

Willis Clair Vandiver
An autobiography

MY LIFE BEGINS

I was born June 2, 1919. Mother was cared for by a mid-wife who was called Aunt Annie Thurber by all who knew her well. I had two sisters – Olive Mae (3) and Vonita Loree (6) and four brothers – Chester Herschel (8), Merrill Berdean (10), Clifford Leon (12) and Willard (Bill) Pearl (13).

According to my sister, Loree, in her personal history, “In the fall of 1919, Dad managed to scrape together enough money for Mother to take us three youngest children and go to Missouri for a visit. We went by train and spent about two months from September to November. I’m sure Mother greatly enjoyed that time spent with her family, her relatives and her friends in her old home.”

Dad bought the grazing rights on an old homestead over at Fir Grove – about 15 miles from the Anderson Place where we were living. Dad moved the family there at the beginning of the summer of 1920. It was poor sagebrush land infested with rattlesnakes – obviously not a good place for a young family. A ladder had to be climbed to reach the sleeping quarters in the attic. At floor level the outside door had not yet been hung. One night, Mother heard something on the first floor. She got out of bed and went to the entrance hole, struck a match, looked down and was surprised to see a bobcat jump off the table and run out the door. At the end of summer, Dad moved the family back to the Anderson Place.

The only glimpse that I have of myself as a toddler is a quote from a letter my mother wrote March 1921 to her sister Mae in Missouri. “...made Willis rompers yesterday have been making him a full outfit of rompers he had outgrown all others he had and they were good yet he sure is a big husky boy his eyes very dark brown and dark hair he is talking everything now and has all teeth but stomach and eye teeth the boys have got him so spoiled we can hardly live with him.”

Also, that spring of 1921, according to Loree, “Dad got the spotted fever. He had been grubbing back the encroaching sagebrush on the Gridley place and had been bitten by ticks. It was a very severe case. He lay feverish and delirious very near death for the better part of two weeks. ... When at last Dad began to recover, his strength was far spent. At first, he couldn’t stand up unsupported. As soon as possible, he wanted to get outside. We had had an unusually rainy spring and by early June everything was green and inviting. I would go outside with him carrying a chair. He could walk only a few feet at a time. Then I’d set the chair down and he’d rest a while and so we went about from place to place inspecting this and that. Day by day, he got stronger, but he was still unable to work when the time came for the birth of the expected baby.”

When I was two years and 15 days old, Mother gave birth to a healthy baby girl on June

17, 1921. The next day, Mother called out in sudden distress and then never spoke again. The area around one eye immediately was filled with blood. Later in the evening she lapsed into a coma and death soon followed leaving eight children without a mother. It seems reasonable that she died from a ruptured aneurysm in her brain, but because medicine and doctoring were still in their infancy, the cause of her death will never be known for sure. She died June 20th at the age of 37.

In those days on Camas Prairie, there were no funeral homes or refrigeration systems where bodies could be kept until burial. One of the neighbors, Rudolph (Dolph) Naser, a carpenter, made Mother's casket and Mrs. Naser lined and finished it. They worked all night to finish it in time for the funeral the next day. She was buried in the Manard Idaho Cemetery.

When the dear mother is gone, who cooks the meals, washes and mends the clothes? Who comforts the young children with their little cuts and bruises? Who usually sets the example for good manners and kindly living? To whom does Dad turn for support and help in decision making? Sad that a Mother had to die at age 37 and leave so many who needed her and loved her so much.

From Loree's account – "The only relatives who came from Missouri were Uncle Perry and Granddad Woods. Granddad came with instructions to bring us younger children back with him. Grandmother was not fully recovered from a stroke she'd had the preceding year and wasn't able to care for children, but Mother's two sisters would have divided us between them. I was terribly afraid I'd have to go back to Missouri, but Dad couldn't bring himself to let even the new little baby go so far away."

Mrs. Erastus (Edna) Nielson stepped forward to temporarily take my new baby sister, Noma Edna. (She was known throughout her life as Edna.) Mrs. Nielson had a mentally retarded son and two other children, but she willingly cared for Edna until Mr. and Mrs. John Bahr arranged to take Baby Edna two weeks later and rear her as their own. They had no children having lost their only child through an accidental death and Mrs. Ethel Bahr could have no more. They were our neighbors and lived only two miles away. They legally adopted Edna when she was about a year old. When I was a little older, I was told Edna was my sister but not to tell her. She was told later and grew up knowing her true parentage. During our pre-school years, she and I often played together when Dad had business to conduct with Johnny Bahr. Bahrs had a strawberry bed just west of their house. Through my encouragement Edna and I would raid it. Being older I often led the play activity and Edna usually went along. Our relationship has been good, but the



Willis & Edna – 1930

circumstances of life deprived us of a closeness I have missed.

In my opinion, Edna's early life was harder in some respects than mine. Mrs. Bahr died when Edna was six. Edna then lived with Johnny's mother in Gooding, Idaho. This grandmother was the one to tell Edna that she had another family. That grandmother died about three years later. Edna then batched with her dad (Johnny) until he married Vivian Brooks who, in my opinion, never accepted Edna nor gave her a chance. Her dad was truly good to her all his life. He died as a result of a car accident the summer of 1972.

As for the rest of the family, Dad kept us together for a year. Mae, age six, began school at the Springdale School. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Roberts came from Hagerman and asked to have Mae live with them. She finished the first grade and the second grade while with them. Dad heard from a good friend that Mae was being mistreated so Dad sent Merrill to Hagerman to bring her home. Mr. and Mrs. Dean Perkins took her for the summer. Dad stopped by one day to see her. She cried and wanted to go home with him. He took her home. She went to Springdale school for her third grade year along with Herschel and me.

Mr. and Mrs. George Kitelinger (a neighbor eight miles north of our ranch) who had no children came and asked for Loree, age ten, who they really wanted and whom they thought ought to be where there was a woman's touch. She attended the Crichton Country School. She lived with them until she was 12 and ready for high school. Loree entered high school when she was 12. She graduated when 16, went two years to college and was teaching when 18.

After Loree left Kitelingers, they took Mae. She lived there and attended the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades in the Crichton School. She would come home now and then. We would play together.

The five boys, ages 2, 10, 12, 13 and 14 at the time of Mother's death, lived on the ranch with Dad.

Other neighbors would offer to take me home to raise since I was so young. Dad always declined those offers to my great relief, but it always bothered me when I saw a car approaching. I remember a family that especially wanted me was the Elmer Nielson family. One summer day, an old Model T Ford came chugging down the rocky lane to our front forty. The man who got out to open the gate was Elmer Nielson. I was apprehensive, so I went to the back of the old cow cellar and hid in the rocks. Dad soon missed me and came out and called my name. I didn't answer but was confronted with two unpleasant choices as I saw it. I could answer Dad's call and maybe Nielsons would take me home or face Dad's wrath for not coming when called. I chose the latter. I waited until I saw the old Flivver pull away before leaving my place of refuge. I don't remember exactly what Dad said, but he made it absolutely clear to me that I would remain a permanent member of the bachelor clan. I worried no more about being taken away from home.

At the date of Mother's death, I was two years and 18 days old and have no memories

before that time. I can only speculate about the emptiness and sadness felt by my brothers and sisters, but especially by my dad. Everyone in the family was trapped by the harsh circumstances of fate and of rural life with no electricity, no car, and living in a cold clapboard shack and as poor as church mice.

With his outstanding courage, Dad organized this young family. Dad had a plan for everyday living. One of the older boys would be in the house for a year. It would be his job to prepare all the meals, wash the clothes once a week, and help milk the cows twice a day, but he would not have to work in the field during the middle part of the day. He would also have to babysit Mae and me until we were older.

Clifford was the first to be at the house. He was thirteen years of age. He proved to be a very good choice. Cliff was always fair as a brother. He was calm and quiet. We younger siblings went to him for justice when we felt picked on. Even though he was second from the oldest, he had the best leadership qualities of the rest. Loree helped him care for Mae and me the first year after Mother's death. Cliff was able to complete the 8th grade by studying at home then going to school to take the tests.

Our diet was simple and monotonous. Seldom did we have desserts. Our meals consisted of milk, bread, meat, potatoes, beans and dried fruit – usually dried peaches, apples or raisins. Cliff was the best student of my older brothers and quickly sought help to learn how to make biscuits – both sour dough and baking powder – pies, etc. He did his job faithfully and quite well. Bill took his turn the next year.

The circumstances of our family at that time didn't allow the lazy, weak hearted or those lacking courage to survive. Our dad had iron courage, a will and desire to see the family through hard times until they were old enough to make it on their own. He never remarried but dedicated the rest of his time, energy and love to his children. His affection was not often expressed overtly, but each of us knew he cared about us. What he knew about ranching was taught to his sons. All of us learned honesty, neighborliness, kindness and dependability from the example Dad practiced. We learned the true meaning of hard work and long hours which built for each of us strong bodies.

OUR BACHELORS' HOME LIFE

One year had passed since Mother's death. There were eight of us living in the same two room shack with an attic one could enter by ladder from the outside. In this house there lived Dad (46), Willard (14), Clifford (13), Merrill (12), Herschel (10), Loree (9), Mae (6) and Willis (3).

It was a very different time back then. There were hitching posts in the town of Fairfield, Idaho, instead of parking spots for cars. The cars that were owned in rural Idaho were mostly Model T Fords. They were always black and seldom driven more than 25 miles per hour on dirt

roads – roads free of gravel or pavement.

Let us suppose you have just come in from a hot days work in need of a bath. If you chose to bathe in warm water, first you must build a fire in the stove and heat the water. You would get the wash tub which was round, 14 inches high and about three feet in diameter. The tub would be placed on the floor and you bathed in it using your best positions depending on your size and shape. Baths were usually taken on a weekend after the work was done and supper eaten. Often more than one person bathed in the same water because of the work and inconvenience in getting the old water carried out and the new water heated. There were too many hours of hard work already finished to be concerned about higher standards of cleanliness and grooming.

The standards of living for the poor and middle class were much lower than now. If you needed to go to the bathroom, you went to the backyard privy about 50 yards from the house. The toilet paper consisted of pages of the Sears or Montgomery Ward catalog. Some of these pages were similar to newspaper. Others were very slick and to be avoided. As a child I learned by experience which to use. Crude, yes, but most country home privies were similar.

Water for our drinking and home use came from a willow covered, fresh water spring that had been rocked in with flat rock – some of which extended out from the regular wall making a shelf below the water surface on which items could be set to keep them cool and fresh. The spring served as a cooling house since refrigerators were not in use. I remember on occasion watermelon floating in the cold spring. It was a rare treat for us in rural Camas Prairie.

An old Home Comfort range with a warming oven and a five gallon water reservoir attached on the right side graced the kitchen. Dishes were kept in a traditional cupboard with glass doors and a small work table. A large cream separator was bolted down beside the kitchen door. The dining table and chairs completed the kitchen furniture. Sleeping quarters for the boys were in a shop about 50 feet east of the house. At night, kerosene lamps supplied the light. The wicks had to be properly trimmed for maximum light. If you wanted to read, you had to sit close to the lamp. Our beds had web springs with feather mattresses. In winter it was necessary for those sleeping in the shop to have extra blankets and quilts with a tanned horsehide on top to shed the snow or rain that leaked through the worn out shingles.

Our steady income came from cream sold to the local creamery. The 20 to 30 cows, mostly Holsteins, were milked twice a day. Milking the cows consumed about four hours each day. First the cows had to be driven from the pasture into the barn, put in the staunches, fed hay, and their udders cleaned. The milk buckets and ten gallon milk cans were brought from the house. The milking was done on a one-legged stool with the three gallon bucket clamped between the knees. You were considered a fast milker if you could milk one cow in five to seven minutes. Some cows were easy to milk and others were hard to milk. In our milking herd there were usually a few cows

that had to be hobbled because they would kick and spill the milk and hurt the milker. The milk was taken to the separator and poured into the large round bowl on top. The separator operated with a bar handle which had to be turned around and around by hand to get it up to speed. The separating device was turned on and the handle continued to be turned at a certain number of revolutions per minute. The skimmed milk came out one spout and the cream out the other – each into its own container. It took close to 30 minutes to separate 20 to 30 gallons of milk. The cream would be poured into five gallon milk cans with tapered tops. The cream was taken to the spring and set on the underwater shelf submerging it about half the length of the five gallon can into the cold water to keep it as fresh as possible until it was hauled by wagon eight miles to the creamery in Fairfield. The skimmed milk was either fed to growing calves or to the pigs. Of course, some milk and cream were used for cooking and on our cooked cereal. (We called it mush). After each milking the separator had to be taken apart and washed, dried and put back together for the next milking.

The summer of 1924, Dad and my older brothers hauled in flat lava rocks from the open range land and started building a rock house to provide more living space. Dad had no building skill but used common sense to figure out how to do this. The rocks were laid flat on top of each other to build two vertical walls placed roughly six inches apart. The space between the walls was filled with soil and tamped down. A gabled roof was built across the walls and wooden shingles were used to shed the weather. A large cellar was built on the west side of the house to keep our winter supply of potatoes, a few apples, dried peaches, prunes, raisins and more.



The house had only one room about 20 feet by 12 feet. On the west wall there was a ladder attached to the wall. Through a cubby hole above the ladder one could reach the attic. The ceiling

in the house served also as a floor in the attic where two double beds were used for sleeping quarters. It was an improvement from the old cold shop where my older brothers had slept for several years.

Since we had a new rock one room house with a place to sleep in the attic, the old two room clapboard shack was used as a separator room and storage.

MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

We had an old sow at one time and I was told that I would get on her back and ride her around for fun. I must have been three or younger because I have no memory of this.

At four years old, I was responsible for starting a fire in the pasture. It took the whole family using wet gunny sacks to put it out. When Dad came in from fighting the fire he asked, “Willis, did you start that big fire?” I replied, “I only started a little one.”

Mae and Loree came home for a short summer visit in 1923. Loree asked me if I would like to hear a good story about a horse. “Yes” was the answer. She was still in bed so she invited Mae and me to hear the story of the “Enchanted Horse.” The story was well illustrated with pictures of the magical horse that somehow remains clear in my 80 year old brain. I now realize how much I missed in the development of the mind through reading and early contact with good books. It was only when Loree came home that I was exposed to books and stories.



1925 – Bill, Herschel, Merrill, Jim (Dad), Clifford
Loree, Willis & Mae



Willis, Herschel, Loree, Mae

When I was about five to eight years of age, I looked forward to summer visits Mae would make. From Kitelinger’s, she would ride an old white mare named Babe to our house, and we would play most of the day together. We built little houses, barns and corrals out of rocks. Often the barns were stocked with an ample number of stick horses. Our imaginations supplied us with the dialogue to play house as children do today. Although the play was thoroughly enjoyed, dread

always hung over my head for I knew her visit would soon end by the necessity of her return back to Kitelingers and I would be alone again – the only child in our bachelor family. I would be lonely and miss her! I learned the truth of the old saying, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” There were times when Mae stayed a few days, but because of distance and mode of travel, this was seldom.

During the winter months, Dad supplemented his income with trapping animals like coyotes, beavers, bobcats, weasels (sometimes called ermine), muskrats, and even skunks. In the spring, he shipped the furs to Fuxton Brothers in Missouri and would get a check back. Before I was old enough to go to school and when it was just Dad and me at home, I used to go with Dad on his trap line to service the traps. He made me a pair of homemade skis. He had his own homemade skis. I'd take hold of the a little rope he would tie to his belt and tag along on my skis.

When I was about six, we got word that Aunt Suzie, Dad's sister-in-law, was coming to visit us. Being bachelors, we seldom had company besides my sisters, so to have someone come to visit was a very big event, especially it being our aunt. My older brothers could remember her from Missouri. The day she arrived, Dad asked me to take the horse, “Old Brownie” and go get the cows to bring them in for milking. There was a gate I had to bring the cows through. Dad had taught me that if you get down on your knees and take the bottom wire off the gate first the leverage is such that even a six year old could open a gate. I got on Old Brownie and went and got the cows, opened the gate, left it down until I drove the cows through the gate then I put the top wire over the fence post first and then put my shoulder behind the bottom and I got the gate shut although it wasn't very tight. To get on Old Brownie I had to lead him up to a fence post, climb up the post and get on his back. So I got a hold of him and started to lead him around when he stepped on my big toe. I was wearing shoes that were just canvas with regular rubber soles. I don't remember whether he had shoes on or not. Because we were starting in a circle, he just pivoted on my toe and tore my big toenail clear out. Of course, my shoe was torn open and I could see my toe. It was bleeding and you can image my reaction as a six year old. I squalled all the way to the home driving the cows ahead of me since they were already on the path. Clifford met me at the corral gate. He picked me up in his arms and took me into the house. Aunt Suzie was there. As soon as I saw her, I quit my squalling and tried to act like I was tough. With the toenail just hanging by a little bit of skin, Clifford prepared to clip it off. That suggestion was very frightening to me since I believed that it would really hurt. He reassured me that I wouldn't even feel a thing, which I didn't. I was soon bandaged up and in a few weeks I had a new toenail.

