week. How I wished that I had my sewing machine. But there was no room. Things were stored under the beds, and anywhere we could think of. One day Glenn's teacher asked me to come to school. Glenn was day-dreaming, and when the teacher asked him what he was thinking about, Glenn told her that he was thinking about his cousin, and that he would never see him again. The teacher asked me, "Who was this Jeff?"

I bought some hand craft work, and even a paint by number kit. We looked at houses. They were very reasonable, and dramatic. After April, the trailer court thinned out. Lucky people were going home. In June, when school was out, we got ready to travel west.

Westward-Ho We visited Silver Springs, a beautiful clear lake. You could see the bottom. We went on a glass bottom boat. Saw a wrecked ship. Then on to Cypress Gardens. They put on a water-skiing show. The surroundings are like the Garden of Eden. Our trip was uneventful going through Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. Saw marshes and bayous and oil pumps. There's a lot of swamp gas in these regions. We entered Texas at Port Charles, and went north west. At Big Bend the map indicated a state park on top of a mesa. Randy pulled the trailer up and around, and no park. So down we came and parked at a commercial court. There must have been a marathon airplane drill. We couldn't sleep with all the noise. So, Randy decided to move. He told all of us to stay put. The trailer creaked and groaned as we traveled along. He parked behind a liquor store. Did it smell of oil. The next night we stayed in the state capital. It was around eleven p.m. when we found a nice trailer court. We traveled around it, trying to find a parking space and ran into trouble. A tree grew in such a way, that it blocked the street. Our trailer had a "dolly" between the car and trailer. To back up, it had to be disconnected. So, there's Randy in the middle of the night, jacking up the car, disconnecting the dolly, connecting the trailer to the car, backing up into a trailer space, then, having to go through the whole ritual to put it all back. To put it mildly, Randy wasn't very happy about the whole thing.

The next day, we were on a hill, waiting for a green light. It turned, but Randy didn't notice it. So, I said, "Go". That startled Randy and he stalled the car. He told me to let him do the driving. As we were rolling along, I noticed that our route turned left, but being a good wife and letting Randy do the driving, I didn't say anything, for about five miles, then I thought I'd better speak up, and said "If anyone is interested, we were supposed to turn left way back there". Another unhappy Randy.

Along the way, we saw the Petrified Forest, just a lot of logs lying on the ground that had turned to stone. Carlsbad Caverns were next and was it hot. Cathy was afraid of caves, so I stayed in the trailer with her. I had her in the bathtub trying to keep her cool. That night it turned so cold, we were shivering. That's the desert for you. Going to Soccora, it got hotter. Randy took the hood off of the car to try to keep it from overheating. He put it on our bed. There we were, pulling a trailer, with a boat on the top of the car, and no hood. We got a lot of double takes. Along about here, I decided to make some spaghetti. I bought some meat, but didn't have a big enough pan, or enough water to boil the spaghetti properly. It was a terrible, gooey mess. I almost threw up, just looking at it. So much for saving money.

We went into Utah and visited Zion National Park. It was fantastic. You drive down into the canyon, and look up at all the formations. Then south into Arizona, where we went to the Grand Canyon. There you are at the top looking down into the canyon. What suburb colors. So we looked for a short time, and Randy said "Let's go". We entered Nevada and again experienced real hot weather. We camped on Lake Mead and went swimming. The bottom of the lake is covered with sharp rocks. So, using inner tubes, we eased ourselves out into deeper water. One guy came running down the beach into the water, when he hit those rocks, he tried to walk on water. The water was a beautiful deep blue. We visited Hoover Dam which was a truly inspiring piece of work.

Randy bought an evaporative cooler, got some dry ice to put in the car, and we waited to drive through the Mojave Desert at night. California, here we come. We went to a public beach. The Pacific Ocean is much colder than the Atlantic. Disney Land didn't open on time, so we missed seeing that. There were some disappointed kids. Now it's north to Yosemite. Its grandeur is unsurpassed. I had a real bad case of high-altitude sickness. Randy and Glenn went up above some lovely waterfalls, taking their lunch, which some critters stole. We parked the trailer, unhitching the dolly and the car. Don was allowed to drive us through the big trees. On the way back he pulled in at an angle at a concession stand. Randy started hollering, "No-no". We looked at him in amazement. He forgot that the dolly had been taken off. Later Don and I went golfing.

Cathy was fussy with a tooth that was bothering her, so I took her to a dentist in Sacramento. He just grabbed her from me, took her in and pulled the tooth. She was so scared by the way he acted, she didn't want to go to the dentist anymore. Don left us, going back to Detroit by bus, to stay with my mother. I guess he had enough. We went on to Shasta Mountain and lake. Cathy was very nervous when we were riding around the lake in the boat. Randy called her "WW" for worry wart. His mother had the same tendencies. That name stuck for a long time.

Then, north to Oregon, where I was allowed to drive the car for a spell. That made me nervous! We saw the Craters of the Moon in Idaho, then on into Yellowstone Park. What a fantastic place that was. Glenn made a "gas mask" and Cathy asked, "Why did we come here". It smelled like rotten eggs. The fishing was great; just throw your line in and land a big cutthroat trout. Randy was fishing the Madison river when a big elk crossed the water, paying no attention to him. We saw a lot of bears, and a lot of foolish people trying to get too close to them. One mama bear chased a boy. The final lap of our journey was going down into Colorado. We lived in our trailer for a month, until we bought our house on Quay Street in Arvada. We called Don and asked him to come home, which he did. We were all together again and I was happy to get out of that trailer, as were the kids.

