

FAMILY HISTORY - CYRIL AND MARY KEARL
Chapter Five - The Later Years in Preston

When I was a Deacon, we built a new 1st Ward & Stake Meeting House in Preston. Dad was chairman of the finance committee. The young men in the ward worked on the meeting house when ever we could.



The old 1st Ward Meeting House
where I went to church most of
the early years of my life.
It was torn down and the new
chapel built on it's lot.

In those days most Mormon meeting houses were built by the membership. I'm not sure why they discontinued this practice. Possibly it was the liabilities incurred or maybe the abilities of the amateur workmen to do good work but there were some real pluses to the old system. A pride in the work done and pleasure in the fellowship that was developed while building meeting houses. Several of us Deacons nailed the wood lath to the walls in the foyer of our Stake House (wood lath are 4' x 1 1/2 x 3/8 pieces of wood that you nailed about 1/2"

apart) The plasterers then smeared wet plaster all over this to form smooth walls. (Nowdays sheet rock is used for this purpose). We worked all of one summer on that meeting house. I am still proud of what I did and would like to return some day and see if the plaster has cracked or fallen off the walls.



The new 1st Ward Meeting House
where I nailed plaster lath on
the walls.

Both of my parents were very religious. To them religion was more a way of life than an attempt to communicate with God. They were Mormons by tradition as well as by conviction. Keeping commandments was a matter of habit. Sunday was not a restrictive day but a pleasant one. We dressed in our very best clothes and went to Sunday School in the morning. There wasn't much solemn dignity about either the Sunday School or Sacrament Meeting. Between the two meetings Mother usually prepared a special dinner. My folks would usually take a nap in the afternoon and then go to Sacrament Meeting in the evening. The day proceeded with a different rhythm. Very few people lived Preston who were not Mormons. Mother and Dad were tolerant of the few others in the community who did not share their religious beliefs but could

never quite see why anyone would not be a Mormon.

We used to go to church together as a family, Dad always sang in the choir and Mom worked in the Primary as long as I can remember. I didn't like Primary which was held on Tuesdays after school and I never missed a chance to skip it when I could by going to the "first hollow", a wild area full of willows that I loved to explore.

When I was 8 I was baptized. The deed was done in Bear River not far from where General Conner massacred more indians than were killed at Wounded Knee or Sand Creek. We didn't wear white clothing for the ordinance, just overalls and there was no short meeting to explain the ordinance just performed. I became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that day.

Halloween was always a special time for us. We were very clever at the pranks we pulled. Some people didn't have indoor plumbing and used a privy (wood bathroom) out in their back yard. It was generally about 4' x 4' and 7' high, with two comfortable (?) seats over an open pit. There were only a few of them left and it was a real achievement to tip one of these over. You can now understand why I've never complained about giving out a little candy when kids came "trick or treating" on halloween. They put you in jail for doing those kind of pranks now.

We used to have a lot of fun at an area west of Preston called the "sand hills" which was the city dump. The land area where Preston is situated is relatively flat but about 3 miles west, over the eons of time the Bear River cut a

river bottom probably 300 or so feet below Preston's elevation. Since Preston has existed, people have taken all their junk, old cars, refrigerators, etc and just rolled them down the hill. No one ever bothered to cover it, they just piled layer upon layer. Sanitation regulations and agency supervision would not allow this to be done now. A couple of times a year we would go down and spend all day just scavenging the dump grounds. We were not allowed to bring anything home. We'd just hide our terrific finds of the day. You can't imagine all of the valuable things we found. Looking back on it I'll never know how we kept from cutting ourselves to bits or getting the bubonic plague.

During those years there was a Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) camp up Cub River. Youth who could find no work during the depression joined the CCC and worked on conservation projects. They were disliked by the community because they would come to town on Saturday nights and raise a bit of hell. I like it because I collect the beer bottles in the park the next morning and sold them for 2 cents a bottle. Now, years later, the results of their good work (parks, camp grounds, mountain trails, roads, and paths) are found all over the west.

