

# THE GREAT ADVENTURE

*On the Road in 1949*



**by Walter Walker**

Andover High School  
Class of 1949

As published in *The Andover Beacon*  
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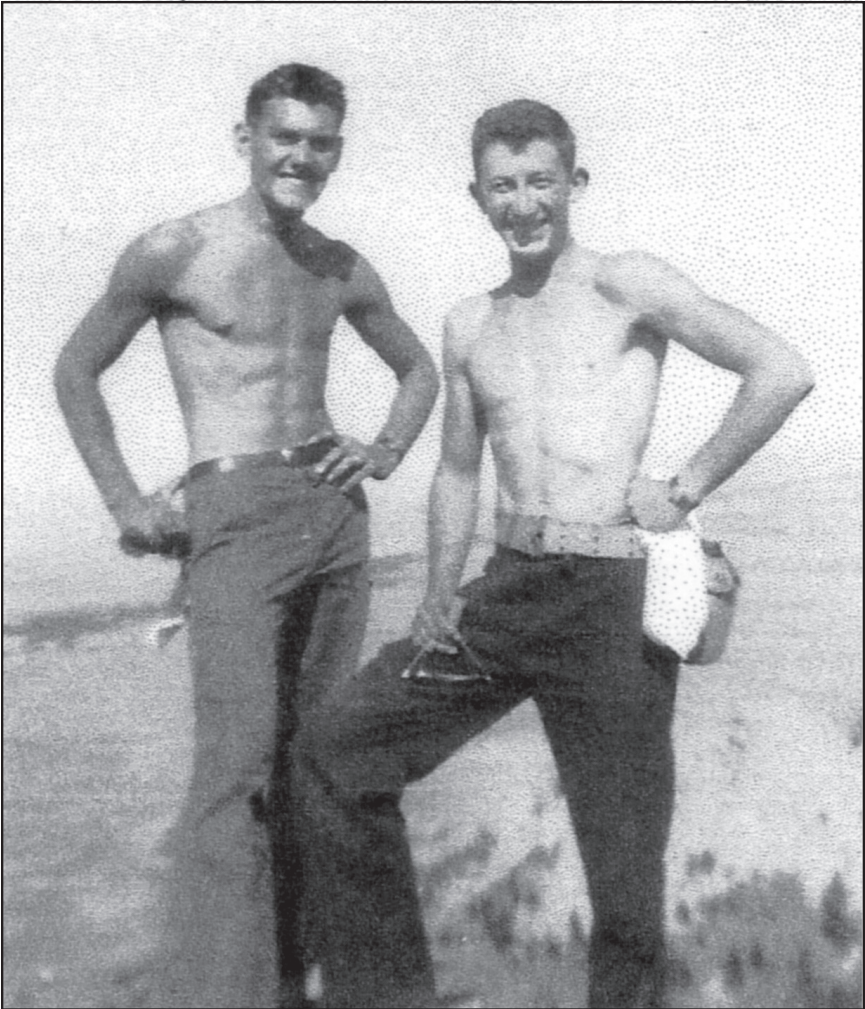
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*This little book commemorates  
the Great Adventure of three young men  
from Andover.*

*Sharing their story with the Andover  
community started when Walter Walker sent  
this picture (right) to The Andover Beacon.  
In the April 2010 issue, we challenged our  
readers to identify the two young men.*

*The rest, as you'll see in the pages that follow,  
is history ...*

*Charlie Darling  
Publisher  
The Andover Beacon  
August 2011*



**Just For Fun:** It's 1949, and three young fellas are off on a great adventure, working their way around the United States. You get 10 points if you can name the two pictured here – 50 bonus points if you can name their traveling partner who took the photo. Let us know at [Articles@AndoverBeacon.com](mailto:Articles@AndoverBeacon.com) or 735-6099. We'll publish the answer and a tally of how many people recognized these "future old-timers."

Do you have a decades-old photo of one or more former or current Andover residents? If so, please send it to the Beacon and we'll see how many readers can correctly identify the people.

*In the May 2010 issue, we published a nice letter from Harold Crane, which will serve here as an introduction to what follows.*

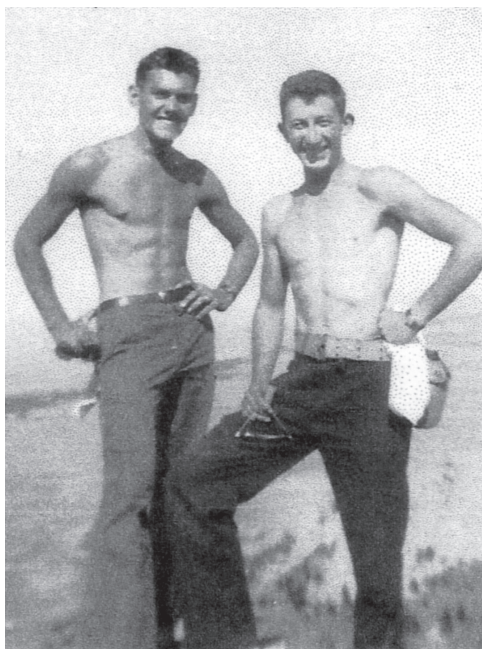
## Introduction

**H**ey, that's me on the left, and my lifelong friend Skip Powers on the right – just a couple of Cilleyleville kids! Our photographer was Walter Walker, then of South Danbury and now a resident of Wilmot.

The picture was taken atop Bear Butte, just outside of Rapid City in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The occasion: an early stop on our “great adventure,” working our way around the lower 48 in the summer of '49. We made it, covering 46 states in just over four months and accumulating almost 15,000 miles on the previously wrecked 1938 Oldsmobile that we had repaired as seniors in the basement shop of Andover High School (AHS).