When I was six going on seven, I was sick and vomiting and had a pain in my side. We figured it was appendicitis. Dad sent for Annie Bahr, who lived about two miles away. She was

depended upon by many in the county for medical assistance when they couldn't get a doctor. I don't know if she was either a practical nurse or a real nurse. When she came, it was concluded that I needed to be taken to the doctor in Gooding and also that I needed a bath before we left. The worse part of it was that Annie Bahr was the one who was going to give me a bath in our old round wash tub. A woman giving a man a bath! As a boy of that age, that was about the worst thing that could happen, but being so sore that I could hardly move, she gave me a bath anyway. Bill Elsberry who had a new 1924 Star car was also sent for. It had two bench seats with a cloth top. Bill Elsberry and Dad sat in the front and they put me in the back and we drove to Gooding. I was just about the right length for the back seat. It was quite a trip in those days. It must have been about 28 or 30 miles from our house over dirt roads with lots of rocks and what not. When we got to the hospital, I was put into bed, and overheard the doctor and Dad talking outside my door. The doctor said, "Well I don't believe we'll operate on him. We'll pack him in ice." They got some kind of device that held ice in an entire ring. It came clear across my stomach and they fastened it around me, and I was in the ice all night. I never was operated on but stayed in the hospital about six days. I was taken to Grandma Bahr's home, the mother of Johnny Bahr, once I was discharged from the hospital. I've forgotten all the medicines I have ever taken in my life except the medicine I had to take after my hospital stay. It was in a brown bottle, and I had to take a full tablespoon of it several times a day. It was terrible! After several days, Dad came and got me and that was the end of my appendicitis.

PLEASANT EXPERIENCES OF CHILDHOOD

Our days were busy but not without some fun and recreation. I don't want to leave the impression that my childhood was all hardship with no joy. My brothers had rifles and hunted sage chickens, rock chucks, rabbits, and squirrels. Sometimes during their teenage years they held miniature rodeos. They would ride horses out on the range land bordering on our ranch and run some cattle into a corral. They would rope them and then using a rope for a "surcingle" (rope tied around the horse's belly) would try to ride them for fun. I went along sometimes as a spectator – too young yet to participate – until I was nine years old; then I demanded my turn and got it. It was common to get thrown off a calf among the sage and rocks, but I never remember a serious injury.

One Sunday we were headed out to do some riding when a coyote was sighted. We ran him down with our horses. He became exhausted so we surrounded him and one of my brothers killed him with a hammer carried in a saddle bag. There was a five dollar bounty on each coyote in those days which provided a worthwhile prize.

There were homemade toys such as whistles and sling shots. My brothers knew how to make a good whistle from green willows that really worked well for calling the dog or just blowing

on it for fun. They also taught me how to make a “beanie flipper” from a willow branch and two pieces of rubber cut from an inner tube with a piece of leather joining them together. A rock in the fold of the leather would work as a missile. We would have contests to see who could hit tin cans. My brother, Herschel, even killed an occasional cottontail rabbit which was a good treat for hungry bachelors.



The poor ol' coyote. Willis is the little one.

I have spent many happy hours with my “beanie flipper” shooting at cans, English sparrows and ground squirrels. I met success enough times to keep me interested playing by myself. There was an eight year spread in age between me and my next older brother.

Dad asked me if I wanted to earn some money for myself. Of course I was eager to do so. He showed me how to set squirrel traps at the mouth of their hole. He promised me two cents for every squirrel I could catch. To collect my money I had to cut the squirrels' tail off and present them to Dad for payment. My sister Mae got in on this when she would come home for a few days visit.

The fact that I was able to do work that could be done as a child made me feel good about myself. Dad saw to it that every family member had a responsibility to help with the jobs assigned. One of my jobs was bringing in the dairy cows in the late afternoon for milking. From the time I was five years old, I would ride a gentle horse to the cow pasture. Just riding the horse, I was in control just like the men. The feel of a bareback ride on a horse was a joy to me.

Dad always left the wire gate to the pasture unstretched so a child could open it. He taught me how to put my shoulder to the bottom of the gate post and unhook the wire as the first step, then the top would slip off the gate post easily. He reassured me of my value even when reminding me to get the cows at five o'clock. Thus at five years of age, I was taught to tell time.

I enjoyed being in the cow barn at milking time with my undersized milk pail and milking stool. We boys would have contests with some jobs like who could milk a cow in the shortest time.

Like all small children, learning the simple things can be an accomplishment if the family members encourage the accomplishments and praise one's success. I always felt good helping, knowing that I was a good contributor to the family. My older siblings praised me enough to build pride in that fact.

When I was taken along to neighbors' homes, which usually were well supplied with better furniture and were more attractively kept by the mothers, I noticed the difference and appreciated the look of nice dishes instead of our tin plates. All the glass plates and glassware that Mother had when she died was evidently either given away or broken by the time I can remember, and Dad replaced all the glassware with tin plates. All our plates were bent up to some extent because the boys would make a game out of setting the table. They would throw the plates onto the table to see if they could get the spinning plate to come to a stop where it was to be set. The boys would vie against one another to see who the best plate placer was. Of course, sometimes they would miss and the plate would hit the floor and get bent. The neighbors all were very nice and friendly to me. The mothers often gave me cookies or a piece of cake. Those wonderful foods didn't grace our bachelors' table.

In those days of childhood, I learned to enjoy finding duck nests full of eggs; the beauty of wild flowers and the songs of birds in the spring. In the summer, the beauty of nature was a pleasure to me – wild grass growing into hay, the wild birds singing (especially the Meadowlarks), the squirrels sitting by their holes like bowling pins chirping and scolding. These sights and sounds are still clear in my memory.

Dad made a special effort to point out the unusual nests of orioles and how they differed from a robin's or sparrow's nest. Once Clifford brought several Mallard duck eggs home and put them in the nest of a setting hen. When they hatched, it was a special event for me to see them peck through the shell and take their first duck walk. When the mother hen led her mixed races – little ducks and little chickens – through the garden where there was a small stream, she became quite frustrated when some of her family went in swimming as she and her chicks preferred dry ground. The ducks grew up and would have flown away but Clifford clipped their wings so they couldn't fly.

My oldest brother, Bill, came home with a baby badger and gave him to Loree who had come home to spend several weeks of her summer vacation. Like all young animals the badger grew fast and he dug several holes in the back yard and garden. He was very playful and would climb up and sit on your shoulder. Since he was playing havoc with the garden, Dad decided the badger had to go. Loree took him to Fairfield and sold him to McHans who ran the local hardware

store. They were going to keep the badger in their hardware store as an item of interest. They tried to put a collar on him and of course that didn't work. A badger's neck is bigger than its head and you can't put a collar on them because they can back right out of it. The badger whipped several dogs that came his way. It began to harm their hardware business. McHans gave the badger to a brother that lived somewhere in the Snake River Valley. The story came back to us that the badger killed several of their chickens which earned him a death penalty. But I still question the fairness of the badger's sentence when he was doing what is natural for a badger. My advice would be to those choosing wild animals for a pet – "know your animal."

A badger and a weasel are the two animals that I know of that aren't afraid of anything. If they get mad, they will attack instantly. Merrill came home one winter when I was about 10 years old. We went out to feed the cattle one snowy morning. We had a coyote hound named Rice. He was white but he had one brown spot on his hip and that's how he got his name. We came across a badger who took off after Rice. Then Dad got too close and the badger grabbed Dad by his leather shoelaces and didn't let go. Of course, Dad was kicking, but badgers weigh about 30 pounds and can't be just kicked off. Dad hollered for Merrill who was about 20 years old and weighed over 200 pounds. Merrill grabbed the badger by the hind legs and gave a quick strong pull that got the badger loose from Dad's shoe but also jerked Dad right off his feet. In that one pull, Merrill swung the badger's head over a fence post and killed him.

MY HORSE WHITEY

When I was four years old, Dad brought something home especially for me. He took me to the corral and there stood a horse as white as snow except for three mottled buckskin spots above his right flank. Dad said, "Willis, Old Whitey is yours to ride."

There was nothing in the world that would have made me happier. I couldn't even sleep that night thinking about my horse. The next morning Dad lifted me on him and handed me the reins, and I rode around the barn lot like a prince. The next day I practiced getting on him by leading him up to a fence post, climbing the post and hopping over on his back. Whitey eventually grew tired of this maneuver and would swing his rear end around moving away from the post. I had to devise a new method of mounting. Soon I discovered that by grasping hide and hair in my fists I could crawl up his left side hand over hand and get on. When Dad first saw me do this, he must have been surprised for his response was, "Well, I'll be damned," which was his expression for amazement. Several times when neighbors were present, Dad would request "Willis, show Mr. Nielson, or Mr. Shear, how you can get on Old Whitey." I would then grasp, grunt and climb up Whitey's left side and straddle his withers with my short legs. Then while I had an audience, I would gallop Old Whitey out the gate and up the road. Whitey was a joy to me, and I loved this

gentle animal that stopped and waited when I fell off – careful not to step on me. He would allow me to walk between his hind legs without moving and never a sign of a snort.

We had several open springs in our 40 acres in front of our house. They varied in depth and some of them were as wide across as fifteen feet. After riding around the farmstead one morning for a few hours, I decided that old Whitey needed a drink. So I rode him up to a spring and he wouldn't put his head down to drink. I thought, "This stupid old horse. He's thirsty. He can't help but be thirsty. I've been riding him for about two hours or so and he must be thirsty." Urging him again, I kicked him in the ribs with my heels. Pretty soon he decided that what I wanted him to do was jump into the spring, and so he did, throwing me off into the water. I was riding him bareback with a bridle. The bank on each side of the spring was real steep. He got in, but he couldn't get out. After a struggle, I climbed out and got a hold of the reins. Seeing my poor Whitey with his feet touching the bottom of the spring and his head out of the water, I got it into my head that he had drown in that spring. How I thought he'd drown when his head was out, I don't know, but I was crying and screaming and hollering for Clifford to come. He was at the house serving as cook for the year. When Clifford heard me and came out, I couldn't figure out why he didn't run. He just walked over. It must have been about 100 yards to the house. He said, "What the hell, Squidley. A horse can't drown when his head is out of the water." Clifford, being a big, husky guy, grabbed the reins, gave a pull, and Old Whitey came out of the spring and I quit crying.

My love affair with Whitey would soon be cut short by the harsh realities of ranch life and hard times. Hay eaten by worn-out saddle horses could be fed to growing cattle. Also, horse carcasses proved to be good lure for coyotes that could be caught in steel traps placed around the carcass. Their hides brought money. Their bounty was five dollars apiece. Then, too, the skins of the horses could be tanned with the hair on and made into a warm, waterproof protection from wind and snow in an open sleigh or for the final top covering of a bed in a cold building. A dreadful fear struck my heart as I heard Dad mention that Whitey would make good coyote bait.

One memorable day in November, Herschel, Dad and I saddled Brownie (a younger horse), caught Old Whitey and headed for the open range from which Whitey was never to return. It was to be my first personal witness of a calculated death of a large animal – in this case, one close to my heart. Dad handed me the six foot lead rope and asked me to lead Whitey in a circle and bring him back facing Dad. Herschel was to tie Brownie to a sagebrush over the knoll because Brownie was afraid of guns.

I took the lead rope in trembling hands but pretended bravery expected of boys in those days. Dad stepped casually about six feet in front of Old Whitey's soft blinking eyes. After slipping a 22 short into the chamber of the Steven's single shot, he aimed squarely between Whitey's eyes

and pulled the trigger. Whitey's legs buckled and he rolled half on his side, pulling the lead rope through my nervous fingers. With a mild reflexive kick or two, all was quiet. Whitey was dead.

Herschel and Dad soon peeled the skin from the carcass, and four steel traps were set at 90 degree angles from the body. The magpies were beginning to gather and quarrel over the impending feast. Herschel fetched Brownie, and Whitey's wet dripping skin was tied to the saddle. Dad and Herschel wiped their bloody hands off in a nearby patch of snow and put their mittens on. Then Dad announced, "Let's go home and get something to eat."

With a heavy heart and a lonesome spirit, I plodded back to the shack with Herschel and Dad. I looked back once to see that the magpies were already pecking away at the carcass. We lit a fire and prepared dinner, but I wasn't hungry. In four hours time, I had aged from five to twenty one, never to be the same little boy again. I had learned a lesson that my dad already knew – sometimes the things you love most are snatched away in a day's time never to return, and you must make the most of it.

People on hearing this story have said to me that my dad must have been cruel. No, he was not cruel. He had to do the things that needed to be done, and some of them weren't pleasant, in order to have food on the table for his children. Those were the realities of growing up on a ranch in those days.

The foregoing experience had a lasting effect on me. A year later when I was in first grade, there was a story in our reader entitled "Bremen's Band." The main character was an old donkey. A picture of this worn-out, old donkey appeared above the title of the first page. His ears were drooping. He looked old and weak – but kind and gentle. Even though it has been over 70 years ago, I can vividly remember the first four lines of that story: "I am getting old and I cannot work and my master wants to kill me." I would start to read the story and remember Old Whitey and start to cry. I still choke up with emotion if I don't watch myself.

MY DOG POODLE

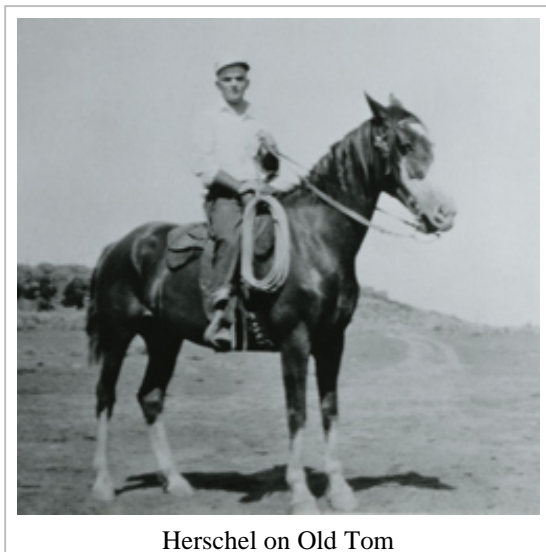
When I was about six years old, Shorty Jensen said, "Willis, I have a bitch dog about ready to have pups and you can have a male of your choice when he is old enough to be weaned from his mother." I was happy and excited. At last the day arrived when I could go get my pup. Folklore around Camas Prairie indicated that the smartest dogs had a black roof in their mouth so I chose a yellow pup with a black roofed mouth. I gently lifted this little, plump, fluffy, tail-wagging pup onto my lap. Happy as could be was I. He was christened "Poodle."

In about a year, Poodle was my regular playmate. Dad made a little harness for him and encouraged me to teach Poodle to pull me on my sled. Neither Dad nor my brothers knew how to teach a dog to pull a sleigh. Every time I hitched him up and got on the sleigh, he would turn

around and try to lick my face.

I thought of a plan that might work by using a cat he could chase. There were two semi-wild house cats named Yellow and Blue who would come in the cow barn at milking time to drink out of a pan used for them. Would Poodle pull the sleigh while chasing a cat? I would soon find out. I tricked Old Yellow into a gunny sack, hitched Poodle to the sleigh and headed for the fence south of our house. There were some yowls from Old Yellow as he was carried along. With some problems I reached the south fence. It was time to let the CAT out of the bag. Poodle gave a yelp and all hell broke loose. He was gaining on the cat at every jump. I stuck one foot out to plough snow to slow things down, but I loved the ride. I repeated the process a few times and Poodle learned what I had expected of him without the use of the cat. Now I had a super sled dog. When my schoolmates saw him running at full speed pulling me across the glistening snow, they must have realized what joy I was experiencing.

Poodle was my constant playmate. The spring of 1929, we had some turkey hens setting and were raising some turkeys. My dog, Poodle, my faithful sled dog, had developed a taste for fresh turkey eggs and was eating them on the sly when Dad caught him. He was sentenced to death by shooting. Herschel was ordered to be executioner. I was relieved to not have to go along as I had with Old Whitey. Herschel took him down to the river and did the deed. I stayed at home and listened for the blast of the shotgun. I hurt inside but it was different now. I was a man at heart in a child's body and learned not to love animals so much. I never had any more pets as a child.



Herschel on Old Tom

OLD TOM

Animals play a more prominent role in everyday life on a ranch than urban folk understand. One such animal was a horse that my brother Clifford brought home about 1923 or 24. Good saddle horses in that part of the country were the exception rather than the rule. Old Tom was a good saddle horse. He was a big rangy horse – bay with four white legs, a bald face with half his head white. He was the best saddle horse on our place remaining with us until Dad sold him to John Painter in 1931. (After WWII Tom was old and stiff but still on the Painter ranch. I

saw him in 1947 on the feed lot shortly before he died of old age.)

I enjoyed riding this spirited and faithful horse because he was always “rarin’” to go and was like riding a rocking chair in his racking gait. He could cover more ground faster and easier

than any horse of my experience at that time. Dad had many attractive offers from people who wanted to buy this horse, but he wouldn't sell him until the ranch was sold.

