

## How We Beat the Great Depression



### Chapter 1 Finding Paradise

On the southwest corner of the United States there is a place that we called home for thirteen years. Mexico lay to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the west, with the Coronado Islands looming up fourteen miles from shore, and the sleepy little village of Imperial Beach with San Diego and Point Loma in the distance to the north. To the east, San Miguel and the Otay Mountains and the peaks of the Coastal Range made a beautiful, panoramic backdrop to a scene that to me is unforgettable.

To the local folk this marshy land was called the "Tijuana Sloughs" because the Tijuana river, originating in Mexico, ran through the town of Tijuana and across the International Border to the Pacific Ocean. The river flowed when, and if, there was enough rainfall in the mountains during the rainy season. Long after we moved from there, the name of the sloughs was changed to the Tijuana Estuary.

A salt works was located there before the big floods in the spring of 1916. Local historians say a fellow by the name of Charles Hatfield caused the flood with his famous rainmaking machine. The city of San Diego hired him to end a long drought, and soon afterward, the rains started to fall. It rained for weeks until almost everything in San Diego was flooded or washed away. By the time we move to the sloughs, the only things left to mark the salt works site were old dikes that bordered the evaporation ponds. No one was ever sure if Charles Hatfield really caused the floods, but he was chased out of town and never paid for his services just the same.

This area was one of the few Spanish Land Grants, and was for many years still in the possession of the original family. Then, as now, a large part of it is salt marsh and not suitable for human habitation, except for a small portion on the inland side and the ocean side. The pattern the sloughs take can roughly be compared to the right hand outstretched, with the wrist representing the mouth or channel through which the tides come and go and runoff from the rains finds its way to the ocean.

The road into this place was not much better than a cow trail. Deep chuckholes and ruts made it all but impassable during the winter. The first few hundred yards were used for a dumping ground, so naturally, everyone called it the Dump Road. It was here that we obtained much of our housekeeping equipment.

We found this spot while living in sight of it at Imperial Beach, and the yen to fish was so strong that we braved the chuckholes, ruts and mud to get to it. We took a lunch and stayed the day, or at least until the fish quit biting.

## Chapter 2 Deciding To Stay

When spring arrived and wild flowers bloomed over the fields, we were attracted more than ever to this spot. The cacti, poppies, the dainty baby blue eyes, yellow buttercups, and a pink low-growing flower that I never could find the name of, made a beautiful variegated carpet. For a background there were the taller flowers with pinkish white blooms, clumps of yellow blooming sour grass and the purple lupine with its sweet cloying perfume. The Indian paintbrush and shooting stars all combined in a riot of color.

For a place so far away from the real desert there were many desert like plants and animals. There were the ever-present gophers with their endless maze of underground tunnels, trapdoor spiders, pack rats, field mice, and the rattle, king and gopher snakes. There were wildcats, coyotes, jack rabbits, roadrunners, hawks, meadow larks, jays, mockingbirds, and cute little screech owls perched on a cactus waiting for an unwary field mouse to catch for his dinner. Some of the other birds were the morning doves, the quail, and once a year, when a certain thorny bush had red berries, a flock of wild canaries. Another once a year occurrence was the visit of the swallows on their way north. Hundreds of them stopped over at the sloughs a week in advance of their arrival at San Juan Capistrano. They stayed a few days to feed and rest then went on their way to their destination. We enjoyed watching them fly about so gracefully.

I was struck with the odd contrasts of things at the sloughs. The song of the mockingbird and morning dove mingled with the squawk of the sea gull and the hysterical cry of the loon. The awkward flight of the pelican and the graceful swoop and slide of the white crane offered another contrast. Beach verbena and ice plant grew alongside geraniums and honeysuckle. It was a place like no other.

After talking and mulling it over in our minds, we decided to put up a tent house by the slough and camp out for the summer. We could save a few months rent at any rate. The country was suffering from the well-known economic troubles of the Great Depression when unemployment was high and the future looked dim. Like most everyone, we too, were having our troubles of the financial variety.

We consisted of my husband, Bill, daughter, Jane, ten months old, and a two-year old boy who we were caring for temporarily, and myself. Had I been able

to look into the future and see the trouble that we were to encounter while living there and rearing the "Lucky Seven," that came to live permanently with us, I believe my heart would have failed. But now that it is all in the past, and it can be seen as an overall picture, it really was a good life in spite of the hectic, and sometimes hapless, adventures. There were serene times, too, when all seemed to be well with the world and God. I don't regret it for a minute, but on the other hand, it wouldn't bear reliving. But to get on with the story . . .

We ordered a large tarpaulin from a mail order house, and while awaiting its arrival, Bill bought lumber to construct a frame to stretch the tarp over to make the tent house. Frank Laury, who was living at the sloughs in his homemade house car at the time, helped us wonderfully with the tent house. As time passed, he became our right-hand man and made many suggestions to make our lives more comfortable and convenient.

The only household goods we owned were a baby crib and mattress, bedding, an alarm clock, a radio, an electric sewing machine, and odds and ends, so Mr. Laury helped us contrive substitutes until we could get the real thing. He made a cook stove that doubled for heat in the winter from an old discarded car gas tank by cutting a hole for the chimney at one end and making a door at the other end. The hinges were made of the same piece of tin. He never failed to amaze us with his homemade inventions. The wall at the far end of the tent house was insulated with tin and a sheet of asbestos, and the stove was fastened to it. The front of the stove was supported by a single leg that was a piece of iron from a discarded buggy top. The chimney was run out and up the side of the house. Our makeshift stove proved to be as good as the conventional type, and wood to burn in it was plentiful since the tide brought some in every day. We had only to go out and gather it and break it up into useable lengths.

There was no gas, running water or electricity, of course, so the first thing we bought in the way of household furnishings was a kerosene lamp for our only illumination. It's feeble light was doubled by a reflector at the back, and even then, it was not too bright. It was my daily chore to fill it with kerosene, trim the wick and polish the globe, so that it would give the maximum of light.

Housekeeping was a cinch in some ways since the floor was sand, and therefore, no scrubbing or sweeping was required. There was very little dusting to be done and no bathroom to scrub. To take the place of modern plumbing, there was a "path" to the outhouse and the old Montgomery Ward catalog that served both for hygienic purposes and for reading matter.

The door of this crude, tin structure was held on by canvas hinges that sagged, and one had to struggle to open and close it. Having no roof, it was open to the sky. This had its advantages as the sun and the elements, plus a bucket

of sand and a small shovel, kept the interior purified to a certain extent. On the other hand, it wasn't so good in rainy weather. The seat was made of two boards with an intervening space between and the occupant had to be careful to balance himself on the front edge.

An elderly man, who with his family camped weekends at the slough, nearly came to grief out there one day. He had just come in tired from a fishing trip on the beach and was the worse from too much beer. He went to the "comfort station," as some call it. His wife had dinner ready and was waiting for him to put in an appearance, but he didn't come. Finally, after waiting about half an hour, she decided to go out and see what was keeping him. She called and got no answer, so she went closer, opened the door and looked in. There he was, stretched out on the seat, sound asleep and snoring. He never heard the last of it. The incident was a conversation piece for some time to come.

We never cared much for that contrivance, so we built one of our own and let the public use the old one. On our beach combing trips we found signs that drifted in from Navy ships with slogans like "Contaminated Water" and "No Loitering" that we nailed to the side. Many a customer got a big laugh out of it.

For the Saturday night absolution, we used a galvanized tub that doubled for the family laundry tub. All the water we used had to be hauled in from a filling station about two miles away. We paid a flat rate of one dollar per month. We bought three five-gallon galvanized cans with spouts for water containers. They were ideal for keeping the water fresh and clean for drinking and cooking. For the laundry and baths, water was stored in kegs that came in on the tides.

We saved all the barrels we could find. When one was sighted out on the water, Bill would row out after it if it did not show an inclination of coming ashore. They were very useful to store a variety of articles in. I made a stool out of one by padding one end with a May West life jacket that had also drifted in and tacking a ruffle around the top. Our furniture was purely functional, but also comfortable.

A piece of furniture that served as a sofa was made from an old discarded car seat. Our bed was a coil-spring bedsprings laid onto a homemade frame and nailed to the frame of the tent house. The one and only table, also nailed to the tent frame, served as our work and eating area and for bathing the babies and playing cards. Above the table there were several shelves that held about everything from dishes to fish hooks. To the left of the table was the substitute ice box, a homemade cooler made from a large oblong box that had also floated in on the tide. Three shelves were made in grate fashion with openings. There were screens over the bottom and top to permit the free circulation of cool, ocean air, and to keep out bugs and other crawling wild life.

And, of course, there was a door for the front opening that was set flush with the tent wall. Here again Frank Laury's inventiveness came in handy in making a spring latch for the cooler door.

Regular beach combing trips kept us in firewood, boxes and building materials, and kegs and barrels. If there wasn't an immediate use for the items, they were stacked in the backyard until there were enough to make a major improvement on the tent house. Gradually, the canvas sides were filled in with wood, as by this time, we had decided to stay on, indefinitely. The place was really getting into our blood.

### Chapter 3 Going Into Business

As spring advanced, and the rains let up, people started coming to the beach and sloughs to fish, some bringing boats along. Gradually, we became acquainted with the visitors, and since we were living there, they asked us to watch their boats for a fee. Bill made a deal to have the use of the boats when they were not using them, and that was the beginning of our business. As other visitors brought their boats, it wasn't very long before the bank of the slough was lined with boats of all sizes and shapes, from the tiny one-seated kayak to the large eleven-passenger variety. As the need grew, we bought a few boats, second-hand of course, and very cheap.

Since bait was in demand too, we decided to offer it for sale. After all, while we were saving money on rent, why not earn some? We wouldn't get rich selling bait, but it would help keep the wolf away from the door a little while longer. Mr. Laury made a clam spear for Bill from a straightened out coil from an old bed springs and a spoon filed down to a spear and soldered onto it. He added a handmade wooden handle for easier manipulation. Frank also took Bill out to the clam beds to show him the clam spearing technique since the clams had to be speared at low tide, and he had to get the whole day's supply.

For catching live bait, a wire minnow trap was made. Live bait collecting was tedious work since the minnows did not voluntarily choose to go into the wire trap. In this event a small mesh net had to be used. Keeping the bait fresh and alive was another problem. This was solved by using an old ten-gallon milk can to hold the bait with a cable and pulley device connected from the bank to the bottom of the slough. The can was filled with stones for weight with one end of a heavy wire cable attached to it. It was placed in the water, and the other end of the cable was fastened securely to a strong post on the bank.

As we soon found out, there were certain drawbacks to this method. Seaweed and kelp coming in on the tides were prone to head for the cable and drape itself over it, and this prevented us from drawing in the bait box. In

order to free it, someone had to row out in a light boat to cut away the kelp. After rough seas the kelp and seaweed were unusually bad, and rather than to risk losing the whole rig, Bill had to go out and clear it off several times during the incoming and outgoing tides. Bill soon became adept at coaxing the clams out of their holes, catching minnows, and handling the boats and keeping them in repair. That first summer business boomed as word got around among fishermen that boats and bait were now available in the sloughs at all times.

When school let out for the summer vacation, it seemed that everyone headed for the old swimming hole. The place was fairly crawling and jumping with small fry bent on making up for the last nine months of enforced education. Cars full of kids, piled high with tents, grub, parents and all the other odds and ends necessary for a vacation, began to arrive. Where before we heard only the lap of the water on the bank, the roar of the surf and the noise of the sea gulls, the air now reverberated with the shrill squeals of girls, the happy shouts of boys, and the pounding heels of both, hurrying to get to the water without delay.

