

News from Nan

DICK'S FAMILY HISTORY

MY FAMILY'S 1951 MIGRATION TO CALIFORNIA

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After World War II there was a large migration of people and families from the East and mid-West to the West, especially California. Many men had been stationed in California during the War or had worked there in the aircraft industry or in the many military bases. After the war jobs were plentiful in California, especially in San Diego where Convair, Rohr and Ryan were hiring. In addition, the climate was very pleasant compared to that of the East.

My family (the Johnsons, Robins, Moseleys and Rebmans) had all been living north of Buffalo, New York, in the Tonawandas since before 1900. The men of the family mostly worked for Spaulding Fibre Company on Wheeler St in Tonawanda or for Erie Press Systems in the same town. By 1942, when I was born, my father, Harold, my uncle Kenneth (Kenny), and my grandfather Alfred Johnson were working as machinists at Spaulding, and my grandfather Edward Moseley was working as a carpenter at Erie Press making wooden packing cases for hydraulic presses (huge machines!). Spaulding made appliance components, plastic sheeting and bakelite plastic. Spaulding had been in business since 1911 and was the major employer in the area. However, in the late 40s, after the World War II boom wore off, things began to taper off at Spaulding.

During World War II my uncle Kenny moved to San Diego, California to work in the wartime aircraft industry, which had grown explosively during the war. After the war around 1950 Kenny and his family came on a visit to New York and evidently convinced my father that he would like living and working in San Diego as well. So in 1951 my parents sold their house, put their belongings in a moving van, and bought a 1950 Ford "woody" station wagon. In the Spring or early Summer my parents and my sister and I got into the station wagon and headed west to San Diego, California, about 3000 miles away. The picture at the top is a car at a recent classic car show that is the same model Ford we traveled in across the U.S.



My sister and I at a motel in Kentucky



At a motel in Waco, Texas (was that our only outfit?)

I don't remember which route we took crossing the country, but I know we went through Texarkana and Waco, Texas. When we were in Texas, my sister and I were looking out the car window to see if we could spot any cowboys.

When we arrived in California we stayed with my Uncle Kenny and his family near El Cajon briefly until we could find our own place, which was 2130 Ensenada St in Lemon Grove. My father went to work at a tool and die machine shop as a tool and die maker. Most men in our neighborhood either worked in the aircraft industry (at Convair, Rohr, or Ryan) or at one of the military bases in the area. There was a huge influx of people from out of state.

Within a year or so both my grandparents and my aunt Evelyn and uncle Dick Starr had also moved to San Diego. My mother's parents, the Moseleys, ended up living in an in-law unit behind the house my parents bought at 2046 Dayton Drive in Lemon Grove. So in a relatively short time span, almost my entire family had moved from New York to San Diego.

◀ 2017 ◀ CALIFORNIA ◀ DRIVING ◀ FAMILY ◀ JOHNSON ◀ NEW YORK ◀ WORLD WAR II