When I was eight, my brothers bought an old child's saddle from Billy Elsberry. This old saddle was a great joy and satisfaction to me. Now for the first time I could reach the stirrups. I could be useful bringing in our dairy herd at milking time each day, and I could take cattle to and from grazing pastures.

On two occasions Old Tom nearly bucked me off. The first occurred when I was to bring home a half sack of oats from Shorty Jensen's place. Kid-like, I tied the loose half sack of oats to the saddle horn leaving the bottom hanging below the stirrups. Tom was whirling as I mounted and started off fast. The sack began to swing under his belly. I felt the hump start in his back and down went his head. I dropped the knotted reins and pulled leather with both hands. When he bucked he humped high. At the apex the oat sack went high above my head – then down. I wondered how I could stay on him and not get brained with the oat sack. Shorty Jensen was shouting for me to stay with him. I wasn't so sure. After bucking down the fence line for about a hundred yards, Tom broke into a run. I reached for the knotted reins and pulled him to a stop with the help of a rather severe "S" bit in his mouth. With Shorty Jensen's help and advice, I lashed the oats properly behind the saddle and rode home. I respected Old Tom a little more from that time on.

Old Tom almost dumped me for the second time the following winter. My sister, Mae, was attending high school in Fairfield. She caught a ride home to spend the weekend with Dad and me. She was surprised and a little shocked to find there was no variety of food to eat and nothing green. We had meat, potatoes, dried beans and biscuits. Dad knew nothing about diets and believed you could live and thrive forever on beef steak. He took a strong stand and refused to buy store bought canned goods despite all of Mae's sensible arguments about vitamins and diet which she had learned in school.

Mae talked to me alone and told me she would tell Dad she needed twenty dollars for things at school. She would spend five dollars for proper green canned vegetables and send them back to Erastus Nielson's place. I could go there on horseback and pick them up. She left it up to me to explain this to Dad – which to me was no small task.

On the appointed day, I mounted Old Tom and headed for Nielson's place. I put the canned goods in a gunny sack and tied them behind the saddle, but again I hadn't lashed them tight enough. In about a quarter of a mile they began to rattle. The noise spooked Tom. Again his head went down and I was quickly in my own little rodeo. This time however, I kept hold of the reins in my right hand and pulled leather with my left. He left the road and bucked down in the gutter along the fence. There was about eight inches of snow on the ground which provided each jump with a

softer landing. About every other jump Tom took, I would see a can fly off into the snow. I was able to stay on until he finally ran out of gas and stopped bucking, and I got him stopped. After dismounting I tied him to a fence post and retraced his jumps finding little holes in the snow and fishing out canned beans and peas. I had learned that I could ride Tom and was no longer afraid of him. After tying up the hole in the sack and lashing everything down tight, I rode Tom fast and hard all the way home in my frustration and anger. On the way, I had to figure out an explanation for Dad about the canned goods without getting Mae in trouble. I finally decided that a head-on, candid explanation was best. Dad plain raised “hell” for awhile, but I noticed later he ate the green peas and beans with relish.



SCHOOL

My formal education began in the Springdale School – a large one room building with a hallway on each end – constructed of stone blocks.

Being a rural school surrounded by ranchers who hired men with families, the school enrollment varied from six to fifteen or more. For three of my first six years, I was the only pupil in my grade. Some of my teachers had only six weeks training after high school and no experience and were usually getting

very low salaries. Some were too young for such responsibility. Four of my teachers were women – usually between 18 to 20 years of age.

Three of my brothers were through elementary school when I entered first grade. Herschel, Mae and I walked to school together. After that first year, I was the only Vandiver in Springdale School until 6th grade when Mae returned home to complete her 8th grade. She and I walked to school the year of 1929-30. The other years I rode a horse the three miles to school and tied him up in a three-sided shed built to shelter the horses ridden to school on cold days. Like many ranch boys, I had no interest in school but yearned for each day to end so I could mount my horse and return to the ranch. One of my clearest memories of those first years in school was a worry I had about going home from school and finding no one home. I didn't like to be alone. Riding my old brown horse home from school, I would look for the welcome smoke coming from the chimney of the house which meant there was a fire and consequently, someone would be there to welcome me when I arrived. By the time I was ten, all my older brothers had left the nest to seek their fortunes leaving Dad and me as two bachelors on the ranch. My brothers would come home when they were out of work but not to stay for long.

Transportation to school the winter of 1928-29 was provided by a gray saddle mare my brother, Bill, had given me when he left home. We named her Wiggs. I rode her to school each day. We had some bad blizzards in January and February. On one such morning I was preparing for school. The wind was blowing hard from the northwest. Snow was falling and drifting. I should not have tried to go to school. Neither Herschel nor I realized the potential danger of this ground blizzard. However, Herschel instructed me that if I started to get real cold to get off my horse and walk. By the time I was about half way to school, the blizzard was such that I could see only a few feet ahead, and I was getting very cold. My horse was having trouble staying on the road because of the drifting snow. Therefore, I had to let her walk – not trot. When I arrived at school and rode into the three-sided shelter provided for horses, I was so cold I couldn't get out of my saddle. I had to ride up to the school house door and shout for help. Mr. Albert Kelly, our teacher, came and took me off Old Wiggs and had another child take my horse to the shed and tie her up. Mr. Kelly thawed me out with dishpans of snow brought in by Helen Scheer. As I thawed out, I remember how it hurt. My nose, cheeks, toes and fingers were frozen and peeled and cracked for weeks after. My two lead fingers on my left hand froze so bad that the nails came off.

On occasion that same winter, I would catch a ride on Robinson's sleigh to school. I'd had to leave home earlier to do this because the teacher, Albert Kelly, drove the team, and he had to be at school in time to have the doors open and the room warm. Their sleigh was covered and had a small wood stove in it. The lines to the horses came through two small holes in the front dash. A small window for driving vision was provided above the line holes.

I realized several years later that my first six years of school would be considered poor education. Nevertheless, I did learn to read and was a little above average in the grades I received, but I would have much preferred working on the ranch with my brothers. I disliked school and spent many hours thumbing through *The Books of Knowledge* just looking at the pictures, or looking out the windows wishing it was time to go home. The wonderful stories available were few. There was only one shelf of books to read. It was only when we moved to Greenacres, Washington, that my new teacher, Mrs. Stiles, got me to reading books. My eighth grade teacher was also the principal. He prepared our class for the state's eighth grade examinations. I became more interested in school and finished my assignments on time.

MUSIC

We had an old record player that had cylinders for records that were round and about six inches long. The record was on the outside of the cylinder and we slipped it on a sleeve. The record player had a big horn on it. Everybody had phonographs like that. I remember sending to Sears Roebuck to get records. They played about two minutes long. I was in the third grade and eight

years old. We had “When the Work’s All Done This Fall” and other western records – about 40 of them. The quality of the music was terrible, but we didn’t know any better. Of course, we didn’t have a radio, but I remember the election in 1928 between Herbert Hoover and Al Smith. Herschel and I rode on horseback to the neighbor Bob Crossings to listen to the election returns. The Crossing home didn’t have any electricity but ran their radio with a car battery. The static was so bad you could hardly understand the announcers. I think that was my first experience listening to a radio.

I learned to play the harmonica by the time I was five years old. The teachers of course had me play for all the programs as I was going through country school. I was the best harmonica player in the family, but Herschel and Merrill could play some. I learned to play the saxophone by ear when I was in high school. I couldn’t read a note. We had a little dance band that I played with for about a year, but I was so ashamed of my quality of music that I never played again. I played other instruments by ear like the concertina. I played the guitar but not very well. I can play chords and accompany. Dad was fairly musical. He could sing and carry a tune and his voice wasn’t bad. We bought him a Jew’s harp when I was about six years old – we sent away for it. I remember yet the day we gave it to him. He could just play right on – several tunes. Then I learned how to play it too. I can still play the Jew’s harp and the harmonica. With a little practice, I’m not that bad.

IMPRESSIONABLE EXPERIENCES

We always had guns, and I have always enjoyed guns. The guns were always put up somewhere high in the cupboard where you couldn’t walk over and get them. Lots of times I’d be left at the shack alone and if my dad and brothers were gone far enough so they wouldn’t hear me shoot and if I could find enough shells so they wouldn’t miss a shell or two, I’d go get the guns and take them out and shoot them. Then I’d put them back and say nothing. I’d been doing that for a long time. One day when I was ten years old, Dad left me home to hoe the garden. I hoed the garden, but I remember thinking to myself that it was about time for me to learn how to shoot a shotgun. We had a 16-gauge Remington shotgun, a pump action that held five bullets in the magazine. I had watched my dad and brothers shoot it and listened to them talk about how it kicked. I took three or four shells, got the gun and went outside. I shot just two or three shells at a can and blew the can to bits. Then I hid the can so Dad wouldn’t find it, and I went back into the kitchen. I had two or three more shells in the magazine that I had to unload to put back the gun as I had found it. I got careless unloading the gun. I was holding it under my arm with the butt up behind me and the barrel pointing down. I pulled the magazine lever back, pulled it forward so it was loaded. My finger touched the trigger, and I blew a hole in the floor about six inches around. The way I was holding the gun, it flew across the room and hit the other wall. Of course, I was in

trouble. How was I going to tell my dad what had happened? I remember thinking that I had to tell him before he came in the house and saw the floor. He was going to lick me anyway but maybe he'll lick me a little less if I told him a crock of bull story. I met him in the yard when he arrived back home. I told him that chicken hawks got in the chickens and I was going to get them out of the chickens. Hawks would kill chickens every once in a while but I'm sure he didn't believe me. He walked into the kitchen, saw that hole in the floor and he said, "Well, what I ought to do, I ought to warm your jacket." But my punishment turned out worse than that – every neighbor that came to the house would ask, "Jim? How did you get that hole in the floor?" And he'd say, "Oh, Willis can tell you about that. Tell 'em Willis." And I had to tell my lie about the chicken hawks all over again.

One very cold, snowy night when Herschel was home again one winter, we had fed the cattle and milked the cows, separated the milk and eaten supper. Dad said, "Herschel, why don't you go out and turn the horses loose." Herschel went out to turn the horses loose while Dad and I washed the dishes. When Herschel came in he said, "Dad, there's somebody hollering for help. I can hear the word 'help' and he's trying to tell me something else but I can't hear. He's too far away." So all of us put our coats back on and went outside. Sure enough we could hear "help." It was probably 10 or 20 below. Dad said, "We'll get three horses and we'll go after him, whoever it is, because obviously he'll freeze to death if he's in real trouble. I can't figure out what a guy would be doing up on the rimrock." We got on our horses and away we went. When we got up on the rim, there was a thick fog. We kept calling to this guy and following his voice until we got to him. He was wading around in snow up to his thighs. Someone had told him that he could walk from Gooding to Fairfield. He'd got into deep snow and then got lost in the fog. We put him on the horse I was riding and we rode double back to our house. We warmed him up by the stove, gave him some dry clothes, and then fed him. When it came bedtime, Dad said, "Well, we got just the two beds. You'll have to sleep with the kid." That was me. I climbed in bed and he took off his clothes down to the underwear we had given him. Then he knelt down by the bed and said his prayers. I had never heard about God or praying for that matter. He was thanking God for saving his life and I thought, "You stupid man. *We* saved your life." The next morning when Herschel and I were milking cows, I told Herschel that when we went to bed this guy knelt down on his knees and he was talking to somebody and thanked Him for saving his life. "Oh," he said, "Some people are religious. They do that." So that was my first lesson in religion.

When we took him to town the next day, I remember him asking for money. Dad gave him five or ten dollars, which for Depression times was a generous amount. The fellow took Dad's name and address. Dad figured he would never see that money again but commented to me on the way home that it was worth it to be able to help a person in need. To my dad's surprise, the money

was returned two years later, after we had moved to Washington. The letter had been sent to Idaho, then to Washington. Dad said, "He was honest or he would have never done that."

COUNTRY DANCES

A variety of recreational activities was scarce in my childhood. One of the most enjoyable events was the country dances usually held in the Krahn or Elk Creek school houses. These were small, white, one room buildings with an adjoining hall in which wraps were hung. Outside in each back corner of the school yard sat the usual two-holer – boys and girls.

When I was five to ten years old I would beg my brothers to take me along to the dances. Since Dad never went to the dances, I had to appeal to my brothers to take me. My brothers had girls on their mind so couldn't possibly be interested in having a kid brother to be bothered with. They must have understood my intense desire to go because they usually took me along, looked after me and bedded me down when I got sleepy. In the winter time on the long ride home they did their best to keep me warm as we rode home either on horseback or in an open sleigh. I loved to listen to the music and watch the square dancing. Most of all I looked forward to the midnight break when cake and sandwiches were served.

The dance music was supplied by local talent and consisted of a piano, a fiddle and a banjo or drum. Mrs. Bill Krahn played the piano while Darrell Smith fiddled and Mr. Ambrose picked the banjo. It was genuine foot-tapping music that increased the heartbeat with excitement and joy. Even under today's standards it was good country western.

The square dances were called by an old, tobacco chewing bachelor named Howard Peck. He would yell out, "Get your pardners for a quadrille. Two more couples over here. Come on, Fat, (my brother Merrill). Get a girl and get out here." Soon the squares were filled and Howard, in rhythm, called forth. Mistakes and mix-ups were common, but everybody laughed with delight and was excited and happy.

Usually there was a floor manager whose responsibility was to check the drunks at the door and prevent them from entering the dance hall. They did their "thing" outside. The dances were respectably operated. Dad was always against drinking, and so my brothers never drank but presented themselves always as good examples of clean and moral manhood.

These were the days of prohibition in which all alcoholic beverages were illegal. However, the local bootleggers, including Mike Kelly, Tuck Turner, Doogy Finch, provided all the whiskey the local drunks would need at a country dance. Bootleggers had the whiskey stills hidden away in various places. When I was about six years old, my brother Bill took me to see Mike Kelly's whiskey still which was hidden in a rock crevice about 2½ miles southeast of our ranch. Never to my knowledge was a bootlegger arrested by any sheriff in Camas County. Local politics worked

then as it does now. If bootleggers were ever arrested, it was done by federal officers who came in from outside the county. One day, Dad told the boys and me that two federal agents were going to stay the night with us because nobody else wanted to host them. These agents had six-shooters. One of them gave me a short lesson on gun safety. He showed me his gun, told me how it worked, told me how to take all the shells out of the cylinder, and then to look to make sure there wasn't a shell in the barrel. He evidently liked kids because he talked to me. I thought that was really something. The next day, the agents went out to Mike Kelly's still, destroyed it, arrested him, and sent him to jail.

Back to the dance – usually about midnight or a little after, the sandwiches, cake and coffee were served. For me this was a real treat and the highlight of the evening because the women folk seemed to make more tasty sandwiches than I was used to at home. Cake was unheard of at our bachelor quarters. The people visited and enjoyed the refreshments. There was a closeness and friendliness special to that time and place that will probably never be recaptured. After the midnight lunch break, people danced on until 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. We then had to look forward to the long, often cold, homeward journey to the desolate life that awaited. This was a dread to me.

HOLIDAYS ON THE PRAIRIE

Usually the girls came home for Thanksgiving and Christmas. We would kill a chicken or a turkey for the meat. Holiday dinners were pretty good and very much like the dinners now by the time my sisters were older and both had learned to cook. They'd buy a sweet potato and bring apples. They'd make pies, and we had an ice cream freezer with a handle crank so we'd have ice cream for dessert, which I think was better tasting than what we now get in the store. However, before then, I remember once going to a Thanksgiving dinner at Pearsons. My brothers were going with the Baldwin girls. The Baldwins and Pearsons were related so they had a big Thanksgiving dinner and invited my brothers and I to join them. I remember wondering what a lot of the food on the table even was. I had never seen some of the foods before in my life living the way we did as bachelors on the rural prairie.

I think one of the Christmases that stands out in my mind was 1928. That winter Herschel and I were alone on the ranch. Dad was gone all winter. We had one particular horse team, Sadie and Bess, that were very spirited. I always wanted to drive this team for fun, but Dad had told Herschel to never let me because I was too young to handle such a team. The time came to go get Loree from Fairfield to join us for Christmas. She was living in Fairfield to go to high school. I was to go Friday the 21st when school let out and bring her home. Of course, I was supposed to take a tame team, but I begged Herschel for days to let me take the frisky team. Finally, he relented. He said, "If you'll do exactly what I tell you, I'll let you take them." We got the two gray horses,

Sadie and Bess, hitched up to our little cutter sleigh. Old Bess was quite a bit bigger than Sadie, and they were raring to go. When they got hitched up to a wagon, they'd pull the driver right out of the seat. Herschel helped me until we got them on the road. He gave me certain instructions to have my teacher Albert Kelly come out and help me with the team when I got to school. Herschel had even written a note to the teacher giving him instructions on how to help me get back on the road with the team at the end of the school day. I successfully drove that team to school, tied them up in the barn, and my teacher came out and helped me unhitch them. At the end of the school day, Albert Kelly helped me again and we got the team hitched up, took them out to the road, and he held each horse by the bit while I climbed in the sleigh and got the reins behind my back so I could hold them back just as Herschel had told me to do. I said I was ready and Albert Kelly let them go.