And what an adventure it was! But that's a story all its own, providing an unforgettable inventory of memories that have lasted a lifetime for each of us. The recording of those details, though, will have to be from one of them.

What inspired the trip I frankly do not recall, but a major objective was in pursuit of California's gold, and why not? We were '49ers, too,



**Harold Crane (l) and Skip Powers, Bear Butte, South Dakota, 1949. Photo by Walter Walker, who sent it to the Beacon.**

**Harold, Skip, and Walter's adventures in 1949 were obviously not a secret. Many Andover High grads correctly identified the photo, including Lloyd Perreault, Jim Emerson, Barbara Sullivan, Jane Currier, Dennis Fenton, Fred Putney, and Carolyn Currier. Thanks, one and all!**

albeit just 100 years behind the others and the great gold rush that we had studied as young scholars. In fact, inscribed on my old cardboard suitcase I had drawn a cartoon of an old prospector crawling across the desert on hands and knees emblazoned with the slogan “California or Bust!”

But great adventures end; we came home without the gold and momentarily all went our separate ways. Walt and Skip, travel aspirations satiated then, both settled locally and along the last 60 years or so have become well-known and popular citizens in their respective towns. I, on the other hand, ever the wanderer, have lived it seems about everywhere throughout the US. While I have lived in various parts of California for almost 40 years, Cilleyville, Potter Place, and East Andover still are and always will be “home” to me.

Skip and I grew up together in or about Cilleyville and Potter Place, he on Ragged Mountain and I on the old Blackwater Farm up near the Wilmot town line, about where Pancake Road intersects Route 11. We attended the old one-room Cilleyville School from first grade together, and just the two of us comprised the entire eighth grade graduating class when our studies ended there.

We were, of course, students at AHS and teammates together on AHS athletic teams during the late '40s. And then, within days after graduation from AHS, we set out for California, only to return to Andover, richer in many ways but with empty wallets, just coins in our pockets, and still eager to take on the world. How our town, the two of us, and the whole world has changed since then!

I write this letter, though, not to regale the past but to protest the meager bounty you have offered to identify these two skinny youths. I predict few collectors, for, like my good friend's once sumptuous locks, I have been missing from Andover, with little left behind to be remembered for, for well over 50 years. Too, the shape of those two sleek and concave young bellies, now convex, rival the expanded and changed silhouettes of the schools we attended. Thus, it is so difficult for even us to remember that we ever looked like that.

And so to all of those who did remember me, I say “Hello!” with fond memories and best wishes always.

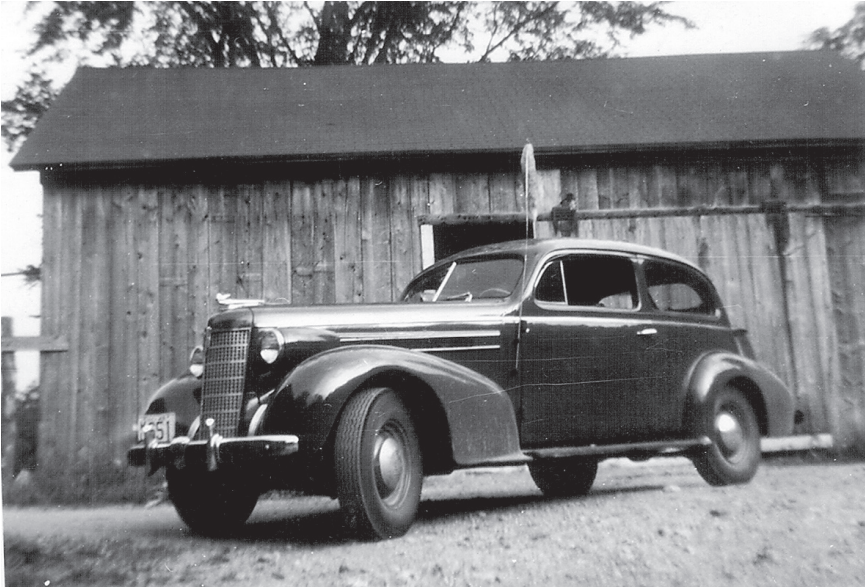
*Harold Crane  
Andover High School '49  
Roseville, California*



*Walter rose to Hal's challenge, and the first installment of The Great Adventure: On the Road in 1949 appeared in the June 2010 issue.*

*Reminiscence*

## *On the Road in 1949*



**The fabled '38 Olds that Walter Walker, Skip Powers, and Harold Crane repaired in the basement shop of Andover High School and then drove 15,000 miles around the USA in the summer of 1949.**

**Photos: Walter Walker**

By Walter Walker

Andover High School '49

My great uncle, a wise old man by the name of Jerome Hoyt, gave each of us a diary in which, he hoped, we would record our trip. It is from mine that I am able to record the following:

We graduated on the 16th of June, 1949, and at 8:20 AM on the 20th of June, with less than thirty dollars cash in each of our pockets, we headed for New York. My diary shows we made 339 miles the first day at an average speed of 34 mph!

The second day, we made it to James Roberts' (remember the store he ran in East Andover for many years?) where he and his



wife were very good to us, as were all the people we ran into along our way. Costs were always on our minds, and I noted how we stopped to swim in a “mud hole” before reaching “Doc” Roberts’ and how we had to shell out 40¢ apiece to swim in it!

The third day, June 22, we finally got work. First we worked at a nearby farm from 9 AM until 5 PM, then at a pea canning factory from 7 PM to 12:30 AM. “Gad, what a day!” says my diary.

On the fourth day, we worked from 7:30 AM to 6:30 PM at the pea factory. We got three meals at the plant cafeteria, and I describe a great evening meal – all I could eat and drink for only 55¢. But we got laid off that day.

