

# Merlin Nelson Larsen



## An Autobiography

*"It was a lot better than this post script!"*



## **Preface**

I have several reasons for wanting to write my life's story. I enjoy very much thinking about the past, reminiscing. I'm quite sentimental and nostalgic. I wish I knew more about my own father and mother, and their life as seen through their own eyes. I wish they had left a written account for their children, and I wish I knew more about their ancestors. So, I think it might be of service to my own children and grandchildren for me to make a written account of my life. I've had an interesting life, sometimes dull, sometimes exciting; a very good life. I've had much opportunity for education and employment. I've always lived in a good home in this wonderful free land of America. I have been greatly blessed to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I want my descendants to know how grateful I am for the good life that I have lived, been privileged to live. I'm beginning this story in May of 1989, recording it on tape, from memory, without reference to written records. I have not been a journal keeper or compiler of scrapbooks, but I have a good memory at the present time of events and experiences and people, so I think I can write a fairly detailed story of my life.

Merlin Larsen  
1992

## **Editor's Note**

In the early 1990's Lori Larsen Weintz transcribed the first four sides of the cassette tapes Merlin had made and then the project came to a standstill. In December 2001 John Larsen converted the tapes into digital recordings. Leveraging off the work Lori had done, John transcribed the twelve cassette tapes in early 2002. Merlin reviewed, updated, and corrected the transcriptions in the spring of 2002, adding a few comments from a 2002 perspective, but the period covered is still through 1992. He is working on additional material to cover the years since this original effort. That will be added at a later date.

The changes he made in the spring of 2002 were incorporated into the transcript in December 2002. Addition of pictures and formatting were completed in February 2003 using Microsoft Word 2000.

The original recordings and transcriptions are available in electronic form on the included optical disc. This document is also included in both Microsoft Word format and PDF format. Also included are mp3 files of Merlin's funeral, full size color pictures from this autobiography, and all the pictures John Larsen had in his collection that have Merlin in them.

Final editing and formatting completed were completed December 2008.

John Larsen

## **Cover**

The cover is a composite of several pictures from the Larsen Image Archive. Picture numbers and ages are given below. The progression is left to right, top to bottom:

000283 – 3 years old  
000275 – 4 years old  
000641 – 15 years old  
000046 – 19 years old  
000182 – 27 years old  
000341 – 30 years old  
000193 – 34 years old  
000414 – 41 years old  
000226 – 46 years old  
000563 – 51 years old  
000581 – 61 years old  
000597 – 65 years old  
000596 – 70 years old  
000591 – 77 years old

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## 1924 - 1930: EARLY CHILDHOOD

In Brigham City, Utah there is a small street that runs from Main Street to First East along the south side of the courthouse square. At First East, on the south side of that



**Image 1. Larsen family home c. 1939 at 424 South 300 East, Brigham City, Utah. Standing at the door are Judith, Raymond, Barbara, and Shirley. (000620)**

little street, there used to be a small house.

During the 1920s, it was used for a while as a maternity hospital. My life story began in that house on November 24, 1924.

I am the fourth of seven children born to my parents, Merlin Russell Larsen and Judith Viola Nelson, all born in Brigham City. My folks had built a home at 424 South 300 East in 1922, where the family lived until July of 1950. So all of us children lived our childhood years in that home.

I've wanted, for years, to tell the story of my life, get it recorded one way or another, and I started about 10 years ago (1982) making brief notes from memory of the main events and people involved in my own life and the lives of my brothers and sisters. I've had trouble getting started telling the story as I sit down to write or to talk onto this tape. A million thoughts run through my mind. It's difficult to decide what to say or what to write. So the story as I tell it may be rambling and disjointed but I feel that I should get started, one way or the other. I'm making this recording on January 29, 1992. My whole story I will tell from memory, without reference to any written

record. I've never been a journal keeper or a scrapbook keeper. But I still have a pretty good memory of the main events and people in my life.

I don't really have a knack for telling an interesting story. I'm going to refer to my notes and some of them may not be exactly chronological or very interesting to other people, but that's a chance I'll take. I think the best thing I can do is refer to these notes that I have been writing over a period of 10 years.

Daddy had the house built by a man named Axel Romer. He was a twin brother to a woman whose married name was Annie Tingey. She was a nurse in Brigham City for many years, and attended my mother a number of times when she had serious illnesses. The usual pattern, of course of a biography, is to tell the first part first, so I think I should start with my oldest childhood memories. I really want to tell the story of my father and mother, as I recall them, as I knew them, but I'll do that not at this time - hopefully get around to it later. Right now to get myself going on this project, I need to get into these notes and I'll talk about my childhood years first.

My very earliest memory, that I can consciously recall, is that of a very serious fire that burned a barn which stood south of our house, perhaps 100 feet away. I believe that happened in about 1926 or 1927, probably '27 when I was almost three years old.



**Image 2. The Larsen family about 1927. Harold (left), Merlin Russell holding Merlin Larsen, Yvonne, Judith holding Raymond, and Orville. (000283)**

The barn was full of hay. I don't know what started the fire. I've heard two versions. One is that it started by spontaneous combustion, it being filled with hay that was not properly dried. The other is, that it was started by a neighbor boy named Denzil Rohwer. At any rate, that fire destroyed the barn and it was so hot that it started our house on fire just by radiant heat. The roof was set on fire and most of the windows in the south side of the house were cracked and destroyed by the heat. A very traumatic experience and I had nightmares in my childhood about house fires, about our own house burning.

I recall one waking nightmare. A year or two, or a few years after this I was with my mother down on the west side of Brigham City where she was visiting with one of her friends, Ruby Forsgren. I believe her house was on 500 West because I remember there was a railroad track in front of it, out in the street, and the train went by there during the visit. There was such a train - it was an electric line on 500 West called the Utah Central Railroad. While we were visiting Ruby the fire whistle blew. It could be heard all over the Brigham City unless there was a strong wind blowing against the sound. Well, the fire whistle blew, and we went out into the street to see if we could tell where the fire was. There was a column of smoke off in the direction of our home, the southeast direction from there. I remember being frightened that it was our home burning. Perhaps I picked that up from comments made by my mother and Ruby. Anyway, so much for my oldest memories.



**Image 3. Merlin (Snooks) and Yvonne in 1928. (00275)**

I have been told of a couple accidents I had at that time but I don't recall them actually, except for what I've been told about them. When I was about three years old I fell and broke my left elbow. I'll tell you the way that happened. One of the things we did when we were little, as a form of fun, was to hold onto the doorknobs of an inside door and swing the door back and forth with the help of another kid. I remember doing that thing, but I don't remember this incident. I was told that I fell off and broke my elbow. I do have a vague memory of going to the doctor, Dr. Cooley, who set my arm. My mother has told me that I was very brave, that I didn't cry, that I looked at the doctor and called him a nice man. I think Dr. Cooley was practicing in what we call the Cooley Hospital, which at that time was on Main Street and 400 South on the

northeast corner of the intersection. There was a large two-story grey stucco building, which was later used as an apartment building.

Prior to its being used as a hospital it was intended to be used as a refuge home for polygamist wives who wanted to flee the tyranny of polygamy. It was built by non-Mormons. I don't think it was ever used for that purpose. Apparently, not many of the women wanted to flee their homes and husbands. Incidentally, a similar situation existed in Salt Lake City at the same time in the 1880's or 1890's. The non-Mormons in Salt Lake City built a large building on 500 East and between First and Second South, intended as a refuge for the polygamists wives who wanted to flee polygamy. It was not used. Nobody fled. The building was later used as The Ambassador Club, an exclusive club for wealthy businessmen and professional men in Salt Lake City; just a footnote to my life's story.

Another accident I had a year or so later, I think, which I don't really recall, but I have a little evidence of it in my left palm. There is a very distinct scar that starts at the base of the palm and runs over toward the space between my thumb and index finger. You can still see the stitch marks in that scar. I was playing with a tin can which still had its ragged edge lid attached to it. I fell on the lid and practically severed my left thumb. Again my mother or father took me to Dr. Cooley, who stitched me back together; did a perfect job. All I have left is the scar. No damage or limitation on the use of that thumb. It healed perfectly.

I do have a clear memory of many times when I fell off the back porch of our house there on 300 East. The house was rather high, set up on a basement foundation. At the back there was a very narrow porch leading up to the back door. The porch wasn't

much wider than the door and for some years I was unable to navigate opening the screen door, and getting around it into the house, without falling off the porch. Mom said I fell off the porch almost every day and often lit on my head. I frequently had healing scars, cuts, on my head. Now there may have been more damage than just the scars; that could account for some of my later behavior, I guess. But I do have memories of falling off that porch. I remember my delight when about six years later, when I was ten, that back porch was replaced by a nice platform constructed by my Uncle Will Sorensen. I'll say some more about that later. This is what I mean about the events not being chronological. I'll just throw things in as I recall them, if that's all right. I hope that some of this will be interesting enough to be of value to someone.

