

## Milford Moments in Time

By Joyce M. Clark

Thanks to today's airplanes and cruise ships, newlyweds continue to travel further and further across the globe for their honeymoon adventures. According to the Travel Channel, the Caribbean is one of the most popular honeymoon destinations today.

Back in the 1940s, newlyweds tended to honeymoon a little closer to home due to gasoline prices and the fact that air travel was still in its infancy. Top destinations included Niagara Falls in New York, or a trip to the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania.

For Stella Heavner and her groom Chester, they chose a far more adventurous honeymoon which involved a trip to California. The drive out to California was pretty typical, as was their stay at a cousin's home for a week in Pasadena. It is their return trip to Michigan that tends to set them apart from the typical honeymooners.

Stella and Chester rode their bicycles home from California to Michigan! Their total bike ride back took 29 or 30 days with the last day's ride requiring 142 miles of pedaling.

Chester was the athletic type and met Stella on a double date back in the 1930s while both lived and worked in Detroit. During that date, they were not paired up with each other. The foursome road bikes round trip from Detroit to Franklin Village. After Chester dropped his date off, he took Stella home and talked with her for quite awhile. They really hit it off, and as they say in the movies, the rest is history.

Stella was a nurse who moved to Detroit from Ohio. She grew up on a farm and enjoyed the outdoors. For their honeymoon, Chester and Stella wanted to try bicycling across America. Chester managed to be the one to personally drive a brand new Pontiac Special Deluxe Coup to the buyer in California. This enabled Stella and Chester to pedal home.

For their return trip, Stella and Chester usually rode their bikes during the day and rented a small hotel room or cabin at night. Stella fondly remembers the ease of biking down the San Bernardino Mountains versus the initial ride up. She also recalls one of the cabins they rented in the desert during the day due to fatigue and heat. Stella and Chester took turns sleeping so the other one could shoe away the flying bugs and pests.

After the honeymoon came the children, at which point Stella's two boys joined in on the family adventures. A favorite camping spot for the family was the Adirondack Mountains in New York. During one camping trip in the late 1940s when son Alan was about three-years old and Herbert was about 6-months old, the family hiked up a smaller mountain during the day. Six-month old Herbert made it up the mountains in Stella's arms. At night Stella boiled the water Chester carried from across the campground so she could wash the diapers. Stella laughs when she thinks about all those diapers hanging around the campsite, sometimes from trees.



Some local adventures for Stella included canoeing with her husband from Commerce to Lake Erie in pursuit of property to begin their canoe rental business. After a long search, they ended up purchasing a cornfield in Milford in 1953 that abutted the Huron River. They were so proud to start their business with 11 canoes (8 new ones and 3 used ones). However, just as they were getting ready to open shop, a tornado blew through town and damaged all the canoes. Stella chuckles when she says the trailer holding the canoes did not suffer any damage, just the canoes. They were hoping to rent canoes, not *trailers* for canoes.

Alan runs the canoe rental business today while Herbert is a Chaplain and Colonel in the Michigan Army National Guard. Stella still keeps her hands in the family business and fondly remembers another adventure that kept her busy for over 50 years. She was a Sunday School Teacher at Highland Church of the Nazarene and loved working with everyone from pre-school to senior citizens.