#### Chapter 4 Our First Busy Summer

Bill was so busy getting bait and tending customers that he couldn't find the time to go to the barbershop for a haircut. His hair was getting so long that it was beginning to curl, and something drastic had to be done. So early one morning right after breakfast, I took the scissors and comb in hand and went to work. I felt reckless and snipped away at his hair as if I had been doing it all my life. It was far from looking like a barbershop job, but he was safe from being caught by the dogcatcher or being presented with a violin. That first haircut was a big mistake, for I was stuck with the job from then on. I saved coupons from evaporated milk can labels and redeemed them for hand operated hair clippers that gave a more professional touch.

Busy with customers, Bill found it hard to find time to eat noon meals. One Sunday it was three o'clock before he had a chance to eat his dinner. By then he was so exhausted, he could not relish it. After that, I had dinner ready at eleven sharp, and most of the time, he had a chance to eat without being interrupted by a customer or someone just wanting to get free information on fishing.

We were so busy because in those hard times a trip to the sloughs was economical recreation for a family. With hand lines and a few dozen clams, they would catch enough fish to pay for the bait and boat and have a wonderful time to boot.

As summer advanced, the tent became too warm to use the gas tank stove

for cooking, so we bought a Coleman camp stove and placed it on a large box that had drifted in on the tide. A curtain was hung across the front and shelves were made in it for my slowly growing supply of cooking utensils, obtained usually through evaporated milk coupons. Starting housekeeping from scratch was in a way great adventure and a challenge to my ingenuity. For more than once I was faced with cooking problems.

One day I had a hankering for some cake. Since I had only one pan suitable to bake it in and no bowl for mixing, I mixed it up in the pan first, then poured the batter into two soup dishes. Then I washed the pan, greased and floured it and poured the batter back in. I baked it in a tiny oven that sat on the gasoline tank stove. Though it was baked under adverse conditions, it turned out surprisingly well.

## Chapter 5 A Growing Family

Came the end of school vacation, and the majority of our customers left. The place was almost quiet again, except for the roar of the surf, the lap of the water on the slough banks, and the sea gull's squawks. A mockingbird perched on the high radio antenna pole poured his heart out to his little world. As if someone had pushed a button or turned a knob, the weather changed. A dry east wind from the desert began to blow, the atmosphere became crystal clear, and the sun made a dry heat. A view of the mountains with their many folds could be seen with the change of the sun's position. The change of wind direction drove the sound of the breakers away, and now there was only a faint roar. The dry hot winds blowing far out to sea made peculiar patterns of the Coronado Islands. A mirage made them appear to float in the sky. Ships passing through were also caught in the mirage, and the ocean looked like a sheet of glass.

Now that living was on the order calm, we had time to do some fishing and basking in the sun on our own little beach or go rowing about the sloughs, but after a week or so of rest our thoughts were turned to getting ready for the coming winter. As it is with everyone, we were always planning improvements for the house, and since we were expecting an addition to the family, and we were crowded in the 9' x 16' tent, it was necessary that we build a bedroom on to the south end of the tent house. Soon the still air was rent with the rasp of the saw and the pounding of the hammer as little by little the room took shape.

It was built of the driftwood that we had laid aside, and the roof and sides were covered with tarpaper to make it weather tight and warm. The window was made to slide open and shut, and the canvas roof of the tent part of the

house was water-proofed with a mixture of turpentine and melted paraffin wax, applied with a paint brush. A floor of sorts was laid using boards that had floated in. The boards were uneven and of all sizes, but it was an improvement, and we were off the ground at last.

A honeysuckle vine that climbed up on the front porch was now climbing over a lath house we had put up with two benches inside, as a place to sit and relax. The benches were never sat on because the honeybees were always buzzing around the blossoms.

When there was no one about, I liked to putter around with hammer and saw, making shelves at first, until one day, I really got brave and made a highchair for Jane. After that amateurish effort, I took a large Lucky Strike cigarette box that we found on the beach and lined it with cloth. I made a hinged cover for a chest for blankets and storage. Then after tasting success of a sort, I tried my luck at making a chest of drawers from four saltwater soapboxes and several nice pieces of planed lumber. Believe it or not, it hung together for quite a few years. The knobs were spools sawed in half and screwed onto the drawers. Then it was given a coat or two of red paint that was found on one of our beach combing trips.

By February there was so much rain that we were beginning to wonder if it would ever let up. It had rained nearly every day up until the 25th, and a new baby was due any day. We had decided to have the baby at home and made arrangements well in advance. We were speculating whether the car would start when the time came for Bill to go after the doctor and the nurse. The 26th of February dawned clear and warm. It was a day to remember. I did my walking up and down the road that paralleled the north slough. The ground on each side was beautifully carpeted with dainty blue and pink flowers. I thought Mother Nature was really smiling to put on such a show, and I enjoyed it in spite of the labor pains.

Before Bill left to get the doctor and nurse, he set one of the five-gallon water cans on the stove to boil for the doctor's use. When the doctor arrived, he was startled at the crude method and doubted that it was sterile. I told him that if it wasn't sterile now, it never would be after the hard boiling it got. He answered back, "Well, after all, it's you that will suffer if it isn't sterile." While he was waiting for me to get down to business, he sat by the slough and fished until the stork flapped his wings. He said that he had done some odd things while waiting for the stork, but this was the first time he had ever fished.

Margaret was born at 3:05 p.m., howling mad and hungry. She weighed eight pounds, fourteen ounces, according to the fish scales. She had very little hair for the first six months, but then, her blond, curly hair began to grow. Her

eyes decided to be blue, which made me very happy.

Janie was very excited about the new baby and helped to take care of her by fetching and carrying diapers, powder, pins, bottles and a dozen other things. I'm glad to say there wasn't a hint of jealousy between them.

## Chapter 6 Life Goes On--Especially the Laundry

Now that we had a roof with eaves, we were able to catch the rainwater that ran off the roof into tubs and barrels. It saved a few trips out to haul water for washing clothes during the winter months. The soft water was excellent for shampoos and baths, and the laundry was easier to do.

At first, the laundry was done by hand, with Bill doing the heavy part and I the sorting, hanging, and rinsing. The water was heated in our combination bath-wash tub that was placed on a large version of what was called a Portuguese stove. This was made from an old discarded tub that was found in the dump. With a chisel and hammer a large circular hole was cut out of the bottom, and another opening, about a foot square, cut from the side, through which a fire was built. Here any length of wood could be shoved in. A smaller opening about four inches square was cut in the opposite side from the "door" at the bottom edge in order to make a cross draft. The tub would then be turned upside down in a suitable location, and the wash tub placed on it for our purposes.

The Portuguese stove was originally invented by fishermen who used it to keep their soup hot while fishing. They used a bucket for the fire-box and set a kettle on top. The idea served us well at laundry time when around ten gallons of water, preferably rain water, was emptied into it and a good hot fire built under it.

The next operation was a bar of laundry soap that was thinly shaved into the water. All was now ready for the first tub of clothes that were dumped in and agitated with a suction plunger. After a decent interval they were lifted out with an old broom handle, let drain off for a while, then piece by piece run through two rinse waters, wringing by hand. When the wash tub needed replenishing, the rinse water was used until the wash was finished.

There were a couple of rainy spells that were so bad that we didn't have a chance to do the wash because our wash place was out in the open, so we hung the clothes out dirty. The rains continued to come down intermittently for several days and nights accompanied with gusty winds, drenching and whipping the clothes on the line. When the storm finally passed and things got dry, I took the clothes off the line and buried my nose in each piece to see if they were clean. Each one smelled as sweet as if they had been run through suds,

and the white articles were as white as the driven snow on the mountaintops that had fallen with the storm.

After our first big storms, we started watching the sea gulls to get our weather forecast. Frank Laury said that if the gulls left the ground and circled around and around, climbing higher and higher, until they were out of sight, it was a sign that a big storm was blowing in. We depended on the gulls because the official weather forecast didn't help us much. The most vicious storms came in from the south, and there were no weather stations in that direction from which to get weather news. The storms we had were usually preceded by three days of south wind, so if the south winds came up, both of us got busy on the wash.

Another family, the Littles, built a cabin near us. They had a girl and a boy, and sometimes, friends or brothers and sisters out for the weekends. They became good friends. They had several windows left over from their building project, so we bought them with the idea of building another room onto the west side of the original tent section. It was by now solid wood with tar paper on the outside to keep out the cold wind. The new room was used for a kitchen and a dining and living room. The tent room became the bedroom, and with two double beds and a crib, it was pretty crowded. In order to sweep under the bed next to the front door, I had to stand outside the door on the front porch and reach in to get the broom under the bed. I had to laugh myself at the weird stance and wondered if it ever happened to other housewives. I always looked around to be sure no one would see me in that position.

In the new room there were three windows in a row that looked out to the west and gave a wonderful view of the slough and ocean. There was a door to the outside and a door on the north end of the room, also. There were now four entrances to the house.

To take advantage of the view the dining table was placed in front of the windows. Later, we bought a wicker table and chair set that gave the room a definite lift. The windows had brick red Jasper drapes and linoleum on the floor. My worktable was a thick, brassbound piece of plywood, painted red. It was nailed to the wall, then above it were two roomy shelves for the dishes. The room was very cheerful and sunny.

We loaned out many things to people that they forgot to bring back or lost. We helped them as much as we could within reason, but we drew the line when one party wanted to borrow our only table for their picnic. Someone else wanted to borrow our tin tub. We couldn't do without our only bath and wash tub. Besides, these people lived just a short distance away, so they could go home and get their baths.

We kept a good stock of groceries on hand all the time. We bought canned

goods by the case, and bought the bulk of our supplies once a month, as it was difficult to get away at times to go to the store. I made our own bread most of the time, so that cut down on the trips out. We bought an oil stove with a large oven that baked six loaves of bread at a time. Before the Littles built their cabin, they camped out on the beach for several weeks, and they took two loaves every time I baked. When the bread was ready, I hung a dishtowel on a post for a signal, and they would race to their boat and row across the water to pick it up.

## Chapter 7 The Oil-Drilling Venture

Early one morning we were startled to hear peculiar noises coming from over the hill. We heard big trucks snorting around, the slam of heavy timbers, the pounding of hammers, rasps of saws and the loud shouting of men. We wondered what could be going on, so Bill walked to the top of the hill to investigate. When he came back, he reported that someone was building something, although he couldn't tell just what. Later on that day, the thing could be seen from our tent. It looked like an oil well derrick, and that is just what it was.

To quote a newspaper article from 1955 about oil drilling in San Diego, "Perhaps the best known of these efforts was a wildcat venture in the mid 1930's in the Tijuana river valley about a mile north of the international line. The venture was a solid one supported by funds raised by fifty San Diego businessmen, who produced enough capital to sink a test hole. This well went to just below 6,000 feet before the explorers abandoned the project."

Along with the oil drilling came the land salesmen who wanted to sell lots with the promise of oil on the land as a sale's pitch. After the oil drilling venture failed, it wasn't long before the real estate scheme collapsed, as well. After hearing the noise of the machinery day and night for months, the silence was deafening. Still the project was a blessing in disguise for us because the good dirt road remained that had been constructed to bring prospective customers out to see the lots.