Let me try to describe the house that we lived in. It was small - about 25 feet by 35 feet. It was up high on a basement foundation. On the south side were two rooms. On the east was what was called the front room, perhaps 16 feet square. On the west was the kitchen, about the same size. On the northeast was the folks' bedroom, a small room perhaps 10 by 10. To the west of it was the stairway to the basement and the door to the stairway was in the bedroom. West of the stairwell was a long closet, which opened into the kitchen and west of that closet was the small room that became the bathroom. It was about the same size as the bedroom, about 10 by 10. The basement was partly excavated, the part under the front room and the kitchen. The soil was still in place up to ground level in the rest of it except where a trench had been dug around for the footings of the foundation on the north, east and west sides. The stairway ran down from north to south through that unexcavated part, there being a trench dug there to make room for the stairs as they approached the basement floor level. Off to the right and to the left of the open stairway were dark holes, which we called "the black holes". They were never enclosed. The stairway was always opens so that as you walked down the stairway into the



**Image 4. The Larsen home about 1949. In the foreground: Merlin, Judith, and Shirley Larsen. (000296)**

basement you passed between these black holes.

The basement did not have a cement floor until about 1932 or 1933. It was a dirt floor. The walls were unfinished. The concrete that had been poured for the basement



**Image 5. The Larsen family home as it looked in 1989. (000695)**

walls was not tamped down properly so there were large gaping holes. There were frequently spider nests and webs built in those holes in the walls. It was kind of a creepy place.

Strangely, the basement did have a plastered ceiling. It looked as though the plans for the basement had been interrupted, hardly begun. At any rate, that unfinished basement, with a dirt floor, was the bedroom for us four boys. Later on I'll tell how the basement was

finished, completed and improved, but it was kind of a spooky place to sleep during those years before it was finished.

The home was heated by coal burning stoves in the kitchen. There was the coal burning range, cook stove and it had in it what was called a water jacket, a cast iron tank that formed one side of the firebox. Cold water was run into the water jacket, and was heated by the fire, and the hot water then passed off into a hot water storage tank, which in our house stood in a corner of the bathroom.

The bathroom wasn't really a bathroom. There was no bathtub, there was no toilet, just the water tank and a wash basin. Until about 1929, the bathroom served as a bedroom for us boys. There was a large folding bed in the room. A folding bed in those days was a large, high wooden cabinet and the mattress and spring didn't really fold they just lifted up into a vertical position in the cabinet. When this folding bed was in the down position, it practically filled the room. The bathroom door could only be opened a little bit. In those days Mom and Dad were both very slender so they could squeeze through.

Earlier in this story I mentioned that we boys slept in the unfinished basement, but that was after 1929 or '30. Until that time we slept in the bathroom, and in 1929 or 1930 Daddy had the bathroom finished. He installed a bathtub and a toilet and at that time they sold the folding bed or gave it to someone. That's another interesting memory that I'll tell about later.

Our home was on 300 East, west of the cemetery, across from the west cemetery entrance. East of the cemetery, a couple blocks east of us, three blocks maybe, was reservoir hill, which was often called the sand hill. It was made of sand and gravel. It



**Image 6. Winter in Brigham City c. 1939. Barbara is holding the family dog Buck with Shirley on the right. (000654)**

had been formed by Lake Bonneville and the wash of water through Box Elder Canyon when Lake Bonneville was there. Reservoir Hill was probably one mile long east and west. It extended from the cemetery to the mouth of Box Elder Canyon, so there was nothing between the canyon and our home except the gravestones and some trees.

There was then, and there still is now, almost a constant wind blowing out of Box Elder Canyon. In the spring, summer and fall it was a very pleasant breeze, but in the winter it was a bitter cold wind. Because we generally have powder snow here in Utah, that wind caused very deep snow drifts to form in the cemetery, in our yard, and in the streets in the east part of town. Deep drifts became as high as a man. They'd drift over fences and when the winter sun was strong enough to melt the surface of the snow, it would crust and that cold wind would form heavy crusts on the drifts, strong enough to support the weight of a man and surely strong enough to support the weight of us little kids, so we had a lot of fun playing on the snow drifts.

I think I'll read from my notes about my memories of how we played in the house. I have vivid memories of our house and the yard associated with different seasons and various events. I remember how we played in the house in winter. Our winters were cold with deep snow and bitterly cold winds out of Box Elder Canyon. The winds drifted snow over the fences and blew it right into the house. There was often snow piled on the front room floor by the cracks around the door and on the window sill of the east facing front window. It sifted lightly on Mom's and Dad's bed in their unheated, east facing bedroom.

I mentioned that the house was heated by two coal burning stoves. Daddy didn't always build a fire in the front room heater and when he didn't we were all packed cozy in the kitchen, in the warm kitchen. To make a fire he'd carry a shovel full of live coals from the kitchen stove into the front room, dump them in the top trap door of the space heater, and then put lumps of coal in on the live coals. When the fire was going well in that heater its walls would become cherry red and the firelight would dance on the ceiling and on the walls through the holes and cracks in the stove.

Often we would sit in the dark for a while before bedtime, loving the cozy warmth, hearing the wind moan around the corners of the house. The heater stood on a metal covered stove board, a floor shield, about half an inch thick, which was needed to prevent the floors catching fire. We loved to play on this shield with our little cars and

trucks. The corners behind the stove where the chimney protruded from the wall were a delicious place to hide when we were little. It was a neat place to sit with a book where you were out of the traffic.

Mom always took great pride in her shiny stoves, both the kitchen range and the front room heater. She regularly polished them with a black polish like shoe polish. When the stoves got too hot, like that cozy cherry red, it burned the polish off and made it necessary for Mama to repeat again one of her endless tasks, shine the stove again. We liked to play car and truck driving around in the crowded rooms holding a lid of a pot or a kettle in our hands like a steering wheel and buzzing our lips to make the motor sound, driving in and out of every nook and cranny in those small crowded rooms.

I have a poignant memory of Christmas 1928. For Christmas I received a set of



**Image 7. Cherry orchard rows around Larsen family home, which can be seen behind on the right.**  
(000658)

garden tools, a rake, a hoe, and a shovel, and they weren't tin. They were real tools with hard wood handles and sturdy metal heads. I couldn't wait to get out in the yard to use them in the dirt and rocks, which I did in the spring as soon as the snow would allow. I was playing with them in the north side of the yard. Our yard was an orchard. It had quite a few fruit trees. In the north side there was raspberry row down between the rows of fruit trees. I was playing that spring with my tools near the fence of the north boundary. Mom called me in to lunch or dinner, I don't know which. I left the tools there by the raspberry row. I never saw them again. I grieved over them for some years. Even when I was a teenager picking cherries out in the yard I sometimes looked up and down the raspberry row and the fence line hoping to find those tools.

Another pleasant memory I have of our playing in the house was when we were tiny boys. My dad always worked outdoors. In the winter he wore a sheepskin lined coat.

My Dad was a big man and he wore a big coat and often when he came home at night for dinner he let us take his big coat down on the floor and we would crawl into it like a tent. It was big enough for two or three boys to play in and hide under. I remember that it smelled of his sweat but it was a good smell and it was a pleasant memory I have of my Dad.

In my notes, I have quite an extensive write up about the Christmas of 1929. About this time Daddy and Mama bought a used phonograph, a Victrola made by the Victor Talking Machine Company in New Jersey. It was housed in a beautiful red, mahogany cabinet. It was a truly wonderful, magic machine. The folks bought a few records, maybe a couple dozen total over a few years' time. I remember standing by the side of that marvelous machine, just able to peak over the top edge, with the top lid lifted up, watching the chrome plated tone arm ride the record. I wonder how many thousand times Mom came into the front room from the kitchen to put on a new record and wind up the spring driven motor. The heavy spring always bumped and rumbled a time or two as it was wound and again as it unwound.



**Image 8. Anna Cottam about 1892.**  
(000026)

I now have a Victrola identical to the one in my boyhood home. It was made in January 1915 and I acquired it about 1966 from Orrin Peck whose father acquired it when he bought an old house in some little town in the mountains east of Salt Lake City. My brother, Orville, has most of the records that we played over and over so many years ago; so many times that we memorized the words and the music and the accompaniment and the style. We had one 12-inch record; all of the others were 10-inch records, 78 RPM. On one side of that 12-inch record was the Blue Danube by Johan Strauss and on the other side was his Tales From the Vienna Woods. These records set lifetime musical tastes, or a criterion or a prejudice that strongly influences me to this very day. I remember the great loss I felt when a chip was broken out of the edge of the 12-inch record. And we continued to hear the last three

quarters of each of those great Strauss waltzes.

Another great treasure came into our lives for Christmas that year. Aunt Anna Cottam, who was Grandpa Larsen's sister, gave Orville and Harold a beautiful Flexible Flyer sled, or a sleigh as we called it. It was brand new, a deluxe sleigh, the finest one available. About five feet long. And it was built low and sloped to the back. It was a racer. It had been bought for Aunt Ann's nephew, Reed Larsen, who was the son of Aunt Ann's younger brother, Wesley Larsen. Reed Larsen was killed, about age 16 in a hunting accident down in St. George country. Aunt Ann never did recover from that tragic loss. His father, Wesley Larsen, had died tragically young and Reed had lived with Aunt Ann for a number of years; I don't know how many. She was embittered quite a bit

by those tragic deaths. I'll tell a little more about Aunt Ann in another place in this story and I'll have more to say about that wonderful, Flexible Flyer sleigh, too.