On the fifth day, we went back to work at the farm and spent 10 hours there. In the evening we went to Batavia and saw our first TV. After a lot of talk with an elderly barber who had no idea what a crew cut was, we all got them before leaving New York.

On July 1, we got our checks from the pea factory: \$70.58 for each of us; and checks from the farm: \$42 apiece. On Saturday, July 2, we headed for Canada; from there we entered Michigan, then Ohio, then Indiana, all on the same day.

We hear a growl in the '38 Olds' transmission but cannot locate it. Trouble ahead?



**They each earned \$42 for two days of work at this New York farm – then saw a TV set for the first time ever that evening.**



# *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, July 2010*

**July 3:** We entered Illinois at 1:45 AM. I drove until 3 AM, and then Harold took over and drove until 7:45 AM when Skip took over. We saw General Grant's home at 7:45 AM. We entered Iowa at 8:10 AM. Entered Minnesota at 11:55 AM. Had a blow-out and had to buy a new tire. Drove until midnight, then pulled off the road and slept in sleeping bags. The Mississippi wasn't as big as I expected it to be.

**July 4 and 5:** Up and off at 4:30 AM. Temperature at 8 AM – 110 degrees! We just discovered we missed a turn, and thus the state of Wisconsin!

At St. Joseph we found we needed a new bearing in the back left wheel. We crossed into Kansas at 10:30 PM. We pulled off into a back road and hit the sack at 11:30 PM in an apple orchard. That morning it took three firecrackers to wake Skip, who was still asleep at 8:45 AM! More car trouble. The brakes need a new master cylinder.

**July 7:** We finally find work in Grand Island.

**July 8:** We report to work at 7 AM. We work helping to store wheat in buildings that were at one time a military base. We three work as a team, trading off every hour or so. The guy inside with the scoop that is pulled by an old John Deere tractor and a series of ropes and pulleys has the worst job, in the heat and dust.

**July 9:** We work from 6 AM until noon. We also were put on



**Skip (l) and Harold at Niagara Falls.**



The boys' "home" in Nebraska for three weeks.

new hours: 4 AM to 1 PM. We are not happy, but it's either "their way or the highway"!

**July 11:** Up at 3:10 AM and to work at 4:55 AM. After work, we went back to the hotel where we had been staying and were told we could not stay there any more because of our new hours!

What are we going to do?



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, August 2010*

**July 12:** We worked out an agreement with the husband and wife owners of Mitch's Hotel and Café, so we ended up staying there for three weeks. It also meant a cold breakfast of cereal and bread. Folks back in New Hampshire knew about our stay at Grand Island, so we began getting mail, including a letter (right) from Jane Thompson, who I had been dating in my senior year at Andover High.

On the 14th, we worked 12 and a half hours and were told we would go back on the 6 AM to 7 PM shift, so we decided to stay another week.



**Mount Rushmore, South Dakota**

Another long day on the 15th, but \$19.18 to show for it. Because we three were used to hard work, we got on the good side of the foreman running the operation, and he would shift us to an area where other boys could not keep up.

On Saturday we got our checks: \$67.94, which at that time seemed like a windfall to us. The 17th being Sunday, we had a day off and got caught up on sleep and letters home.

Monday thru Friday we worked 12 hour shifts. On Friday, Harold and I discovered we were coming down with some kind of a rash from the wheat dust, so decided to quit, but hated to leave that good money.

On Saturday, July 23, we got our last checks, went into Grand Island, cashed them, and headed for the Black Hills at 4:50 PM. Entered South Dakota at 1:35 AM.

On July 24 we had to stop driving around 3 AM, as we were

low on gas and could not find anything open. We pulled off the road and went to sleep. We got up at 6 AM, found some gas, and entered the Black Hills at 7:30 AM. First we went through Wind Cave, then swimming, and then up Iron Mountain and Mount Rushmore and viewed the four presidents' heads. We then went into a park and hit the sack around 8:30.



**Bear Butte, South Dakota.**

On the 25th we saw the Reptile Gardens in Rapid City and also bought a second-hand tire for the car. Climbed Bear Butte nearby and went swimming in a pool at its base, then headed for Deadwood City.

On the 26th we went into Deadwood and looked over the museum. I wrote, "Best one we've seen so far." Entered Wyoming at 1:55 PM. We decided to miss North Dakota and entered Montana at 2:25 PM. "Miserable stinking roads," says my diary! We drove outside of Twin City and found a place to camp beside the Yellowstone River.

Stay tuned for bear stories!



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, September 2010*

On July 27 we got up at 5:30 AM, got the camp stove going, made some coffee, and washed the dishes. Pulled into Billings, Montana at 11:30 AM and had lunch with a distant cousin of my dad's. Ran into a hailstorm outside of town with stones an inch and a half through. Had supper in Redledge.



**Skip Powers (l) and Walter Walker at the top of Beartooth Mountain July 28, 1949.**

We then drove down a long, long grade until at the bottom we found the brook that signs had warned us about that ran up hill. We camped beside it, and next morning it was running down hill, or it should. I know this sounds far-fetched, but all I've said is true.

On Tuesday the 28th we rolled out of our sleeping bags at 5:15 AM onto frosty ground. "Darn near froze last night," says my diary!

Around 6 AM we started over the Bear Tooth Range, and when we reached the summit we were 10,942 feet above sea level and surrounded with ice and snow.

We got into Yellowstone around 9:15 and went to the hot springs. We were disappointed in the park. We camped beside Yellowstone Lake. A bear came messing around about 9:45. When I got up next morning I found I was all alone. Harold moved into the car when he heard other campers yell about a bear.