Before the oil drilling adventure all that land had been used for cattle range, so now again the dairy cattle moved in and resumed their grazing, making a pastoral scene to add to the strange contrasts that we observed while living there.

Since a large sum of money was invested in the equipment, the oil derrick, and the now silent machinery, was watched over by a young man until it could be hauled away. He passed the time away by reading, shooting rabbits and visiting us nearly every day. Jane said he looked like a big black spider in his black

denim suit coming up over the hill toward our house, with his long skinny legs striding along, making steps twice as long as an ordinary person.

Disease was common in the wild rabbits then, and the young man shot one that was evidently, newly infected. While he was skinning it, his knife slipped and cut his finger, and in a few days, he was a very sick lad. He spent a few weeks in a hospital, then still being weak and needing care, he stayed with us for awhile. The disease was diagnosed as tularemia. When he was able to get about and do his own cooking, he returned to the oil derrick.

It was shortly after he returned to the job that he shot a large bobcat prowling near the derrick. He brought it down to show us, and Bill took a picture of me holding Ann beside it, for comparison and for posterity. We missed him when he quit the job later on. I imagine prowling bobcats, skunks and coyotes influenced his decision.

He was replaced by a middle aged couple who were good company for us during the next winter with the long evenings. We visited back and forth and played cards, which livened up the evenings quite a bit. She would bake a loaf cake to bring down on her little camp oven that invariably, burned the bottom of the cake, and I would make coffee to drink with it. She and I had a lot in common in the fact that our housekeeping was of a primitive nature.

After a while all of the machinery except the tall oil derrick was removed, and it was no longer necessary for a watchman to be kept there. Our friends moved on. It was a good thing, too, for not long after they left, during a spell of high east winds, the whole works was blown over with a rending, splintering crash. And so passed another "wildcat" oil well venture.

## Chapter 8 Winter At the Beach and the First Floods

Everything was shipshape before the winter rains began. The winds blew cold and wet, but we were comfortable in our tent house with the gasoline-tank stove keeping it cozy warm. In fact, it became too efficient and the fire had to be doused sometimes. The rain beating down on the canvas roof was deafening, and often the wind blew it up and down, slapping and tugging at it so hard that I found myself holding my breath, fearful that surely the next gust of wind would blow it off, but it never did.

It was this first winter, after a storm such as the one above, that I watched a freighter battle the elements like a cork on the sea. The ocean was whipped to a fury by first, a strong south wind that came with the rain, then as it cleared, a brisk cold wind that started blowing from the north. This unfortunate freighter was tossed about unmercifully by the heaving ocean. For

an instant it was riding on the crest of a swell with stern and prow free of the water and screw spinning wildly, throwing spray high in the air. The next instant, the ship fell into the trough of the wave with the smokestacks barely showing above the white caps. I watched as the captain made several tries to pass the Coronado Islands, but as soon as the ship hit a certain spot, it was outdone by the wind. Each time it was driven nearer the rocky shore of the Mexican beach where the breakers were dashing against the cliffs to an unbelievable height. Finally, after the third or fourth try, the ship turned around and disappeared over the horizon from whence it came. I was relieved to see that the captain made that decision because I was freezing out there in that cold wind, but I wasn't going to leave that ship to battle those waves alone and be forever in doubt as to what had happened.

Don't let the Chamber of Commerce spoof you into believing it never gets cold here in California. Oh yes, it's warm in the sun out of the wind in the winter months, but during a rain storm the mountain tops get a heavy blanket of snow. When that storm is spent and the clouds that are left are blown away by a brisk north wind, it is plenty cold. At night the north winds let up, then start blowing from the east, bringing dry, cold air, down the Tijuana Valley and out over the ocean.

Every night we heard the sounds of the San Diego & Eastern Railroad trains flying down the mountain passes miles back in the Mexican mountains. Its shrill whistle and the rumble of the train echoed and re-echoed back and forth down the valley. The nearer it came, the louder it grew, until you would think surely, it was just outside the tent. Jane was frightened and thought that it was coming right through the tent. We had to do some good explaining before she was convinced that it was impossible for it to come down to the sloughs.

Another common smell in those months was the very pungent odor of skunk wafting to our quivering nostrils on the same crisp east wind. On many a night it was so strong that we were nearly overcome. We weren't the only ones who called the sloughs home.

Since we were so close to Mexico, with the right weather conditions in the early morning, we could hear the drums in Tijuana played for the changing of the guards at the city bastille or jail. We also heard many other sounds like gun shots, firecrackers, car horns and ringing bells.

In December we experienced our first flood. Frank Laury warned us of what was going to happen, so we moved the household articles that might be ruined by the high water, and ourselves, to a friend's house for several days until the water went down.

The flood left a layer of muck that was offensive, to say the least, as the flood washed out every dairy, pig pen, corral and out-house from Tijuana, San

Ysidro and the river bottom. The floor of our tent house had to be washed down with Lysol disinfectant and scrubbed repeatedly. The combined odors were awful, and I tried burning coffee grounds on the stove, hoping that it would overcome the smell, but it didn't help much.

Our new bait business had a set back because all the clams were washed out to the ocean by the flood. It was a long time before they were established again, so Bill had to get bait clams in San Diego bay for the customers to use. The rain gradually washed away the muck from the ground outside, and little by little, with lots of fire in the stove and hard work, living got back to normal again. This flooding was a disillusioning experience, but when the rains stopped and the wild flowers burst into bloom with the first warm spell, all was forgotten, at least until the next time the mouth was closed by a sand bar. The second time we were flooded out, we moved in with a neighbor about a mile east of us and beyond the air field located nearby. The rain had been coming down in torrents and the river was running high, so as usual, the mouth of the slough was closed again.

By the time the water was high enough to flow over the top of sandbar at the mouth, there was about a foot of water in the tent house. Bill took Jane's little boat up on high ground and anchored it, so he could use it to go back and forth to the tent. He had a friend with him when he went back the first time. The water was high enough to row up to the tent door, where he tied the boat to the door hasp. Just as he was about to go through the door, his friend looked up over Bill's head and saw a full-grown rattlesnake hanging onto a small ledge. The reptile was dispatched in a hurry. They carefully eased into the tent, and there on the floor was another rattler. Repeating the former procedure, they walked into the bedroom, and there lay another bigger one on the mattress, coiled and ready for action. He said by that time, he'd had enough. If there were any more, they could have the place. It was several days before the floors dried out enough to go back to clean up the mess. Bill used some salt water to clean the worst off the floor, then took water he hauled in from the filling station and dumped in a generous amount of Lysol to finish the job. When the floor dried up, we moved back, and we didn't see any more wild life in the tent, thankfully.

Floods became a part of life throughout the years we lived at the sloughs. Sometimes, we thought the floods were coming, and they never happened. Other times, we were taken by surprise. Anyway, we forgot about them when springtime came and the fields again were bright with wild flowers. The children, cats, the dog and I went for walks up the road and around the fields, picking flowers and gathering gobs of mushrooms that we never had the nerve to eat. The walks were adventures enjoyed by all of us.

After these storms had spent their fury, we would pile in the largest boat and row over to the beach to see what the storm had blown in. The sky would be a sparkling blue, dotted with fleecy clouds scudding across as a fresh breeze blew from the north. The water was deep blue and still choppy from the storm. The sea gulls returned to the beach to feed and play their game of flying off en masse, then landing again, as if they were playing "last one down is a rotten egg."

We never knew what we would find on the beach, but we very seldom returned empty handed. There were Navy mops, scrub brushes, brooms, dust brushes, wooden grates, May West life jackets, pencils, paint and varnish to name a few of the small and frequent articles. Of course, we found tons and tons of seaweed, kelp and garbage that we couldn't use.

One time a storm brought in a case of Vienna sausage in two-pound tins with other loose cans scattered along the beach. At the same time we found a large tin of ship's biscuits in perfect condition. I opened a can of sausages and heated it for our lunch when we got home, and they were enjoyed very much.

One of our acquaintances, who came to the sloughs to net mullet, visited soon after we made that fabulous find. Since he was always generous with his mullet, we gave him several cans of the sausage and some ship's biscuits, too. I saw his wife some time later, and she said that he wouldn't eat the sausages until he tried them out first on his cat and dog.

Soon after the rains let up, we started on another room for the new addition to the family we were expecting in May. We did some remodeling to the garage. It was attached to the west side of the house. We put a floor in it and had three windows facing west. It was a nice room that we used for a sitting room because it gave a good view of the sloughs, the ocean and beach.

Dorothy was born May 10, 1934, and as with Ann, she was born at home with the same doctor in attendance. He must have enjoyed his fishing when Ann was born because he sat out by the slough again and fished until the nurse called him to do the honors. The delivery was normal and uneventful. In other words, it was a howling success.

A different woman came along to do the necessary duties of a nurse, but she was very capable, and a good cook and housekeeper. She was also very good with Dorothy who was a good baby. Unlike a majority of newborns, she didn't turn night into day. That was something new to us since both Jane and Ann seemed to have their days and nights reversed.

The weather was fine, and the following Sunday after Dorothy was born, we had a good number of boating and fishing customers. Nearly every one came in to see me and the new baby and wish us well and to give candy to Jane and Ann. It was a wonderful day, until Jane appeared at the door and said, "Daddy, I got

a boat load of wood for you."

"What? Where did you get it?"

"On the beach," was her innocent answer.

(Time out here to get our hearts down where they belonged.)

The tide was high and rough, and in that shallow little boat of hers, it would have been very difficult to row to the beach side. Bill talked to some men fishing on the bank, and they said that they saw her with a sizeable load of driftwood from the beach. The Littles saw Jane rowing across the rough water from the south side of the channel. They ran to their boat and were ready to jump in if she had any trouble, but she made it across all right. They rowed along by her boat until she got back home. They said the swells were so deep sometimes that she and the boat were hidden from sight. Greatly relieved that she was all right, we did some explaining to her as to why she shouldn't do these things without telling us first.

The weather was fairly nice during the holidays except for cold winds from the snowclad mountains to the east. The river was still running swift and muddy out to the ocean, making ominous rushing sounds, but we thought the worst was over. We were proven wrong when another storm, or the same one, came back for an encore. The house was already surrounded with water, and the surf was so high and rough this time that we were afraid it would damage the house when the tide was at its peak. We decided to move the girls to higher ground.

Dorothy and Ann were down with the chicken pox, so we wrapped them in warm blankets and carried them out. The other girls followed and would stay with the babies until the tide turned and went down far enough that we would no longer be in danger. Our car was in a garage getting work done on it, otherwise we would have been sitting out the emergency in it. Well, as it sometimes happen when you plan for an emergency, it doesn't happen. The tide came and went without damage, so back to the warm house we went. I kept my fingers crossed, hoping the cold and damp wouldn't cause Dorothy and Ann to develop complications. I'm glad to say they recovered from their siege of chicken pox very nicely.

## Chapter 9 The Tidal Wave

By now we were not surprised by anything weather wise. A new storm blew in with high winds and torrential rain. The ocean was whipped to a fury and more water was added to the still swollen river. We sensed trouble, and the Littles and Halls were notified of the situation. Mr. Hall came down, bringing a huge stack of burlap bags to make a sandbag breakwater for the front of their cabin.

He went to San Diego to see if he could get a big tent for us to move our furniture, bedding and food into during the emergency and came back with a tent large enough for a camp meeting. He and Bill put it up, back far enough, they thought, that the high water wouldn't reach. All of us worked like beavers moving the things into the tent between showers all day. Since the worst was yet to come, we decided to move everything out of the house, except the beds and food and dishes for breakfast. We would sleep there and get up early, eat breakfast and get out before the tide started to come in at about ten a.m.

