

Dirt Road and Model T's

Let's go back to dirt roads and Model T cars and Eudora athletics in the years from 1926-28. Can you remember any of the trips I am talking about?

This trip was to Gardner to play football. It had rained and was a cold day. Some players went in the cars of interested town people, but this day there weren't enough volunteer drivers. Floyd Broers came to the rescue and offered to take the balance of us in his dad's Model T truck. With straw on the floor and blankets to cover up with, we made it to Gardner over muddy roads. The game was played on a field with water standing everywhere and rain still coming down. On the return trip our blankets became water soaked and our clothes also. East of Prairie Center was a long steep hill and we got stuck. All got out and pushed until we reached the top, proceeded to right the car again and drove home without any more trouble.

Another time we were to play a basketball game with Bonner Springs at Bonner. It had rained and the muddy roads were slick. Rather than drive all that way, we decided to take the interurban (train) from Denzer Station, 4 miles north of Eudora at the intersection of what is now 32 Highway and Leavenworth County Road No. 1. The station at Bonner was at the east end of Main Street and had a small restaurant.

We got to Denzer early because of the schedule—got our tickets and were ready to board when the train came. The single car had a small rope that ran from the front of the car to the rear where the passengers got on. In front, the rope was attached to a bell so that when all were aboard, the conductor, who saw to the boarding of the train, would pull the rope, ringing the bell and the driver in front would start the train. On this trip, though one of our smart ones pulled the rope before everyone was on and the train started. Needless to say, there was some yelling by the conductor to stop! Also a reprimand to the boy who did it.

After getting to Bonner, we walked several blocks to the high school and lounged around a couple of hours, went back down to the restaurant for a lunch and had 2 basketball games, first and second teams. We had no girls' basketball in those years. Luckily we had a different conductor when returning home on the interurban.

Another trip I remember was to a ball game at Shawnee Mission. There was just the one Shawnee Mission High School at the time. It is now Shawnee Mission North. It was in the Kaw Valley League with Eudora. Transportation was hard to get then. One of our teachers, a Mr. Robinson, usually would take a load but this day he wasn't able to go but offered his Model T Sedan if we could find a driver. One of our players was Paul Woodard, whose father had the Ford Agency and Garage here in Eudora. [H.O. Woodard's Ford Agency was the first of its kind in Eudora. Established in 1918, it was located at 736 Main Street.] Paul knew all about cars, so he volunteered. Everything went good until we got to a long rather steep hill, west of Zorah on our return home. Near the top of the hill, the car stopped. Paul let the car roll back to the bottom of the hill, where he backed it into a driveway. He knew the trouble but the rest of us didn't and he kept us guessing. He stepped on the starter and it started. Then he pulled out of the driveway, facing the car down hill and backed up the hill with no trouble!! When he got to the top of the hill, he turned the car around and came on back to Eudora.

The gas tank in those cars was under the front seat. To fill the gas tank, the seat cushion had to be removed. When the tank got a little too low, because of the gravity feed to the carburetor, on a steep hill such as we were it, the carburetor couldn't get gas and the car would stop. Going backwards, the tank would be higher and therefore the gas would flow. Mr. Robinson put gas in it the very next day!!!

Paul Sommer, 11/1992