Herschel told me the team wouldn't run if I'd really lean back in the reins with all the weight I had. He figured I could make them slow down but he said to let them gallop if they have to, to run them down a bit and if they ran away, to just keep them in the snow and they'd run down in about a mile or two. The old big mare was tiring me out just holding them back within the first quarter mile of the school. My hands and arms were getting tired, so I just let them go. They quickly went up to a gallop and we made the next mile in good time. I made it into town in short order with that team. Loree was ready, and as soon as we got her suitcase in, we were ready to go back. Of course, that was a great reunion, and we were back home in good time. Loree was with us for at least a week. Mae was brought out by someone else in time for Christmas too. The four of us – Herschel, Loree, Mae and I together for that Christmas. Although we didn't have a Christmas tree, we had presents for one another. My chief gift that year was two things. I got a harmonica and a new pair of clamp-on ice skates. The river was frozen over. I remember being shown how to clamp the ice skates on with a skate key and Christmas morning I took the ice skates and my dog Bruno to the river that was frozen over and went skating alone. I had never been skating before, just had seen other people skate. I kept experimenting and took some pretty dirty spills. I learned to skate in about an hour, so I could get a little fun out of it. I went back the next day and skated. I remember that as one of the nicest Christmases we had. We played card games in the evening. We had a lot of fun being together again. It was especially good for Herschel.

ALONE WITH DAD

Some Sundays my brothers would leave me home with Dad since there weren't always enough saddle horses to go around. On a few of those occasions Dad would get extremely depressed and talk to me about "Edna", his wife – my mother – who had died three or four years before. Occasionally he would sob and express how much he missed her. I was only a child and

didn't understand his intense grief and certainly was unable to comfort him in his despair. Those few occasions made a deep impression on me as I listened to his expressions of sadness. I could almost feel his aching soul. On those Sundays, in Dad's loneliness, sometimes we would walk either to Tom Avery's or Shorty Jensen's where Dad would find adult bachelor company to soothe his grief or forget it temporarily.

OLD ART

One of the so-called characters in my childhood was an old man, Art Davis. Actually he was a bum or hobo as you might say. He didn't ever work at a steady job but got his meals and bed by rotating from ranch to ranch. At each place he would come and stay for a few days. My brothers and Dad didn't care much for Old Art. He was dirty and uncaring. He always bragged about his erotic experiences with women. He chewed tobacco and was dirty with this habit. Sometimes after he paid his periodic visit, we would find where he had spit on the cement floor of our new one-room rock cabin, which my Dad and brothers built in 1924. Herschel decided to cure him of this sneaky trick. On Art's next visit, he was constantly under the surveillance of Herschel's eagle eye. One evening Old Art slyly spit on the floor. Herschel spied him and promptly grabbed Art's vest from the bed and scrubbed up the mess. Old Art never said a word, but his bald head blushed scarlet from front to back. Never again did he spit on our floor.

Evidently Art never learned our names although he was in our shack many times for days at a time. He called all of us boys either Big John or Little John, depending on our size. Between 1923 and 1931, he was a regular caller at our bachelors' abode.

During the winter of 1930, Dad and I were batching alone. My older brothers had already left the nest to seek their fortunes. On weekends, when not in school, I would help Dad feed our stock and haul hay from the Clutter Ranch located about four miles southwest of our place. It was a heavy snow winter and the temperature often dipped to 10 or 20 below zero. We would feed both hay and wheat straw to the cattle. Old Art had come to stay awhile. We were feeding straw down on the creek north of the old Nielson house. Dad had been crippled about two years before and had little use of his left arm. When it got tired he would put the handle of the straw fork under his left armpit and handle the weight by leverage with his right hand. He and Old Art were shoveling off straw for the cattle as I drove the four-horse team which was necessary in the deep snow. Art was on the back of the load and Dad was near the front. Art was telling Dad about his bad luck and misfortunes in life. Dad said nothing for quite a spell but finally grew impatient as he often could. Dad interrupted Art with words to this effect, "Art, you have been nothing but a coward all your life. When your wife died, you sent your children back to her relatives to be raised and you went on the bum." Art got as mad as could be and rushed at Dad with his fork. Dad parried the thrust

and the forks fell into the snow. There was a scuffle and Dad got in a pushing blow that knocked Art off the sleigh into the deep snow. Dad then said, "Now you old ***** go get your horse and don't you ever come back!"

Six months or so later, when summer came, I looked down the lane unbelievably to see Old Art's gray horse headed our way. "What would Dad do?" I wondered. Art headed for the barn and put his horse in and fed him our hay as usual. He then sauntered down the slope to the house coming clomp, clomp, over the wooden foot bridge that spanned the canal. Dad and Art greeted one another as if nothing had happened, and he stayed a week or so. I think Dad got so lonely for adult company that even Old Art looked good. After I was a young man and Old Art was past 80 years old and was living in the office of the livery stable in Fairfield, he invited Dad to have dinner with him. Dad's comment was to the effect that it probably wouldn't be clean but probably he should go. He did. Dad must have had a tender spot in his heart for poor Old Art. In the years that Old Art came to our place, he may have served a need for a lonely man trying to raise a family. His company may have been appreciated more than we know.

LIFE CONTINUES

Our life on the farm continued routinely until the summer of 1928. Clifford and Willard found jobs with the Harder brothers who owned a huge sheep operation near Kahlotus or Washtucna, Washington. Mae was living with Mr. and Mrs. Kitelinger. Loree was living in Fairfield and going to high school. Merrill had a temporary job at the Bahr ranch. He later joined my two brothers at the sheep ranch. Herschel, Dad and I were left on the ranch. Dad saw the need to sell the dairy farm and reduce the number of dairy cows to 16. He sold the home place to Albert Von Krosik. We moved across Camas Creek to the Gould place about 1½ miles northwest into another clapboard shack of two rooms and a pantry. But first we had to fumigate the house to kill the bedbugs under the loose wallpaper and in cracks of the loose siding.

One morning in early September some cattle rubbed a gate down and were feasting on John Bahr's wheat which was ready to harvest. Dad ordered me to mount Cricket, a small black work mare, and drive the cattle out of the wheat then shut the gate. Cricket balked and refused to leave the rest of the nearby horses. Being nine years of age, though I tried, I could not make this animal behave. She would rear up, then kick up and run backward. Dad said, in effect, "You get off and let me on that S.O.B." He picked up an old rusty hame (part of a harness) that had been discarded. He mounted Cricket and when she reared up, he hit her hard right between the ears and knocked her to her knees. She wrung her head and came up bucking and threw him off. Since Dad was riding bareback he didn't have a chance. He lit on his left shoulder on the rock hard ground. I remember him kneeling on his knees holding his hand on his shoulder and I asked him if he was

hurt. "I'm not hurt. I'm just mad," was his response, but the truth was that he had broken his shoulder. He and Herschel stacked hay together that day while I was in school, but by the time I got home from school, Dad was really in a lot of pain. The next morning, when he got up his arm was stiff, and he couldn't work. It was just a day or so later that he announced that since he couldn't work, he would go visit his brother Steve in Greenacres, Washington. That left Herschel and I to run the ranch.

Because Dad continued to be in a lot of pain, Steve convinced him to see a doctor in Spokane. A lot of cartilage had grown around the break. The doctor had to re-break the shoulder and put it in a cast with the arm raised above his head. The arm was left above his head for 16 days. One of the cast braces rested on what is commonly called the Funny Bone. The final result – Dad's left arm and shoulder shrunk to half its size. His fingers tapered off almost like claws and the ligaments to his fingers grew together on the back of his hand leaving the fingers stiff and half open. He remained crippled for the rest of his life.

HERSCHEL AND I RUN THE RANCH

Dad left for Greenacres in September. Herschel (17) and I (9) were the only ones left to run the ranch. We had no idea when Dad would return. Mae and Loree came home for Christmas. All good things come to an end, as Christmas 1928 did. Mae and Loree had to be returned to their homes, and we were alone again. Herschel seemed lonesome and silent, and I would try to think of cheerful talk. When he noticed what I was doing, he would cover up by saying, "Dad will be home soon and things won't be so hard." His predictions were like the predictions of a balanced federal budget – it didn't happen. An extremely cold winter with blowing and drifting snow made this the hardest six months of our young lives.

January 1929 came in like a roaring lion with whistling blizzards on a strong northwest wind straight out of the arctic. The temperature dropped at night to 40 below with highs in the 20 below range. The winds whined and howled through the cracks in the barn as we milked the cows. Even though we had the warmest of work clothes, the weather was often so cold it pierced through our clothing to our body. Calves were born during this cold weather, and it was necessary to keep them warm until they dried off to keep them from freezing. We had no heated building except the house, so that is where we took them after covering the floor with old newspapers or sacks. When the weaned calves sucked one another's ears, they froze, rolled up and in a week or so dropped off. Several calves' tails froze off. We tried to keep a roaring fire in the kitchen range by stuffing in the coal, but while your belly burned your back would be cold in that old uninsulated shack.

Many a morning that winter the water bucket in the kitchen would be frozen solid with a two inch hump in the middle as temperatures often dropped between 35 and 40 degrees below

zero. Since there was no such thing as storm windows or insulated walls in those old houses, the ice would form on the inside of the windows up to one half inch thick. All sorts of imaginary winter scenes would be ornamented by the crystals on the windows. It was the only thing of beauty that the severe cold brought us. Herschel usually checked the thermometer before we sat down to eat breakfast. The winter of 1928-29 was one of the coldest in ten years. It was HELL ON WHEELS!

A Typical Day

The alarm clock is jangling its morning announcement that it is 4:30 a.m. Sixteen cows must be milked, chores done, breakfast cooked and eaten. I am dully aware that Herschel groans and turns over as the alarm jingles on and runs down. As he finally pulls himself out of bed, I am glad it is he and not I. He will have to revive the fire which we banked with coal last night in the old Home Comfort range. I can go to sleep again until he calls me. I am so tired.

Herschel's call reawakens me. "Squidley, you must get up. I got the fire roaring." (Herschel usually called me by my nickname when we were on the best of terms or if he wanted to give me courage – especially in view of our sleep starved bodies.)

I drag myself out of bed, grab my Levis and shirt, and head for the kitchen. The oven door on this kitchen range easily supports the weight of a large person. I sit on it to keep warm as I dress. I'm glad Herschel always gets the fire going and allows me to stay in bed until the room is less than freezing.

Herschel comes in from the outside carrying a fresh bucket of coal and announces, "It would freeze the balls off a brass monkey this morning." The thermometer says 35 degrees below zero.

Herschel stuffs more coal on the fire and we put on our sheep lined coats, felt lined caps and overshoes to get ready to go milk the sixteen cows. We reluctantly leave the warmth of the kitchen and head for the barn with a milk bucket in one hand and a ten gallon cream can in the other. As the cows walk from the corral to the barn on the packed snow, we can hear crunch, crunch, crunch of each step they take confirming what we already know – it is cold! Herschel opens the barn door, hangs the old kerosene lantern on a peg in the barn and herds the cows into the barn. My toes are already getting cold. I take off my mittens so I can milk, then I realize I must put one back on or my fingers will stick to the frozen milk bucket. The Nielson heifer will be my first cow. She is easy to milk, and I get off to a good fast start. I squat and sit on my one-legged stool and brush the straw off the cow's bag and belly. I then swing my legs, one at a time, under the cow and grip the bucket between my knees. The cold bucket tingles my upper legs. As I start milking, the cow relaxes and lets her milk down almost immediately. The milk begins to foam in the corner of the tilted bucket. Soon I switch teats from left rear and right front to the remaining

two teats. One of her teats is cracked and I can feel her tense up through my head which rests on her right flank. The salve for sore teats should be applied, but it is too cold to bother this morning.

I am now starting on my fourth cow. My feet are getting colder, and my fingers are getting numb. I push my hands up between the cow's flank and bag for a few seconds to warm them up. This is only cow number four, and I have four more to go. I must hurry.

Herschel milks eight cows – the hard to milk cows and the ones who kick. At last I am on cow number eight and whimpering with cold hands and feet. Herschel beefs me up. "Squidley, we just got to grit our teeth and bear it."

We separate the milk in the warm kitchen and glory in the warmth. The #15 DeLaval separator has two spouts – thick cream comes out of one spout and skimmed milk comes out the other. The energy that made the separator run is supplied by turning a crank for about 15 to 20 minutes. It is hard work, and we take turns at the crank.

I am dreading going out to feed the calves, but here I go. Herschel will get something ready for breakfast while I am gone. We eat breakfast of steak and fried potatoes, a dried sour dough biscuit and a dish of peaches. I head off to school, and Herschel is left to feed the stock, haul hay, wash the dishes or leave them until supper time, feed the pigs and chickens. He has to plan the food, buy the groceries by making long cold trips to town, and more.

When I return from school, we repeat the same chores done in the morning. We are tired when we finish supper and wash the dishes.

DAD'S RETURN

About the first of March 1929, we got a short letter from Dad saying he would be coming to Fairfield on the train on Saturday. Herschel and I hurried to get the morning chores done, feed the stock and meet the train. The snow had been melting for a day or two and the bottoms of the snow roads were getting soft. One such snow road led to and from the haystack. After we had loaded the sled with hay and started to leave the stack, one side runner of the sled sunk and tipped over the load of hay. Herschel asked our closest neighbor, John L. Robinson and his son, Jimmy, to help us get the sled upright and reload the hay. Then we had to feed the stock. This hay accident caused us to lose a lot of time so that we didn't get to Fairfield until evening. In our rush to get to Fairfield neither of us had eaten since breakfast and we were very hungry.

Meeting Dad was a shock. He was skin and bones and very weak and had lost the use of his left arm. The cords to his fingers had grown together in a knot in front of his wrist making it impossible for him to shut his hand. The hand was swollen tight with a raw sore on top of the knot. It looked real serious to me. Herschel and I told him of our hunger. There was no café in Fairfield. Dad asked a good friend, Ernest McHan, if his mother could prepare something for us to eat, for

which he would gladly pay. Ernest's wife had died and his mother had come to live and cook for him. She prepared a nice hot meal which we ate with relish and really appreciated.

Even though it had been over 0 degrees in the morning, the temperature had dropped to 10 below by 8 p.m. That evening it got very cold. We had to drive the team in a walk because the roads were melting during the day and freezing at night. They were a mess.

We left McHans after dark and started the long, slow, cold trip home. By the time we reached the Chandler place – about two miles out of town – Dad was getting very cold. We stopped and asked if we could let him warm up by their heating stove. Of course, they were glad to help out. As soon as he was warm, we again started home knowing that there were sixteen cows to be milked and other chores yet to be done.

We had to stop again and do the same at Dal Baldwin's about three miles further down the road. We had to get them out of bed. Dad was freezing. One of our horses was rather weak and giving out so travel was slow. Old Sadie was nursing a colt which accounted for this spirited animal's weakness. We arrived home to the Gould place after midnight with at least three hours of work to do before going to bed. After the chores were done, I came into a warm house out of the severe cold. I was exhausted. I woke up the next day about 9 a.m. Herschel had undressed me – all but my shirt – and put me to bed. As I remember tough days as a child, that one was the hardest day of my childhood. We had experienced hunger, cold and exhaustion.

Thus ended the hardest six months of my life. One that still brings forth in memory a shiver from the cold and a shudder of relief to remember how it felt to be tired almost all the time with still more work to do. Life that winter was "hell on earth" for Herschel and me. The deep snow and cold, sixteen cows to milk, feeding to do, hay to haul and batching was "damn" near too much for a nine year old – let alone Herschel's problems of doing the heavy work.

Herschel and I shared the responsibility to see that the stock was cared for. It was the only means of livelihood we had, and we knew it must be done come "hell or high water" and we did it! We worked and suffered together. We took care and looked out for one another. Herschel told me that he worried for fear I would freeze on the way to school. I was too young to realize how close to right he was. That winter drew Herschel and me close together. I knew and understood him better than my other brothers.

Just like any brother relationship, you know what happens when one brother gets on the other's nerves. Dad wouldn't stand for any of this arguing or monkeying around when he was there, but when he wasn't there, we'd sometimes get into a tussle. Herschel would often challenge me to a race or contest. He'd give me a certain advantage, but he wouldn't ever let me win if he could help it. One particular morning after Dad's return in the spring of 1929, we had gotten out of bed and Dad had already left the house. Herschel said, "I'll beat you getting dressed." The

challenge was on. As soon as Herschel saw that I was getting ahead of him, he held me down with his right hand and got dressed with his left. I just got madder than hell that he'd do this to me when he knew I was winning. He was laughing and I was bawling, and as he walked out of the room he said, "Boy, I sure beat that race." That was the straw that broke the camel's back. As he waked out into the kitchen not knowing I was following behind, I grabbed an old mop stick that leaned again the wall and got him right down between the ears and knocked him down and about half out. Dad came into the room just at that time. "What is going on here!" Herschel told him that I just hit him over the head with a mop stick, and I was bawling giving my end of the story that I was cheated out of my win. I remember Dad saying, "Herschel, all you do is train his temper and I'm tired of you doing that to this kid." Then he turned to me and said, "If you ever hit anybody like that again, I'll warm your jacket 'til your hide will peel off." And he meant it! When Herschel got the word from Dad, we never led on like anything had happened except that he had a scab on the top of his head. Of course, after Herschel and I grew up and got married, we were good friends and used to talk about these crazy things that happened. I never gave in on that one. I would say, "That was once that I got you and you couldn't do anything about it. It was good for you, and I'm not sorry." I wasn't. He had what was coming to him. He was a great tease.