Another thing happened in the summer or fall of 1929 that I imagined largely in our boyhood adventures. We got a dog which we named Buck about this time. Buck had been given to my cousin, Bob Koutnik, who is my mother's sister Bernice's boy. They were visiting us for a few weeks and he and we boys had gone up east of the cemetery where a large herd of sheep were coming through town as they often did in the spring and the fall when they were moving the sheep to and from their summer grazing lands. But the sheep herders gave this dog, Buck, to Bob. His parents wouldn't let him keep it so he gave it to us. I don't know whether he gave it to any one of us, but all four of us boys and Yvonne claimed this dog. He was a black, curly haired Spring Spaniel. He probably weighed about 40 pounds and had a white spot on his chest. I think he had a couple white paws.



**Image 9. Buck, the family dog c. 1939.** (000636)

Here's another thing I remember about the Koutniks. They were visiting with us in the summer of 1929. I guess Uncle Jim Koutnik was changing jobs. I think they had been living back east and were moving to Utah, and they stayed with us. We didn't have any room for guests so Daddy set up a big tent out in the corner of the yard and that's where the Koutniks stayed. I guess they ate in the house, but one exciting thing was to sleep in that tent. When they left our place, ending their visit with us, they moved to Ogden and rented an apartment. The next summer, in 1930, I was permitted to spend a week in Ogden visiting with Bob. I have pleasant, vivid memories of the week that I stayed there. I was impressed

with how many cement sidewalks they had in Ogden. We didn't have many in Brigham. They were such fun to play on and to ride wagons and scooters on. I also was impressed with the luxury of a house down the street from Bob's that had a carport and the smoothest, sloped concrete driveway I'd ever seen. I really enjoyed playing on that driveway. The owners were very tolerant of us.

As I mentioned earlier, it was about this time that Daddy had a bathtub and toilet installed in the house and they got rid of the big folding bed. I remember clearly what they did with it. They gave it or sold it to the father and mother of Ruby Forsgren, Mom and Dad's dear friend. They put the folding bed on the new sled that Orville and Harold had received the Christmas before, and hauled that folding bed down to the Poulsen's house. That was Ruby's maiden name, Poulsen. I can see them doing that so clearly. I can also see the plumbers sliding the bathtub into the house over the snow. It was a bathtub that had feet under it. The feet were bolted on after it was in the house. To get

the heavy cast iron tub into the house they slid it over the snow. I can see them doing that in my mind's eye very clearly.

It was at this time, with the folding bed gone, that our beds were moved to the basement. The basement still had a dirt floor and Daddy put some boards down for the boards to stand on so the feet wouldn't sink into the dirt, and laid a couple of boards down from the foot of the stairway over to the beds so we didn't have to walk in the dirt in order to get to bed. I think there were two full-sized beds; at least later on we had two of them. Raymond and I slept in one. Orville and Harold slept in the other. Although to begin with, since Orville was only ten or eleven at this time, and Raymond was only about five, we could all have slept in one bed. We had some high adventure sleeping in the basement. Although it was creepy with the spiders and occasional snakes, it wasn't all bad; especially with our dog, Buck. I guess right now would be a good time to confess to how many times we let Buck into the basement through the basement windows and he would sleep on the foot of our beds. Mom was always exasperated by that I'm sure. We pretended not to know how he ever got in, but I imagine Mom had it all figured out and knew that dog didn't open the window by himself.

Another really fun memory of sleeping in the basement with that dirt floor were the apples my Dad would buy in the fall of the year. For many years my Dad would buy maybe 10 or 12 bushels of apples usually from Henry Harris who had a farm down near my Dad's farm. He raised good apples, usually Jonathan and Golden Delicious apples that my Dad bought. We had free reign on those apples. They were in the basement with us. There was hardly any way Daddy could limit the amount we ate, so almost every night we would eat two or three apples apiece and we would just throw the apple cores on the dirt floor under the bed. That was not a problem because every spring Mom would house clean our basement bedroom. First she would bring the garden hose down and spray some water on the floor to settle the dust. Then she would clean the floor with a rake, raking up the apples cores and banana peels and what have you that were under the bed. Sounds a little bit like pioneer times, doesn't it?

This seems like a good place to mention my brothers and sisters and when they were born. We were all fairly close in age and that was good. We were very close in our feelings for each other, too, and constantly played together. The older kids tolerated the younger kids and helped entertain them. They looked after them and taught them many things, mostly good, some not so good, I guess. Orville, my oldest brother, was born August 26, 1919. He was a little over five years older than I am. Harold, my second brother, was born on November 7, 1920, just four years older than I. My oldest sister, Yvonne, was born September 26, 1922. She was born the year in which the folks had the house built and one month before my father's father died as a young man, only about 56 years old. Then I was born, as I said, on November 24, 1924. Raymond, my youngest brother, was born September 13, 1926, and was about two years younger than I. Then Barbara, my second sister, came along on February 20, 1931. Shirley, the baby of the family, number seven, was born June 1, 1936. There was about a five year spread between Barbara and Shirley. That accounts for all seven of us.

Mother had a couple of miscarriages in between our births. We don't know who they would have been, but we would have had a huge family if they had been born and survived. We were a close family. We lived in a tiny house and we were crowded, but it

was a peaceful family with very little jangling. We respected each other and everyone tried to make life peaceful and pleasant, and it was so.

## **1931 to 1936: GRADE SCHOOL YEARS**

New excitement came into my life in the fall of 1931. I began school in the first grade at Central School. My teacher was a tiny, plain woman, Miss McBride. I loved her. I loved school. That year set the pattern. I always loved school and loved, or liked, all my teachers. We got along just great. I was a good student and always earned high grades, usually A. That wasn't an unmixed good thing, as I'll discuss more in detail later. As I turned seven in November, I was one of the older kids in my grade. I had many friends but did not develop really close, buddy type friendships. Teachers often told Mama, "Merlin is a good student and never any trouble, but he's such a little old man."

That year Orville was in the sixth grade, Harold in the fifth, Yvonne in the third, and I in the first.

In those days, the teachers of the grade schools produced operettas in which they involved scores, even hundreds of the children. They were musicals, real musicals, and the kids learned a number of songs and were always dressed in costumes. I remember Orville was a pirate that year. I can still see him in that pirate uniform with a patch over one eye. I don't remember Harold's part in it. Operettas all through my sixth grade, were exciting. I don't know how long they continued them after that, but the practice disappeared I'm sure before World War II came along.

I have some specific fond memories of the first grade. I had two sweethearts that year. One was Sharon Thompson who lived down in the Third Ward of Brigham City. At that time her parents were renting Mrs. Wagner's home, which was the first house south of the service station on the southwest corner of the Tabernacle block across the street. That's where Sharon lived. My other sweetheart was Geneal Cazier who lived in our Sixth Ward just a block south of us on Third East.

I remember too the big boys in sixth grade who had the responsibility for ringing the school bells; bringing us in from recess; the noon hour; ringing the bell for time to go home, school's out; and ringing the bell in the morning for time to start school. I remember Geneal Cazier's oldest brother, Clarice, was one of those boys. There was a big bell that hung in one of the hallways on the second floor I think. They also had a good sized hand-held bell, which a boy could shake with both hands. I thought they were quite the big shots to have that responsibility.

In the fall or winter of 1932 I had another accident, which could have been very serious. One of our self-entertainment projects as kids in the winter was to build little, miniature bobsleds. Now a bobsled, a real bobsled, is one that is pulled by two or more horses and has a wagon box that is set low on runners. It has four runners, the front two of which turn for steering. We made miniature bobsleds and our favorite material to make them out of was wooden cigar boxes. We carved the runners out of a piece of that wood, either with jigsaws or pocket knives. As I was whittling with my pocket knife, making a runner, my knife slipped and it sliced open my right thigh, a deep cut about three inches long, and blood spurted out. My Dad, who was home, tied on a tight bandage and then bundled up himself and me against the severe winter cold wind and carried me to the hospital. I still carry a large scar including some of the stitch marks on my right thigh.

When we started school in the fall of 1932 my little brother Raymond was just a year behind me, although nearly two years younger than I am. I was starting second grade and he the first. Families around us were large and most families had children in several grades at the same time. At this time Harold was in the sixth grade, Yvonne in the fourth, I was in the second, Raymond in the first, and Orville had moved to the seventh grade, junior high, which was held in the same building as the high school. I remember being very proud of my older brothers and sister. They all set good records in school which prepared the way for us younger ones when we came along, since we often had the same teachers. I also remember being very much aware of my older brothers' friends particularly, but of Yvonne's friends also, and I learned to admire their friends and felt the same affection, almost more affection for them than kids of my own age. This may have been the "little old man" coming out in me again.

This fall or winter Raymond had an accident. We all had chores at home and Raymond's and my chores included bringing bushel boxes full of coal from the coal pile up onto the back porch or near the back porch. We needed the sleigh to haul with. Harold had been playing with the sleigh, and he turned it over to us by laying it down and giving it a shove with his foot down a slight slope in the back yard. The metal front end of the sleigh struck Raymond's leg and snapped both of the bones, a very serious compound fracture. As I remember it, Daddy wrapped Raymond up and hauled him to the hospital on the sleigh. Probably so, because I don't think we had a car at that time. I can still see, in my mind, Raymond hobbling around on those tiny crutches. We even had some fun taking our turn playing with his crutches.

We had several serious injuries with that sleigh along with many exciting adventures. I'll try to tell a little more about them later. I had more fun with it, of course, as I became older and more able to handle that big sleigh. But Orville and Harold were having adventures with it already and some of them were very dangerous. It's a wonder that no one was killed by some of the things we did in our play.