My Dad thought that we children should be kept busy at all times and he was very creative and successful at finding us jobs. When I was 9 I had my first paper route. I took over Bry's Salt Lake Telegram route. It was the evening edition of the Salt Lake Tribune. I delivered this route on our horse, old Queen, and I'll never forget those freezing winter nights. Being in competition with the Deseret News and being a non-mormon paper it wasn't too popular in an all Mor-

mon community. Finally Russ and I each got a morning route of the Salt Lake Tribune. I had to buy my route and paid \$100.00 (3 months profit) for it. The papers sold for \$1.05/month and there was a 30 cent profit on each customer. There were 4 routes in Preston. Russ and I had 2 and boys from another family had the other two. I had a hundred customers and so I could clear \$30.00 a month if I collected from all my customers. This was a fortune for a person of my age. Every morning, rain or shine, snow or blow I delivered those papers and only a few times did Dad or anyone take me in the car.

Russ and I would go get our papers about 6:30 a.m. and be home about 8:00, cleanup, have breakfast, and away to school by 8:45. If it snowed real hard I might be late for school, or perhaps the papers were late in coming and I'd deliver them after school. It was a seven day a week job and it lasted for about 9 years. I wore out several bikes during those years.

The worst part of the job was the collecting. During the depression years many of the customers were on relief (PWA or WPA) and to collect you had to be there the night that they received their pay checks. Generally they didn't make enough to pay all of their bills and the creditor who wasn't waiting for them to come home on pay day didn't get paid that month.

Some of the other jobs my Dad found for us included mixing and spreading poison bait for the farmers, loading wool in box cars when the wool marketing pool sold their spring shearing, stenciling bleachers at the fair ground, passing out checks to farmers for the AAA acreage compliance, and measuring farm acreage

for the Department of Agriculture.

Dad was a good teacher in many ways. He once gave Russ and I each a calf to care for. He agreed to buy the feed, but we were to be fully responsible for their care. It was agreed that if we didn't take care of them their ownership would revert back to Dad. During the summer we slacked off and didn't take care of them but Dad did. In the fall he sold the two calves and didn't give us a penny. We really thought he'd get soft and give us the money from the sale. After that I knew that a deal with Dad was a deal!!!



Me, Russ, and Mack Kennington with
with our 4-H calves at the Ogden
Jr. Livestock Show.

I was usually a member of one of the 4-H clubs that my father was responsible for promoting. For several years we used dairy cattle from my dad's herd but occasionally we'd raise a steer, show it at the Jr. Livestock Show in Ogden and then sell it at the auction there. The market in those days paid about 8 to 9 cents per lb. (live weight) but buyers would pay as high as 15 cents for a 4-H calf. A 500# calf would bring \$75.00 and since Dad gave us the calf and furnished the feed

it was all clear profit.

My Father raised purebred Holstein milk cows and by selective breeding had developed quite a good herd. During the fall of the year he would select the best of his herd for the fair entry.

Russ and I would then train and groom them for Del Mar and Spence to show at the fairs. County, District, and State Fairs had contests where anyone could bring their best livestock and in competition have them judged against the entries of other dairymen in the area. All were judged against a theoretically perfect physical specimen for each breed.

halter and would stand just so. We usually showed them at Cache County (Logan), Franklin County (Preston), Bannock County (Pocatello) and Eastern Idaho District (Blackfoot). We'd load all the cattle, usually about 10 or 12 in trucks with all kinds of equipment, sleeping bags, livestock feed and away we went. Usually each fair lasted about three days and we'd go the day before the show. It was almost a week's vacation at each fair. In a good year the prize money won could be as much as \$500.00 which would be used to help Del and Spence with their college expenses.



Del and Spence. Russ and I trained Dads cattle and Del and Spence showed them at the fairs and used the money to pay for their college expenses.