LIFE GOES ON

The spring of 1929 we moved from the Gould house to the Nielson house. Mae returned home from Kitelinger's at the age of 13 and took over keeping house. She immediately changed things related to keeping house. Within two weeks she turned our bachelor habits of housekeeping and cooking. She had learned how to cook good food and all the rest of good housekeeping skills. We ate many of the same foods, but they were prepared so they tasted better. The house inside had whatever it is that makes it a home. I heard Dad tell more than one of the neighbors that she came home and by herself did just as well as a mature woman would. She washed the clothes and ironed the shirts that hadn't been ironed for years. At nine years of age I never appreciated my dear sister Mae as I should have.



Willis by the cellar on the Nielson place – 1930

Around this time when I was ten, I remember my Grandpa Woods, my mother's dad, came from Edina, Missouri for a week-long visit. My dad was not religious and never attended any church. He told us about Grandfather Woods being religious and always had a blessing at mealtime. Dad called it "returning thanks". In a short time, I liked Grandpa Woods. He bought me my first gun – a 22-single shot Stevens model.

A year after Dad returned from the hospital in Spokane, he still had an open sore on the back of his crippled hand which became infected. He went to a hospital in Boise for help. His doctor advised him there was danger of losing his life from infection if they didn't amputate his arm at the shoulder. Dad refused the surgery. The doctor assigned a Swedish nurse to massage his arm and shoulder. Hot towels were also applied to stimulate better circulation. His arm was saved and the open sore healed. It was mid-summer of 1930 when he returned home from Boise. Mae and Loree continued to massage his arm and shoulder until they returned to school in the fall. After they left, I continued the massaging. Dad had been through so much pain with that arm that he kind of changed. He became real irritable and was hard to get along with – just really hard.



1932 – At Greenacres, WA

In the late autumn of 1931, ten years after Mother's death, Dad sold his property in Idaho and all that went with it – horses, cattle and machinery. He and I, with a load of furniture in a one ton truck, moved to Greenacres, Washington, with Dale Morris (my sister-in-law, Artise's brother) as truck driver. Dad bought fifteen acres (ten acres of apple orchard and five acres for truck gardening). His tract of land was about a mile from Steve Vandiver's home. Mae stayed in Fairfield until the end of the school term. Loree had started to teach school. Merrill had recently married, and the other boys were working in various places in Idaho and Washington. I enrolled in Greenacres Public School as a 7th grader. There were over 30 pupils in the class. What a

shock and change for me since I had been the only one in my class three of my first six years in the Springdale School in Idaho. Adjustments were made and I graduated from the 8th grade after passing the state tests which included a test in shop skills.

By 1932 the Great Depression was having an effect on everyone. Dad was losing money raising apples which were selling for 50 cents a bushel. Vegetables, like tomatoes, barely sold over the cost of the wooden crate in which they were packed. In three years Dad could no longer pay the taxes on the fifteen acres.

In 1933 Dad bought 40 acres of undeveloped timber land near Newman Lake, Washington. With the help of Herschel, Clifford and me, a one room cabin was built on this property that we could live in. Soon after its completion, Herschel found work elsewhere.



1932 – At Greenacres, WA

We made enough money to eat by selling wood to the business people in Spokane who used it to warm their buildings by burning it in furnaces that burned wood instead of coal. To prepare this wood for sale by the cord (a stack 8 feet long x 4 feet wide x 4 feet high) we had to fall the tree, cut it into four foot lengths then split it into sizes that would go through the furnace door. Dad was a very skilled woodsman. He taught me how to saw trees down with a crosscut saw and to cut them down with a double-bitted axe.



The cabin near Newman Lake

Dad, Clifford and I worked making saleable wood about half of the summer of 1933. One morning I had an accident with a double-bitted axe. Dad and I had felled a tree about three feet in diameter and were cutting the limbs off when I cut my foot just behind the toes. The wound cut three leaders to my toes and into the bone. Clifford helped me over to the cabin step and got a clean dishtowel to bind the wound to stop the bleeding. Neither Clifford, Dad, nor I knew anything about where to apply pressure to stop bleeding. We relied on drawing the dishtowel as tight around the wound as possible. All three of us agreed I had to see a doctor. Poor people during the Great Depression never saw a doctor unless something serious happened. We didn't even know any doctor's name. Cliff picked me up and carried me to his 1930 model Durant Coupe that was parked on

the road above the cabin. He and I headed for Spokane to locate a doctor. As we arrived at the edge of the city, Cliff would stop and inquire where we could find a doctor. About the second stop we were directed to a doctor. He put me on the operating table and discovered three leaders to my toes had to be tied before sewing up the wound. In my memory every stitch hurt. I don't know whether or not they had pain killers 66 years ago when this happened.

With my injury I was of little use to Dad except for cooking and milking our one cow. It was over a month before I went back to cutting timber. I began to realize what a lonely existence it was for me with no one my age back in the mountains with Dad. In my mind I wanted to get away – to leave home – but I was afraid to talk to Dad. Finally, my mind was made up and I began to set a date. I wrote to a friend I had in Greenacres who was 18 years old and owned a car. In my letter I asked if he would write to me and tell what day would be best for him to pick me up. I also asked how much he would charge to take me to my cousin, Floyd E. Vandiver's house. My friend wrote right back and gave me a date a few days away. About one day before he was to come after me, I told Dad I was going to leave – not knowing what he would say or do. Clifford had found a job and had been gone a few weeks. Dad would be alone unless Herschel would come home from

his job. Dad seemed surprised – even shocked, but he was not angry. He reminded me of the Depression and the shortage of work. He told me I would probably be back soon. This was the summer of 1933. I was 14 years old. I only went home for visits after that.

Dad moved back to Greenacres sometime in the late 1930's. In 1938 he had a serious heart attack and never regained his health and strength. The years slipped by and Dad's family grew up and married. He was getting old when WWII came with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. His only unmarried son, Clifford, was drafted and served in the South Pacific until he was killed March 10, 1945, on Mindanao Island in the Philippines. When I was in Navy boot camp at Farragut, Idaho, I went to visit Dad in Greenacres. He was 67 and in poor health. There was stiffness in his legs and he walked with a slight limp. He carried pills to take in case his heart started to play games. (I felt sorry for him and knew he was lonely as he was growing old and in poor health.)

In September 1945, Dad moved to Post Falls, Idaho, near Merrill. After a little more than seven years, Dad began to feel that he no longer wanted to live alone and wanted to come back to Fairfield, Idaho, where Mother had died. Sometime in the spring of 1953, when he was in his 77th year, he had Merrill take him from Post Falls to Fairfield where Mae lived. It was in her home where he spent the last part of his life. Although in failing health, he was up and about. He walked uptown and back the last day that he lived. When he failed to get up on the morning of September 13, 1953, Mae investigated and found him in a coma. The doctor diagnosed it as a massive stroke. A few hours later he died. He was buried beside Mother in the old Manard Cemetery.

We all felt that the Lord was kind to him in not prolonging his life after he had reached the point of no longer being able to live independently. He had lived his life of deepest integrity and had faced its trials with a courage that arouses in his children a profound respect and admiration. Although there was much hardship in his life, he had the satisfaction to see the accomplishment of his greatest purpose – the rearing of an honorable family.

From his obituary: "James P. Vandiver, 76, a retired Camas county farmer, died here Sunday morning (Sep. 13, 1953) at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Mae Brooks. Services were held Wednesday at the Community church under direction of the Rev. Dwight E. Welcher, with internment at Manard cemetery alongside his wife who preceded him in death in 1921. Pallbearers were Hyrum Lee, Elmer Painter, John Bahr, Stan Smith, Oliver and Erastus Nielson.

He was born in Knox County, Mo., Nov. 14, 1876, son of Jasper Vandiver and Fleckner Smith. He was the sixth in a family of eleven children. He was married to Edna Woods, April 1, 1906 at Brashear, Mo. To this union were born five sons and three daughters. They moved to Mountain Home, Idaho, in 1913, and after 1½ years moved to Fairfield. Since 1931 he has lived at Green Acres,

Wash. and Post Falls, Idaho, and spent his summers here the past few years.

He was preceded in death by his wife Edna, June 20, 1921, and one son, Clifford, March 10, 1945. Since April he has been visiting in Fairfield and Jerome.

Survivors include four sons, Willard P. of Curlew, Wash.; Merrill B. of Post Falls, Idaho; Herschel of Jerome, Idaho, and Willis C. of Greeley, Colo.; and three daughters, Mrs. Ross (Loree) Lee, Rigby, Idaho; Mrs. Harold (Mae) Brooks, Fairfield; Mrs. Kenneth (Edna) Wilson, Shoshone, Idaho, and twenty-five grandchildren.

Other survivors are brothers Bert, Robert, and Perry of Hurdland, Mo.; Willis of San Francisco and Steve of Spokane, and sisters, Mrs. Carl Murray of Hurdland, Mo., and Mrs. Alice Emmons of Kirksville, Mo.

Mr. Vandiver was a member of the Christian church.”

ON MY OWN

I left Dad the summer of 1933. I was 14 years old and on my own a little early. Floyd Eugene Vandiver, a cousin of mine who lived in the area, let me eat at their house for ten dollars a month. However, they had no space for sleeping privileges. I remembered Dad had arranged to have some of his household furniture left in the house on the property he had traded for the timber place. There was a bed mattress I could sleep on if I could get in the house. I found I could open a window in the back of the house so I slept there for over a month.



Floyd & Petra Vandiver with Jean & Willis

At that time, Gene (as he was called earlier in life; he went by Floyd later) was 28 years old and married to Margurette, his first wife. They had two children, Myrna (five months old) and Ina (five years). They socialized rather intimately with another couple about their age by the name of Buff. About three years later each couple divorced and married the other's previous mate. Again I was getting an early introduction to the negative

side of morals. Gene divorced his second choice. He married a fine lady, Petra, a part black, when he was around 40 years old. He decided to straighten out his life and became not only a good mate but a leading citizen wherever he lived. They settled in Mesa, Washington, and bought a hardware store. Petra ran the store and was a good business woman. Gene was the area's plumbing expert. They both were highly respected. Because Gene was good to me, we kept in touch all our lives. In

his 50's, he became a victim of arthritis which was very painful and took away his ability to get around very well.

Back to the summer of 1933 – my number one job was to find something I could do for money. I started knocking on doors and asking if they had any temporary or permanent work. I spoke the truth of having to raise enough money to pay my ten dollars for food each month. I also pleaded that I would work hard for whatever they would pay. There were some jobs in Greenacres like picking tomatoes, sweet corn, cucumbers and more. The first month went by and I had a little money left after I had paid my ten dollars food bill.

My sister, Loree, wrote me a letter from Idaho and offered me a place to live with her in the Manard teacherage. Her teaching salary was \$60 per month with the teacherage of three small rooms. After some thought, I went back to Camas County, Idaho, to finish my high school education.



Camas County High School

My oldest brother Bill came to see me about three weeks before school was to start. He had the contract from the Camas County Stock Growers Association to take care of 1500 cattle that grazed on forest service land. He explained that he was living in a one room cabin up Soldier Creek. He needed an extra man to round up the fat steers ready for market. The rest of the cattle were left to graze some more. He said he had eight saddle horses. We each could have a fresh horse every day because the mountainous country made a very hard day for each horse. Bill would pay me two dollars a day and board.

I was very pleased to work for Bill where I could enjoy the beautiful country around Soldier Mountain. Bill gave me the tamed, gentle four horses, and he took the spooky ones. One of his horses was named “Cougar”. Every time it was Cougar’s day to be ridden, he would buck when mounted. Bill didn’t want to go through this so he developed a system. The lariat would be put

around Cougar's left front leg above the hoof yet under the ankle. He would pull on the lariat lifting his front leg so the knee would make a 90 degree angle and then tie the lariat to the saddle horn. Bill would mount the horse and let him buck on three legs, which was very quickly tiring. He would then untie the loop from the saddle horn and be ready for the day's ride. I was proud of Bill's ingenuity to come up with a clever way to handle a bucking horse.

I always have pleasant memories of those two weeks I spent with Bill. He was 12½ years older than I and treated me very kindly in my early youth and took an interest in my plans to go on to school – a chance he never had. My dad had only about a third or fourth grade education, and he was of the opinion that if you had a strong back and strong body and worked hard, that was about all there was in life. He didn't feel it was nearly so important to get me through school as my brothers did. I got most of my encouragement to continue my education from my brothers and my oldest sister.

Loree's teacherage was five miles from Fairfield. I lived with her for about three months that fall. Loree was good to me and taught me the courtesy of being a gentleman and tamed me down from what I knew at home. I remember getting instruction from Loree about dances. She told me to always remember the girls that other people didn't dance with and to always make sure to ask them for a dance - even though you think it's not fun, remember how that girl feels.

One Saturday night, Loree and I had gone into town to a dance. When we came home, Loree went out to the outhouse – there was no indoor plumbing at the teacherage. Unbeknownst to her, a skunk was in the outhouse and Loree got sprayed really well. She was wearing a brand new coat which was quite a thing because it was depression times. She didn't have the money to buy another coat. I don't remember whether she was able to save that coat or not, but I do remember that she buried it for a time to try to get the scent out so she could wear it again.

Loree had a 1929 Chevy Coupe that I drove to Camas County High School in Fairfield each day. I took along three riders – Don and Emily Packham and Vanita Olson. These three passengers paid a few cents each to cover the cost of the 28-30 cent per gallon gasoline. We were able to get to school by car until late November. By then the snow blocked the country roads. There were no snow plows to keep them open.

Once the snow blocked the roads, I lived with the Packham family in Fairfield. Packhams bought the old creamery building in Fairfield. They boxed half of it off into small rooms where beds could be set. Don and I slept in a double bed in one of these cubicles. The other half was made into a dining-living room and a kitchen.

I needed some way to pay my board and room at Packhams. Word came to me that Dolph Naser needed someone to milk the cows twice a day. I went to see him. He gave me the job. It was a good feeling to be able to support myself. I was paid \$25 per month that first year. Mrs. Packham

who cooked for her family of seven charged me \$20 per month for sleeping space and food.

The Packhams were a pleasant family to live with. I have never seen a better mother and home organizer than Mrs. Packham. She was kind and loving, yet firm. The children were expected to get along without bickering. There also was fun during meals as they exchanged their experiences at school and elsewhere. It was my first experience of seeing a mother and her family at work and play. Mr. Packham stayed on their ranch and came to town only on weekends.

It was necessary for me to walk about six blocks at 5 a.m. each morning to milk eight or nine cows. Some mornings Dolph would ask me to help bottle the milk and deliver it to his customers in Fairfield. Dolph always paid me for doing these extra chores. He certainly became a good adult friend. I could always count on him being to any activity I was in at the high school. A few days after I started milking Dolph's cows, I saw him drinking from a whiskey bottle. It appeared that he only took a swig. Then I learned that his pint bottle lasted about a week. He never offered me a drink but told me to follow my dad and brothers' example which meant LEAVE IT ALONE.

Dolph and his wife lived in the same house, but he slept in the attic and she slept downstairs. The first opportunity Mrs. Naser had to talk to me alone she asked me if I knew where Dolph hid his whiskey. I denied any knowledge of his drinking. Yes, a white lie. I was learning that playing dumb is sometimes better than getting involved in a family conflict. It was evident that she didn't like me much and Dolph did.

The summer of 1935 I worked on a farm owned by Hugo Olson. Their house had burned down the year before. They moved another house onto the foundation of the burned house and hired a man to remodel it for them that summer. In the meantime, they added a room on a granary and were living in it. I was given a sleeping space in the house that had been moved in. My salary was \$35 a month and board with the understanding that I would have to wait for most of my salary until they sold their wheat in the fall. They had about 20 milk cows which were to be milked twice a day by a hired man, their three children and me. During the day I worked in the fields driving a six-horse harrow team, plowing, haying and more as required on such a farm.

My boss, Hugo Olson, was a heavy smoker and wasn't well. Often he would cough and spit up blood. He coughed a lot. In the middle of the summer he became bedfast. It was evident he wouldn't live long. His neighbors took turns staying with him at night until he died one night in late July of tuberculosis. It was a new experience for me to be around a grieving family. Hugo left behind his wife and four children – the oldest 15 years of age and the youngest about five. The hired man, Dan Patterson, became my boss and took charge of the ranch.

When it was time to go back to school in September 1934, I hadn't yet received all of my summer salary because the brothers, Hugo and Albert Olson, owned the farm jointly and there

were court proceedings before I got my pay in October.