In school this year, 1932, my second grade, my teacher was Miss Carma Davis. She was a very beautiful woman. I knew that and I fell in love with her, really. I remember a year or two later when she quit teaching school and married a young Doctor Pearse in Brigham City. I was deeply offended that she wouldn't wait for me, but I loved school.

Another thing I remember about that winter, all four of us boys received new winter coats. They were all lined with sheepskin. Orville's coat was made of corduroy. The three of us had coats that were made of a kind of a rubberized plastic, something waterproof and rather stiff, unlike the soft the artificial fabrics of today. They were nice coats, and we also had what we called aviator caps. They were very much like the caps pilots wore flying the open cockpit airplanes of that day. We also received mittens and a pair of galoshes, so we were well equipped for playing in the snow and bundled up warm going to school.

In those days we had regular fire drills at school. In the fire drill we were to leave everything and get out of the building immediately and there was a prescribed pattern for each class to follow a certain other class and go out a certain doorway so it could be done in an orderly manner in an emergency. I remember my feeling of great reluctance to leave the building without my new coat and hat and galoshes and mittens, just like leaving a dear friend in there to perish in the fire.

We had a school operetta this year, as every year during my grade school time. I remember that Yvonne was a sweet pea, dressed up in a costume to look like a sweet pea, and I can see her costume in my mind. I think Mom has a picture of it, which would be black and white, of course, and not show the color, but it was very impressive to me. I believe only the sixth grade took part in it. Sometimes the younger grades took part. Yvonne was in the fourth grade that year and she was in it.

About this time Orville and Harold bought, or acquired as a gift, an Iver-Johnson bicycle. It was an old bike but a prize and a treasure. They were generous and let all of us, including Raymond and me, try to learn how to ride a bike. Of course we fell down frequently and it was very hard on the bike, but I remember that I did learn to ride a bike. Some of us were so small we had to ride with our leg under the top bar, which meant crossing over through the bars with your one leg. You'd ride on the left side of the bike, kind of hanging on, and just put your right leg through the bar onto the right peddle, kind of awkward, and it didn't make learning to ride the bike any easier, but we were very determined to learn as soon as possible.

Another practice that we had in our grade school days was to go down town behind the stores. Our grade school was only a block from the business district and it was an exciting thing to go down and rummage through the trash pile behind the stores. They threw out all sorts of exciting things, big pasteboard boxes and fancy containers of one kind or another. The Cornet store, which was a five-and-ten cent store, was right next door to JC Penny's so their trash piles were very close together.

I remember one of the treasures we looked for in Cornet's rubbish was candy, which was sometimes thrown out. It was sometimes clean and good and oftentimes it was mixed with the floor sweepings, but people were very poor then and we had very little change for candy. Of course we hungered for candy, for sweets, and I remember often we'd pick pieces of candy, whole pieces of candy, out of the floor sweepings and rub it off a little bit and eat it. It was ok except sometimes it tasted a little bit of that oil they used on the floors to settle the dust. Many floors in public buildings in those days were oiled floors, just a tongue-and-groove fir floor that they oiled frequently to settle the dust, but we had no qualms about eating candy with a little oil on it if it didn't taste too bad.

1932 was a Presidential election year. President Hoover was the president, and in the election campaign that year he was the Republican candidate. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the Democratic candidate, the challenger. My Dad was always a very staunch Republican and he was very much opposed to Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had a lot to say about the election and we kids picked up on it. I'm sure his strong feelings influenced me to be most generally a Republican in all of my voting experience.

Orville was 12 years old at this time. When school started this year he launched on a hobby that has absorbed him all of his life to the present time and that is automobiles. He obtained his first Model-T Ford at this time. A block or two below us between First and Second East on Fifth South, there was an automobile wrecking yard owned by Dan Jeppsen and his family. Dan had 20 children all born of the same mother and they ranged in age down to, maybe Raymond's age, the youngest. The older children were much older than Orville and Harold. Orville was fascinated with cars and worked for Dan Jeppsen in his wrecking yard, helping to demolish cars and reduce them to

salvageable scrap metal. He worked for Dan to pay for this Model-T Ford and it began an exciting phase of our childhood.

Orville's cars were always a center of attention in the neighborhood. He always had several kids riding with him in his cars. He needed them because the cars frequently needed to be pushed. He often had tire trouble and often ran out of gas. Often the cars wouldn't start or would fail, stall, and he needed somebody to help push them in. It was always worth that risk to have the thrill of riding with him in these cars. They were generally open cars with the wind blowing in your face and he was young and daring and it was always a thrill to ride with him.

Orville, by practical experience, became an excellent mechanic. He knew cars inside and out, from one end to the other, machinery, engine, all the parts, the bodies, electrical systems, he knew all about them. He learned it by experience and gradually acquired tools and expertise over the years. I prided myself in being his tool carrier. I would fetch the tool that he needed when he was lying on his back on the ground, under the car. He would ask me to bring this tool or that tool and I took real pride in learning the names of the tools and learning to know exactly which one he wanted. I also picked up a little bit knowledge of cars myself that way.

At school this year I witnessed a terrible tragedy on the highway. The main highway ran right in front of our school between the school and the Box Elder Tabernacle that still stands in Brigham City. The school building that we attended burned down in 1947 and was replaced with a newer building, which stands there today. All the traffic that went through Brigham City went past our school, including big trucks. There were a couple of Knudson families that lived in the neighborhood close to the school. Some of them were related to us through marriage. My Grandpa Larsen's oldest sister, Alice, had married a Knudson and the Knudsons were all related, it seems. Anyway there was a little Knudson boy two or three years old, who strayed away from home and was playing near Main Street, in front of the school. This was after school in the afternoon, three o'clock to four o'clock. The little boy strayed out into the street and was struck by a truck loaded with grain. The truck ran right over his head and smashed it like an egg and I remember the grizzly scene of that boy's brains scattered on the street mixed with blood. It was a dreadful, dreadful thing.

I remember a pleasant thing that Christmas. I think it was that year when I received from Santa Claus a wind up tractor. It had a very powerful motor in it and wide rubber Caterpillar treads and the style of it was that it had an enclosed cab at the back end. I don't think it had a bulldozer blade on it, but it may have done. I remember we played with it a lot and the older boys played with it too. It was a very interesting and quality toy, but I remember one of the older boys wound the spring too tight and snapped the spring, and that was a great loss to me.

In 1932 my Dad began to work for Brigham City. He was just a laborer to begin with, but he quickly displayed his ambition and energy and dependability and became assistant to the water master of Brigham City. The water master was a man named Joe Lee. My Dad's job would last for 17 years until November of 1949.

I remember of being aware of why he went to work for the city. Daddy was a fruit farmer at heart. He and his brother Ira, his oldest living brother, who was 10 years older than Daddy, had bought from the estate of my Grandpa Lars H. Larsen, the farm of 51 and a half acres down in the southeast corner of Brigham City. They bought the farm

from the family estate and to do so they acquired it with a debt on it. I remember that the debt was owed to the Federal Land Bank in Berkeley, California. I remember my Dad mailing payments to the land bank. I think they were annual payments due in the fall after the crops had been harvested.

On this farm Daddy developed a very fine deep well with a powerful pump on it, probably a 50-horse power electric motor that pumped water from a depth of 200 feet. The water was ice cold and crystal clear and it pumped an eight-inch pipe full, throwing the water out three to four feet, a really large stream. I don't know how many feet per second it pumped, but it used a lot of electric power. Daddy and Ira had run up quite a power bill owed to Brigham City, those being hard times and being very short on cash.



**Image 10. Ira Larsen with his wife Clara Christopherson Larsen and their children Iris and Dorothy, c. 1915. (000686)**

The crops were insufficient to pay the bill so my father went to work for the city and part of this wages were applied toward payment of that power bill. We're not talking about a great many dollars. I don't know what my Dad earned at that time, but it was probably less than \$100 a month and part of it went on the power bill and he had, at this time, six children. Barbara was the sixth and she was just a year old. They were lean times so Daddy devoted most of his working hours to the city. Uncle Ira was supposed to run the farm and Daddy worked all he could after his regular working hours and on Sunday, I guess, and holidays. Daddy was a very hard worker all of his years as long as he lived, except in the last four or five years of his life. He was disabled by an injury which I'll talk about later.

Daddy's work with the city became a very interesting part of our life and the farm was a very big part of our family life, and our individual

lives. I'll talk about that in my story of the years to come.

My third grade teacher was Miss Doril White, a very tall, thin, rather pretty woman, not a beauty, but a lovely person and an excellent teacher. I remember we had a writing contest. We studied penmanship in those days. We were taught to write as well as we possibly could. They tried to teach us all to form our letters the same way. It was called the Palmer Method and it was effective. They need something like that today. Writing is still important and especially being able to read what is written. I won first prize in that contest, which was an Eversharp pencil. It was green and black. Eversharp and fountain pens were quite new things in those days. The fountain pen, of course, was a pen that had its own ink supply within it in a rubber tube, which replaced the stick pen

which had to be dipped in a bottle of ink, in an ink well, as you wrote. Well, after school, with that prize pencil in my pocket, I went over to play football with the boys on the Tabernacle lawn. The Tabernacle, as I said before, was directly across the highway, Main Street, from our school. It occupied a whole city block and most of it was grass, a huge lawn with some trees. Most of the trees were far on the east end. There were large areas that were wide-open grass and it was our playground. There was no grass at that time on the school grounds so we played on the Tabernacle grounds. I remember laying that green and black pencil down at the base of the lamppost while I played football. I never saw the pencil again. Somebody stole it. We did have thieves even back in the Halcyon days. It broke my heart that I never had a chance to use the pencil that I had won. I'm not sure whether that dampened my enthusiasm for football or not, but it may have done.

