

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Historical notes from the Big Butte Historical Society
Recollections of Charleen Brown

Not only has our winter weather changed but summer temperatures have changed as well. In the 40's and 50's, our summer temperatures usually topped out somewhere between 90 and 99 degrees. The valley would often record temperatures of 100 degrees or more but rarely did we see anything over 95 or 96 degrees here in Butte Falls. That probably explains why those early tourists left the valley to travel by train to this mountain town to enjoy the cooler temperatures.

As kids, we didn't notice that our temperatures were cooler than in the valley. Summer was summer and we spent our days hiking in the woods, fishing or swimming at several favorite spots along Big Butte Creek. About the only way to get to the creek was to hike down by way of one of the many trails on the north and east sides of town. There was a road to the falls but in those days it was barely passable. The trails were easy to go down but it was very steep climbing back up. By the time we reached the top, we would be hot all over again.

The Eagle Point Irrigation District diversion dam just below the falls was a favorite destination. Still today, this dam creates a pool about 2 to 3 feet deep so water can be diverted through the "head gate" into the irrigation canal. Some people liked to use the pool to float around on inner tubes but our favorite use was to throw sticks into the water so our dogs could swim out and retrieve them. This was great sport until one day one of us threw a stick a little too far and "Flash," the Rambo's dog, got caught in the swift water that was being pulled through the "head gate" into the canal. We all ran to the edge of the water, screaming for Flash to swim but the current was too strong and he was sucked under. In panic, we ran over to where the water entered the canal and waited for what seemed an eternity. We just knew that Flash was a goner. Then, suddenly, he popped up paddling frantically. We ran to where we could reach him and pulled him out. He coughed and sputtered a few times but was no worse for his ordeal. But, that scare was enough for us! That was the last time we ever threw sticks for the dogs at the diversion dam.

The canal just below the "head gate" was our favorite place to swim. The water was swift but not very deep so we could jump in and paddle along with the current for about 30 feet. Then we would grab onto the concrete side of the canal and pull ourselves out, run back up and do it again. Of course the water was so cold that after only a few times, we would have to lie down on the concrete to warm up in the sun. Sun screen? We never heard of it. Another favorite activity at the canal was to use inner tubes to float the canal from the flume to the water wheel. The water wheel is what keeps fish from going down the canal and was another place we would sometimes swim.

The swimming hole at the falls was used mainly by older kids. After the mill was removed, the falls was allowed to revert back to a more natural state and a pool about 15 feet deep formed at its base. Even today, the water swirls and the current is strong in places so only the older kids and a few of the bravest young ones dare to swim there.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - \$5.00 per household

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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