The fall of 1935, Loree got a teaching position at Fairfield Elementary School. She rented a large room on the second floor of the old court house. Her very nature was a caring one for all the brothers and sisters. She asked Edna Bahr (our sister) and me to come live with her. A curtain was hung to provide privacy for sleeping. The three of us were very compatible. I was able to finish my sophomore year at Camas High. I continued to milk cows for Dolph Naser. During the school year, while others slept, I had to get up at 5 a.m. and milk cows for a living. Nevertheless, I think it was good for me. The job helped me learn strength, punctuality, and dependability while I was young. I also developed a love for early morning when everything was fresh and beautiful. Not only that, but I was one of the richest in high school because I worked. During the summer months, Dolph Naser paid me \$30 a month plus room, and I could also hold another job during the day.

Each summer I got a new job. I knew how to work. My dad taught me a lot of these things when I was little. We had to work hard and when I went to work for somebody, I didn't wait for them to tell me to do things. I'd see things that needed to be done and do it. The boss would come around ask for something to do done, and I could tell them that it was already done. The summer of 1936, I was 17 and worked for a Swede named Fritz Frostenson. He agreed to pay me \$35 a month. I was paid in the fall when he sold his wheat. He paid me \$45 a month instead of the agreed \$35 because he said, in his broken English, that I was the best worker he had ever had. The next summer, 1937, he helped me get a job through AAA to make maps of the farms in Camas County. Fritz was a county commissioner and I can imagine he had presented my name to the other commissioners who probably were skeptical at giving such a good paying job to an 18 year old. I received five dollars per day which was more than common labor pay. A school of a few days taught me how to use a plane table with an alidade (a tool used in map making and surveying). I won't go into the procedure but instead say that I was the boss with two fellows working with me. One was my brother-in-law Harold Brooks. I lived with Harold and Mae that summer. They had an extra bedroom and I paid room and board at their place.

My high school years were busy but successful. It was a small high school of less than 90 students coming from the entire county. Consequently, there was more opportunity for participation on the athletic teams, plays and speech events. I played basketball and football for three years – lettering each year. I also won first in what was known as a citizenship award one year based mainly on grade improvement. I was a “B” student in high school making “A’s” on the Honor Roll only two semesters. I enjoyed my social life. Movies and dances were alternated on each weekend and were provided by the LDS church. That gave the young people of Camas County a chance to socialize and have fun in a well supervised place.

About the time I finished elementary school, my oldest sister, Loree, joined the Mormon Church. She was teaching school at the time. I often went to church with her in my early high school years. I also had close friends who were LDS. I could see the value of higher moral principles and generally congenial ways. As a result, I joined the church at the age of 19 knowing very little of the church's early history.



The trailer house Beverly Noble and Willis lived in their senior year.

My last two years in high school were very similar to the first two. The only important difference was I fell in love with Jean Smith. She went to England with her parents my senior year and I missed her. Beverly Noble (a male!) and I lived in a one room trailer house our senior year. I continued milking cows for Dolph Naser from

September until school was out in the spring.

Jean returned from England the spring of 1938. We both were getting serious about getting married sometime in the future. We knew we were too young with no source of income. This had to come later.

I bought my first car in Boise the spring of 1938 after I graduated from high school. It was a 1929 Durante Coupe with a rumble seat which was popular with the young set. Cars thus built were popular in the 1920's, but in the 1930's there were very few around equipped with rumble seats. It was my mode of transportation for the year. During the summer of 1939, I traded the Durante Coupe plus \$35 for a 1929 Model A Ford.

After finishing high school, I got a job on a ranch. I worked there until my brother Merrill's wife, Evelyn, died from complication of childbirth on August 8, 1938, leaving him with a baby boy Wayne, Dale (4) and Carol (5). Merrill had bought 10 acres with a house and other buildings and was paying monthly payments on them. I quit my job to go to Post



Sweethearts – Jean & Willis

Falls, Idaho, to attend Evelyn's funeral. I had saved around \$400 to start to college. Merrill had to have some money. I loaned him all I had. Of course, I was paid back later on.

This wasn't the first time I had loaned Merrill money. My grandfather, Chester Woods, died in September of 1932, and Mother's share of his estate was to be divided among her children. Each of us inherited about \$800. Those under 21 had to wait until they were 21 to receive the money. There was a provision in the will allowing the administrator of the will to loan money to the others with proper security and interest. With my permission, \$600 was loaned to my brother Merrill by Uncle Leonard who was the administrator, to be paid back when I was 21. He paid off that loan before I was 21.

A week after Evelyn's funeral, I returned home and got a job as a common laborer with the forest service for three dollars a day helping to build a sheep bridge across the South Boise River. One day our bridge boss, who was missing one eye and wore a patch, beat on a steel triangle to signal the twenty-five workers to assemble. He said, "I need a truck driver. Is there anyone around here that can drive truck?" I had driven truck on Fritz Frostenson's ranch. Nobody raised their hand. Truck drivers got paid more than common laborers, so I said I could drive truck. I could tell when he looked at me that he didn't figure I could. And he was right. I knew how to steer the truck and use the gear shift, but I didn't know how to lift up the bed and it was a dump truck. I went down to the Cat driver in the truck and asked him how to use the lifts. I had to get five tons of rock on the truck and back it up to an exact spot on the muddy, slick river edge. The boss was standing there watching me because he had to have those rocks in just the right place. Well, I'd get it too far this way or a little too far that way and he was just cussing at me. He was ready to fire me on the spot and he would have if he had another truck driver. I finally got the rocks in place in spite of his swearing and cussing. Every day he'd tell me he wished he had a truck driver and I'd say, "Well, I'm learning." A week or so went by and the boss beat on the triangle again to call us all together. He said the cook's wife had been hospitalized with appendicitis. He asked, "Is there a man who can take over the cooking at \$3.50 per day. If there is, step forward." The cook was paid more than a truck driver. No one seemed to be interested except me. I finally stepped forward. The boss then said, "You little so-and-so probably can't cook any better than you drive a truck, but I guess we are stuck with you." I knew I could cook better than the one who just left, and the crew was thoughtful enough to tell me so.

While I was the cook for the bridge crew, I couldn't go to Fairfield on Saturday nights. The dishes had to be washed and the wooden floors in both the kitchen and dining tents had to be cleaned. Another young man, Cline Funk, and I didn't participate in drinking hard liquors which was the main purpose of the crew going to Fairfield. He stayed in camp with me and helped with the clean up.

We were awakened about 2 a.m. one Sunday morning by loud talk spiced with cuss words. The crew had returned to camp. All of them were high on liquor or worse – dead drunk. Some were arguing and fighting. A few went into the tent kitchen and started raising Cain. They emptied the flour and sugar on the floor and threw tin plates all around, broke several glass containers and more. Cline and I couldn't control the situation. The boss of the crew was so drunk he couldn't walk without help. We each took an arm and helped him to his tent. He was sleepy and about to pass out. We put him on his couch and with some pushing on his upper body made him lie down and go to sleep. By then it was past 3 a.m. We went to the tent we shared and talked about what we should do in the morning. I decided to go to the forest ranger station and tell the ranger what had happened. Furthermore, I decided to quit the job and go to college.

First thing in the morning, I packed my belongings in one suitcase and a bag and then into the rumble seat of my 1929 Durante and drove to the Soldier Creek Ranger Station to explain the circumstances at the bridge camp to the ranger. When I arrived at the ranger station, the ranger was away visiting the lookout stations and wouldn't be back for two or three days. I wrote him a message telling him what had happened and explained that I had decided to go to college. I asked him to send my pay check to my sister, Mae Brooks, and she would send it on to me.

ALBION, IDAHO

After leaving my job with the bridge crew, I drove to Albion, Idaho, where I had decided to attend the Albion State Normal for Teachers starting September 1938.

A mile before reaching Albion there is a hill to cross before the college campus comes to view. When I reached the top of the hill it was a thrill to see the campus with its beautiful green, well trimmed lawn, flowers and trees. This kind of beauty I hadn't seen often in my short and limited experience. I thought what a beautiful place to go to school. The brick buildings were surrounded with well kept lawns, flowers and trees. There was nothing like Albion in Camas County where I had spent most of my life. I was thrilled with the setting and resolved in my mind to do my very best in learning and living. The possibility of becoming educated as my brothers hoped I would was a dream to come true in the next 15 years.

In my ignorance as a country boy, I didn't know who was in charge of the campus or where to go and who to see about finding work. Experience in different homes and working at various jobs built in me a self-confidence that there are always good folks who will give you the information you need.

When I arrived in Albion, I had \$34. Registration was \$16. I was broke! My need was a room with a bed and some place to eat. I found a second floor room in Hampton Hall, the boys' dorm, for \$18 per month and the Dean of Men helped me find work. I got a temporary job in the

dining hall serving meals, for which I received free food. I finished the two years of school by June 1, 1940. I had a certificate to teach junior high.

My two years in Albion were the most enjoyable of my educational experiences. I was elected president of my class both years and was in three different plays and a member of the Delta Psi dramatic club. My money was tight but enough to pay my way. I did several things for money at different times – janitor work, cleaning trashy yards, mowing lawns, serving meals in the dining hall and more. My second year there I batched together with three other fellows.

The highlights of those two years were Jean's coming down from Fairfield for the Junior Prom and the Senior Ball. We were in love and enjoyed each other's company.



MARRIED YEARS

Jean and I were married June 12, 1940, in the Salt Lake Temple. My sister and her husband, Loree and Ross Lee, and Jean's Aunt Ida were present. In the afternoon following the wedding we left Salt Lake for Greeley, Colorado, in my 1929 Model A Ford. During that summer, I attended Colorado State Teachers College earning one quarter of college credits. That fall I had a contract as principal and teacher of the 6th, 7th and 8th grades in Almo, Idaho. Almo was just a little village with an elementary school and one store. The store sold the necessities of life for the people living there. Almo was at the end of a dirt road 50 miles south of Albion, only a few miles from the Utah border. There were no telephones. Electricity came to Almo the first part of 1941. Most of the population were Mormons who had lived there all their lives. The school had a population of approximately 90 students in eight grades. There were two teachers besides myself. The Depression was still with us. My salary was \$80 per month for nine months. I was more fortunate than many teachers since only 70% found work.

Because there was no housing available in Almo, Jean and I bought my sister's homemade trailer house, went via Twin Falls where we bought some needed items to furnish the trailer – stove, table and four chairs, and daveno (which folded out to be our bed), and an electric washing machine which we couldn't use for five to six months because there was no electricity. With a "house" full of furniture, we headed for our new home pulling all behind our '29 Ford. A tire on



Our first "home" – Almo, Idaho

the trailer went flat. There was no money for a new tire. We continued on to Almo on the rim and parked the trailer – which now was full of dust – on the back of the lot of one of the school board member's home, who was the owner of the one store in town. We were to make payments to Sears, Roebuck & Co. of \$42 each month for the furniture. This left only \$38 to live on. Yes, we were barely squeezing by, but we had a

job. It was time of the Great Depression. We had friends in the same economic situation. For entertainment we would get together to play cards and visit.

Jean and I had our first emotional shock and sadness the first year of our marriage. She was expecting a baby the last half of March 1941. Because Almo was an isolated community with no doctor or hospital within 50 miles, it was necessary to get her close to a doctor. We saved \$35 to pay a doctor in Albion. We made arrangements with Grandma Erickson in Albion for Jean to live there for three weeks before her due date.

There were no telephone connections between Albion and Almo – a distance of 50 miles. I made arrangements with a friend in Albion to come get me in case anything went wrong when Jean delivered the baby. On the evening of March 17, 1941, my friend knocked on my door about 9 p.m. to tell me that something serious had gone wrong in the birthing of our baby, but he didn't know what had happened.

I immediately left Almo in my 1929 Model A Ford to travel the fifty miles on a rain soaked dirt road. Care must be taken, I realized, or I would slip off the road, yet I felt pressed to hurry. I was met at Mrs. Erickson's door with the news that our baby had been born breach and had died shortly after the birth. Fortunately, Jean was O.K. I had my cry. Jean held up very well considering what she had been through. I then had to drive back to Almo, a strange town where no one seemed to care, and there was practically no help. I hired a substitute teacher for the next day. I turned around and drove back to Albion to plan all the things that had to be done – call Jean's parents in Fairfield, dig a grave, arrange a graveside service. My father-in-law, Stan Smith, made a coffin and Jean's wedding dress was used to line it. Only the Bishop, my father-in-law and I were present at those graveside services. For me at the time, it was a very sad experience. I felt so sorry for Jean, and yet I had to leave her and drive back to Almo to teach school the next day. It was a hard time for Jean and me, but we survived and went on with our lives.

School let out in May. When we had paid all of our bills, we were broke and had no job for summer. Jean's parents always made us welcome in their home. We went there as we tried to find a way to live through the summer. Everyday I went downtown in Fairfield to seek work. A Mr. Jensen I met needed a plowing job done on his ranch. This was music to my ears. I took it at once for two dollars per day with board and room. It was a plowing job with a three-bottom plow hitched to a crawler Caterpillar tractor. Since I had never plowed with power equipment, Mr. Jensen had to show me how to plow the corners and more. He accepted my inexperience and we became friends. The job lasted five days. Now I had ten dollars when I returned to Fairfield.

We were eating supper the evening I returned when there was a knock on the door that brought a wonderful change to our situation. It was Wallace Saling, the forest ranger who had hired me on the South Boise Bridge crew over two years before. He asked me if I would come work at the Soldier Creek Ranger Station as a forest fire guard for \$125 per month with a place to live included. Of course Jean and I were more than happy about this opportunity. Before going up to the station, we went downtown and bought \$15 worth of groceries on "time". In 1941 you could buy a lot of groceries for \$15. The rear seat of our 1929 Model A was filled with groceries. Harold Brooks loaned me a saddle horse for the summer to ride when going to lightening fires and cleaning forest trails.

The forest service office building had two rooms – one was the office, the other was our home, but we were happy to have it. Verland, the ranger's wife, let us use her washing machine and space in her refrigerator. This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship with Wallace and Verland Saling. I took the opportunity once to ask Wallace about the situation two years prior when I quit the bridge crew. He told me that when he returned home after three days and read my note that I left him, he went up to the camp and all those guys were still drunk and hadn't done a day's work. He fired them all and hired a new crew to finish the job.

We returned to Almo in the fall. I taught for two years in Almo. It was a successful but difficult experience teaching 34 children from 12 to 14 years old in an isolated community 50 miles from the nearest railroad, with no telephone, and a population that had intermarried for many years. In fact, in my classroom over 75% of the students' names were Durfee, Taylor, Jones, or Ward.

Children in such a school deserved some excellent teachers with at least a few years of experience. Instead, two of the three teachers were without any teaching experience and the third had taught one year. The common gossip of the past teacher-principal of the upper grades was that he smoked and was unable to control the upper grade children. The school board members warned me to be in control and said they would support me. I wasn't afraid of losing control even if I had to do a little bashing. From the opening day I demanded good order and respect. But five years

later I began to fully realize the Almo School was in need of teachers better than I. My two years of college gave us questionable experiences in student teaching and a lack of training in child growth and development.

Our Almo school had no library – just a book shelf in each classroom. My bright,

capable students had read all the books provided.

My intentions were good. I worked hard and prepared my classes the best way I knew. My class put on the play *Tom Sawyer*. The community loved it as did the class. Anyway, the board invited me back the next year and raised my salary to \$105 a month adding the janitoring of the school and the firing of the furnace. It was not uncommon during the Depression to make just enough to survive.

There was a boy in the 8th grade, Cleave Lloyd, who had a good mind and showed great potential in mechanics, electricity and science. At 13 years of age he had developed a system of electric lighting for their home using a wind charger and other needed parts. And it worked! Also, by studying encyclopedias and other books, he built a radio. When we moved in the spring of 1942, and with the consent of his parents, we brought Cleave with us. We went back to the ranger station. Cleave worked for my brother, Bill, in Gooding, Idaho. When we moved that fall, we enrolled him in high school in Burley. Cleave was with us about two months. One day his brother came to get him and take him back to Almo on request of their father. Cleave never returned to get an education. We were sorry to see a young boy's future thrown away.

The fall of 1942 we moved to View – a little community eight miles east of Burley, Idaho. View, a farming community, like Almo, had only one store that sold groceries. My salary was \$125 per month as principal and teacher of the 7th and 8th grades for nine months. In those days very few school districts provided a place for their teachers to live. The only available house was a bare two room “house” that had been used as a granary then cleaned out to again be used for a house. We were charged no rent. To make it livable, Jean used wooden orange crates nailed to the wall and made gingham curtains to surround them. Orange crates and apple boxes made cupboards,



Tom Sawyer Cast at Almo School



Our home in View, Idaho

night stands and other needed furniture. Del was three weeks old when we moved there. A buggy was his bed. We lived there about two months. Then, another member of the community offered us a little better house for six dollars a month. We cleaned and papered, and it was quite livable. We carried the water in and carried it back out. Our “facilities” were out back a distance. The heater we could afford only had three legs. Three bricks where the fourth should have been made it level. We didn’t have much, but we made it do and were happy.