I never was much of an athlete but I played sandlot ball and football. I played a little hockey later on, tried to on ice skates. I played along with the kids at most things, but I was never very good at it.

I remember at school we had an iron fire escape attached to the south wall of the building that went up to the second and third floors. We had 12 rooms in the school, four on each floor, one room in each corner of the building with a cross shaped hallway, a large center hallway with an extension in between each pair of rooms and the area for hanging our coats in the halls. The areas were in those extensions of the cross-shaped hall. Anyway, the older sixth grade boys and some of the braver younger boys had a habit of sliding down the vertical iron bar that supported this fire escape. It was hung on the brick wall of the building. Supporting its outer corners was a vertical iron rod that went from the bottom of the second floor platform up to the bottom of the third floor platform. A slanted rod from the top of the third floor platform slanted up to the brick wall where it was fastened by a bolt into the wall. The boys would slide down, climb over the railing of the third floor platform and grab hold of that rod and slide down to the second floor platform. The really brave ones would climb over the railing of the second floor platform and hang by their hands to the bottom of the platform with nothing but 10 feet of open air below them. That always gave me the chills to see anyone do that and I never did have the courage to try it myself, but I admired the courage of those who could do it.

The school was on Main Street between Second and Third South. Our home was on Third East between Fourth and Fifth South. It was about a half mile to school and the path went through our church lot. The church was on Second East and Third South, a couple blocks from our home and it still stands to this day. It's used and owned by the Presbyterian church who acquired it right after World War II when our church built a new building on Second East and Fifth South, a couple blocks down from the old building.



**Image 11. Brigham City Tabernacle**

West of the church building on the corner of First East and Third South, kitty corner across from the Tabernacle Square, was a small frame building, which we called the scout house. It was probably 15 by 40 feet in dimension and was used by the Boy Scouts.

Scouting was big and there were a lot

of boys in the ward. Scouting was very active when Orville and Harold were scouting age from 12 to 15, and I remember the fascination that that building and its contents had for me. There were three or four scout patrols, one in each corner of the building, and in there they had displays of knots and skills, things built of branches, collections of rocks, collections of butterflies, collections of leaves, all of which they did pursuing their merit badges. They worked with ropes. They did first aid and practiced bandaging injured limbs. The things the scouts did were fascinating to me and that building contained all of that magic.

I remember also the fascination of the big irrigation ditch that flowed south across the front of the Tabernacle Square. It's still there. I think it is still open. The walls and the bottom are concrete. It's a big stream and it was always a fascinating thing. I don't think it was dangerous although a little kid, two or three years old, could easily have drowned in it, and maybe some of them did. I remember, too, the man who was the custodian of Tabernacle Square and the building. I think his name was Rasmussen. He was an immigrant from Denmark and we called him Danish Ras. He lived on Fifth East south of Fifth South. He mowed the lawn, a whole city block of grass. He used a horse drawn mower that was built very much like a racing sulky. It had two staves that ran up one on each side of the horse. It had a seat for the driver, two wheels, and these huge reel-type mowing blades that did a good job. It was stored in a little shed behind the Tabernacle. I remember how interesting it was to me that it was pushed into the shed and then the staves that the horse walked between were pushed up into the air. The shed in which it was stored was not very big in ground area but it was very high, about 10 feet high, an odd type of shed. I remember the funniest things, unimportant things.

Danish Ras lived across the street from the Richards family, which will be mentioned somewhere in this story, I'm sure. The Richards were a big family of boys and a couple of girls who were close friends to us kids. We played a lot together and had a lot of adventures and misadventures

A very exciting part of going to school at the Central School was going to primary in the church house once each week, usually on Wednesday afternoon immediately after school. I loved primary. We had good teachers. They had a fun program of things to do, games to play, things to learn, songs to sing, and we held our primary activities right in the chapel. The chapel had a sloped floor, higher at the back, sloping down toward the pulpit. The seating was on wooden benches. There were three sections of benches; a wide center section and then a narrower section on either side of



**Image 12.** All, but two, of the children of David and Annie Richards, who lived on 400 East just south of the cemetery. Annie Richards was Daddy's first cousin. Front row left to right: "Poopy Doop", Robert (Bally), a friend (holding the newspaper), Glen (Dugan). Back row left to right: Clarence (Cluck), Harold (Huck), George (Greg). Not shown: Elmer (Emmett) and Nelly (I don't think she had a nick name) (000663)

the chapel, much the same as now, but the benches in the center section were not fastened to the floor. They were free standing and to make room for activities, such as dances and plays, entertainment of any kind that was held in the ward, those benches were simply moved to the back. A couple of men would take hold of the benches one on either end, and lift them up and over the benches behind, leaving a large area of the floor exposed.

The pulpit work in front of the chapel was also removable so that the pulpit and the breastwork of the stand where the bishopric and others sat during Sunday School and Sacrament meetings

could be removed. It was removed when there was a play to be presented or something requiring a stage. The stand area became an elevated stage. Up behind the pulpit and the stand area was the choir section. There were choir seats arranged in kind of a semi-circular area and in the midst of the semicircle there was an organ and a piano. The

organ was a pump type. The player had to pump air with his or her feet to provide the wind to make the organ play like a pipe organ.

A very memorable thing about primary, apart from some specific classes, was the dismissing from opening exercises to go downstairs to our classrooms. We went down a very noisy wooden stairway, especially under the feet of a bunch of children, but they always played the song “Called to Serve” for the music to which we marched out of the chapel down the stairs to our classrooms. That song has a marching tempo, and we made as much noise as we could on those stairs as we went down and later came back for a reassembly closing session of primary after our class work; very memorable. That song, incidentally, has been included again by the Church in its 1987 hymnbook, and it serves as the rallying theme song at the Missionary Training Center in Provo. It is really something to stand with 2,000 or 3,000 young missionaries and sing that song, “Called to Serve”, a thrilling thing. It takes me back to my exciting primary days. I loved primary and it was in primary where I obtained my love for the church and the gospel and obtained my testimony, which has seen me through my life and is still very strong today. I love the church and the gospel and I know they are true.

About this time our dear friend and neighbor Wilford Christensen bought a new 1934 Chevrolet truck. I remember it so well. The Chevy truck was larger and longer than the Model-T Ford truck he had. He built an extension on the back of his garage to make it long enough for that truck. They lived south of us, on the corner of 300 East and 500 South on the northwest corner. That garage still stands – barely.

The Cooley Hospital moved into a new building on First East between First North and Forest Street. The old building was turned into an apartment building. I remember that our primary president, Mrs. Carruthers, and her family lived in that apartment.

About this time, Daddy obtained a Studebaker truck. The truck had been made out of a touring sedan with a canvas top. It had a truck bed on the back and they had replaced the sedan top with a shorter one. This truck had eight cylinders. The huge engine was about four feet long. It had huge solid steel disc wheels that stood about three feet high and the tires were about 30 by 6 inches. I don’t know how many years he owned that truck, but it was a fascinating truck. Dad loved it and loved to drive very fast in it.

My mother’s parents, Grandma and Grandpa Nelson, had moved to California in the early 20’s, maybe about the time I was born. All of their children, except my mother, moved to California with them, so we didn’t have frequent contact with my mother’s family, but Grandpa and Grandma Nelson came almost every year to visit. Grandpa worked for the Union Pacific Railroad, so they had either free or reduced rate fare. They always brought goodies of some kind for us children. Not gifts usually, but maybe a bag of candy or a box of candied California fruit, which I never cared much for. Their visits were interesting and it kept us aware that we belonged to a big family and half of it was in California.

Some time in the early 30’s Daddy had a new barn built. It was a very fine structure made of tongue-and-groove fir flooring. It was used primarily as a stable for milk cows. Daddy kept six to eight milk cows at this time and the corral in which they could go outside and get some sunshine consisted of the lane or driveway that ran from the barn west of the house up to the street on the south side of the house. Between that lane, or corral, and our house there was a garden, which was usually a flower garden.

Sometimes it had vegetables in it, but mostly Daddy raised flowers there. He loved roses. He raised beautiful gladiolas and zinnias. Daddy loved flowers and Mom did too.

In the spring of 1935 Uncle Will Sorensen did something to our house that was



**Image 13. Soren and Jennie Nelson, parents of Judith Larsen**  
(000130 and 000133)

very exciting. A cement floor had been poured in the basement in 1933 or 1934, and the basement walls were plastered with a nice smooth plaster. Uncle Will built wooden partitions dividing the basement into three rooms. About half of it was a bedroom for us four boys in which there were two full-sized beds, one bed for each two of us.

The other half was divided into a bedroom for the girls, Yvonne and Barbara, and later Shirley. The other part of that half, which was nearest to the stairway, was the fruit/store room. This was a great improvement on our basement. It also made it possible to get the couch out of the front room, which had been the bedroom for Yvonne and Barbara.