Rumor has it that Skip stayed outside until a bear sat on Skip's chest to finish off a milk bottle. As soon as he could get out from under the bear, he headed for the Olds with the bear in hot pursuit!

On the 29th we had a breakfast of beans and coffee and then did our laundry in the water heated on the little camp stove. We left that



campground at 11:30 and went over the continental Divide at 1:50 and entered Montana about 4:45. Stopped at Ennis and had supper and looked for work. No luck. Bedded down about 20 miles outside of town.

On Saturday we stopped in White Hall, and the county agent said we could find work in Dillion. At Twin Bridges the guy changing the car's oil said there was no work in Dillion! We got there about 12:30 and hunted for work until 3:30 with no luck. But the real bad news was the rear end of the car failed and we cannot drive it until it is fixed. We find a place to camp beside a local stream.

On Sunday I stayed in camp and did dishes, etc. while Skip and Harold walked into town to see a fellow about work. He said he could get us work Monday morning. An old man who lives nearby comes and visits with us, and we are learning a lot from him.

Monday, August 1, Skip and I went to work at the Beaverhead Livestock Co. We helped them get in baled hay and ate at the mess house both noon and evening meals. In town after work we walked for miles and never found Harold, so gave up and got a room in the local hotel and went to bed.

On August 2, Skip and I worked at the ranch again. We got paid for two days, and back in town we found Harold, who looked in tough shape. We spent the night beside the river in our sleeping bags.

Do we find work so we can fix the car, or will we have to send home for help?



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, October 2010*

On August 4, we went back into town. About 2:30 in the afternoon, the fellow from the employment office said he had a job for one man. We went to the address he gave us, and we all got jobs digging ditches. We worked until eight then had supper and went to the hotel and got a room for a week, the best they had, for \$21 a week.

August 5 found us up at seven, and after breakfast

we went to work. "A routine day," says my diary. August 6 was the same, except we got the Olds in the evening. Had a bill of \$55. "A \$35 job. Ha!" says the diary.

August 7 being a Sunday, we did not get to work until noon and quit at 3:30. We are now digging a cellar hole for the plumber Dugan, who we started out digging ditches for. We went to a hot springs about 40 miles from our job and went swimming there. Hit the sack about 10:30 that night.

On August 8, we start work at 9, and it was delivering items for Dugan. After lunch we went back to digging on the cellar until 6 PM. I wrote a letter and caught up on my diary.

August 9 found us having breakfast at the Oasis, where we had been eating since we found work. We worked on the hole from 8 until 5, and after supper we went to the local library for awhile.

Back at the hotel, I hit the sack with Harold Crane. I think I should stop here and explain some things so people will not take this the wrong way. We had a double bed in our room and took turns sharing it. One night Skip and Harold would share and I would sleep on the floor. I soon found my friend hogged the blan-



**Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park**

kets, and I passed up the bed for the floor, as I slept better! My memory says Skip did the same thing.

On August 10, we worked on the cellar hole for eight hours. After cleaning up at the hotel, we had supper. Then, feeling flush, we each bought and smoked cigars. We spent some time at the library, and back at the hotel I did some mending.

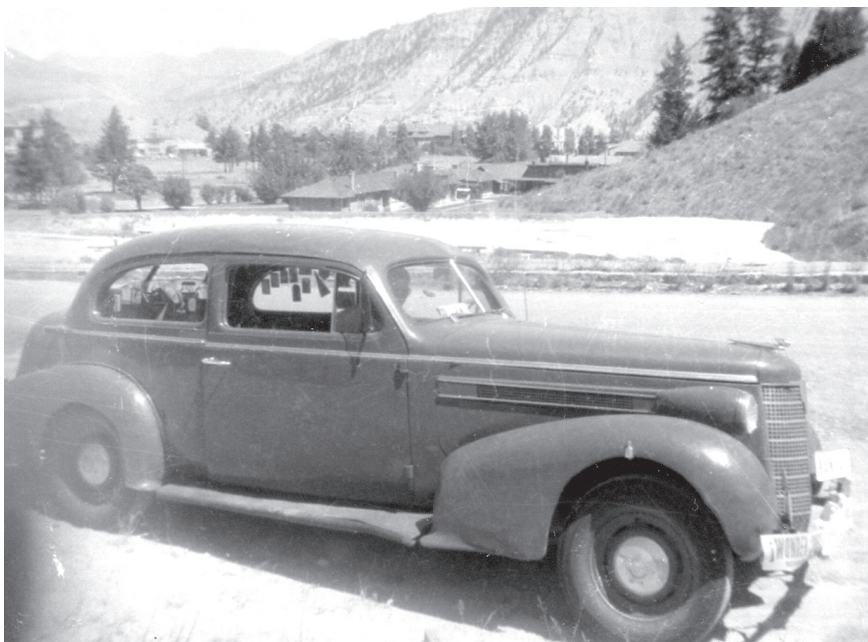
This is pretty dry, but the next installment gets real exciting! 🚗



**Skip Powers (l) and Harold Crane on top of Mammoth Hot Springs.**

## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, November 2010*



**The Olds in Yellowstone. Notice all the window stickers and number plates the boys have accumulated.**

Thursday, August 11, 1949 turned out to be an exciting day. We spent eight hours working for Dugan again, and in the evening we went to the circus that had come in on the train that forenoon. As we stood admiring the train cars that had been left on a siding near our hotel, a man approached us and asked if we would help him run a little gambling game. He would get us in for free, and we would also get to see all the side shows. This was too good to pass up, and we grabbed the offer.