In April or May of 1943 Ralph Nyblad, the Superintendent of the Rupert, Idaho, School System, stopped at the View School to inquire where the Springdale School was located. I gave him the directions to the school and invited him to eat lunch with us in the school cafeteria. I had never met Mr. Nyblad before, but we had an interesting visit about school and children. When the noon hour was nearly over, he mentioned that he was interested in the principal of the Springdale School because he had a vacancy to fill in Rupert. When he was about ready to leave, I said, “I have some really good students in my 7th and 8th classes, and we are doing some interesting things. Would you like to visit my class?” Mr. Nyblad did stay for about an hour. I went to the door with him and jokingly said, “I’m always looking for a better job. Keep me in mind.”

About four days later I received a contract in the mail from Mr. Nyblad. I was asked to be principal of the Pershing School in Rupert in the fall of 1943. Hurrah! Another step up. The salary was \$1115 for a 9½ months school year. For the first time in our marriage we moved into a respectable four-room house with running water and a bathroom. I was able to earn extra money by working in Roper’s clothing store on Saturdays. During potato harvest vacation I worked sorting potatoes for two weeks.

One of the greatest pleasures I enjoyed every day was



Del & Willis – 1943

our year old son, Del Ray. He was a very happy little boy that loved playing. Jean and I treasured his childhood.

WAR YEARS

In 1943, WWII was in its second year. It was being fought against Japan in the Pacific and Germany in Europe. Many basic needs such as shoes, meat, sugar, gas, tires and more were rationed. It was quite common to hear the roar of airplanes in large numbers – 50 to 100 – flying over Rupert. The B-17's from the Pocatello Airbase 70 miles distant were getting air training before going overseas. Many of the South Pacific islands that had been lost to the Japanese early on had been won back. Many of our soldiers and sailors were being killed in the Pacific as they reclaimed the many islands the Japanese had taken over. In Africa and Italy, land wars were taking their toll. My brother, Clifford, was in danger as he served in Buna and Gona in New Guinea. I was 24 years old and eligible to be drafted. Clifford, 35 years old, advised me to stay out saying, "This is no place for a married man with children." I felt guilty even though teachers were scarce.

I talked it over with Jean and decided to enlist after the school term was over in the spring. After some thought I decided to join what was then called the Army Air Corps. I drove to Pocatello to enlist. Some written screening tests were given to determine if I was capable and suitable for this service. They would mail me the results soon.



1944

In about ten days the results came. The news that came was both good and bad. I had passed the tests but there were already too many men in the Army Air Corps, and I wouldn't be needed. I fully expected to be transferred into the regular Army. I just waited. Weeks went by but nothing came in the mail. Just before school let out in the spring I received "greetings from the President" – my draft papers. I was to be in the Pocatello High School gym on a certain day to be enlisted in the service.

While I was waiting for my draft notice, Jean and I bought a small one bedroom house in Rupert for \$1800. We decided the best thing for her to do was to live there until the war was over. The next visit with her parents made a change in our plans. They wanted her to come home and live with them. That turned out to be the best plan. The people that were living in the house when we bought it continued living there until we sold it.

When I went to the draft call in Pocatello, I was able to join the Navy instead of the Army. It was a good choice for any person who had some college training. The Navy would send most men like me into some kind of special training. In June 1944, I went to boot camp in Farragut, Idaho. After boot camp, five other men and I were sent to Lakehurst, New Jersey, to Aerology School for three months and were trained as Aerographers (weather forecasting and flight clearance) for the Navy Air Force. In the war time, the Navy would take over a school and close it to have space to train the men. Where we were sent at Lakehurst had been a private boys' school and it housed about 200 men for training purposes. We were taken into the auditorium to hear out our first briefing instructions. A Navy Lieutenant came out on the stage with a big smile on his face and said, "Good morning, Gentlemen." Of course, we were used to being addressed as "slop-bellied slouches" or the like and so when we heard "gentlemen", we all were listening right away. He said, "Turn to your right and shake hands with the man on your right and introduce yourself if you don't know one another and then turn to your left and do the same thing – get acquainted. Now," he continued, "one of you three with probably flunk out of this school because one third of the people flunk out. When you flunk out, do you know what's going to happen to you? You are going to be put aboard the freighters that are taking the supplies to Russia and England. Not only that, but you are going to be down in the hull in the kitchen somewhere and if you get torpedoed you are the first guys to drown." I had my motivation right there. About three or four weeks later, a couple of guys went up about three or four stories high and jumped to their deaths because they were flunking. I was smart enough by then getting letters from Clifford who was fighting in the South Pacific that it was touch and go. If you lived through World War II, you were going to be lucky. So everyday was a blessing for me and I was lucky.

When standing in muster one morning, I received word that we now had another member in our family. Kaye was born in early 1945. The biggest battle of WWII, the Battle of the Bulge, had just been won with over 75,000 Americans dead or wounded.

I was being trained as a weatherman who could make flight clearances aboard aircraft carriers. Or if we were put aboard a battle ship, we could figure the wind drift if Howitzers were firing in the wind. Through some lucky and unusual circumstances after completing training, I was sent to Wold-Chamberlain Air Base in Minneapolis, Minnesota for duty in early spring of 1945. I was given permission to live off base and have my family with me.

The first part of March of 1945, I received a shocking letter from Dad telling me that Clifford had been killed on March 10th on Mindanao Island in the port of Zamboanga, after four years of combat service. His death was unexpected because he had written me a letter not more than three weeks before in which he assured me he had earned his 149 points for time under combat and would be out of the service and home soon.

In Minneapolis, I was able to find housing with a lady, Lil Gast, whose husband was in the South Pacific. Jean and the two children came back to Minneapolis in March 1945. It was with happy anticipation that I waited for them to arrive by train. Now I would get to see baby Kaye and again get acquainted with Del Ray. It was a nice reunion – one I shall always remember. Kaye was a good looking little baby. I remember being not quite comfortable; not knowing what to do as a young dad with a baby girl. But in a few days I was getting smiles and used to her. She soon really won me over.

Lil made us welcome and a special friendship began. Lil worked during the day. Jean cared for her five year old daughter and prepared the meals during the week. Lil took her turn on the weekends. We lived in Lil's two-

bedroom basement apartment for eleven months. I could ride the street car to and from the air base where I made daily weather forecasts and flight clearances for airplanes. It was a requirement for me to fly two hours each month in order to get the additional flight pay to which I was entitled.

Later in the year, I went downtown to the feed mixing mills on Hiawatha Avenue and got a job (against Navy regulations) for a dollar an hour. We saved as much as we could with the dream of buying a larger house when the war was over and we returned to Rupert. We needed a car so I could get back and forth to work. The only cars available were well worn. No new cars had been built since 1941. I found an old 1935 Nash Lafayette for \$200. I had a mechanic overhaul the engine and later had the tires retreaded. New tires were not available.



Our "new" Nash Lafayette



August 1945 – Minneapolis

A big surprise was about to shake up the world. The first Atomic Bomb was dropped August 6, 1945. About four days later WWII ended. I thought, until then, I would be in the invasion of Japan. What a great relief it was. Soon we would be back home and continue living a happy life. The end of the war was the happiest day of my life!

OUR RETURN TO IDAHO

After two years of service, I was mustered out of the Navy February 18, 1946. I was fully qualified to go to work for

a weather station but wanted to go back to teaching. We left Minneapolis in the old Nash Lafayette and headed back to Idaho via Missouri where we visited several of my relatives, Dad's brothers – Perry, Bob and Bert Vandiver, and his sisters Alice and Eva. Further down the road we visited my cousin, Olen Welch, who had met Clifford in New Guinea in 1944.

Del was exposed to the red measles just before we started back to Idaho. By the time we reached Utah, red spots were showing up. We stayed overnight with Jean's Aunt Ida and the next day drove on to Jean's parents in Gooding, Idaho. We stayed with Stan and Nell for a few weeks. By the time Del had recovered from the measles, Kaye was beginning to break out with them. After Del and Kaye were over the measles, we visited the members of my family who lived in Washington and Idaho.

I was hired again by Wallace Saling for the summer to resume the job I had before going to the service. Before going to the Ranger Station we bought a house in Rupert. The people who were renting the house at that time continued living there until about the middle of August when we returned to Rupert to settle in before the start of school.



Our home in Rupert, Idaho – 724 G Street



Off to Albion for morning class

We lived in Rupert from September of 1946 until May of 1949. I was on a half-time contract as principal of the Pershing School. The law required that returning veterans be rehired to the jobs they had before the war. I continued working on my BA at Albion, which now was a four-year teachers' college. I attended morning classes – riding my motorized bike to Albion when the weather permitted.

After the day's work, our evening meal, and Del and Kaye were in bed, Jean and I worked hard cleaning, papering and repairing our house. We often worked until the wee hours of the morning. I believe we enjoyed the long hours of hard work making the house into our home. In the spring of 1947, we added a foundation and cement floor to the garage. We were young and

attempted anything that needed to be done – mixed the cement in the wheelbarrow and raised the garage with a pole over a log. Jean sat on the end of the pole holding the garage side up while I poured the cement. Next we had the backyard plowed. Jean and I leveled it with a 2x4 down on our hands and knees and prepared it for a garden. I bought a paint spraying outfit and during the summers I found jobs painting roofs, bleachers and whatever else I could find. An older couple, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Johnson, were our next door neighbors. They treated us like we were their own. We visited them many times after leaving Idaho and loved them like parents.

ON TO GREELEY, COLORADO

I graduated from Albion with a BA in 1949. Jean and I agreed that I should continue with my graduate education. Our decision was made because Idaho passed a new law on school consolidation in 1948 which reduced the number of school districts to just over 100. Minidoka County, in which the Rupert schools were located, became a county district rather than a Rupert district. The superintendent and school board of Minidoka County wrote me a letter which promised me the position of Elementary School Director of the county if I would complete my Master's degree in school administration.

I chose the College of Education in Greeley, Colorado, as the best school for me. Also the GI bill made it possible for me to continue my education. I was sure I could pick up some odd jobs on the side. We sold our worn-out Nash Lafayette and bought a Buick sedan about eleven years old, sold our home and left Rupert the end of May. We later learned the Buick was a real oil and gas guzzler, but it took us to Greeley with a trailer load of needed items.

I enrolled in summer school after we were settled in college housing. It was a three-bedroom collapsible trailer. It had been lived in by many families and was badly in need of a good cleaning. We had scrubbed and painted when we discovered the bed frame and springs were full of bed bugs. DDT had no effect on them so we demanded that they be replaced.

My college advisor, Mr. Hambrick, told me there was a new school, Arlington Elementary, that had an opening for a principal. He encouraged me to apply. I was surprised and pleased to be hired because there were several candidates for the position. The salary was \$3900 a year.



Arlington Elementary School



Our first home in Greeley – 1315 16th Ave.



Our second home in Greeley – 2407 10th Ave. Ct.

Taking this job made it necessary to leave college housing and buy a home. We found a small house that we could afford. We did a little remodeling that made it more comfortable. We lived in this house for one year then moved to a house nearer to the Arlington School. The day we moved, a couple new to Greeley, Aubrey and Connie LaFoy, came to help us. This led to a close friendship that lasted down through the years. Connie was Kaye's first grade teacher in Arlington. Aubrey was continuing with his education at the university.



August 16, 1951
Master's completion

I was principal of the Arlington School for five years and finished my Master's degree by 1951. My last contract at Arlington was for \$5200. I continued working on my education and continued work towards my Doctorate.

Often visiting educators would come to Arlington School. Three war veterans from Germany visited our school. They also visited our home. Jean prepared lunch for them. They told us of their experiences fighting on the Russian front during WWII.

During those five years we had two more children. Ann was born in 1951. She was a healthy, happy baby who brought joy to the whole family. Don was born two years later in 1953. He was born with a diaphragmatic hernia and had surgery when 29 hours old to save his life. He was taken by ambulance to Children's Hospital in Denver where a thoracic specialist performed major surgery. His recovery required 24-hour care. He projected his milk after each feeding and had to be



Willis & German visitors

fed again. Jean took care of him with patience and love. He developed normally despite his digestive difficulties.

OUR YEARS IN BILLINGS, MONTANA

The summer of 1954 I learned of an opening in the Billings Public Schools – that of Director of Elementary Education. This was a big job, and there were many applicants. I drove to Billings for an interview with the superintendent and board members. After returning to Greeley, I received a phone call to let me know that I had been chosen as the new Director. That fall we moved to Billings, Montana.



Leaving Greeley for Billings

The summer of 1955 we returned to Greeley so I could finish my dissertation and receive my EdD. My wife, Jean, and our children, and my sister Mae, her husband, Harold, and their three children were the only relatives who came to my Doctoral



Receiving doctoral diploma in Greeley – August 18, 1955

graduation. Mae and Harold drove 700 miles from Idaho to be in Greeley, Colorado, for that occasion. Mae and I have always loved each other and cared deeply about each other's welfare.

In Billings, my beginning salary was \$6000 plus \$300 for the use of my own car. We had, at that time, a staff of about 300 elementary teachers and 20 schools. I had much to learn along with the usual

pressures of planning workshops, ordering supplies and books for the new school buildings, and interviewing teachers for a rapidly growing school population. My seven years there was professionally the most pleasant of my career. My boss, M. C. Gallagher, was widely respected as one of the best superintendents in Montana. I learned more about good management of schools from him than from anyone else. Also, how to deal with parents of all kinds – good and bad –

Indians, Blacks, Mexicans and more – so that their children would have an education providing skills and knowledge to be successful in life. Mike Gallagher was 102 years of age on July 1, 2000. Today is March 6, 2001. He is still living and with all his mental faculties. (*M.C. Gallagher died later that year.*) I worked hard to make the Billings elementary schools the best in the state. I am not the person to say they were, but I am the one that did my very best to make them so. During the summers I was allowed to teach summer school at Eastern College and Montana State College. This again was a new challenge.



1954



June 1961

Our home in Billings at 1209 Ave. F.

During the year of 1956, two ladies from the U.S. Office of Education wrote a letter to the Superintendent of the Public Schools asking for permission to visit the elementary schools to observe examples of the best education Billings had to offer. Mr. Gallagher passed the request on to me. The permission was given. It was my good fortune to be able to accompany them and introduce them to the best we had to offer. They stayed for a week and visited ten classes. About a month after their visit they wrote to Mr. Gallagher requesting that I be sent to Washington D.C. to help plan leadership meetings for principals and supervisors of elementary schools on how to improve instruction as a consultant for the Department of Education.



Starting for D.C. – February 1957

In early 1957, I was given leave from the Billings district to go back East. I worked there March through June. Jean drove back with the children in the latter part of May. It was a good experience for all of us. We visited the many historical sites close to Washington: Monticello, battle fields of Bull Run and Gettysburg plus the many sights in D.C. I was offered a job for \$1000 more than I was making in Billings. Jean

and I discussed it and decided we wanted to stay in Billings. My experience in D.C. motivated the Billings's school board to raise my salary \$1000 per year which gave us a much needed lift with an improved standard of living.



Chesapeake Bay



Our summer of 1957

Gettysburg



In the stocks at Williamsburg

The summer of 1958, my family and I drove to Houston where I taught summer school at the University of Houston. The summers of 1959 and 1960 I taught at Montana State College in Bozeman. Montana State offered me a permanent job in 1958, but the offer was for less pay than I was making in Billings. Two years later we agreed on a salary – \$9,000 a year. I came on staff at Montana State College as an associate professor the summer of 1961. It later became Montana State University. In 1964, I was promoted to full professor.

OUR FINAL MOVE



Our home at 1020 W. Story, Bozeman, Montana

We moved to Bozeman on June 25, 1961. We had contracted with Emil Martel to build a house with rentals in the basement to help defray house payments and college expenses. We borrowed \$9,000 from my Sister Mae and her husband on contract for 5.5% so we could finish the basement and start renting. Del had finished high school and six months of basic training in the Marine Corps. He decided to attend

M.S.U. Kaye was a junior in high school. She was upset with having to move but easily made the adjustment. Ann was a fifth grader and Don a third grader.

Jean managed the rentals and kept it as clean as possible for all these years – now numbering 39. We paid the mortgage loan off early and have had a steady income from the

basement. It has brought in well over \$55,000.

The year of 1961 demanded from me a whole new and different working position. It was a major professional adjustment, but with Jean's help and support, I was able to meet the demands with success. The last sixteen years of my professional life was spent teaching at M.S.U. It was a very busy and demanding time. Even so, it was a fulfilling time for me. For Jean it, too, was demanding to be the number one parent who thought of our children's needs before her own.

Through my years of teaching I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or deescalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized.

How does a person write about the special awards earned during his professional life without having a bragging tone? Nearly every person of ambition and desire to do good work has more or less a duty to mention these events. Here it goes – In 1967 I was given the Distinguished Teaching Award. The beautiful plaque now hangs above my desk in the study. The Montana Association of Elementary School Principals honored me with an attractive desk pen plaque which reads, "In appreciation for his many contributions to the children of Montana."

In 1968, I was asked – almost begged – to be Department Head until the university could find a qualified person to assume the position. It was supposed to be for less than six months, but it turned out to be for three years. I learned that I preferred teaching. While serving as "Head," my teaching load remained the same, but I was one of the highest paid professors.