The other thing that Uncle Will did, which was equally exciting, was to build a new back porch. Really it was just a platform about five feet wide and nine or ten feet long with a nice railing around it. The steps down were 2 by 12 planking and ran along the house to the south.

Raymond and I still had chores of getting in wood and coal and this big platform made a neat place to have bushel boxes full of coal up close to the back door in the wintertime. At this time, and for several more years to come, the winter supply of coal was just a big pile dumped about thirty feet from the house. Before the snow fell, we would usually cover that coal with a big canvas tarpaulin. Getting the coal in amounted to cleaning the snow off the tarp, throwing it back, filling up the boxes and hauling them over to the house with the sleigh, then covering the coal again.

We also stored kindling wood on the platform Uncle Will built. We chopped up a lot of kindling wood in the fall because we had to start a new fire in the kitchen range every morning. We started it with wadded up newspaper, then fine kindling wood with a few pieces of coal on top of that. In the winter we used a lot of kindling and coal, so that was a steady chore that we had. Later on we had other chores. Of course, at this time Orville and Harold had other chores including milking the cow. Some years we raised pigs down at the farm, which was about a mile away, so it was some task to go down and do chores on the farm.

In 1934 and 1935 I was in the fourth grade. My teacher was Miss Vivian Maughan. Her family is related to Gwen Maughan, our son Doug's wife. They all came from the Cache Valley area mainly around Wellsville. Miss Maughan was a middle-aged woman, an "old maid", and I really loved her. She was a lovely person and a wonderful teacher.



**Image 14. Will Sorenson and Mary Larsen Sorenson. Mary was Lars H. Larsen's sister.**  
(000600)

That year Clint Holmes and I both thought we were in love with a girl in our class, Phyllis Cederholm. She was less than thrilled by our attention. We often called her "Pie Face" just to taunt her and show our affection. She didn't understand, I'm afraid.

One memorable project we had in fourth grade was the study of the history of Brigham City, which included a visit to the city Relic Hall in the basement of the County Court House. They had some pioneer artifacts there, enough to stimulate the imagination of the kids and increase our appreciation for the pioneers. Brigham City was founded in 1851, so it was 84 years old in 1935.

For our study of Brigham City, we also made a movie theater out of a large refrigerator shipping box, which was made out of thin plywood sheets. We cut a hole in one side about 15 inches high and 20 inches wide, and on two broomsticks we mounted two reels that ran through the box from side to side. On those two reels was wound a long strip of butcher paper. To the paper we pasted a long series of drawings that we made illustrating the history of Brigham City as seen by 10 and 11 year old kids. We would wind the reels and the audience would see the pictures through the screen hole in our theater.

I remember that Miss Maughan cried openly as she bid us goodbye at the end of our fourth grade. I often wonder what happened to her. She was a sweet person and a wonderful teacher. One of the things she taught us was tenderness and that it was okay to cry if you felt sad. We learn important things in the most accidental ways, often by observation rather than by deliberate teaching. I learned many wonderful things from my schoolteachers and the older people in my life.

For Christmas in 1935, I received an electric train. I think I was too old for it. The most pleasure I got out of it was building a wooden frame to support its figure-eight railroad track so I didn't have to keep taking the track apart. How the folks and the rest of the family permitted me to have that train and track in the house I can hardly imagine, but it indicates how tolerant we were of one another and our need for space, and our need

for room to play. I kept that train for a long time, but I don't know what happened to it. I later used the electric transformer from the train for our erector set, which required a transformer because it had an electro magnet as part of its equipment. Incidentally, I still have that erector set here in our basement. I don't know how I ended up with it, since it was Raymond's and mine, but I was always the one to take particular care of things.

Marble playing was a favorite pastime when I was ten-years-old. Our house faced the east. It was made of frame and always painted white. On the south side of it there was a 12 to 15-foot wide patch of dirt between the house and the row of cherry trees and the garden. The reflection of the sun off that white house onto the snow melted the snow very early in the spring. It was the first area in our whole neighborhood to be free of snow. As soon as it was clear, before it was even very dry, we would begin to play marbles there. It was the marble playing rink for the whole neighborhood. We had a



**Image 15. Orville Larsen on the south side of the house. Note the cherry blossoms. This area was the neighborhood marble playing spot because the snow melted here early, due to the sun reflecting off of the white house. (000624)**

score of kids there, and played different games including Rings, Pots and Fats.

You shoot a marble by holding it between the knuckle of your thumb and the tip of your index finger. Some kids held the marble in their curled up index finger with the thumbnail behind it. Flipping your thumb out shoots the marble. Coordination, strength in your hand, and the ability to hold the marble all combine to determine how skillful you are at shooting marbles.

In Rings you drew a ring on the ground, any diameter you wished, depending on how far you were able to shoot a marble. Each player put in his "date", which was two or three marbles apiece. They were arranged in the middle of the circle and little mounds called "innies" were built out of mud on which we set the marbles above the level of the ground. Each of the marbles in the middle was set up on an innie. You'd take turns shooting at the marbles from outside the ring. You shot with a "taw", which was usually a little larger than the other marbles. You tried to shoot straight enough and with enough force to knock a marble out of the ring. If you hit a

marble out of the ring you got another shot. If you were good enough, you could clear the whole ring in a turn.

Pots required a long, flat, smooth strip of dirt, about 25 feet long. At one end of that strip there were nine little holes, or "pots", dug into the soil in an arrangement of three rows of three pots each. The holes were dug about nine or ten inches apart. There

were four corner holes, and a center hole on each side. There was one hole in the center of them all; nine holes all together. Each player would put his dates in the center pot. Then from the other end of the strip a line was drawn in the ground and each of us, in turn, would try to roll his taw into the center pot and make it stay there. If your taw stayed in the center pot, all of the marbles in that pot were yours. If you got into a corner pot, you had to put dates in again. So if the dates were three marbles, you had to add three more marbles and that was your turn. If you rolled your taw into one of the side pots, that is the middle pot on any of the four sides, you could take your dates out of the center pot. The game was a great deal of fun.

To play Fats you needed a long smooth strip of soil. At one end of the dirt a narrow football shape was drawn into the ground about a foot long and maybe three inches at the widest spot. The players lined up their dates inside the fat right through the middle of it in a row. From the other end of the strip we would roll our taw and try to knock marbles out of the fat. You kept anything that you knocked out, but each turn you only rolled once. If you didn't get anything out, that was still the end of your turn. Of course, the object was to get all the marbles you could. Harold was the champion marble player in the neighborhood. He always wound up with more marbles than he had to begin with. Orville was not so much a winner as a destroyer. Orville could shoot with such force that he broke many marbles by shooting them so hard against a rock, another marble, or the foundation of the house. I guess Orville broke more marbles than anyone else in the neighborhood.

Swimming was another thing we did for fun. Across the street from our house there was a big irrigation canal that ran across the cemetery from north to south. We called it the three-mile-ditch, and that's where we learned to swim. It was four or five feet across and eight to ten inches deep. Willows grew on each side of the ditch, so you could be in the ditch and be hidden by the willows. The ditch is still there in the cemetery, but is mostly covered over with cement.

On the southwest corner of the cemetery there was a home that occupied about half a city block. It ran from 300 East up to the ditch and its south border was 500 South. This big ditch ran across the back, or east end, of that lot. It was the Tom Johnson home. Tom had about three wives. He remarried each time after his first and second wives died. Both his second and third wives had children of their own, so it was a big family of half brothers and half sisters and stepbrothers and stepsisters. There must have been ten or twelve children ranging in ages from Shirley all the way up to kids who were the same age as my parents and good friends with them. They had an orchard that was not very well kept.

In the Johnson home they never had running water. They just had a water hydrant in front of the house from which they obtained all the water they needed for cooking, washing and bathing. Carrying all that water and warming it up was not too appealing. A couple of the older boys, Elmer, who was about Harold's age, and Robert, who was two or three years older than Orville, were in their twenties at this time. They bathed in the three-mile-ditch as early in the spring and as late in the fall as they could, even when there was ice on the water that they could break.

Right on the northeast corner of their property was a big weir in the ditch. A weir is a horizontal board, which is set there to back the water up. The water must flow over it and it serves as a means of dividing the water. At that point two smaller ditches were

branched off from the main ditch. The western most ditch flowed over the Johnson's property and was the means of watering their land. It crossed 500 South and ran along 400 East to water all of the people's lots from 500 South to 700 South.

Farther toward the middle of the weir another stream was taken off. To get it across the first ditch it dropped down into a hole formed with concrete walls that flowed west under and across the first stream. It flowed down the north side of the Johnson's property down to 300 East and then turned south and flowed down the east side of 300 East all the way to 700 South. That was called the Field Stream, and it was about three times as large as the one that flowed in front of our house.

The irrigation ditch that flowed in front of our house was taken off of the three-mile-ditch up in the cemetery about a block north, just east of 300 East on 400 South. It flowed down to 300 East on 400 South and there it could be made to flow south toward our house or to the north. The lay of the land was such that 400 South was a high point and the land sloped to the south, west and north from that corner, which was just north of our house. So that's how the irrigation stream originated that flowed in front of our house.

