**Going Home by Marje Smith Perkins**

The gravel road that leads me home is like a slideshow at the back of my mind— images from my childhood fill the screen in my head. I will tell you what I remember, or at least what I think I remember. As Mark Twain said, "I have arrived at an age at which things that I remember most clearly never happened at all." The gravel road to my childhood home runs east past a grove of dying trees— sagging leafless branches. The road, bumpy like an old washboard, shakes me as I sit in the passenger seat of our rented car. Ruts created by the countless cars, farm machinery, and trucks guide our SUV through the dips and mudholes. How many times have I rattled and shook as I rode down on this old gravel road to and from the farm? Furrows with sprouting corn stalks replace wooded areas. Giant sprinklers crawling across vast fields dominate the landscape. A ghostly abandoned farmhouse huddles in an overgrowth of weeds and trees. Images beside the old gravel road are changed, but the rutted jarring road remains. While exploring the road to the farm, I was curious about the old barn? Before I was born, on Memorial Day in 1935, a devastating flood along the Republican River caused damage and destruction along its path. My family sheltered in a neighbor's hayloft as the floodwaters raged. The barn survived the flood, but was the reminder of my family's history still standing? The house's roof ripped apart during the flood, but it remains looking as it did before the 1935 flood. As we slowly progress by the farmyard, I see a large, well-established shiny metal shed on the site of the weather-worn old barn. Though the barn is gone, the family stories of the harrowing night spent in the hayloft remain as pictures in my mind. Continuing on the bumpy country road, I glance to my right, and a flood of pictures reel through my brain. I see Mrs. Brown's house. Happy memories fill my senses: feeling the cold sting on my face as I ride a sled down the hill beside her house, the aroma of Mrs. Brown's fresh-baked cookies as we chat and share cookies and milk at her kitchen table, the yipping of the little black puppy she gave me fills my ears, and dust collects on my shoes as I skip through her yard on my way home from country school.