We had just finished moving things to the tent, when the rain began to come down in buckets. It was raining so hard that the emergency tent was swaying and buckling from the terrible onslaught of the wind and rain. The noise on the house roof was so loud! Never have I seen such a storm. That evening our car was brought back from the garage, so at least we had that.

The alarm clock was set to go off at six the next morning, so we went to bed early. The tide would be low, and we could eat breakfast and move out the rest of our belongings before the tide came in again at ten o'clock.

The alarm went off, and I awoke the girls and put on the coffee pot, and water in a pan to cook cereal while Bill started a fire in the heater. Jane and Ann were old enough to dress themselves, but Dorothy and Rosalie had to have some help. Before I started to dress them, the cereal was cooking and the coffee dripping. I stood each one on a chair by the front window in the living room to dress them where I could keep an eye on the tide. In fact, there was almost no water at all in the slough, and it was time for the tide to be coming in, too. It usually comes in gradually, but what happened that morning was like the Bay of Fundy, for all of a sudden, it came tumbling in. It filled the slough from bank to bank and continued to rise with one continuous heave. I looked away for an instant to pick up Rosalie's dress, and hearing a slap against the house, I looked out the window. There, not a foot and half away, was a sheet of brown water shooting straight up in front of us. The girls grabbed me, and I snatched them up and carried them to the kitchen where the others were getting breakfast on the table and gave the alarm.

All of us looked out the dining room window and watched the water sweeping across the yard and up the road. The shed that the car was in parted the water, and the car, and even the ground, luckily, didn't get wet. The water rushed out in a few minutes, even down to the original low tide mark, which baffled us.

We nervously ate our breakfast, while Bill went out to start the car to get it warm. Before we left, another tidal wave came in and went out in the same way. We ran for higher ground. We were a sorry sight standing up there in the middle of the road watching the tide rip the boards off the fence and toss the

boats around like so many corks. Bill was dashing around in his hip boots with a gaff hook catching the boats and dragging them up as far as he could and anchoring them securely.

Between tidal waves he tried to start the car, and finally succeeded in driving it up to where we were standing. All of us climbed in, including the cat and dog. We watched the tide tear down our little lath house with the honeysuckle over it, and wash it away up onto the salt marsh. The car shed started to break up and wash away, along with fishing gear and boat supplies.

The breakwater in front of the Hall's cabin was of little protection, as the water lifted the sand bags almost as high as the roof, and moved them all away from their place in front of the cabin.

The tent with all our possessions in it had several inches of water, so I put on Bill's knee-high boots, and sloshed around, stacking things to keep them dry. The mattresses and bedding we placed high on boxes as they were brought from the house. Clothing had to be kept dry and lunch cooked. The oil stove was set on boards in the water, and the cans of drinking and cooking water set on boxes. It was more precious now, and we had to conserve it as much as possible, since we were cut off from going out to get more.

After lunch was over, I was so exhausted that I sank into my easy chair to rest for a spell. I happened to look down at the seat, and under the right armrest I saw an enormous black widow spider. I suddenly decided that I didn't need any more rest. I grabbed the first likely weapon and dispatched it without delay.

We decided the tent was much too drafty and damp to sleep in, so we got in touch with one of our good neighbors and made arrangements to stay in their house until we got things under control again.

When we returned to see the house, we were sickened by the sight that met our eyes. The garage was swept completely away, and a big hole was left where it had been. The little beach to the front and side of the house that was white and level with sand was now a gaping black hole full of rocks and hard pan. The kitchen was about to fall off from the main part of the house and was hanging over what was now a small cliff. The house was broken into three sections with the little front porch hanging crazily to the house with strings of kelp draped over it. The whole house was pushed off the foundation and back four feet. The sand had drifted up even with the sill of the French windows, and the geraniums growing there were all but covered with sand.

Our house got the worst of the storm this time, but our neighbor's houses were pushed off their foundations, too. Their front porches and fences were wrecked, and sand piled high around their outhouse, back porch and kitchen. At our house the girls could walk up the sand dune onto the kitchen roof and jump

down on the other side onto another sand dune. There was nothing to do but rebuild, and already Bill was busy tearing down our wrecked house and laying the foundation for a new one.

## Chapter 10 Bessie

We had not been living by the sloughs long before we found that we had a great need for a cat to keep the little field mice away. The little devils had a cute way of getting into the clothing and chewing it up to make a cozy nest in which to set up housekeeping. At this time, the beach side of the north slough was fairly lined with campers, so Bill rowed across and inquired around for a good mouser. It didn't take long to scare one up. People were somewhat astonished that a person would go out to look for a cat as they are so plentiful, ordinarily. Finally, he found a kind and understanding soul with a cat about to have kittens who pledged one of the kittens to us. In a few days, Bessie, a gray and black striped cat, came to our house to live. Bless her! She made the fur fly without delay.

We had just gone to bed when she caught the first mouse. She was so proud of her conquest that she jumped up on our bed to show it to us. I didn't mind that so much, and didn't object when she laid it down to tell us about it, but golly, when it tried to get away, and it headed for me, that was too much! Bill got up and put her and the mouse outside for the night.

Later on, the people who gave us the kitten came to see how she was getting along. Bill proudly told them we named her Bessie and how she caught a mouse on the very first night. They looked at each other and began to laugh and told us the Mrs. was named Bessie, too.

As time passed Bessie had her first litter, which consisted of one large male kitten. It grew to be twice her size, and it was amusing to see the way she made the big lug behave. When she "spoke" to him, he obeyed without delay.

Bessie developed a bad habit of jumping onto the table and stealing food. She could let herself into the tent house by clawing at the door, which was held shut by a spring. Many times a day I had to stamp my foot and say, "Bessie you go on out!" She would make tracks for the door, push it open, and run outside. This became tiresome until Bill found a way to break this habit. It involved the use of a clothespin and her tail. I won't go into details, but it worked. We never had any more trouble with Bessie jumping onto the table.

She was the bane of the customers who chose to fish from the bank, because if they weren't careful, their catch would disappear. One day she stole a three or four pound halibut from under an overturned apple box. How she ever did it remains a mystery. When the gentleman saw that his fish was gone, he was fit

to be tied. We found the fish under our car with Bessie licking her chops and trying to decide where to begin eating it. She was very disappointed to have it taken away, but shortly afterwards, she was given a treat of bullheads, a type of saltwater catfish, to make-up for it.

We learned that Bessie believed in keeping a good supply of meat on hand. One day, when the shore birds were plentiful along the slough, we noticed her dragging one curlew after another into the garage and then going out again. We began to wonder what she was doing with so many birds and followed her. She took them to a small closet in the garage where we kept the vegetables and placed them sardine fashion in an empty lug box. They were just as perfect as if packed by human hands. We didn't know what to do about it as they were protected, and it would have been hard to explain to a game warden. But then, how could we undo her hard work? She deserved them, and we kept our fingers crossed, hoping that no game warden would come snooping around.

Bessie could defend herself against dogs, too. She put on a demonstration of her prowess as a tactician one day that will never be forgotten by those who saw the performance. One of our customers brought his dog along to enjoy a day at the slough. As soon as the car stopped, the dog jumped out, and Bessie was the first thing he saw. He went after her, but she stood her ground and struck him on the nose. While he was recovering from his surprise and pain, she ran for a small side room of the house called a lean-to and leaped up on the roof out of his reach.

He should have given up then and called it a day, but no, he pranced and jumped about, barking and whining with Bessie looking down at him, glaring and growling, calling him bad names in cat language, no doubt. About then his master whistled for him, and as he turned to go, in a split second, Bessie hurled herself from her vantage point right onto his back, digging the claws of all four feet into his hide. He gave an agonized howl, and up the road they went toward the salt dikes, howling every step of the way. Now and then, she would lift one of her front paws and give him a few extra digs, which helped him run faster. Being shorthaired, he consequently got the full benefit of her sharp claws. He went dashing madly up the road for about fifty yards making about 35 mph before circling back to the starting place.

As they came down the home stretch, we detected a triumphant smile on Bessie's face. As if planned, when they arrived back at the lean-to, she leaped off his back and onto the roof. Then turning around, she gave him a look that said, "Now, how do you like that?" After that unfortunate encounter with Bessie, he gave her a wide berth on following visits to the sloughs and always treated her with respect.

In our years at the sloughs Bessie had many litters of kittens, and at one

time there were seven cats in all. When the children went rowing, they and the dog would get in the boat and go along for a ride. One time, one cat didn't get there in time, and not wanting to be left behind, she gave a big leap into the water and started swimming out to the boat. They backed up to haul her in.

Bessie could be a tyrant with her own kittens at times. When food was put out for all the cats, she would chase them away, and eat all she could hold, then make herself comfortable beside the dish until she became empty enough to eat some more. One day I presented leftover sauerkraut and wieners to the cats, wondering how it would be received. All the cats came running, and as usual, she growled at them, and immediately went to work on it with gusto. She stopped suddenly, shook her head, sniffed a couple of times in disgust and drawing back, she looked at it in wonder. Inching cautiously closer, she attempted to sample it again, and finding that it tasted the same, she walked away, and let the kittens have it. They didn't like either.

## Chapter 11 Donkeys, Frogs and Chickens, Too

During the Depression it was common to trade goods for services since money was hard to come by. I remember two boys who drove a wagon pulled by a donkey whenever they came to the slough for a day of fishing. They paid for the bait and boat with eggs or a chicken from the family hen house. One hen they brought us saved her neck by laying a nice big egg the next morning, and every day thereafter, for several years.

Another time they brought us a bantam rooster and a little hen that were an entertaining pair to watch. During one of the floods we found them perched on top of the chicken coop that was floating around on the water. They seemed to be enjoying the situation, and the rooster kept up a reassuring "conversation" with the little hen until the water receded again. After a while they took off and flew an incredible distance to dry ground. They built their nest in some prickly undergrowth out by the edge of the salt marsh, and the rooster shared the duties of setting on the eggs until they hatched. We had a total eclipse of the sun that really puzzled the chickens. Around noon it turned dark, so they went to their coop and settled down for what they thought was the night. Then, in a few minutes, the sun appeared again, and they were more confused than ever. The rooster kept a close watch all day on the sky, not at all sure when he should crow.

One evening Bill had just finished his dinner and was going back to his bait house, when the bantam rooster and his little harem started making a big fuss in the back yard. He went to investigate and saw a full-grown rattler coiled and ready to strike. He dashed to the bait house to get his double-barreled shot

gun and fired away without telling anyone what he was up to. Not only did it scare all of us; the chickens went into a tizzy when the thing went off. Not much left of the reptile, except its rattles which were put in the box with Bill's false teeth and saved for years. After that episode everybody walked with extreme caution, and any little rattling sound was cause for alarm for the rest of that warm season.

Speaking of Bill's false teeth reminds me of the episode of the baby frog. We both had false teeth, and during the day I wore mine, of course, but at night they rested beautifully pink and white and pretty in a small agate pan of water, crystal clear and cool. One morning, as I arose to get breakfast, there sat the pan as usual on the kitchen cabinet, but there was something on the edge. I rubbed the sleep from my eyes, the better to focus on the object, and there looking me square in the eye was a tiny, tiny frog, no larger than a nickel. I stood still while a wave of mixed emotions paraded through my sleep-numbed brain. How in Sam Hill did that thing get in the house? But then, worse still, how was I going to get the jumpy thing outdoors again? Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained, so moving slowly, I reached out, and taking hold of the pan behind the frog, I slowly lifted and escorted it outside where it accommodatingly, hopped off and went under the geraniums, growing lush by the door and kitchen window.