Almost every street in Brigham City had an open irrigation ditch that flowed along the high side of people's property. Most of the residential lots at that time were large enough to have a small orchard of fruit trees and a flower or vegetable garden. All were watered from the irrigation ditches. Well, I don't know what that has to do with my life except that I remember these things so vividly as memories of my childhood.

Another thing we did a lot to entertain ourselves was to play rubber guns. We made guns, rifles, and pistols, out of wood. Our ammunition was bands of rubber cut out of automobile inner tubes. The bands were perhaps half an inch wide and as large as the tube happened to be. The rifles were about four feet long. We cut a series of notches back where the bolt action on a real rifle would be. The rubber bands were stretched from the end of the rifle barrel. You had as many shots as you had notches, and some rifles had as many as twelve. You would just roll the rubber band off the notch with your thumb at the back, and it would fly off toward your target.

The pistols were a little different. They had a pistol-grip handle. We would fasten a clothes pin to the back of the pistol-grip handle wrapping rubber bands around it to hold it on and also to make it grip tighter. You had only one shot on a pistol. You fed one end of the folded rubber band into the clothes pin and stretched the band to the end of the barrel. You would point the gun at your target, squeeze the clothes pin, and your shot would fire. We acquired real skill in the making of these weapons so that we could shoot for twenty or thirty feet with some accuracy.

Our favorite style of rubber guns was to divide into two teams and get into somebody's barn, preferably one that was not full of hay. We would roam through the hayloft, stable, and harness area and through attached sheds, looking for the "enemy". You'd shoot at your enemy. If you hit him, he was dead. Of course, the object was to kill off the other team.

Orville and Harold were on opposite teams one day when we were playing in the Hillstrom's barn. A very terrible thing happened that day. Harold had always called Orville "Brother". That day they had an argument. I'm not sure what it was about, but I think it was over whether a shot had hit its mark. I remember that Harold swung his rifle and broke it over Orville's back. He hit him so hard that Orville had imprints on his back

from the notches of the rifle. It was bitter fight between two brothers. The reason I remember it so well is that Harold no longer called Orville "Brother" after that. He called him Orville or something else if he spoke to him at all in the weeks that followed. It was a wound in their sweet friendship that lasted for some time, and it was a long time before they felt good toward each other. I remember this as one of the rare instances in our neighborhood playing where such strong feelings were generated. We usually got along quite peacefully. Of course, Orville and Harold are on good terms now, and have been their whole lives except for that brief time of healing after that fight.

In 1935 and 1936 my life became quite a mixture of activities. Home chores, working on the farm, school, playing with the kids in the neighborhood and some hobby activity. The lives of my brothers, sisters, and parents were busier in these years and a lot of that would be interesting to include so I'll try to tell the story, but it may be chopped up with things that are out of order and unrelated.

I ought to say something about Daddy's farm here, because changes took place about 1936. Daddy and Uncle Ira bought the farm in 1922. Uncle Ira had been managing the farm since 1932 when Daddy started working for Brigham City. Daddy hired men to help with the farm work, representing his side of the partnership and Harold, now reaching the age of 15 or 16, began to work on the farm, just like a grown man. Orville also worked on the farm, but not nearly as much as Harold. The farm was 51 ½ acres. The north boundary was 700 South. The west boundary was the west side of 400 East Street. None of the North South streets extended South of 700 South. The farm extended from the west side of 400 East to the west side of what would have been 700 East, if there had been a 700 East. It was about 1200 feet east and west and it extended South of 700 South about 1900 feet.

A sad thing happened in the summer of 1935, which resulted in a bitter division between Daddy and Uncle Ira, and also a division of the farm. During the winter, spring and summer, Mom and Dad charged their groceries on a bill at Ren Smith's store. Ren Smith was the father of Dee Smith, who later founded the Smith Food King chain throughout the Intermountain states. Daddy would pay that bill in the fall out of the proceeds of the cash crops raised during the summer. At the end of the summer of 1935, Daddy's cash share of the farm's activity was not enough even to pay his grocery bill. At that same time, Uncle Ira bought a new Ford car. This resulted in a bitter controversy between them and very hard feelings. Daddy thought that Uncle Ira had cheated him. So they decided to split the farm, dividing it up and down north and south. Uncle Ira took the west part and my Dad took the east half of the farm and they operated them separately. In the couple of years following, Daddy would hire a man to do a lot of the work for him in the summer, since Harold wasn't able to do it all.

Raymond and I were expected to do some work on the farm and we gradually were able to do more as we got a little older. At this time what it amounted to was picking cherries in the summertime and helping to gather branches out of the orchards that Daddy pruned off the fruit trees. He usually pruned them during the months of February and March. We really hated gathering those limbs. It wasn't bad but we didn't like it much. We spent some of our time dreaming of a wood magnet that would draw the branches right out of the orchard and into a pile. Our invention didn't get very far though.

We picked cherries that generally came on the end of June. There were cherries to pick in the orchard around the house and also on the farm. Daddy had to hire a number of pickers for the fruit trees on the farm. He hired many school kids and unmarried young adults, and also married people. These were Depression years. The



**Image 16. Judith Larsen picking cherries.**  
(000666)

Great Depression began about 1932, and many married people with children picked fruit as a way of earning a few dollars. Work was very scarce during the 30's.

I wasn't much of a fruit picker. I would pick two or three bushels of cherries. We would get one or two cents a pound, or about 50 to 75 cents a bushel. Then, being kids, and it being the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we'd take our money downtown and buy a six shooter cap gun to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

One of the most interesting stores in downtown Brigham City was Compton's. It was called Compton's Art and Music Store. It's still there in Brigham City, being run by Glen Compton; a man my age. He's the fourth generation of that family to run the store located on the corner of Main Street and First South. (An "update" added in July 2002: Glen Compton died in 1999 and the building is gone; one of the oldest pioneer landmarks. Too bad.)

There was very interesting merchandise in there - small toys, such as cars, and marbles. They had the most

wonderful assortment of marbles. They also had a photography studio there since the days of Glen's great grandfather when the store was set up in the late 1800's.

My scribbled notes are such a mixture for these years I think I'll just go down the page and mention what I have written down. Maybe when this recording is transcribed onto paper we can arrange these things in a more meaningful pattern.

I have mentioned here the construction of a new gymnasium at Box Elder High School. I think the gym still stands. It is all that is left of that high school campus. This was a good project for the city. It created work for a number of men and some activity in the economy. It was the center of much wonderful activity in the high school and a very good building too.

I've made a note here of an accident my mother had. It may have been even two or three years earlier than this. She was opening a bottle of fruit, trying to take the lid off with a butcher knife, which maybe wasn't very wise. She slipped and the butcher knife cut into her wrist and severed an artery. The blood spurted out very, very fast. She would have bled to death in a few minutes if it had not been for her own quick acting. She grabbed her wrist, pressed it as tight as she could, and ran to Fanny Christensen's,

half a block south of us. Fanny took over, no doubt applied a compress to stop the bleeding, and took her to the hospital. I'm sure this saved my Mother's life.

I'd like to mention here some other things that we did for recreation as kids. Our recreation changed as we got a little bit older. One of the very enjoyable, memorable things that we did as a gang of kids in the neighborhood was to get together in the evening after dark, and we'd play street games under the street light down on the corner by Fanny Christensen's. Some of the games we played were "Run Sheepie Run", "Capture the Flag", "Slips", "Red Rover"; there were others too. It didn't matter much what game we played. The fun was the excitement and mystery of being out in the dark, and being half scared of the dark when we got away from the big street light. But, being together with friends was most of the fun.

I have a note here about the hills east of Brigham City. We played on the hills, just south of Box Elder Canyon, winter and summer. We hiked all the way to what we called Slide Rocks every Easter with our sack lunches, Easter eggs and goodies. It was a talus pile made of big rock fragments that had crumbled off of a cliff over the centuries. As you probably know, this whole area was once covered by Lake Bonneville some thousands of years ago, and the action of the water, the waves and the lake, wore ridges on the hills east of Brigham City. We called them benches and they marked different levels of the lake, which lasted for perhaps hundreds of years. The action of the waves took place over a long enough period of time that it wore an actual ridge on the face of the mountains. We had first, second, and third bench, and Slide Rocks was up on third bench above Daddy's farm. That was a long hike in 1935 when I was only 10 or 11 years old. It was even longer for Raymond who was only eight. We did this hike every year into our high school years.

I remember one interesting activity that my father engaged in those early Depression years. Fuel for stoves was very scarce. My Dad went up in the hills above the farm and cut down Maple trees and hauled them downtown. He cut them up and sold them for firewood or we used them ourselves. Some of those trees were very large, 10 to 12 inches in diameter. They had no doubt been there growing for a long, long time. I don't think that there are any trees up there now of that dimension. The interesting thing is the way Dad harvested those trees. He would cut them down, tie two or three of the trunks together, and then pull them down the hill with a team of horses. Dragging those trunks through the sagebrush created a drag trail straight down the hill.

In winter we did a lot of our sleigh riding on the mountains. Some of the braver sleigh riders would ride those drag trails straight down the mountain. A couple of those brave sleigh riders were Orville and Harold. They would ride the sleigh piggy back with one on the sleigh and the other on top of him. They would go very, very fast. Once they went off the trail and uprooted a sagebrush with the front of the sleigh. One of the boys got his face badly cut up that day. The other one wasn't hurt. The very next day, the one who wasn't hurt repeated the process and he got battered up. I don't know whether they tried it a third time or not! But, Orville and I did the same dumb trick later on, although we didn't go down a drag trail. I'll leave that story until 1946 where I've made a note of it.

