

*(Story from Roy Fitzgerald's Life.)*

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*“The Memoirs of Roy Madison Fitzgerald”*

*“The Roving Fitzgerald’s”*

*An autobiography by Roy Fitzgerald*

*Submitted By D.J. Freeman*

*This is* a long story but only a small piece from my Great Grandfather's autobiography.

I went to work for the Nevada Packing Company. While working there we bought our first auto--a 1914 Ford. We sure had some great old trips in that Ford. We always carried a camping outfit and a big tin box full of groceries on the running board. One day, just before pulling into Alturas, California, as we were driving along the side of a very steep hill, the strap holding the box on the running board broke, and down the hillside, bouncing high in the air went our grocery supply, and there was not much money left to replace it. So I stopped the old Ford, and scrambled down the hill to where the box had come to rest, expecting to find it empty, but again the Irish luck held--for the strap holding lid shut had not broken. So there all the supplies were, though a mite scrambled up.

Once before we had driven into Alturas to take in a movie. Going home that night, when we were about half way there, rap, rap, rap went a burned out connecting rod.

*I always* carried extra connecting rods, for with Ford's unique oiling system, burning out a rod was a fairly regular happening. So putting a bucket that we had in the car under the oil drain plug, I took the plug out, and while the oil was draining I took the tail light loose from the car, and used it as a light while taking the crank pan off. To remove the burned-out bearing to get the piston with rod out, I had to take the top off the motor. My wife drained the water out of the radiator into an old rusty five gallon can she found along side an old deserted shack. While my wife held the improvised light for me, and our daughter slept peacefully in the back seat, I took the piston and rod out, fastened the new rod to the piston, put it back in the motor, crawled under the car, put the bottom half of the bearing on the rod, tightened it to what I thought was about right, and put the pan on.

**While** I was putting the oil plug back, my wife gave a scream, and dropped the can she was filling the radiator with, which gave me a nice shower bath. I called to her to find out what had happened. It seemed the old rusty can was the home of some lizards, and when she started pouring the water into the radiator one of them came out with the water, but being too big to go through the opening in the radiator, had acted as a plug--and when my wife felt the water running out of the radiator instead of in, she reached over to find out what was stopping the water from going into the radiator. She found out all right. The first thing she touched was the wriggling tail of that lizard, which explained the scream, the dropped can of water, and my shower. The radiator was only about half full, so after fastening the tail light back on, we drove slowly to where a small stream crossed the road, finished filling the radiator, and drove on to camp. I had done as good a job putting that rod in with only that dim tail light for light, as I could have done in broad daylight.

That was the best feature of the Ford--most anybody could repair it.

*D.J.*

D.J. Freeman was allowed to reprint this excerpt from "The Roving Fitzgerald's",  
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