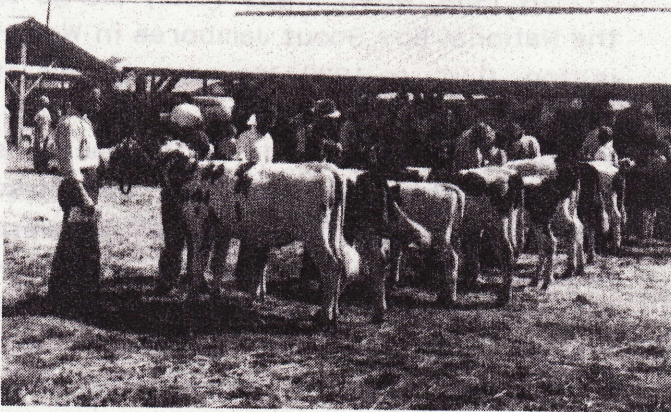


Russ and I showing our cattle at a fair.

We would start about July 15th to get the "showstring" in their best physical condition. We'd train them to lead with a halter and stand correctly while the judge compared them with all the others of the same age. We'd bed them in deep straw, feed them extra grain and hay, put blankets on to get them to shed the excess hair and make their hide condition smooth and silky. We'd lead them around and around so they were used to the

We would get our stalls assignments in the barns, bed down the animals and head for the carnival. Those fairs had some pretty raunchy side shows. People with deformities of all kinds (like the elephant man) and some times a little pornography were exhibited. It was disgusting even for a little kid. At nights we slept in the barn with the cattle. We'd bum around the midway in the evenings, but in the early part of the day we worked. We got up about 5:00, cleaned the barn, washed the cattle, braided their tails, sanded and shined their horns and hooves with shoe polish, polish the halters and then put on our white pants and

shirts and we were ready to whip the world. Dad had an excellent herd of cattle and we always won more than our share of ribbons. We showed cattle for probably six to eight years. Del and Spence started it and it just kind of grew into a tradition. We kept it going after they had graduated from college and for many years it was a normal for the Kearls to be on the "show circuit". We became pretty well known to the other exhibitors. Dad was a Superintendent of some sort at both the Franklin County Fair and the Southeastern Idaho District Fair at Blackfoot for a number of years.



Russ and I showing cattle at the Eastern Idaho District Fair in Blackfoot.

We, of course, had expenses. We'd eat our meals at the concession stands, so we figured out a way to earn money. Those who brought cows that had to be milked really had no use for the milk so we talked them into giving it to us. We'd take it and barter it with the carnival food concessionaires for 10 cents a gallon taken in trade for our meals. Also we'd take it to the people who brought pigs to the show. They liked to have fresh milk to help fatten their pigs. One hog exhibitor was Vic Fisher from Oxford. He was stingy and knew we had more milk than we could sell so he'd beat us down on the

price to 5 cents a gallon, knowing full well we'd sell to him. I guess it was a little dishonest (really more than a little) but we'd add water to the milk for Vic, then he'd dilute it with water before he fed it to his pigs. The poor pigs were drinking colored water.

Spence and Bry were always doing fun and exciting things. They got the bright idea about this time of selling fireworks at Idaho Day (June 14) and on July 4th. At that time you could buy all kinds of firecrackers, torpedo bombs (almost anything that was explosive). They ordered several big boxes full of explosives from Salt Lake City and we went to Franklin, Idaho for the celebration of Idaho's Statehood, put up a little stand by the side of the road and were in business. I don't recall, but I guess we just worked for Bry and Spence. It was especially exciting when some inebriated bum would come up and start waving his cigarette over the top of \$500.00 worth of fireworks. I don't know how well we did financially, but we kept selling them every year at Preston, Weston, and Franklin on all of the local holidays until the state outlawed any kind of fireworks, putting us out of business.



Spence - An Air Force Major with a P-36 Group in Africa during WW II.

With a bunch of boys there were always lots of practical jokes. Once we got a 6 volt dry cell battery and with a Model A Ford coil we could generate some pretty high voltages. (A Ford coil was a little wooden box containing the wires for a small transformer. With it the voltage of a 6v. car battery could be increased until it could fire the spark plugs of the car). We had it mounted under our car and wired so we could shock anyone touching the car by pressing a switch hidden under the dash. Once the wires to the ignition coils got wrapped around the transmission shaft of our car. The transmission shaft tore the coils loose and as the shaft rotated the coils started pounding the bottom of the car, frightening my father.

