

The Vintage Voice

Serving The Church Pension Fund's Family of Beneficiaries

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Amazing Pace

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It was a long trip. We would be going, all told, over four hundred miles to share a dinner with old friends. As I was driving along, the thoughts began to strike me as we ticked off mile after mile on the Interstate.

I was born in 1930. The idea, in 1930, that a seventy-five year old man could drive an automobile in excess of seventy miles an hour would have been absurd. It would take a relatively young and strong person to handle the wheel of a speeding sedan. And, of course, seventy miles an hour was in the realm of race car drivers at Daytona Beach taking advantage of wide open spaces and firm, packed sand.

There were very few radios in the cars made in 1930. Certainly, radios were not taken for granted, and the radio we had was AM and subject to static, fading and not a very good sound. There were no interstate highways at the time, though there was talk of a fancy highway being built in Pennsylvania. There was a coast-to-coast route called the Lincoln Highway, but it was not limited-access, and was, for the most part, two lanes.

We were on a wonderful highway and listening to stereo FM radio as we went along. In 1930, that would have been grist for an article in *Popular Science* magazine.

I reminded myself that I had two little pieces of stainless steel in arteries leading to my heart. In 1930, that prospect would have been preposterous. And if I told people that I went home from the hospital the next day and didn't feel any discomfort, they would have relegated me to the loony bin.

A friend of mine has a little hand-held device that tells him exactly where he is on the face of the earth. The device depends upon satellites parked up in space . . . of course, they are not really "parked." Given the incredible array of technologies involved, only Buck Rogers would have thought it possible in 1930.

Those of us born in 1930 faced a variety of diseases for which there was no cure. Infantile Paralysis was the most feared, I think, and there were a lot of us who got it before a vaccine almost eradicated it from the face of the Earth. There were no antibiotics.

There was no social security in 1930. There were institutions called "poor farms," and I never quite figured out how they worked.

There seemed to be a lot of poor people in those days, far more than there are today. It would be two years before FDR told everyone that they had nothing to fear but fear itself. Most people did not own automobiles, and certainly my three year old Chevy is far superior in every way to the most expensive car available in 1930. I need to remember that when the urge comes to trade it in for something newer.

Most people did not go to college, and had to make do with whatever education they could get. I have the impression that high schools were better than in preparing people for the realities of the job marketplace. It was hard for a good person to get a job in 1930, I am told. Most of the food available in today's supermarkets was unheard of in 1930. The supermarket itself was also unheard of.

So the miles rolled by under our tires, and music continued as we switched to CD's, and we were nearing the place where we could call our friends for exact instructions as to how to find their rural house. Make a telephone call? In a moving car? With a device scarcely four inches long?

The Church seemed to be more important then than now, though that may be my imagination. Certainly the priest was one of the most educated people in any community, but that was soon to change, especially after the G.I. Bill made college available to so many. People went to the Church they were born into and did not shop around. Loyalty to your Church was almost as important as faith. And what Father said, went. That was it. Period. End of discussion. No questioning.

Some airlines were just beginning, around 1930. If you wanted to go any place, you went by train. Trains seemed to go everywhere. I can remember, as a kid, getting maps of the western United States with just railroads on them, no roads. Some places off the rail lines had buses. The city buses in my home town were owned and operated by the Union Pacific railroad.

Now, of course, there are hardly any trains. And the buses don't seem to go anywhere, so we either stay home, take a plane, or do what we were doing, driving to see our friends.

So there have been wonderful technological changes since the day I was born. If it were possible to send a magazine of today back to that time, the ads alone would make little sense to the people of 1930. I wonder what the magazines of seventy years hence are going to look like? I wonder about the morals. As a little kid, I don't recall thinking a lot about abstract things. Belief in God and in Christ was taken for granted. I was pretty old before I met a non-Christian; probably in the service, come to think of it.

After a few hours in considerable comfort, we reached our friends' house and began the wonderful experience of talking and remembering and eating together. And of course, we all took digital pictures of each other with cameras that do not use film. We've since shared them by email.

Who could have imagined that in 1930? Or imagined the computer I write this on?

That trip took me farther than I expected to go.



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