This, I thought was the last of the little beastie, but not so. The next morning he was there on the edge of the pan--and the next, and the next. Every time he was escorted to the door in the same fashion, and by that time I was not having those mixed emotions.

One morning something woke me up earlier than usual, and there he was nestled cozily, bathing in high fashion in the middle of my beautiful store bought teeth. He only blinked his popped eyes and said, "preet." As he was being hauled off to the door, he jumped nimbly onto the edge, then onto the floor, hopping towards the door, leaving wet spots. As I opened the door, out he went back under the geraniums.

Before the day was over, I was determined to find out where the little creature was coming in. A crack was located and repaired between the kitchen counter and stove, making it frog proof. It had been easy and natural for him to climb up the geraniums and into the house. To make him happy, the girls found an old, shallow pan, put a few little stones and water in it, and placed it under the geraniums. He took to the water, and lived "hoppily" ever after in a froggy kind of way.

Another night before we had gone to bed, there was a fierce commotion in the yard with chickens squawking and dogs barking. We got outdoors just in time to see a big bobcat slinking away, and we knew then what all the fuss was

about. We called the cats, but not one was to be found. We took a flashlight and searched for Bessie and her kittens. We were about to give up, when we heard a faint sound coming from a roll of roofing which was standing upright by the side of the house. How they managed to get into it, and so fast, puzzled us. But what about Bessie? Where was she?

Fearing the worst, we flashed the light around and found her clinging to a narrow ledge on the side of the garage wall. I held the flashlight while Bill rescued her from her perch. This was the only time Bessie came out second in a confrontation, but second to a bobcat isn't too bad.

## Chapter 12 An Unforgettable Character

We had our share of unforgettable characters to visit the sloughs during the years we lived there. One old gentleman we will always remember happily was Monsieur John Minice, a stocky, bald man, with blue eyes and a gray "Kaiser Wilhelm" moustache. In spite of the resemblance to the Kaiser, he was a jovial sort of person who added spice to our lives while he was camped at the sloughs. He insisted upon being called Johnny. From his conversations I gathered that he had been a chef. He also spoke often of the premier of Walt Disney's "Mickey Mouse" and the "The Cat and the Fiddle", and the entertaining connected with it. He loved light opera music, and especially, songs from "The Cat and the Fiddle." He came to play cards with us nearly every evening, and I can still hear his cheery, "Ho the tent," as he came down the path from his house car.

After the supper dishes were washed and stacked away, we would take down the cards from the shelf and play rummy on the all-purpose desk that was also the kitchen table until bedtime, or until someone ran out of matches that we used for counters. He played for "blood," and his favorite remarks were, "I'll make somebody pay through the nose this time", and "Let's see if the Gods are propitious." He also said, "We must be grateful for small favors", and when his luck was bad, and he took a beating, his remark was always, "I think I'll go home now. I've received a liberal education."

He liked to cook and talk about cooking and gave me many good pointers. I didn't know too much about the subject at that time, but he showed me how to make light as a feather hot cakes. I marvel still that the success of such a simple dish depended on the careful handling of the batter, a bit of sugar, eggs separated and egg whites stiffly whipped and gently folded into the batter. The mixture was carefully poured on a hot griddle, then very gently turned over. "Voila, and now to enjoy them!" That was Johnny.

He contended that baked potatoes and boiled fish were made for each

other. We agreed when we tried the combination, but we didn't see eye to eye on the subject of caviar and ocean snails as a food, Ugh! He was quite a gourmet.

Johnny loved to fish and comb the beach. He also liked to sit by the slough, hours on end on a rickety old camp chair. If it happened to be in the evening, he would sometimes get sleepy and doze off, letting his fishing pole fall. He would snooze away until the tide came up and got his bare feet wet. One night Bill came in from checking the boats and reported the strange sight of Johnny sleeping soundly although the tide had nearly reached his waist. He woke him up and off he went to his house car to go to bed properly. Johnny had a black cat that he called Kat-Kat. He made her almost his equal in that she enjoyed the privilege of eating her meals at the table and eating the same food he ate, even lettuce and prunes. One day Johnny had to go away for a few days on business and asked if we would feed Kat-Kat while he was away. We agreed to, and to use his own expression, she gave us a liberal education.

She had her own dish and chair and a place at our table. She displayed beautiful table manners that reflected her good training, eating daintily and slowly, with her front paws resting on the edge of the table. She "sat" beside Bill, and when she wanted more to eat, she would tap him gently on the arm and meow softly. When she had enough, she would jump down from her chair, wash her face with her paws, then go to the door to be let out. She had better manners than many people I've met.

### Chapter 13 Just Fishin'

In living so handy to fishing grounds, we never lacked for plenty of fish and the pleasures of fishing. We learned how really good fresh fish can taste, and never tired of it, no matter how often it was on the menu. Clam chowder made from fresh clams tasted better, too. I made a clam-fish chowder that transported us to gastronomic heaven. It was one of the few dishes that made everyone eat in silence, broken only by the word, "more."

Razor and butter clams were common to the sloughs, but now and then, we found pockets of Pismo clams that the former owner of the sloughs, a Mr. Babcock, planted years ago. It was said he brought the first of these clams from Pismo Beach, Washington.

Other mouth-watering morsels were the scallops and flounders or "sand dabs." Scallops were hard to find because they covered themselves with a thin layer of sand. Both were rather tedious to prepare, but well worth the effort in the final results. The only edible part is the white muscle that holds the two shells shut. A short pointed knife was inserted at one side to sever the muscle.

The shell was then opened out and the sweet, white morsel removed. They could be used in any way oysters were used, except eaten raw, and they were delicious in poultry stuffing.

To catch the "sand dab" or flounder, the fisherman had to use a bit of cunning. A lightweight pole or rod and reel was used or a hand line was just as effective. On the "business" end of the line, beyond the small sinker, as many as four of the tiniest hooks were attached. Bright colored buttons or beads were sometimes strung onto the leaders before they were attached to the line. Live crawfish were impaled on each hook and gently swung back and forth several times before being dropped into the water. The flounders hid on the bottom of the slough with just their eyes exposed waiting for whatever might pass by.

Halibut of all sizes were caught too, by pole, reel, and spearing. Bill did the rowing and took out many spearing parties. A Coleman lantern was rigged up with a reflector and attached to the front of the boat. The customers stood in the prow with long spears and watched for the outline of halibut or other bottom fish on the floor of the slough. If they were lucky or good marksmen, they would get a few fish.

Mullet is a vegetarian and does not take bait on a hook, so the only way that it is taken is to be snared in a net or speared. One night Bill was out with a spearing party and came upon a school of large mullet. They were going quietly along, when without warning a big one jumped high out of the water and hit one of the men on his back, nearly knocking him overboard. He regained his balance and turning around with his fist ready for action he demanded, "Say, what did you do that for?" Bill just pointed to the flapping fish in the bottom of the boat, and the man exclaimed, "Well! I'll be." He apologized for his hasty action.

One time when Bill was going after bait, he was wading along through shallow water when all of a sudden, the ground began to heave and rock. A huge halibut shot out from under his feet nearly throwing him off balance. Halibut can be dangerous and unpredictable. A friend of ours caught a good-sized halibut, and after he removed the hook from its mouth with a pair of pliers and laid it on the bottom of the boat, the fish made a sudden lunge in the direction of his bare feet. If he hadn't been quicker than the halibut, he would have been missing a part of his foot. The fish have powerful jaws and sharp teeth, and they would rather bite a hook in two than be hauled in.

It is a good thing to have a long handled gaff to hook into the halibut's gills when it's landed. Bill and a friend caught a halibut that was almost as large as the boat they were in. He said they had quite a time getting it into the boat. Then, it nearly beat the bottom out of the boat before they killed it with the

boat anchor.

Other fish caught in the sloughs were golden croaker, spot fin croaker, yellow fin croaker, sea trout, bass, and perch of different varieties. Of the inedible varieties - stingrays, bullheads and sharks were common. The bullheads were with us all the time, but the other denizens of the deep came only during the warm months. When a stingray was caught, the stinger had to be held down with a board and a heavy foot, before attempting to cut out the hook. If you didn't take these precautions, you would surely get a very painful jab with the stinger.

#### Chapter 14 Geography, Topography and the Ever-changing Mouth

The single thing that made our lives the most complicated and difficult was how one high tide could change the whole topography at the mouth of the slough. Where yesterday there was a sand bar, today not a sign of one. Overnight sand could be deposited until the mouth was completely closed, trapping water in the slough and causing even more problems. Various methods were tried to open up the channel, but we usually had to wait it out until the winter rains came. The runoff then raised the level of the water enough for it to start flowing over the sand barrier.

More than once, the tides built long sandbars from the beach far into the slough, leaving the channel narrow enough to step across. We lost business when this happened because the boats were located on the north slough and could not navigate the narrow opening at low tide. Bill had to wait for the highest tide of the day to transfer the boats to the east slough, so there would be an open channel.

One morning early, about six a.m., I happened to look out toward the mouth, and there, lying on its side was a live-bait fishing boat with several people hanging onto the side. A sand bar had built up overnight by the surf, and the unsuspecting captain ran aground and capsized.

When the mouth closed up, the trapped water became stagnant and seaweed grew rampant. Bait was hard to get and fishing was not good. Only mullet were plentiful, but they had to be caught with a net or spear instead of hook and line.

Now and then, the tides would be freakish and pull some unexpected tricks. I recall one tide that was unpredicted and caught us totally by surprise. It was the slack season, so Bill took a job with the State Highway Department. He was away from six a.m. to six p.m., so only the children and me were about. The tide came in quietly as there was no wind behind it. As I went about my housework, I glanced outside and I noticed something alarming. The water was about eight

inches above ground level and coming toward the house. I knew we had time to wade through and reach higher ground, but as old Johnny Mince would have said, "the gods were propitious." It only came even with the doorsill. Whatever kept it from spilling over into the house, I'll never know, as the water was sweeping by in good-sized ripples. It looked like a spoon or a cup that is brimful and heaped up with liquid.

That evening when Bill came home from work, he saw the ground wet by the tide several hundred feet before he got to the house and was more excited and worried than we were. He wanted to stay at home the next day just in case it came even higher, but I thought it unnecessary as we could wade out before it got too high. The next morning the tide was just about the same height and uneventful, I'm glad to say.

## Chapter 15 A Blight on Paradise

Prohibition came on the scene long before we moved to the sloughs. At Midnight on January 16, 1920, the Eighteenth Amendment was put into effect and all importing, exporting, transporting, selling, and manufacturing of intoxicating liquor was put to an end. As is always the case, those who want to find a way around a law will find it. The slough was a favorite place to run contraband liquors from Mexico, and this kept the Customs and Immigration men busy trying to catch smugglers.

Most of the time we knew when agents were about because they would come in and visit for a spell, but one night a new man was added to the group, and instead of visiting, he insisted upon spying on us. He lay in the brush that grew about ten feet from the tent house. We heard the dog barking and fussing about something, but we thought that she was just teasing Bessie. The night was moonless and as dark as a stack of black cats. After I finished washing the supper dishes, I took the dishpan of dirty dishwater outdoors, groping my way for a few feet, gave the dishpan a hefty swing and let her go. After that, I imagine they did their sneaky work out of my range.