We were a happy family with children who made us proud. None of the children were difficult. They did what was expected of them most of the time. We loved them but expected them to be a success with life's demands. Jean and I supported one another in the "No's" and "Yes's" when they needed guidance. We acted with firmness when necessary and were present when they needed support in their school work and activities. In a larger sense we were parents not buddies.

Del graduated from M.S.U. June 6, 1965, and also received his commission into the Marines. He married Susan Spaulding in 1965. In July 1966, he was sent to Vietnam. During his tour, he was wounded by a sniper as he went to help a wounded Marine in his company. A rifle bullet went through his right leg in the fleshy part of the leg below his hip. The leg bone was not broken, and he made a complete recovery and was awarded the Bronze Star for bravery. After his thirteen months there, he returned to later join the FBI. They have two girls.

Kaye graduated with a BA in Elementary Education and taught fifth grade for one year in Connecticut then returned to Utah to continue with her education. After the first semester, she

moved to Palo Alto to seek her fortune. She married Lynn Johnson in 1969. They have five boys.

Ann attended Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, for two years. She married Robert Quinn in 1971. They have four girls and one son.

We are proud that Don passed his physical and was able to fulfill his stint in the National Guard Reserves. Don married Cynthia Wick in 1977. He graduated from M.S.U. in 1978 with a degree in architecture. They have one son and three daughters. In 1973 Don and I added onto the



Garage addition and new driveway – 1973

garage of our house. He was in his second year of architecture and was able to draw up the plans. This addition added the needed room for a second car and much needed storage space.

All four of the children had some music training. Jean supervised their music training by getting good instructors and supervising their practice time. I

have appreciated Jean's dedication to their music training. Del had some piano training; Kaye and Ann took piano lessons and played the clarinet in the school bands. Don was a drummer. I was unable to have music training at the time I needed it most and it's one segment of my life I regret.

HUNTING AND FISHING

My favorite sports were fishing and hunting. Bozeman was an ideal place to live for those sports. Both Del and Don were introduced to fishing and hunting. While we lived in Billings, Del and I fished together many times in Sue Charlie Lake and the Stillwater River. Don wasn't old enough for the long walk in and out. After we moved to Bozeman, Don was able to join in these events. Those experiences together strengthened the strong bond of fellowship, love and respect we have for one another.

The highlight of all my fishing experiences took place in 1973. It was June 13, 1973, when five good friends – Al Suvak, A.G. Erickson, G.V. Erickson, Bob Wilson and I – headed in a station wagon for Lake LaRonge in Saskatchewan, Canada. There we hired a pilot to fly us north to Lake Costigan. Lake Costigan has 800 miles of shore line. It has many irregular shapes that create this long shore line, yet is only about a mile wide at the widest part. We had a lot to enjoy. The small mountains surrounding the lake were beautiful.

The pontoon airplane was small. All but two seats were taken out to make room for people.

I was filled with doubt and wondered if such a small plane could carry this load. We started at one end of the lake, and the pilot headed the plane north! We could see the forest coming closer and closer as the plane finally took off. We were immediately into lake country. The pilot told us to watch for wild game. He said that we would likely see moose and black bear in the open spots. Jack pine covered most of the ground below.

It was a joyful ride into a new country of lakes and streams, but not as beautiful and rugged as Montana's primitive areas. We saw two moose and one black bear from the plane. In less than an hour the pontoon plane landed on Lake Costigan, and we were introduced to our log cabin. Our cabin was mosquito tight and contained two bunk cots, a stove and kitchen table. The five of us couldn't wait to get on the lake to fish for the BIG ones. Our 65 year old Norwegian guide reassured us that we would all have our limit of fish in three days. The limit was 20 pounds of lake trout, 15 pounds of northern pike and one trophy fish. Our guide had worked over 20 years showing people where and how to catch these fish. During hunting season he was guide for the moose hunters. He had interesting stories to tell about the wolves that preyed on the moose.

The first morning I caught a northern pike that weighed a little over five pounds. The guide instructed me to throw it back. The smallest we would keep would be eight pounds. I was excited and happy as we entered a small inlet about ten feet wide. We could look into the clear water and see those big pike swimming through this inlet into the rather small wing of the lake. During the next two hours we caught several pike that weighed less than eight pounds and about three big enough to keep. My arm was tired from casting the large red and white lures. We could see the sharp back fin of the northerns as they rushed to attack the lure. What a wonderful two hours of fishing!

The second day we went through a small inlet to a balloon shaped part of the lake. I could see the back fins come about an inch above the water as they raced to strike the red and white lures. Then the fight began. That morning in early June represents what I remember as the greatest two hours of fishing in my life! It was a different experience with pike than with Montana trout. They were much larger than our trout and put up a longer and harder fight. They also had large sharp teeth to deal with when taking out the hook. Our Norwegian guide cleaned the fish and put them in the ice house for safe storage.

My second best experience of the trip was on the last day when I caught a 16 pound lake trout which I brought home and put in our freezer. I also brought home fillet from our earlier catch.

All five of us had experienced some of the greatest sport fishing in North America. We returned home happy and satisfied. We fished for three days (June 14, 15, and 16). We each caught our weight limit of fish. It was an experience of a lifetime!



A fabulous fishing trip – June 1973

Something should be said about my four companions on this trip. Bob Wilson and I have been friends since Junior College days in 1938-1940. He will always be remembered for his cartoons you can enjoy in the 1938-1940 Albion yearbooks. I have known G.V. Erickson and his brother, A.G. Erickson, since moving to Montana in 1954. A.G. was Superintendent of the Helena School District. G.V. was teaching at Montana State University. I met Al Suvak at Montana State University in 1961. He was a guidance director for students and gave different tests required at the University.

At this time (Sept. 24, 2000), only two of the five are still living – Bob Wilson and myself.

Some of the things that happened in the sixteen years I taught at Montana State University were family matters. Jean's mother, known as Nell, died in September 17, 1964 after a long battle with cancer. Loree's husband, Ross Lee, died January 24, 1968 of emphysema, leaving Loree with the youngest daughter, Linda, still in elementary school. On February 20, 1970, my brother Herschel (a carpenter) of Jerome, Idaho, died after a very short illness. He had a bad cold with a fever which resulted in a heart attack. His heart had been weakened by emphysema and a lifetime of smoking. He was 59 and the second in our family of eight to pass away. (As mentioned earlier, my brother Clifford was killed March 10, 1946 during WWII while stationed in the Pacific.)

Since my retirement others have died. Jean's father, Stan Smith, had a stroke on June 17 and passed away June 29, 1980.

Willard (Bill) died April 27, 1984. He was a rancher and logger in Curlew, WA. His wife, Helen, died June 2, 1995. Both are buried at Curlew, Washington.

My oldest sister, Loree, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1981. She went through chemotherapy and everything seemed OK until 1984. She phoned one day in February and told me she had cancer of the liver – it was fatal. She asked me if I would phone the other brothers and sisters and let them know. These phone calls were especially difficult for me. To pass this sad news to all who



1953 – Herschel, Bill, Merrill, Willis
Mae, Loree, Edna

loved her brought tears to my eyes. Loree was a gifted person – good grades all the way through public school and college. She was a special person to all her brothers and sisters, helping in all the efforts to survive the Depression. Jean and I went to see Loree at her home in Rigby, Idaho, on March 22, 1984. I dreaded to go for fear I wouldn't be able to control my emotions. She didn't seem upset or frightened and put me at ease very soon. Loree was like a mother to me when I was a little boy only two years old when Mother died. She was eight and was my chief babysitter for two years after Mother's death. When I was in high school she was a sister, counselor and helpmate. She died May 27, 1984, of liver cancer.

Harold Brooks, my sister Mae's husband, died at home in Gooding, Idaho, after a seven year stretch of Alzheimer's disease on August 9, 1985. Mae and I were with him when he passed away. Mae had nursed him for seven years with very little extra help. All living members of our family were so proud of her.

My youngest sister Edna Bahr (Vandiver) Wilson died January 17, 1992, in Gooding, Idaho, following breast cancer and then liver cancer. Her husband, Kenneth, died June 20, 1993.

Brother Merrill died May 17, 1998, after a long illness. He was buried at Post Falls, Idaho, where he had lived for many years. During his last three years, he had lost the ability to make sense. His wife, Iona, preceded him in death July 14, 1995.

Each of these deaths brought with them grief and sadness, but as we grow older and wiser, it seems easier to realize how natural these events are. We learn to grieve sensibly and go on with life with a happy and optimistic view as possible.



1977 at retirement

RETIREMENT

After sixteen years, I retired from Montana State University the spring of 1977 at the age of 58. Jean and I felt we had a financially adequate income to live comfortably. However, I didn't stop working completely. I bought a lot (which I later sold) and two different houses to repair, decorate, and sell. We took several trips during the next few years. The first was to Alaska. We invited our eleven year old granddaughter, Robin, to go with us.

On June 3, 1977, we drove to Prince Rupert British Columbia, put our car on the ferry and the three of us started up the Inland Passage headed for Skagway with a stopover in Juneau. Friends, Jerald and Jeannette Mikesell, met us at the dock in Juneau. We stayed with them several days, and each day they showed us the interesting sights in and around Juneau.

We again boarded the ferry and continued to Skagway where on June 29th we put our car and ourselves on the train and went over the pass to Whitehorse. We set up our camp tent on the Yukon River just out of Whitehorse. The historical spots included a three-story log cabin, an old paddle wheel steamer and a local museum.

We left Whitehorse July 1st and drove to Anchorage. The large salmon were going up Chip Creek to spawn. Just below a small falls there were seals eating what salmon they could catch. July 4th was spent in Anchorage where "Grandpa" had to take each of the rides in the concessions with Robin.

Our next adventure was a trip down the Kenai Peninsula to Homer. While picnicking, Robin excitedly watched the chipmunks – especially the one that jumped on our table and enjoyed licking around the top of the honey jar. After the night spent in Homer, we returned to Anchorage.

The highlight of our trip was the McKinley Park tour by bus on July 7th. We saw eight grizzly bear, many Dahl sheep, a moose and one caribou. It was one of the few days that the top of Mt. McKinley was in clear view – free from cloud coverage.

On July 8th we drove to Fairbanks. One evening we drove out to a little village pub that put on a skit in which the Malamute saloon was the setting. It was after 11 p.m. and the sun was just going down when we drove back to our motel in Fairbanks.

We drove back to the U.S. on the Alcan Highway when it was still a graveled road. It rained almost every day on the return trip. There were quite a few freight trucks meeting us. The sand thrown up by these trucks and other cars on the road sand blasted our windshield and one light. They were replaced when we were again at home. We continued east past Edmonton, visited the game farm and on to Grand Forks, North Dakota, to visit Kaye's family which included the month old twins – from there on to Dallas to take Robin home. Back to Bozeman completed a 10,000 mile trip.

In 1977-78, John Kelly (a young family friend) and I built a house for his parents off South Third Avenue. We worked as partners until he died of brain cancer in 1978. I broke my right ankle in February of 1978 but made a full recovery within a year.

While I was still lame, we flew to England to visit Jean's relatives and see sights of interest. Jean's cousin, Stanley Pegram, and his wife, Eileen, made us welcome in their home. They took us to the Lake District and to Northern Wales. En route to Wales we stopped at Sparrow Falls. We met other cousins and their friends. It was a delightful ten days.



Leaving for Europe – Sept. 17, 1978

On September 28, 1978, Stanley took us to the train station for the beginning of our ten day tour using our ten-day Brit Rail pass. We went first to Edinburgh, Scotland, which we toured in detail. We found housing in bed and breakfast places as we traveled. From Edinburgh we took the train back to York, England. The Roman Wall still stands around part of York. We took a guided walk around York. Our next stop was in London. We took a guided tour of the city then went back to see the interesting spots more fully. The tour guides in England are trained and certified. You can respect the truthfulness of their narrations.

On October 4th, we took the ferry across the English Channel to Oostende, Belgium. We had a 21 day Eurail pass that we used for our tour of Europe. The first leg was the train to Amsterdam, Holland. Again we took the city tour and saw many interesting sights – Ann Frank's house, a dairy farm with all buildings and home under one roof and the boats that are homes stationed along the canals.

October 9th found us in Paris. We used the underground railway to get ourselves around to see the sights of the city. We visited Versailles and took a day bus trip to the chalet country south of Paris.

On October 12th we took the train to Wiesbaden, Germany. We were met there by Nelson

and Marge Lutey, friends from Billings, Montana. He was with the American schools in Germany. We stayed with them for five days. They were great hosts and showed us many places of interest around that area. Back to the train and on to Munich – a five hour ride. We visited the large Deutsch museum and the Dachau prison camp that was eight miles from Munich. Many thousand prisoners were executed there during WWII. What a depressing and horrible place! The weather matched the mood of the camp – gray and drizzly. About 60% of Munich was bombed out during the war, but at the time we were there all had been renewed or restored.

Our next train ride was to Basel, Switzerland. We were welcomed there by Margrit Vonasch who had stayed with us in the summer of 1965. She insisted we stay with her parents in Basel. Again we were made welcome and shown interesting sights. The most interesting was the gondola ride to the top of the mountain where Margrit and her dad took us for dinner then for a walk around the top of the mountain.

From Basel we went by train through the tunnels of the Alps to Rome where we had reserved a room for \$74 a night. A bus tour of Rome was enjoyed. There is so much history there which we didn't know very well. We couldn't fully appreciate the places we visited.

The port of Brindisi on the eastern side of Italy was our next stop. We boarded a ship and traveled across the Aegean Sea to Patras, Greece. A bus took us to Athens where we stayed and took tours out each day to see such places as Corinth and Mycenae and Naupleon. Of course, we saw the ancient buildings in Athens. We were especially interested in the Parthenon.

On the 28th of October, Jean and I went to the flea market in Athens. The street was cleared of automobiles and hacker sales people spread their wares on the walkways in front of their stores. Neither Jean nor I had ever been in such a massive crowd of people so close together that movement was slow and stuffy. We warned each other that we must not get separated. Somehow that is exactly what happened. Jean had the money and the passports and not too good in knowing which direction was which and spoke no Greek. I knew exactly how to get to the hotel and got there first. Because I was worried about her, I went back to the market and searched for her but without success. She had waited for me at the corner where five streets come together. When I didn't show up, she headed out knowing that she could see the Acropolis from our hotel. With the help of her two hands and a word or two she found her way back to the hotel. When I returned the second time she was there. What a big relief! In Greece when you don't speak the language, it is much more difficult to communicate than in other European countries.

On October 31st we were homeward bound aboard a DC10 for the ocean flight back to Boston. We had been gone seven weeks and looked forward to going home.

When we came home from this seven week trip to England, Scotland and the many countries of Europe, we realized that we had not really seen these wonderful countries in depth.

Yes, we had seen a lot but mostly spots designed for tourist satisfaction.

From that first experience, we learned that many times the interesting places had significant and important histories that have brought meaning to a visit, such as the Roman Wall still standing around the little town of Chester, England, just a few miles from Liverpool, or the wild pony herds in south central England.

It was 1979 and we were now senior citizens. I was 60 and Jean 59. What would I do to make life worthwhile and make life better for those of my family and friends? The answer was in my very nature – to keep busy. I liked to build and fix things so they looked better and worked better. I did this for several summers. I would buy a house, fix it up and sell it. Since there was no pressure on us financially, we then could take trips to countries that we had not seen. During the next few years we made trips to the Scandinavian countries and back to England several times. We also had several trips with the Senior Citizens group – to Hawaii, Branson Missouri, to see the fall colors in the northeast US and to the Black Hills in South Dakota. We joined them again in cruises to the Bahamas and the Mexican Riviera.

The purpose of our trips to England was to visit Jean's Aunt Mary, her half brother, Fred, and his wife Vi, and several cousins. We usually stayed with her cousin, Stanley Pegram, and his wife Eileen. They showed us the interesting parts of England that are not usually on the tourist line. Cousins Bill and Norman also took us on some interesting trips. We went back to visit England twice more in the next 15 years. On one visit of five weeks, we arranged for a week's tour to Scotland and the Isle of Sky. Fred and Vi went with us. Another week was spent touring southern Ireland. Our times together with all these relatives were priceless.

Several of these relatives returned our visits as well. Fred and Vi came several times. Stan and Eileen in came 1982 and 1992. Bill and Ada were here in 1983. We visited family members with them and were able to take them all

on scenic trips including Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Canyon, and even some Canadian Parks. The fellowship we enjoyed along with the sights of interest was outstanding.



Willis, Vi, Jean, & Fred – August 1979 at Yellowstone Park

FINALE

I believe that people are capable of terrible (the Holocaust) or great things (Albert Schweitzer). What they do never surprises me anymore – good or bad. I trust people but never without some questions and never too far. I trust, but I also cross check, and it is surprising how often the do-gooder – both in and out of the church – is the villain or the manipulator who uses people to promote his own ends.

I believe that God lives and hears our prayers and that Jesus is our Savior. I'm sure of the power of love and that it is the answer to many problems if we can but master how to use it.

Willie Vandiver