The game was the pea under the shell that most everybody has heard about. We three were mixed in with the crowd around the table, and this guy would slip one of us a ten on which to bet which walnut half shell the pea was in. Of course we won, and he would take the winnings from us on the sly, and then some poor cowpoke would bet his week's pay, which we saw, and of course he lost ev-

ery penny.

The cowboy was some mad and said he would soon be back with some of his friends, and he would see who would win then! The con men were no fools, and they soon folded up their table and were long gone. We each got ten bucks and enjoyed the rest of a good circus.

Friday, August 12, was just a routine day. It looks like we will be out of work tomorrow and shall hate to leave this nice town.

On August 13 we worked for Dugan about seven hours and got paid, which was \$54 for each boy. I bought some pants, socks, and t-shirts. We spent some time at the library again, and later at the hotel we sat around shooting the bull until midnight.

Sunday, August 14, found us late getting up. A lazy day reading, and in the evening going to a V-J day celebration. Back at the hotel, we packed our things, ready to leave, as this is our last night here.

Monday morning, August 15, found us loading all our gear into the Olds, going to work after breakfast, and working for our last day and then getting paid. We got a free meal at the Oasis, where the lady owner and the two girls who waited on us and who we flirted with outrageously were all so good to us, as was Dugan the plumber who, with his pregnant wife, took us on a long trip one Sunday that I never got in my diary. Too tired from work, I guess.

Anyway, we left Dillon at 6:45 PM and headed north. Drove until 2:30 AM, then found a place to sleep beside the road.

The next installment will find us living like kings!



**Walter caught this one while waiting for work in Dillon, Montana.**

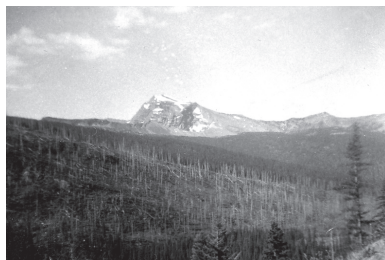




## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, December 2010*

August 16 found us up at 8:15 AM and having breakfast in a small town just outside Glacier National Park. It cost us a buck to enter the park, which we did around 9:15 AM. We really enjoyed this park, especially the Road to the Rising Sun.



**Signs of a forest fire upon entering Glacier National Park**

We left Glacier around 11:30 AM and had to go about halfway around the park to get on a road to the coast. By driving steadily and taking a shortcut, we made St. Regis before the Post Office closed, the reason being there was mail and homemade food waiting for us!

August 17 found me eating cookies for breakfast and writing a letter back home. We entered Idaho at noon – mileage: 70,898. We entered Washington at 1:25 PM and got into Spokane a little before 2 PM, where we bought some fresh fruit. We drove into Pasco and then later, quite a way outside town, we bedded down around 11:30 PM.

August 18 found us stopping in a small town to get cleaned up and a breakfast of hotcakes. On our way down the Columbia Highway, which follows the Columbia River, we stopped at another fruit stand where we bought peaches and tomatoes. We are in the Cascade Range, and it seems more like the White Mountains of New Hampshire to us.

We pulled into Portland around 4:30 PM, where we stopped at the Clarks, who were distant cousins of mine. They had been alerted we were on the way and had a bedroom all set for us. They couldn't understand when we insisted on sleeping in our bags in their backyard!

On August 19, we had a good breakfast for a change. They had a daughter several years older than us, and she seemed happy to cook for those "Yankee kids."

There was a park nearby where we played basketball and ten-



nis, and later, after dark, the Clarks took us up to see Broadway. “That was really a sight to see,” says my diary.

On August 20, we lived like kings. To start with, the Clarks fed us three meals each day, while we really did nothing but attempt to play tennis all day with equipment the daughter furnished.

Then in the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Clark showed us around Portland, where we ended up at an amusement park. These people, who were only distant cousins of mine by an ancestor’s marriage and no relation to either Skip or Harold, would not let us pay for anything. We rode all kinds of things, ending up on a roller coaster and not leaving the park until midnight.

Mr. Clark, who paid for all this, was Sadie Arey’s second husband, so not related at all. I am still stunned today at that man’s generosity.

The next installment finds us leaving Portland.



**Sadie Arey Clark (center) and her husband entertained the boys in grand style.**



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, February 2011*

Sunday, August 21, 1949 found us riding up to Mount Hood with the Clarkes. We drove as far as the Timberline Lodge, then took the ski lift the rest of the way.

Back at Portland, we went with the Clarkes to a picnic beside a lake whose name I did not record. We ate and watched fast boats hot-dogging on the large lake. We got back to Portland about 6 PM, where we were fed again and where we slept in our bags on their back yard again.

August 22 was almost a work day. Those good people let us use their machines, and we all did a lot of laundry. We had all been playing tennis in our work shoes, so our feet suffered, and by this day I could work without too much pain! After supper, we got in our wash and talked with our hosts until about eleven and then went to bed out back.

Tuesday, August 23, found us eating a large breakfast, packing up the Olds, and saying goodbye to the Clarkes around 8:45 AM. At 11:06, we got our first look at the Pacific. After driving a way, we found a place to park beside the ocean and ate our lunch there, then took our pants off and went wading in the water. Harold got wet so went in all the way! Later we saw the sea lions dive, which was quite a sight. We drove until about 8 PM, then pulled off the road and went to sleep.

August 24 found us on the road at 7:30 AM. Later, we found a place to park and had a lunch of blackberries which we had picked beside the road the night before. We crossed into California at 10:40 AM, where we were stopped and inspected for fresh fruit. Later we got a grease job on the car and then visited the Trees of Mystery. "Really worth seeing," says my diary.



**Indians fish for salmon in the Columbia River.**

We then headed for Trinidad, population 95, where mail was waiting for us. Skip got some cookies, so we had them and milk for supper.