Up until Prohibition was repealed in 1933, I never saw anything of a suspicious nature although I got wind of it later. Prohibition left its mark on the sloughs though. Every time I planted a geranium or cleared away weeds in the yard, I would find a "nest" of rusty, Sterno canned-heat containers and large vanilla extract bottles. I was astounded to hear that some people were so desperate that they hid out at the sloughs to drink whatever they could find that had alcohol in it.

## Chapter 16 People Came From Everywhere

A variety of people from every walk of life visited the sloughs to fish and explore. Among them were doctors, lawyers, law enforcement officers, dentists, carpenters, clerks, newspaper editors, and entertainers like Tom Brenneman who sang on the Breakfast Club from Los Angeles. We heard him sing "That Little Boy of Mine" many times on the radio, but it was a real thrill when he sang it for us right there in the tent house. Other people I can't forget were army, navy, and marine brass and enlisted men.

The airfield was just over the hill to the east of us, and the men would walk to the beach from there. We became acquainted with many of them and their families, too.

As in every group of people, there was a daredevil in one squadron who thought it was exciting to fly under our radio aerial. The wire was forty feet high and one hundred feet long and located too close to the house for comfort. We were all tired of this, so Bill wrote a note to headquarters at North Island in Coronado about the shenanigans going on. A few days later an officer showed up to do some fishing and see what was going on. After that the word got out and the acrobatics stopped.

Another customer was a representative of an aircraft company and a flight instructor at North Island. He landed on the road at the top of the hill and walked down to inquire about the fishing, and sometimes, took Bill for rides in the airplane. He was an ardent fisherman and duck hunter, and through him, we got many new customers.

Some groups came to the sloughs every year to camp or study. One such group was a summer class of biology students from San Diego State College. They were there to pry into the private lives of the clams and other saltwater creatures. They were studious and serious about their work, and aside from the fact that they were rough on the boats they rented from us, they were good natured and pleasant.

Another group was the Japanese Congregational Church that came and camped by the sloughs for a week or two each summer. They came from as far away as San Francisco, Redlands, and El Centro. The minister spoke English well, but his wife was newly arrived from Japan and knew very little English. We did pretty well using sign language when words failed to get our ideas across.

There were two or three hundred people in the congregation, and we made friends with many of them and became acquainted with their foods and way of life. The children and babies were everywhere and everyone a perfect little doll.

They invited us to have tea with them, and what tea it was! I have never tasted such delicious tea. Sweet bean cakes with white frosting wrapped in tissue with

fortune enclosed were also served. Other foods were rice balls and rice cakes wrapped with a leaf of kelp with a piece of candied ginger in the center.

Their camp was something to see--so orderly and clean. When they left, their camping spot was as clean as before they came.

The Japanese Christian Boy Scouts Troop and Buddhist Boy Scouts also came to camp. They were a happy bunch of boys and had a lot of fun swimming, boating and fishing, but when work was to be done, they were all business. They had a strict schedule to follow and for every change of activity, the bugler would play a tune on his bugle. I was glad they were not any closer to the house, for he had good lungs and put all his heart into his work.

Family groups also came and stayed days at a time. Local Japanese came to fish and picnic and often brought us lugs of fresh vegetables from their farms. One farmer from the Imperial Valley filled the trunk of his car with honeydew melons for us. We ate those melons until they became overripe, and really had our fill of melons for the rest of the summer, but still they were delicious.

## Chapter 17 The Birth of Rosalie and "The China Clipper"

In November of 1935 two very important events were taking place. Both were scheduled to arrive at about the same time. Pan American Airway's, "China Clipper," piloted by Captain Edwin Musick was headed to San Francisco to launch the first airmail flight across the Pacific. The destination was Manila with stops in Honolulu, Midway Island, Wake Island, and the Philippines. The start of mail service and commercial flights across the Pacific was a significant event, not only California, but the whole world. To us it meant the famous aircraft would pass directly over our house on its way from Acapulco, Mexico to a refueling stop at the San Diego airfield.

The other important event was the pending arrival of the stork again, bearing a precious bundle for the fourth time to our house. For a week or so, we were hearing news over our treasured battery radio about the progress of the flight.

I don't remember where the Clipper was when we began to hear the faint flap of the stork's wings, but I knew then that the Clipper would come in second in the race. I had counted so much on seeing the Clipper fly by our place, and hoped perhaps to get a picture of it.

While the Clipper was creating a news flurry, there was a flurry of another kind going on at home. We didn't have the same doctor to deliver Rosalie that delivered Ann and Dorothy, and the reason was my foolish pride. This reminds me of the old axiom, "Pride goeth before a fall." Dr. Higgs had the irritating habit of teasing me about the frequency of my pregnancies. With a devilish

grin he would pick up his satchel and say, "I'll be seeing you in another two years." I was left to boil and seethe over his remark, but he was right.

The delivery was very difficult. Doctor Warren, from Paradise Valley Hospital in National City, attended me. He brought with him a registered nurse and a student nurse. They had been busy the past forty-eight hours delivering babies and were very tired to begin with. Who ever heard of the stork waiting for a convenient time to arrive?

The doctor sat in the only comfortable chair in the living room and dozed off to sleep while the two ladies attended to me. They grabbed naps when they could in a chair by my bed.

The labor was going slowly, so to hurry things along, a drug was administered. This didn't help as far as I could see, and years later, I learned that my life had been endangered, more by the drugs, than the natural process of giving birth.

At any rate, Rosalie was born at 7 a.m. on the 7th day of November, 1935, weighing in at eight pounds and 14 ounces. A friend found a lady to come in and bathe Rosalie every day until I was able to do it. A young girl named Dorothy Gaines Evans came along to stay the whole day to help with the three girls and usual chores while Bill tended to the bait and boat business. Dorothy and I became fast friends even though there was a ten years difference in our ages.

I was still confined to my bed on the day the China Clipper was due to pass our house. Bill and the girls hurried out to watch it fly up the beach, and I listened on the radio. As the plane came closer to San Diego, there were frequent reports. When the announcer said the Clipper was five minutes away, we began to hear the faint hum of its powerful motors. It sounded like a low chord played on an organ. As it came nearer, it got louder until it became a deafening roar. The ground fairly vibrated, the walls shook, and metallic articles vibrated and gave off a sympathetic, zinging sound. The announcer's voice over the radio was completely drowned out as the plane passed overhead. At the landing field the emcee greeted Captain Musick and persuaded him to say a few words to his many admirers awaiting his arrival.

Even though I didn't get to see it, I was doubly compensated, by being able to hear the China Clipper arrive twice, once by direct sound waves, and once through radio waves. I have always felt that I had a personal stake in the success of that event as I sent up a very fervent prayer for the safety of Captain Musick on this and all his future flights across the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. When I heard of his untimely death in the South Pacific, I felt that a personal friend had passed away. I have no doubt that many others had the same sentiments.

## Chapter 18 The Rains Came Down and the Floods Rose Up

In December 26, 1936, we were again plagued with unusually high tides. On the day I have in mind, the surf and tide were running high and swift. It was logical that the waves would break in front of our place, but instead, they kept on going up the north channel and dashed against the Hall's house. They battered away at it until the big front porch was broken off from the house and swept away by the current. The waves breaking against the house sent spray higher than the house. Luckily, there was film in the camera, and I got a few good shots of this event. Bill went out to a phone to tell the Halls that their house was being battered to pieces by the rough surf. They came down to see the damage and decided to have the house moved to a safer location.

The storm lasted four days, and then, the wind shifted to the north and blew the clouds away. The mountains were covered with a thick mantle of snow and the air was clear as crystal. A mountain close to Los Angeles and the huge cross on Mount Helix showed up distinctly in the clear cold air. At night, the temperature dropped below freezing and the frost was so thick that it looked like snow. The rainwater that had fallen in the boats and in puddles had frozen solid, and according to the news reports, it was the coldest spell in fifty years.

Having all that ice around, I "allowed as how" I would try making some ice cream for the kids. So I made a thin vanilla pudding, and while it was cooling, made a makeshift freezer out of a bucket with a double boiler top that had a lid without a handle. The kids got a big thrill out of the adventure, and when the ice cream was stirred, they had to sample it. I had as much fun out of it as they did, as I had never made ice cream before. Not much could be said for the texture of the finished product, but it was cold, and it tasted like ice cream.

There was lots of rain the following month with the usual blustery cold winds and snow in the mountains. No sooner had one storm passed, than another storm came in. Having small children to keep clean, it was a job getting the wash done, and worse yet getting the clothes dry. As soon as most of the water was out of a garment, I brought it in the house and hung it on the line we stretched through the house. The heating stove was kept going at high heat. Although Bill's long handle underwear took a long time to dry, it didn't take very long to get everything else dry.

Five inches of rain fell in one day, and the Tijuana river started running again. The mouth closed up, and the next day, we were flooded out of our house by high water. This time we took refuge in the Sniff's house for six days and nights. The county road department came and made a couple of cuts across the barrier with a grader to start the water flowing out to the ocean. Once it got

started, the bank washed away almost as fast as the grader could travel. When the bulk of the water had flowed out, the mouth of the slough was about a mile wide, and we had a good view of the ocean for a while. It didn't stay that way very long before the sand piled up again.

Being flooded out was getting to be too much of a bad habit to suit us, and we decided to tear down the house and rebuild it above the high water mark. We started by tearing down the first and second rooms that we had added onto the original tent. By now this was all solid wood. When the "new house" was finished, we would be able to stretch out again and feel reasonably sure that it was high enough to escape the high water whenever the next flood came.

## Chapter 19 Animal Antics

We fell heir to a Fox Terrier dog that was a good match for Johnny Minice's black cat. A couple moving to an apartment could not take their dog with them. His name was Peter Putter. We soon found that he had some unusual traits. He liked to eat oranges, prunes, raisins, lettuce and raw carrots. He even took part in the Halloween festivities one year.

Since we didn't live close to neighbors with children, we always fixed up the house with Halloween props, baked cookies and pie and made punch for refreshments. We brought in the wash tub to put water and apples in for bobbing for apples. We tied apples to strings and hung them for another contest, and carved pumpkins for jack o' lanterns. The kids donned costumes, and they were ready for action, with Peter Putter right in the middle of everything. He tried to duck for apples, and succeeded in biting an apple, which wasn't too difficult considering the nature of his mouth and jaws. It was very amusing, and he knew that he had done something unusual. He danced around on his two hind feet and barked. The kids all said that he was smiling, too. Then, when they turned to the suspended apples, he tried his luck, but they were a little harder to master. He finally caught it and brought it down. More cheers for Peter Putter! He was in solid now and got his share of the refreshments.

He disappeared one day while we were away buying groceries. Evidently, someone picked him up or his master reclaimed him. We all missed him terribly, and it was a long time before he was unmentioned.

## Chapter 20 Illness

The weather turned very cold and the water from the rain in the boats froze at night. This time, I didn't feel like making ice cream for the kids. Jane and Rosalie had come down with the chicken pox the day after we moved into

the Hall's house, and I didn't feel so well, myself. I thought I was coming down with the pox too, and with the beginning of morning sickness, even more serious, to my way of thinking. It was more serious because of all the hard work ahead. The house was still on moving timbers, which made it high off the ground, and we only had a box for a step to the front door. From the box to the floor was a long step, and for my short height, it was quite a distance for me to reach. Besides that hurdle, I had to handle cans of water, some were five gallon size and others ten gallon milk cans. I learned to roll them on their bottoms to place them in the location we kept them in by the door. In this way, it took a lot of strain off my back. Even so, I was exhausted at the end of the day.