Part III COOL COLORFUL COLORADO 1955 TO 1999

We bought a nice ranch house near a school and got settled in. It was about 2 miles from the Dudleys. They had given us a royal welcome. Randy had been going to church with us in Florida, and found a church wherever we were on Sunday. We all sat around Evelyn's table with Dud, Aunt Mary and Uncle Hubert, talking about God and the Bible, Randy asking questions. He kept going to church with us, and one year later, decided to be baptized and commit himself to Christ. We both needed to learn more about the Bible, and thru the years, we have progressed a lot.

The kids and I went to Detroit by train, and had to change in Chicago. We had to take a taxi, and got there by the skin of our teeth. That train went through small towns in Michigan, stopping at all of them. It took forever. All of my family came to visit us in our new home, Randy's mom and dad, also.

Over the years, we flew to Detroit, visited, bought a car and drove it back home. My favorite was a Mustang convertible. Evelyn and I drove around with the top down, wearing big hats and sunglasses. Evelyn said that she felt like an idiot. Not me. I loved every minute of it.

Randy had many jobs, would you believe it, he even taught a class in basic radio. Then on to Hotpoint where he became a salesman, selling parts. One of his costumers sold his television repair shop to Randy. So Randy was self-employed. He fixed the shop up, putting in picture windows and carpeting. I would go down in the afternoons, so Randy could make house calls. Once I put a tube in a radio for a lady. She came back a while later and wanted me to fix her radio. I told her that I couldn't fix radios, and she replied that I had fixed one for her before. One day a couple of strange guys came in. I thought that they were going to rob me. They came back that night and stole four T.V.s The optometrist next door wanted more parking, and bought out the shop-everything, and converted it to a parking lot! That's when Randy retired.

Don worked for a while at a furniture store, then went to Rocky Flats until he retired. He married Pam, and they had two daughters, Linda and Carrie. They later had my great grandchildren. Glen went to Viet Nam. When he came home, he was so thin. He took courses in art, married Marline [later they were divorced] worked at computer graphics, and is still at it. Cathy went to college, took business courses and worked for a time at a stock exchange. She married Steve [they later, were divorced] and they had three children, twins, Sean and Kelly, and later, Scotty. She is now working at Channel 9.

My mom came out a few times, to recuperate from illnesses. We played Scrabble constantly. When Randy went hunting, I would fly to Detroit to visit all the family. We played games, went golfing, and drove around to look at the beautiful foliage. Gordon and Doreen would drive up from Ohio so we could all be together.

In 1981, we sold our home, bought a trailer, and went to Arizona for about four months. When we came back to Colorado, we looked for a new home and we parked our trailer in the Dudley's driveway. Randy wanted to get away from traffic, so we bought a house in the foothills. It needed work! Lots of it! The last time I went to see my mom, she was very ill, and I brought her home with

me. She spent two winters with us, spending the summer in Ohio, with Gordon and Doreen. She wanted to go back to Detroit. One day, Arch called and told her that a room was available in the Care Center. It was a Home that was under the care of the church she had attended for years. She felt like she owned it and seemed very content to be there.

We resumed our winter trips to Arizona, except in 1985, when I slipped and broke my knee. Pam and Donald had a lovely 50th anniversary party for us, and the court in Arizona had another one, for anyone that had been married for 50 years. Evelyn and Dud came down one year for a short stay, then went on to California. There were members of our church in the court, and we went to church, together in a van. Our last year in Arizona was 1989 and Randy had trouble walking. When we came home, he had a six-artery heart bypass, and later, both Carotid arteries had to be cleaned out. In 1996, he had an artery by-pass to his legs. So, now, Randy wanted to move back to town to be nearer to doctors, hospitals, and our kids. I hated to move; I liked it up there in the foothills. It took us over seven months to find the house we now live in. We wanted a home all on one floor with a two-car garage. It's a comfortable home and not too hard to keep up with the work. There is a sun porch that we enjoy and we do lots of eating back there. It's also a nice spot for our picnic table. Gordon and Doreen, Norman and Miriam, and Edie and cousin Pat Howe have visited us here.

We took a trip to see Randy's brothers and wives in Tennessee, then up to Ohio to see my brother and wife, and on to Detroit to see more relatives. In 1992, my niece Ann Carlton, planned a lovely family reunion for the Hutcheson side of the family. I flew to Detroit, and granddaughter Linda and I stayed with Pat and Arch. Lots of out of towners staying here and there. I was the oldest one there - the Matriarch of the family.

Don gave me the computer that I am using to type this, along with my other memoirs. He has his hands full bailing me out of trouble. I have written many anecdotes, and given them to family members. This might be my last effort.

We are here, in this house until we are home in heaven with God and Jesus. These last years have been the best. Randy greets me every morning with a big hug. We have learned the hard way, to get along with our differences. Our early years were tumultuous. Randy was macho, and had a bad temper, and I was pouty. When in their teens, our younger kids were hard for me to understand. I made many mistakes. There are many classes today in managing children. I should have been more loving instead of so dogmatic. "Too late, we get smart".

But these Russet Years are well worth the 65-year Journey.

These are the russet years, when the apples hang the ripest on the tree.
And every sunlit afternoon appears to bring a richer harvest time to me.
Need I bemoan the unripe fruit of Spring, and think myself unneeded, lost bereft?
Rather I hold this age a precious thing, Its tartness gone and all its sweetness left