I was up at 5:45 AM on the 25th and wrote 15 post cards for family and friends back East. Later, we went back into town for breakfast and to check the mail again, where Harold found two letters. We then drove a short distance until we found a place where we could go for a swim, which we did, but found it so cold we could not stay in very long.

Our next stop was Willow Creek, where we got gas and after much talk and discussion took in a fellow who rode to Redding after paying for our gas. We hit the sleeping bags about 8:15 PM.

Friday morning, August 26, found some guy going by in a truck yelling at us to get up! When we got around to it, we did. We arrived in Greenville around 11 AM, where we got cleaned up and had breakfast.

The next installment finds us hitting the hot spots in Reno, Nevada.



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, April 2011*

We found out where the Ranger Camp was and went to see Dan Graves. No luck, his day off, he might be back that night but was not, so we went swimming in a warm spring and bought our supper and later found a place to sleep.

On August 27 we checked on Dan Graves again and found he would not be back until Sunday so gave up and headed for Quincy.

Here we had one of the front wheel bearings replaced and found a garage that would replace the leaking blow-out plug at three that afternoon. I had lunch and got a haircut for \$1.25.

Once we got the car back, Harold sent a telegram to J. Graves and then headed for Reno. By dark it was still raining, so we pulled off behind a small sand shelter and bedded down inside. "It leaked," says my diary.

Sunday, August 28. "Rolled out at 7:15, what a night. Everybody was coming back from Reno, and being Saturday night they had to stop every now and then," says my diary! Later we crossed into Nevada at 8:40 AM and pulled into Reno around 10 AM. We were not impressed by what we saw. I wrote a letter and some cards, and we went to a park where we passed time reading. After our evening meal we got some "Harold's Club" things to put on



**"I wish you could have seen the look on our faces when 'Big Paul' spoke and asked, 'How you boys from New Hampshire doin'?' We answered and had a short conversation with him before paying and going through the redwoods."**

the Olds and then drove out of town and found a place to spend the night.

Monday morning on August 29 found us very disgusted with the spot we picked to sleep, as it turned out to be a favorite spot for lovers, and we did



**Walter (left) and Harold get ready for a rainy night outside of Reno.**

not get much shut eye. Back in town we had breakfast and went to the post office where Joeboy Graves was supposed to leave a message for Harold. No luck. We drove outside Reno and found an outdoor theater where we watched the show and met some folks who used to live in New Hampshire.

August 30 found us again driving into Reno for breakfast and the post office where there was still no word from Mr. Graves. So we spent some time in the park again, and after lunch hit the post office again, and this time found word from Mr. Graves that he would be glad to see us, so we headed for Oceanside. It was a hot day, and we had to drive over several mountains, and the radiator boiled real bad, but we made it, and we drove until after midnight and finally found a place to sleep behind a pile of tar about five miles from Los Angeles.

I rolled out about 6:30 AM on August 31 to find myself covered with ants. We finally shook them off ourselves and our sleeping bags, packed them away, and took off to notice a skip in the straight eight. We stopped at the first open garage we came to and had the plugs cleaned, new points and condenser installed, which fixed the problem. We drove through part of Hollywood and Beverly Hills. "They did not impress me very much, too much smoke, etc." says my diary.

The next installment finds us finally heading east.



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, May 2011*

August 31 (continued): Entered Oceanside, California at 12:15 PM, where I wrote some letters, etc. Around 3:30 PM we met John Graves. We then ate our evening meal and played miniature golf for a long time. We took John Graves back to his base and hit the sack around 1 AM, just a few feet from the ocean.

Thursday, September 1, found us up around 9 AM, covered with ants again. We took a dip in the ocean and killed time until about 1 PM when we had lunch. We then went into Oceanside looking for work, but had no luck.

We then picked up Corporal Graves. Ate and played golf until we got sick of that, then went to an amusement park and later to a show. After the movie we sat around talking until around 3 AM, went to bed around 4 AM, in the ants again!

September 2 found us up and on the road by 9:30 AM, driving until we got to Riverside, where we went to the employment office. We got a job hoeing cabbages, and after hunting for a long time we finally found the place and learned we would be working under a Japanese woman. Remember, this is 1949 and not too distant from December 7th and Pearl Harbor, so “Grand Canyon, here we come,” says my diary.

We stopped at 10:30 PM for gas, and it was an even 100 degrees! The Olds was boiling most of the time, but we managed to cross into Arizona at 11 PM, where it was a bit cooler.

On Saturday, September 3, we drove until daylight, which was around 4 AM. We pulled off the road about 50 miles from Grand Canyon and slept until about 10 AM. We then drove to the canyon, where we had lunch and admired that beautiful natural “trench.”

Our car quit on us as we were about to leave, but we got it going again and headed for Winslow, where we found rain. I wrote some letters; we ate and hit the road again. Crossed into New Mexico at 10 AM.

Sunday, September 4, found us driving until about 3:15 AM.



We found a place to sleep a little way outside Albuquerque and slept until about 10:30 AM.

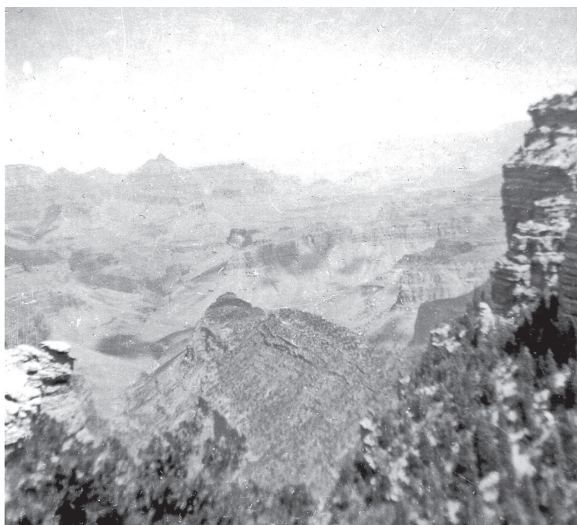
We next stopped at Tucumcari for gas, got cleaned up, and bought something to eat.