In those days you could buy an old Model "T" Ford Auto for almost nothing. You would then strip off everything but the frame, wheels, engine, dash board and a gas tank (which stayed to carry gas and was also used as a seat.) One day I was barely hanging on to a friend's "T" and he hit a bump. I fell off and was knocked unconscious for quite a while. I didn't dare tell Mother and Dad about it.

When we were kids, 9 or 10 years old, we would hitchhike 30 miles to Logan to see the college football games at Utah State on Saturdays in the fall. We'd bum a ride to Logan, crawl under the fence at an irrigation ditch (they had irrigation ditches that no one guarded.) We'd see the game and buy several paper thin hamburgers at 2 for a nickel and hitchhike back home again after the game. Boy were our parents trusting. No bad incidents ever happened that I recall.

Things were inexpensive in those days. Regular gasoline sold for twenty

cents a gallon and during price wars it got down to ten cents a gallon.



Me in my Scout Uniform.

In 1938, when I was 15 my me go to the National Boy Scout Jamboree in Washington, D. C. in 1938. We made a tour of Chicago, Detroit, Boston, Washington, St. Louis and home. All of the facilities for the Jamboree including the Mess Tents and the tents we slept in were pitched on the mall between the Washington Monument and the White House. We visited most the the museums and Government Offices in Washington while we were there.

We used to go to Camp Hunt on Bear Lake for a week each summer. One summer I wore an old pair of trousers and early in the week the worn seat gave out. For days I died a thousand deaths from embarrassment of knowing that my shorts were showing.

Nearly every year we drove to Salt Lake just before Christmas to do our shopping in the big city. Dad had a Plymouth Coupe (one seat) and we would ride in the trunk, and I mean trunk. We would leave the lid up a few inches and ride curled up like a bunch of sardines under a huge pile of blankets during the trip. We had an old car horn that you

pinched the bulb to honk. We'd wait until Dad was riding the center line and then honk the horn. Dad would slow down and pull clear over and kind of wait for the traffic to pass. After he had forgotten about the horn we'd honk at him again. Of course there was no one in sight. He wasn't very happy about that trick. We kept doing it all the way to Salt Lake. We had games we played to pass the time and there were very clever rhyming signs advertizing Burma Shave along the road to read. A typical one said, "The Bearded Lady tried a jar. Now she's a famous movie star."

We would stay with our Aunt Grace. She and Uncle George kept a "Parlor Grocery Store" (one of the ways that people weathered the depression) in the front of her home at 619 South West Temple. They didn't have much room so we slept on pallets on the floor. Most of our Christmas shopping was done in the 10 cent stores. I remember one year that we each had \$1.25 to buy all of our Christmas presents. That trip was an event which we looked forward to each year with much delight. There were many kids in Preston who had never been to Salt Lake City until after they had graduated from High School.

Edna Rae was Aunt Grace's only child. Even though she was Russell's age she was the big city girl and kind of something special. Very pretty, long dark hair, lots of pretty clothes, and she had her own candy store. Aunt Grace was always kind of frightening when we were young. She seem awfully stern and yet it was exciting to be there in the big city at Christmas.

At Christmas, Santa Claus usually brought us one or two toys and a bag of

hard candy, nuts, an apple, orange and a coconut in our stocking. Before Christmas we found and played with most of our toys. I remember playing with a wind-up train (few people could afford and electric train) until we broke the drive spring for the engine and how angry my Father was because he thought that he had been sold a defective toy. We didn't have the courage to admit that we broke it. Nearly every Christmas we would be given a book. We used to try with great effort to snare Santa on Christmas Eve but were never successful. Conversely, Dad went to great effort to simulate Santa Claus. One year there were sleigh tracks and candy that Santa spilled in the snow as he left leading right up to the front door and then out to the street.

Preston used to award prizes for the houses that had the best house decorations at Christmas. We won the prize for many years. One year we went over to Weston Canyon and cut a whole car full of pine boughs, we wired them into garlands and with strings of lights hung them along the eaves and gables of our house. The house seemed beautiful when covered with snow. One year Bry made a large drawing of a Christmas scene of the wise men on plywood which we mounted between our gables. We cut it out and spotted flood lights on it.