

New Year's Day 2004

Memories

My name is Mildred Hall and I will be eighty-nine years old on March 17th of this year. These are my memories of my eight years as the mail carrier on the Fallbrook/DeLuz mail route.

In 1945, my husband, Malcolm, and I moved to the little community of DeLuz with our growing family. Our home, which we rented from John Stohler, was on 80 acres. In 1947, we signed a U.S. Government contract to carry the mail between Fallbrook and DeLuz. We were paid \$50 dollars a month which really helped to make ends meet as gas was 19 cents a gallon, bread 10 cents a loaf and ground beef 20 cents a pound.

At that time, according to Ripley's Believe It or Not, the little post office in DeLuz was the smallest complete post office in the United States. I often sent mail from this tiny post office to my sister, Janet, who was a missionary in far off India.

It was exactly eleven miles from the post office in DeLuz to the larger one in Fallbrook, and I carried the mail three days a week. I did my shopping in Fallbrook while waiting to make the return trip to DeLuz. The shopping area was a full block on Main Street with two grocery stores, a drug store, the Mission Theater and, of course, the post office. In winter the unpaved dirt road was slick from rain and in summer there were often forest fires. There was no bridge over the Santa Margarita River and many times I had problems crossing it during high water. Sometimes I couldn't cross at all without a push from a big truck. My brakes would get wet and then I'd have a hard time stopping my vehicle.

The mail carrier who had the route before me used a cable to get the mail over the river. The DeLuz postmaster would come down to the river and pick up the mail from Fallbrook and then send the mail for Fallbrook back over the cable.

In approximately 1950 we purchased some property of our own and began building a house in Fallbrook. The only time I failed to get the mail through was during a fire. I was told by the fire department that there was no way to get to DeLuz that day, so I turned around and went back to Fallbrook.

Whenever I returned with a heavy sack of mail, Mrs. Baxter, the postmistress, helped me get the big bag into the tiny office. It was a tight squeeze for the two of us. Mrs. Baxter would sort the mail inside the office and then distribute it to the customers' boxes. The families could pick up their mail from these boxes without entering the post office.

I also delivered mail to the boxes of the three families who lived along the road from Fallbrook to DeLuz. My teenaged niece, Carol Blount, would often ride along in my Ford Model A to keep me company on the hot dusty route. She remembers with fondness, Mrs. A. B. Dinsen, who was one of these customers. Mrs. Dinsen gave Carol her first puppy, Waggles, who lived to be 19 years old.

My children attended the one room DeLuz School for several years. Mrs. Connors was the teacher at that time. She was also the editor of the DeLuz News, which was published once a week. Mrs. Connors knew everything that went on in that small community and it was all printed in the paper!

Three months before my contract was up at the end of 1954, I sublet my route to Red and Delia Bernardin as we were moving to Sacramento. We had become acquainted with the Bernardins through gymkana activities (games on horseback), which was the most popular sport in the area at that time. Both of our families had many trophies to show for our efforts.

It was an interesting time -- with fires and rattlesnakes in summer and high water and slick roads in winter.

Mrs. Dinsen and Mrs. Baxter were great ladies, the Bernardins were good friends and Mrs. Connors was a wonderful teacher for my children.

Those were the good old days!

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