We crossed into Texas at 3:30 PM. “Hadn’t any more than crossed the line when we came up behind a car with an old couple

in it. The way they were acting, you would think they were teenagers! That’s Texas for you,” says my diary.

I’m not sure if it was those two old-timers or us, but for some reason we had a tire blowout about 6 PM. We fixed it and drove until a little before 10 PM, when we stopped, and after listening to the radio for a little while, we went to sleep at 10:55 PM.

In the next installment, you will meet some of the nicest folks we came across during our trip.



**“This is the view we had [of the Grand Canyon] while we ate lunch one hot day in September 1949.”**



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, June 2011*

Monday, September 5, found us up around 9 AM and driving until we needed gas, to a place where we also got the car greased. “Darn nice grease job, and only a buck, too,” says my diary.

We drove until we found a shady spot, where we stopped and I wrote some letters.

We entered Oklahoma and went through Oklahoma City. At Warner [Oklahoma] we bought a very good watermelon for only 50 cents. We got on the wrong road and went 70 miles out of our way. We finally got back on our correct route and hit the sack around 9:30 PM.

On September 6 we crawled out of bed at 8 AM and crossed into Arkansas at 9:30 AM. We stopped and looked for a job at Fort Smith, with no luck. We then headed south and entered Louisiana at 3:54 PM. We had a quart of milk for lunch and drove across the state. “The stinkiest state I’ve ever been in,” says my diary. We crossed the Mississippi at 10:30 PM at a cost of \$1.55. We drove until 11:30 PM then went to bed.

We got up at 6:30 AM on September 7, hit the road, and listened to the growl from the rear end, which meant the need for a new bearing. We entered Alabama at 1:40 PM and installed a new bearing ourselves. Cost: over \$7.00.

We drove a little way, and it began making another noise. We made it to Tuscaloosa, though. We had supper at the Conants, talked and read until about 10 PM, then hit the sack in one of their bedrooms – with air conditioning!

On September 8 we got up at 8:15 AM, had breakfast, and went to have the car fixed. The first man we saw did not dare to tackle the job, but the second would and did. When we went to get the car, we had a bill of over 14 bucks!

We looked for work, but found nothing. We had supper at the Conants and went to bed around 10 PM.

Friday, September 9, found us doing the dishes after breakfast and then off to the employment office. The only work they had was for cotton pickers, so we said, “What the heck, it’s work!” and we

gave it a try. We started at 9 AM and picked that white fluffy stuff as fast as we could until 1 PM, when we weighed in. Our pay for four hours work was 73¢ – total! That ended that.

As I look back today, I think how we were ahead of our time. Many years later we all saw the rich white kids go south to pick cotton alongside the poor blacks.

One thing we all remember is the little black girl, very cute and probably about four years old, who came over to our row probably three times that morning and said, “Please, Misters, will you all tell me the time?”

Back at the Conants, we had lunch, did the dishes, and I wrote some letters. We did the dishes after supper, also. This became a ritual which was helped along by the Conants’ two daughters.

On Saturday, September 10 we got a job cutting brush just outside town. We were paid 50¢ per hour and made six bucks among us. We went swimming in a nearby pool and returned to the Conants for the evening meal, dishes, and to bed around 11:30 PM.

Next time you will read about how Mr. Conant finds us work.



## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, July 2011*

Sunday, September 11, found us staying in bed until 8:15. After breakfast and the dishes, we cleaned out the car, did some repair work, and put some decals on the rear windows, which were just about full by now. After the midday meal, the Conants took us to Moundville, which used to be an old Indian village. The museum had been built over an old burial ground, and there were skeletons and pottery all around, as well as other artifacts. Back at the Conant's, we had supper and the usual routine and went to bed around 11 PM.

On Monday, the 12<sup>th</sup>, we got up real early and, after breakfast and the dishes, we went looking for work; again and again no luck. But back at the Conant's later, we learn that the carload of lumber is in, and we can work unloading it. We drive to the plant and find a bigger train car than we had expected, with about 19,000 board feet in it. The owner of the plant, which made furniture, will pay us \$3 a thousand to unload that lumber. We rented a U-Haul truck, and after lunch went to work and kept at it until 7 PM. We took much needed baths, had supper, and hit the sack at 10:30 PM.

We were up early again on the 13<sup>th</sup> and after breakfast went and rented the truck again and worked on the lumber 'til noon. After a lunch of two hamburgers and a quart of milk each, we went back to work and finished the job at 1:45 PM. We got paid, took the truck back, and got cleaned up. I wrote some letters then did some washing, and we helped get supper. "Did the dishes, then played double solitaire. What a game, especially when five people play," says my diary.

Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup>, found us up at 6:30 AM helping get breakfast and then the dishes, and next I did some laundry. Next, we went and cut some more brush for the lady friend of the Conants and went for a swim after. Poor Skip lost his ring in the pool.

After lunch at the Conant's, we went to see a man about tarring his roof, but he was not home, so we gassed up the Olds and returned to our home-away-from-home and mowed some of their lawns. We also washed our car, took baths, and had supper. This

was followed by another game of cards and then bed at 10 PM.