Bill was working as fast as he could to get the house finished, so we could move into it. He already had a cold, and the day it was finished as he was putting the last tacks in the tar paper on the outside, the wind changed and brought cold damp air from the snowy mountains. This caused him to become worse, and it developed into pleurisy, we later found out. He had been sick for a week when one of my friends who was a nurse came to visit.

She took his pulse and temperature and told me that he needed a doctor right away. I had no idea that he was so sick, but I called the doctor as soon as I could. He came about dark, and after examining him, said it was pleurisy. He gave me some pills to give him and said to see that he drank quarts of water and swallowed six eggs a day. He wrote out a prescription, gave me the instructions, ripped off the prescriptions and shoved them towards me in one motion. He was out the door before I could ask him if he thought Bill should be in the hospital. The girls wondered what he was mad about, and I wondered myself. I was afraid the worst would happen to all of us if I had a miscarriage and had to get to the hospital or had to go to bed myself.

While Bill was sick, I more than had my hands full, lifting the water cans, taking the girls to the bus stop and picking them up, getting the mail at the post office, shopping and so forth. The unaccustomed driving and all the extra work made my stomach sore. I made up my mind to break in the girls to some of the simpler chores. Dorothy and Rosalie were more than willing to help out with some of the errands around the house like washing the dishes. There were a few broken dishes and water on the floor, "but who cares?" I thought this for the first time in my life. Jane and Ann brought in wood for the stove and carried in buckets of water to fill the barrel in the kitchen for dishwashing, and washing hands and faces. They did these errands after school, and their help made a big difference in how I felt. I soon began to feel more normal.

We got through these troublesome times at last, although how we did it, I will never know. We took it a day at a time. Like the old saying, "When you go

on a long walk, you should not anticipate the whole journey, but take one step at a time." When the spring showers let up and the sun came out bright and warm, the flowers began to bloom in the fields. Our troubles seemed to fade in the background of our memories. We felt at ease, now that the water could not reach us at the new location, and that too, helped our general morale.

Gradually, Bill began to gather strength, and in the meantime, Jane and I went on the search for razor clams, for we hoped that some fishing customers would come to fish. We needed the money. Spearing the clams was a fascinating pastime we thought, but when it has to be done, and you have to get them for bait, you soon get a backache. Now, that it was necessary for us to do all the claming, it was hard to find a clam bed. We tramped up and down the east slough until we were exhausted and found only a handful of clams.

Gradually, the clams became established again in the sloughs, and business began picking up. Since the walk from the house to the slough where the boats and bait were kept was a rather long one, especially if one had to make many trips to wait on customers, it became necessary to put up a shelter for whoever was in charge of "watching the store."

When Bill got strong enough, he built a small shack at about the same location as the house used to be. It was built three or more feet above the ground. The sand around and under it was deep and white. The high tide never did get up to the floor level.

Our building projects were not subject to building regulations and inspections, but I have no doubt that they would have passed. They held together in seventy mile per hour winds and over, without losing anything more than a little slate off the tar-paper roof.

The little bait shack had a small porch and railing around it, and on this day, I was in charge of the bait and boats while Bill and the girls went out to town for some supplies. They were on their way back when I saw them coming down the road in the car.

I stepped out on to the porch and started to go down the steps, got my foot too near the edge and fell headlong to the ground. I was shaken somewhat, but not hurt, surprisingly. Still, I was afraid that it would start my labor as it wasn't too long before we expected another baby to be born. I was heavy and big as the proverbial barn, and we didn't yet know I was expecting twins. I suppose the deep sand at the foot of the steps kept me from getting hurt.

I kept out of sight as much as possible because of remarks people sometimes made of my delicate condition. They wanted to know if I was going to have twins, and I told them that the doctor hadn't said so. I was so big that one of the girls had to wash and dry my feet, put on my stockings and shoes and tie my shoelaces for me.

That day was an unlucky one for me, for that night I cooked fish for supper, and in eating it, a fish bone got stuck in the back of my throat. It was an inch or more long, and I could see it plainly. I tried tweezers, but they were too short, so I got two chopsticks that we had and removed it with them. It was an awkward operation, and thankfully that was all the excitement for that day.

## Chapter 21 Twins!

Finally, the big day arrived on the first day of school. I managed to get the girls fed and off to school before going to the hospital. Later in the day, Bill made a special trip to the store where we bought our groceries, to phone the hospital to find out if the baby had arrived and what sex it was. The nurse told him he had twin daughters, and he said in a dazed and stunned voice, "My gosh, six girls!" The store clerk was in an adjoining room, and hearing the remark, came dashing into the store. Her eyes big with surprise and her mouth wide open. She said, "My goodness! Six is very unusual. In fact, I've never heard of such a thing!" Her remark struck him hard, and it was all he could do to keep from laughing. When he explained that I only had twins, she was relieved.

The twins were born September 11, 1939, between four and five p.m. The first born I named Helen Adelle, and she weighed six pounds, fifteen ounces. The second girl was born forty minutes later. I named her Mary Alice, and she weighed six pounds, two and half ounces. I don't mind telling the world that I was exhausted after that ordeal. The doctor had me stay in the hospital for ten days and ordered double doses of vitamins and iron pills. I was low on blood, and I had very little color. When I finally left the hospital, he cautioned me to take it easy and stay in bed for a few more days.

The day after the twins were born, the weather turned very hot, 108 degrees, and after a few days, a fierce tropical storm blew in from the south with a spectacular electrical display and strong winds that shook the hospital. All of us were miserable with varying degrees of fever. Along with that miserable sticky heat, I had to get a bad case of hives that nearly drove me mad.

Everyone drank large quantities of water, and keeping our water jugs filled kept the nurses busy. At three o'clock they brought all of us a mug of hot chocolate. The nurse that brought them to us was a very stout German lady with a broken accent. She gave me two mugs, saying, "Two for the twins." She was so sweet and sympathetic. One of the girls asked me what my husband thought of the twins, and I thought that his emotions were rather mixed, and so were mine. He was wondering how we were going to cope with the double

care. A short time before they were born, I dreamed that I was washing diapers, and there was a row of them as far as I could see, and more to wash yet. The dream pretty near came true too, for every other day I had six dozen diapers hanging on the line flapping in the breeze, besides the other odds and ends that babies wear.

Bill came to see me once during my stay in the hospital. He couldn't get anyone to tend to the business and take care of the girls at that time. That one time was the day of the electrical storm. Jane and Ann always walked home from the bus stop, and the storm was in full force as they arrived. They walked through it all the way home. They said, "The air sure did smell funny, and we were sure scared." This was an understatement, no doubt. These storms from the south were never predicted by the weather bureau, otherwise Bill would not have left at that time. He felt terrible about it. I didn't know about it until I returned home, and then I felt awful too.

The official temperature in San Diego was 108 degrees. At home the temperature was 102 degrees. One thermometer happened to be lying on a window-sill, and the heat was so terrific that the mercury went to the top and ran out on the window sill.

On the day the twins and I came home, the weather cooled off somewhat, and a few days later another tropical storm from the south blew in with rain. This time it made the river run as far as the pumping station, which was "something to write home about" as someone said. The wind caused a lot of damage to power lines, trees and homes, and twenty-five boats were lost at sea. This was of course, unusual weather, but then, as some one put it, "Any weather in California is unusual."

The twins were double the enjoyment to care for. Feeding time was a little busy though since Mary couldn't take the regular formula, and she had to be fed differently. They slept through the nights most of the time, but their daytime naps were not taken at the same time, and one would wake the other one up. They were not identical twins. Helen was short and had blue eyes, and Mary was slender with very dark eyes, so we never had any problem knowing who was who. Since Mary was frail, I kept her wrapped in a blanket. With her eyes peeking out, she reminded me of the expression of "snug as a bug in a rug." We started calling her "Bug", and the nickname stuck with her to this day. And Helen was so fat and chubby. She reminded me of a hunk of pudding, and we called her that, and pretty soon it became "Hunka", which she is still called today.

The early mornings were the worst to get through, with the twins howling for their bottles and a change of diapers, cooking the breakfast for the girls, getting them fed and combed, finding their school books and pencils, settling

arguments, and finally, sending them off to school. Sometimes, it was necessary to completely strip the twins and the bassinets and bathe and dress them again before starting breakfast. Those were really hectic times, but now as I look back on it, I have to laugh. They were so much fun.

An elderly doctor who came to the sloughs to hunt ducks, came in to see the twins. He asked how much they weighed, and I told him. He said, "Great Heavens woman! I wish I could have seen you. I bet you were a sight! Thirteen Pounds and one and one-half ounces. Boy!"

One day after the twins began walking, they were playing with a little red wagon. All of us were out of doors doing our wash, and they were playing quietly, but pretty soon, we missed them. We all scattered to go looking for them, and coming up the road from the east slough was Mrs. Little and her daughter, Marion, each with a dripping wet twin in their arms. We were really shaken up when she told us that they were out in the water up to their armpits and crying. The tide was coming in very strong, and in a little bit, they would have been swept away. Marion and her mother just happened to be out on their front porch watching the tide come in when they heard the twins crying. When they saw the twins in the water, they vaulted over the porch rail and ran as fast as their long legs could carry them, and snatched them up from the rushing water. I think now that all of us were in a state of shock for several days after that incident. We tried to find words to thank them but there just aren't words enough to express gratitude for such a service, anyway we all tried our best.

## Chapter 22 Adventures and Mysteries

A mystery that confounded us, and to this day has not been explained, happened one night. When we arose that morning and looked out on the slough, we saw an expanse of something white all over it. We hurriedly dressed and went out to see what it was. It was brownish white, the color of seafoam candy and very fluffy. It was at least six inches deep, and covered everything as far as we could see. Looking over to the sand dunes, we saw a deep cut through them, and smooth paths where the tide washed through to the slough. At this time the mouth was closed, and this foam stayed for a long time. There was no fishing and very little boating, as the foam made a drag on the boat sides. When the winter rains started and the river began to run, the mouth opened up again. All that foam washed out. It was nice to see the good clear water again, and to be able to go for boat rides and fish, but it still remains a mystery.

The adventures and misadventures of the children made life exciting and

anxious for all of us. They had to be watched closely because of the nearness of the water, but even that was not good enough, as they did manage to fall in, even when we were with them.

Jane got several dunkings. One while she was fishing from a large boat that was tied up on the beach in front of the house. She was standing on it when a little wave came in and rocked the boat, and she lost her balance and fell into the water. Bill and another man was fishing there with her, and they helped her out of the water. When she got her breath, she declared that she had swallowed a fish. We all laughed, but she was very sure she did.

Another time she was visiting our friends, the Littles while they were camped on the beach, and she had rowed herself across the water in her own little boat. I don't know how it all happened, but she somehow fell into the water and very nearly drowned. Mrs. Little said she went under two times before she jumped in and helped her out. She took off her wet clothes and dried her out and put one of her husband's shirts on her and sent her home in her little boat. Jane didn't say much except that she slipped off the bank.

