

Life in the High Sierra's . . .

By Rena Beth Moore-Smith

The Moore Family

Rena Elizabeth Roop and Frederick Arthur Moore were married on May 8, 1920 at the Los Angeles courthouse. They took the train to Lone Pine, CA. Mom and dad settled in the town of Independence, just 16 miles north of Lone Pine. Dad was working as a surveyor and on cattle drives when needed, or for whom ever needed extra help in this cowboy life he grew up in. He soon joined in with the Chrysler & Cook's Mt. Whitney Pack Trains working as a packer out of the Whitney Portals and Carroll Creek pack station locations. Dad and Ted Cook (who also rented a room) lived in the Mary Austin house in Independence, CA. Dad remained life-time friends, and pack station guide/packer with Ted and Frank Chrysler. Dad thought this was the perfect outdoor life for him.



Rena and Fred Moore

In 1922, Mom & Dad moved to a small house in Lone Pine where my brother, Frederick (or Bunkie, as we liked to call him), was born. It seems like everyone in those days had a nickname. Every summer Dad set up a large tent at Whitney Portals (known earlier as Hunter's Flat). In the course of ten years, four more brothers were added to the Moore family. Then surprise, in 1932 a girl was born. Yep, that was me. Rena Beth. I was born on Thanksgiving day.



The town of Bartlett in Owens Valley

My first summer in Whitney Portals was when I was seven months old. That's when I began to love rocks – and I still do at 85! Summer after summer it was about all that I knew. There were always long time friends from Lone Pine and relatives visiting us at our campsite for lunch and evening visits. Sometimes we had rainbow trout to share with our meals. The smell of the tall pine trees in the mountain breezes, the sound of the near-by creek

and the flowing waterfall – still today, if I close my eyes – I can visualize it all again.

Three years later, in 1935, my youngest brother, Willis, was born. Whitney Portals was our playground – with strict safety rules, of course, and they were to be followed.

My Dad's winter job was in Bartlett with the soda ash plant. At times he had the family living there. My brother, Bobby, was born there in 1927.

In 1934, Dad and Mom found an old farm near the town of Compton that they thought would be the perfect place for their large family. Dad started working his winter job at the Stauffer Chemical Company which was affiliated with his job in Bartlett. We all helped to shape the old farm into a wonderful picturesque place to live – complete with fruit trees, a vegetable garden, chickens, rabbits, cats, a dog, and a cow. We still camped all summer in the Sierra's until September. There were a few years off and on that we lived in Lone Pine. One of those years was during WWII when we lived on a ranch in the Alabama Hills. We loved it there. It was all a wonderful life.

We had it ALL – there were no complaints!