I should step away from my diary a minute and talk about the two Conant girls. I cannot recall their ages, but I remember the oldest, Mary Lou, had breasts when we



**This is how the Conant Family looked nine months before the Andover boys showed up.**

were there and was entertaining her younger sister, Harriet, one evening by jumping up and down in front of a mirror in their bedroom, and Harold caught a glimpse of this as he came back from the upstairs bathroom. This involved a lot of laughter on the girls' part, and before Skip and I could enjoy the show, their mother Georgie called up and put an end to the fun.

Louis was the father's name, and he was a rock. He was the one who got us the lumber job. The family had been there for a long time, so the girls and their friends had that beautiful old-time southern accent, and we used to have a lot of fun comparing our "talk" with all those young girls.

We loved every minute we spent with them, and I think they enjoyed our company as much as we enjoyed theirs.

Sadly, our Great Adventure ends with the next installment. 🚗

## *On the Road in 1949*

*The Andover Beacon, August 2011*

Thursday, September 15, found us up at 6:15 AM helping get breakfast and doing the dishes before we put the Kansas number plate back on the Olds and also the “Harold Club” shield. We gave the car a good cleaning and then cut some more bushes before going swimming. Later we helped get supper, did the dishes, and listened to the radio before bed at 10:30 PM.

September 16 found us doing some laundry after breakfast, and after lunch I read some folders Mrs. Conant had, and then we went swimming until supper time, after which we went to a high school football game. We got in as students and sat in the cheering section among a bunch of “junior high brats, which didn’t help any.” Back at the Conants we did the dishes and went to bed around 11:30 PM.

Saturday, September 17, found us staying in bed until about 8 AM. After getting cleaned up, we had breakfast and did the dishes. We got our things packed and left the Conants around 10:30 AM.

We had gone only about a hundred miles when the back wheel just about came off. We hitchhiked back to Centerville to get the bearing put back on and caught a ride back to the car, where we put things back together. We took off again and stopped for some oil and had a heck of a time getting the Olds started. We finally got it going and headed for Jacksonville, Florida. We entered Georgia at 6:05 PM and drove until about 40 miles from Jacksonville and hit the sack around 11:30 PM.

On Sunday, September 18, I “fought my way out of the mosquitoes at 7:30 AM, packed up, and took off. Entered Florida at 8:16 AM.”

I am sad to say that is the last entry in my diary. I remember we briefly visited an elderly lady, Mrs. Lenard, whom Harold had lived with for several years near the Andover/Wilmot town line. We then headed north. On a back page of my diary I show the following mileages and times: Tennessee: 76,614 at 10:40 PM; Virginia: 76,675 at 8 AM; West Virginia: 76,824 at 1:35 PM; Virginia: 77,005 at 7:40 PM; Massachusetts: 77,795 at 9; New Hampshire: 77,852 at 10:40.



Photos in my album show we went over Virginia's famous Skyline Drive before we visited Washington, DC. I remember we tried to run up and down the Washington Monument and visited a few important buildings there. The truth is, I think all three of us were homesick!

Also, we were running out of time, as Harold had learned Anna Roberts had registered him to attend the University of New Hampshire, so one of the last trips for the faithful old Oldsmobile was to ferry Harold to the university.

But before that trip, that great lady Anna threw a welcome home party for we three and the girls we were going with at that time: Jane and Caroline Thompson and Josie Lorden. It was a wonderful and fitting end.

Sadly, the famous '36 Olds ended up in Anna Robert's barn and forgotten as the Korean War came along. We three ended up enlisting and serving in the United States Air Force until being honorably discharged.

I hope *Beacon* readers have enjoyed this series half as much as I have, as I went through my diary and relived those days. Also, I tip my hat to editor Charlie Darling for finding room for my scribbles and photos.



# *The End*

*Shortly after the trip was over, Walter's parents received this letter from Louis Conant, whose family the boys had stayed with.*

Tuscaloosa, Alabama, September 21, 1949

Dear Frank and Annie,

Two weeks ago three husky and healthy looking youngsters reached our place in their Oldsmobile after a fairly steady trip from California. We were glad to see them, and I guess they were kind of glad to settle down for a few days. We made them at home as well as we could, and tried to help them find jobs, with only fair success.

Tuscaloosa unfortunately has a lot of surplus labor at present, thanks to a strike at a big tire factory, and partial shutdowns in their plants, so jobs are not plentiful. Thanks to a good neighbor, however, who took an interest in the boys, they did get a profitable job unloading a carload of lumber and got some pleasant (?) work clearing a building lot close to a private swimming pool where they were welcome to go in. That job didn't pay very much, but did afford some money and a few good times.

They also tried picking cotton one day, but quit at noontime after a morning's hard work had netted less than 75¢ apiece.

The boys made a fine impression on the people they worked for, who were pleased with the way they buckled down to work and got a lot done. Such manner of work is uncommon in these parts....

We enjoyed the boys a lot, they are all so nice, and such a clean-cut bunch of fellows. Having boys in the family for several days was an especial treat to our girls,

who have remarked wistfully “we wish there were some boys like that in Tuscaloosa.”

For a change, our girls enjoyed helping with the dishes. With the three boys all pitching in on the dishes, our little kitchen was a busy place after each meal. It was also an interesting experience for G. to cook for boys with real appetites, in contrast to the appetites of her two daughters and a middle-aged husband who works in an office. She enjoyed it.

The boys really seemed to be in good condition. At first they appeared to have had enough wandering for a while, but I think that after the opportunity of settling down for a few days they felt rested and showed a renewed spirit.

You folks are to be congratulated on having such a fine son. We surely hope that Walter will be able to find something for work after his trip in which he will be interested. Whatever he does, however, we’ll bet that he tackles it with a will and makes good. You may also tell the other parents, if you see fit, that we think Harold and Skip are fine fellows. Such a trio from one small high school class is impressive....

Sincerely,

*Louis*