Then, years later, when Rosie was big enough to climb into the boat, the girls and I went to the beach on the south side of the mouth of the slough for a change of scenery. I rowed the boat and beached it at about the same place as Jane got her dunking. The tide was almost at its peak, and Jane took the anchor and jumped out of the boat and pulled it up on the sand, so the rest of us could get out. We walked across to the ocean side to watch the breakers and enjoy the of the Coronado Islands and Dead Man's Island in the distance. We decided to walk down the beach and do some beach combing, and as we started out, we suddenly realized that Rosie was not with us. We looked frantically around the area, and there wasn't a sign of her. We ran to the boat, and there she was out in the middle of the channel trying to row the boat, but not making much progress. We were petrified. The water at this place was very deep and crystal clear, and I was afraid she would step out of the boat, as she always did on dry land.

I called to Bill who was caulking a boat on the shore across the wide channel, but my voice was too weak with fright to be heard. I told the girls, Jane, Ann and Dotty, to all holler together with me to get Bill's attention. They did, and finally he heard us. We motioned in the direction of the boat, and it didn't take him long to size up the situation. He pushed a boat into the water and rowed over to rescue Rosie, and the boat. He took Rosie into the boat and towed the other one to us. Luckily, the current took the boat easterly over a sand bar instead of out through the mouth and into the breakers. By this time we decided that we had enough excitement for the day, and we got into our boat and went home too. Rosie must have been about four years old at the

time.

## Chapter 23 Pearl Harbor

December 7, 1941 was "The Day of Infamy," when Honolulu was bombed by Japanese planes made of scrap metal, that we, the United States, had sold them. It was a cold, overcast Sunday morning, and since fishing customers were expected, we were up early to be ready for them. Time passed, and the ones we expected did not come, but finally one new customer did show up.

I went about my household chores, as usual, then thinking a little music would brighten the day, I turned on the radio. There was no music, just the terrible news of the bombing. I couldn't believe it at first, but coming from reputable newscasters, I was stunned. Putting on my coat, I hurried to the slough to tell Bill of the horrible news. He and the customer couldn't believe it either, and they went to the shack and turned on the radio.

We didn't have another customer for several days, and this was a turning point in our lives, and every one else in the country, also. Need I say more, the whole country was in a state of shock.

Like the rest of the country our lives changed as the war effort began. Rationing and blackouts became the norm. Training and practice increased and there was a new baby, John Daniel. He was born October 27, 1942, on Navy Day. He was born at 8:55 p.m. Like the twins he was born in the hospital, and was a pleasant surprise after having six girls.

As happened the other time, while we were in the hospital, the weather turned very hot and humid, and there was only a ceiling fan to cool the room. On top of that to add to our misery, all of us were frightened when an earthquake struck. No one was hurt, but it was scary. When we came home, John was the center of attention, and quite a conversation piece to say the least. We finally had our boy.

The war really started the development of Ream Field as a training field. The planes made practice runs all around our house at all hours every day. On one particular morning they were flying low, directly toward the house and over it. The noise and vibration were terrible, and I went outside with a pad and pencil and took down their numbers as they flew over the house, thinking I would report them. I think they used our house for their flight pattern.

Later that day, as we were getting ready to go to town, we got the scare of our life. We were about to walk out the door, when an airplane flying over the hill began sputtering and losing altitude. It landed in the salt marsh, and the wheels caught in the soft mud and flipped over. It didn't take long for the

wrecking crew to come with the fire crew and ambulance to right the plane and get the pilot out. He was not hurt, but was only muddy and shaken up a bit. At any rate, he walked away from the plane and got in the ambulance without any help. Bill invited anyone who wanted coffee, to come to the house, and a few did. They were more shaken than the pilot.

Another day, a big bomber was flying around in large circles from North Island, out over the ocean, back over our house, and eastward towards the mountains, over and over again all afternoon. We thought it was just routine practice, but it became louder and lower as the day wore on. As darkness came, and we were sitting down to our evening meal, here it came again, and I remarked, "Don't they know when to quit?" When it passed over, the house shook and the roar was deafening. A few seconds later we heard a loud crash and then complete silence. In those days, these things were not put in the papers or on the news, but one of our friends told us that the crew couldn't land it because the landing gear was stuck. They got orders to set the controls, so the plane would head out to sea, and the crew could bail out over North Island. They got out successfully, but the plane for some reason chose to fly around in circles.

The plane went down in a vacant field and no one was hurt, but somehow, one of the wheels flew off and crashed through the kitchen window of a woman who lived nearby. She had just walked into her living room before the crash. Lucky woman, and many others, including us.

Ream Field's runways and landing strips were extended, and we no longer had a road into town. In order to get out, we had to cross the west end of the flying field runway when there were no planes flying. Something had to be done about this dangerous situation.

We, along with our neighbors, the Littles and Halls got busy writing to the Navy Department to see if they could, or would, have a road made for us to the outside. They were very slow to act, as there was so much red tape. The Halls lost hope of getting the road and had their house moved out and located near Southwest Junior High School a few miles to the east.

Our family and the Littles were thinking of moving out too, when one morning, we heard heavy machines to the north of us. Looking in that direction, we could see bulldozers at work cutting a road from Coronado Avenue. All of us were so relieved that we would not have to move. It didn't take them very long to make the road. It was begun in May of 1943 and was finished and opened to traffic on July 20th of that year.

After the road was finished and all seemed to be on an even keel, Bill decided to rebuild the house yet again. So, in June 1943, he started tearing down the old house and began building the new one. This time it was built very

high off the ground and designed in a "U" shape facing east. The sand was deep here, so it was necessary to build walkways out to solid ground, otherwise we had sand in our shoes, and carried it into the house. This was to be the last location for the house, thank heaven.

The following fall there were bad fires in the mountains, and the pillars of smoke reached high into the sky. Then, another fire started on Otay Mesa above San Ysidro and got out of control. The wind brought live cinders and ash that dropped every where. It was dark and ominous under that cloud of smoke, and it gave us an eerie feeling. We watched for new fires starting around us, but luckily none did.

We liked this new location since the sand was clean and deep. The "U" shape of the house gave a protected place for the children to play when the winds from the ocean were cold. When the weather was hot, they could play under the house. The dog and the cats liked it too.

As I said the airfield was very busy with pilot training and practice. One interesting addition was a catapult for aircraft carrier training located by the side of the regular runway. We became acquainted with many of the boys and personnel at the base who came to fish or just relax on the beach with their families. Our regular family groups didn't come as much anymore due to the booming aircraft work that was in demand.

The girls missed the friends they had made and had to turn to other diversions. They became more interested in the radio for music and the short serials. Some of their favorites were, Amos and Andy, Fibber Magee and Molly, I Love a Mystery, and The Bell Telephone Hour.

The programs started around 3:30 or 4 o'clock, and Bill would hurry the girls home from the bus stop. They would come dashing up the steps and into the house. I would have the radio warmed up and already playing when they came running in. Other good programs were, G. Washington Coffee, Fire Chief Gasoline, The Little Theater Around The Corner, Bob Hope, Burns & Allen, and Breakfast at Sardis.

## Chapter 24 All Good Things Must End

When John was about two years old, he became curious about matches. One day he climbed up on a chair that sat under a shelf where the oil lamp was kept and found a match. He struck it and held on until it burned down to his fingers and burned them. He gave a howl, and I ran to see what was going on just in time to see the match drop to the floor. I thought it was a good thing that he found out that fire burns while I was there. I hoped he had learned his lesson not to play with matches, but to be on the safe side, I gathered up the

matches and put them in a safe place out of his reach. I inadvertently missed one on the lamp shelf to his and my sorrow.

The next morning, while I was in the kitchen clearing away the breakfast dishes, there was a scream from the twins. I rushed in the living room to see what the trouble could be, and John was standing on the chair holding a flaming match close to his chest with his clothing on fire. He dropped the match on the chair as I took him off and laid him on the floor, quickly brushing the fire away from his face with my bare hands.

After the fire was out, I looked at the chair, and it was beginning to burn too. Laying John on the couch, I ran to the kitchen, snatched up a pan and dipped some water out of the barrel that stood by the kitchen door. I ran back to put out the fire, but while doing this, John turned over and slid off the couch. This broke the burned skin causing him more pain.

I managed to take off his shirts, and it was a job too, as they were still hot with fire. Trying to hold John, I made a solution of water, salt and soda and found a soft cloth to dip in the solution to put over the burn. He was already in shock now, and cold. I wrapped him in one of his crib blankets and sat down to wait until Bill came home, so we could get him to a doctor. He had taken the older girls to school and should have been back. Eleven o'clock came and still no Bill. He must have had car trouble to make him so late, but something had to be done.

Hearing the sound of heavy machinery, I decided the only thing to do was to walk up the road where some men were making a mound of dirt for target practice, and see if one of them could take us to the doctor at San Ysidro. I singled out the boss, showed him John's burn, and asked if he could spare one of his men to take us to San Ysidro to the doctor. It didn't take a minute to get on our way.

He waited until the doctor dressed the burn, and we returned home. John was still in shock, and I held him until Bill came home. When he heard what happened, he nearly went into shock, too. It could have easily been far more serious. A strong, dry east wind had been blowing for several days and everything was tinder dry. If that fire had gotten out of control, everything, except the car and fishing shack, would have been lost.

When Bill collected himself, he decided that we should take John to the doctor in Coronado. The doctor changed the dressing and put on a new medication that the Navy was using. A good friend of his, who was also a Navy doctor, came into the office and took a look at the burn, too. Several days later the doctor stationed at Ream Field heard of the burn accident, and he and another man came to the house to see John and looked at his burn. His name was Dr. Reese. Does this name ring a bell? The Reese Clinic in San Diego

was named after him.

There were many things that happened, some good, some not so good, that I have not mentioned that would take many more days to set to paper. But I think that from this point the children have their own memories of the years we lived at the sloughs. I will add one more happening that made us decide to move away from there.

During the war there was frequent target practice over the ocean from fighter planes equipped with machine guns, and several times some stray bullets sprayed our area. One day while I was hanging clothes on the line, bullets came uncomfortably close to me. Another time, while we were away, a machine gun on a fighter plane became jammed. Instead of staying out over the ocean until all the ammunition was gone, the pilot came in to land at Ream Field. We got a few hits as the plane passed over, and one was in a very bad place-- the kitchen window in back of the cook stove was shattered. The Little's house had holes through their roof. We heard later that the mess building at the field where the sailors ate their meals was hit, as well. Fortunately, no one got hurt there because it was between meals and the building was empty.

We finally decided that it was getting too hot for us in the sloughs, and we started looking for a house to move into. It didn't take long to find one in San Ysidro.

Customers who had boats were notified that we would be moving soon, and after all the boats were taken away, the packing of our things began. Some of our friends wanted to move into our house at the sloughs while we were getting settled in the new one. This was all right with us, and they stayed several months. When they left, we tore the house down board by board and hauled the lumber to our new home in San Ysidro, where we lived for eleven years.

Our departure from the beach was a sad and happy experience, or I should say, all of us had our own mixed emotions about it. Dad had tears in his eyes, and the rest of us were silent as all nine of us piled into the car with the dog, and Bessie and Blackie, the cats. I was holding the Rochester lamp on my lap.

The bard rock hen and the banty rooster and his harem had already been taken to their new home. In San Ysidro there were new things to look forward to like running water, indoor plumbing, electric lights, and neighbors. There was no more filling of lamps and cleaning of chimneys, no more sand fleas, no more floods, and no more sand in our shoes. Still, all in all, it was a good experience living at the beach. This is the reason I felt compelled to write it all down. I wanted my children to know how it was and not forget the most carefree times of their lives.

As for myself, I wouldn't have missed the experience for anything, but on the other hand, I wouldn't want to live it over again. Once is enough.

