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R.B. & I

—By Elmer M. Mills

R. B. Hensley was my playmate, and we lived catercornered across the street from each other just three blocks off the business center of Weatherford. The Main Street of America, U.S. Highway 66, ran along in front of our homes. It zigzagged through town, and I even recall it being nothing but a graded road all the way.

Both R. B. and I were about six years old. Most of the time I was at his house, or he was at mine; or we were out in the middle of the road playing in the sand pockets. Well, actually it was pure dirt. Traffic wasn't heavy; therefore, our mothers didn't have much to worry about. The time was 1912.

Roads during those days needed little maintenance—just some smoothing down, thus getting rid of the high centers so the axles of the cars wouldn't drag. Wagons and buggies seemed to be the chief vehicles of the highway, intermingled occasionally with those high-skirted

"The time was 1912"

automobiles. The cars back then, as compared with the ones today, ran on "stilts" in a manner of speaking. Otherwise, R. B. perhaps would never have lived to tell the story. However, he did live to tell it, that is until after he was grown. I hadn't seen him since we were kids when suddenly he, as a young man, popped up at our place, and I hardly knew him. I was still living at home, and he had made it a special point to see me on his way through. My, how we enjoyed our visit! I've never seen nor heard from him since.

Anyway, he and I had lots of fun playing on the "Main Street of America," and we picked the biggest dust pocket or chug hole in the road to do

our wallowing. That smooth, silky dust reminded me of water. Cars were scarce going by, but when they did they were a threat. Of course, our mothers couldn't keep an eye on us, and they got into the habit of letting us go. Anyone who has ever lived in the dustbowl country knows what I mean. The chug holes in the road between our houses got so big they made ideal "swimming" holes, so full of that smooth, silk-like dust. They were just right for guys like us to swim around in. We would dive in and paddle out, cutting all sorts of "die-does."

One day R. B. and I were really in a big way. Both of us were, I suppose, completely submerged when suddenly we heard a rumbling above.

Sticking up my head, I jumped in time, but R. B. was a little slow on the draw and got

"Ole 66... the Main Street of America"

caught in the middle. A Model T ran completely over him. Luckily, the car straddled him, rolling him over and over in the dirt. Up he jumped and all I could see was a streak of dirt shooting full length for home. It looked like a rocket taking off. I was soon in my own front yard looking and wondering.

After the driver of the car had left and R. B.'s crying had quieted down, that feller showed himself looking sound as a dollar—no scratches, no aches, and no pains. From then on, we, with the cooperation of our mothers, rehearsed the situation and decided definitely to close forever those dust pockets swimmings on "Ole' 66, the Main Street of America." ☛

(ELMER M. MILLS spent his early years in Weatherford. He now lives in Neosho, Missouri, where he entertains his children and grandchildren—as well as other WESTVIEW readers—with his anecdotes about frontier Western Oklahoma.)

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