One of the fun activities at Christmas time that I remember vividly was how they decorated Main Street with Christmas lights. It was very simple. They had strings of lights with large bulbs in them the size of a small orange. They strung them across from

pole to pole over Main between First North and Second South. Those lights were a very pretty sight and, in my opinion, those are the only kinds of Christmas lights that should be put up. They had all colors - red, green, blue, yellow. Now days most Christmas lights are white. I think most of the Christmas spirit left with the many colors.

The Chamber of Commerce did a special thing for Christmas. They filled hundreds of paper lunch bags with candy, nuts and an orange. Santa Claus would come to the court house in Brigham City and give one to every child. During those hard times, that bag of candy may have been the best part of Christmas for many children. Those were poor times and there wasn't much money for most families.

I made a sad discovery in Christmas of 1935 or 1936. I learned that Santa Claus was not quite the character that we were told about in the stories. My sister Barbara was four or five years old, and Santa Claus brought her a doll buggy. The folks knew we were in bed and thought we were asleep, but I was still awake. I saw Daddy come down on the basement stairs, step into one of the dark holes and bring out that doll buggy. I wished I hadn't seen it, but we all have to learn who Santa Claus is sooner or later.

Another memorable practice we had in connection with a holiday was on Decoration Day, which was always on May 30. It was a big celebration for us. We lived close to the cemetery so there was a lot of excitement for us with everyone coming to visit the graves of their family. Daddy's parents, his grandparents, and other relatives were buried in Brigham Cemetery. In those days there was no grass. Most of the cemetery was just dirt. We'd go up a few days before Memorial Day, dig all the weeds out of the grave plots, and mound up the dirt to indicate where the graves were. Daddy would go up on the foothills north of Brigham City to the Beecher farm. They had some springs that flowed year round, creating a damp spot where wild ferns grew. My Dad arranged with the Beechers for enough ferns to cover the graves. I thought this was quite an attractive expression of love and caring for the dead. It was a high day. I'm sure these things helped me have comfortable and pleasant feelings about most cemeteries.

My sister Shirley was born June 1, 1936. I don't remember it being particularly good to have a baby around again. Mom seemed to be busy enough without that, but she made room for another one. Shirley was a cute little blond with a lot of hair.

For Christmas 1936, Raymond and I received as a joint gift from Santa Claus an electric powered erector set. The erector set was made up of pieces of metal shaped like the girders and plates from which building frames and machinery were made. These pieces were put together with little nuts and bolts using little tools to make machinery, derricks, cranes, bridges, cars, etc. I still have that erector set here in the basement of our home. I was always one who took care of things. I didn't particularly enjoy playing with it, but I thought I enjoyed taking care of it – everything in its place – kept there.

(Strange)

One of my sweetest memories of childhood was the annual Toyland that appeared in JC Penny Company's store every November. We didn't have toy stores in those days. We didn't have toys except at Christmas time. There were little toys, such as miniature trucks other times of the year, but children from poor families, ordinary families like ours, generally only received toys at Christmas time.

Another Christmas gift I remember was when Santa Claus gave Raymond and me a wagon with air-filled pneumatic balloon tires. It had a streamlined metal body and the wheels were covered on the sides like a car so you only saw the lower half. The wagon

had two, round glass-covered headlights in the front that were run with flashlight batteries. It was a beautiful toy and about the only wagon of that type in Brigham City. We saw it in JC Penney's Toyland and drooled over it and must have impressed our folks with the necessity of getting it for us. It was a beautiful gift and what happened to that wagon is a story in itself.

I got the notion when we'd had the wagon for a year or so that I wanted the wheels to be spring-suspended like a car's. So I cut the bracket that supported the back axle and tried to mount four coil valve springs from an automobile. These were stiff coils about one inch wide and four inches high. I wasn't successful in mounting them so that the wheels would remain in place. As soon as we got in the wagon the rear wheels collapsed. Orville took the wheels up to his shop at school and built a flat-rack wooden body for them. So the stream lined wagon became a flatbed wagon and wasn't nearly as much fun to play with after that, but maybe more practical. But, he salvaged our toy. The interesting thing about this is that my father didn't chastise me for doing that to the wagon. I actually destroyed the wagon, but I was trying to make something and my Dad could see that. I don't remember a single word of criticism directed at me for that goof. I don't believe I got much praise for it, but he let me learn my lesson from my own failure.

This might be a good time to talk about how we were raised by our parents as far as discipline was concerned. We were given a lot of freedom as children and a lot of responsibility. The older ones looked out for the younger ones. Often when we played we were doing things that were quite dangerous, but if we were ever chastised for it I don't have any recollection of it. We were never spanked, beaten or whipped. The only recollection I have of being spanked was when I was a tiny boy, perhaps five or six, and I stole a nickel out of my Dad's pocket. I showed up with a nickels worth of candy and said I had found the nickel. I guess I wasn't very convincing and must have confessed that I took the nickel, because I got a spanking for that. I don't recall ever stealing anything again since then. I've really tried to distinguish clearly between what is mine and what is not.

I think we were all raised that way. Our parents had lots of patience with us and trusted us and we responded. I think we've all grown up to be fairly honest and honorable people.

In school in my 5<sup>th</sup> grade, which was 1935 and 1936, I had a teacher named Leola Seely. She was a tiny woman and was the sister of the man that I had later as a teacher in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Elwin Seely. I don't know whether she ever married.

During this time of my life we enjoyed swimming in Bally's pond. Bally was the nickname of Wallace Johnson who had a farm up on the side of the hill above my father's farm. Mr. Johnson had about four children who were around the same age as we kids. Above his house he had a water storage pond carved into the side of the hill in which he captured the water running out of Dunn's Canyon, south of Box Elder Canyon. The water was cold and clear and his pond was quite deep and was the favorite swimming hole for our end of town. We all learned to swim there. It was a dangerous place but generally there were older kids around to look out for the little ones.

I don't remember anyone ever drowning there, but we had a couple close calls. I remember we nearly lost Raymond one of the summers in the middle 30's. He didn't know how to swim very well. We used the inner tubes out of car tires for life preservers, the same as they use tubes now. Raymond wrapped an inner tube around his waist and

went out into the deep water. The tube was wrapped around him tight enough that it stayed on him, but he flipped over so he was head down, feet thrashing in the air. He surely would have drowned but Fred Forsgren was there who was about Yvonne's age, and he swam out and rescued Raymond.

Bally's pond was deep enough for diving. I remember Clint Holmes father, Dell Holmes, supervised some of the older boys in building a diving board. They built it in Dell's back yard, out of 2 by 12 fir planks nailed one on top of another with each plank protruding a little farther than the last so the diving board was tapered and supposedly flexible. I remember it took 15 kids to carry that diving board from Dell's back yard up the hill to Bally's pond. They mounted it in the gravel bank of the pond weighted down with big rocks and sand bags. It never was very successful. The first heavy man or boy who jumped on the diving board either tipped it over or broke a plank. It didn't amount to much - rather a vain exercise, but it was a good idea.

The diving board was typical of the efforts that everyone made in those days to entertain themselves. We didn't have any money so we tried lots of things to have fun. Another example of this home entertainment equipment was in the cemetery across the street from our house. The west part of the cemetery was unused and was an open alfalfa field. We used it several summers as a track and field area where we set up high jumping, pole vaulting, broad jumping pits, and other structures. We cut some big limbs out of the poplar trees for the high jump standards and we even got some high enough to challenge the pole-vaulters. This was quite dangerous because we didn't use strong enough poles for pole vaulting and a number of times the pole-vaulters broke their poles. It's a wonder that someone wasn't seriously hurt. We dug up the soil to make a pit and sometimes mixed it with sawdust or straw to make it softer. We had a lot of fun. It was just as much fun as professional equipment would have been, probably more. The making of the equipment was most of the fun.

I was in the Sixth Grade at the Central School in 1936 and 1937. My teacher was Grant Valentine. Grant is still alive as of this time, 1992. I talked with him just a few weeks ago. He's eighty years old. He was a wonderful teacher although he taught only a year-and-a-half then went into business. During that year he read to us after noon hour each day Gene Stratton Porter's book "Girl of the Limberlost". That was most enjoyable and gave us a taste for really good fiction.

In my Sixth Grade year Melvin Thayne moved to Brigham City with his family after the school year had begun. Mel joined our class and we've been good friends ever since.



**Image 17. Cemetary in the background near where track and field area was. Judith and Shirley Larsen with neighbor Mabel Burr. (000604)**

My brother Orville graduated from high school in 1937. Harold was a grown man at 16 and he was running the farm for Daddy. I believe it was this summer of '37 that Orville had an interesting job with Leonda Holtz, whom we called Toley Holst. Toley had a herd of turkeys that were kept on the sand flat east of Box Elder High School on the North side of the highway that goes into Box Elder Canyon. Orville got the job to tend those turkeys that summer. He had to stay

with them night and day. He lived in a shepherd's wagon.

We had some interesting times when we went up to visit him. When we stayed overnight, sleeping out on the sand flat (which was really a June Grass flat) our bedding got filled with June Grass seeds. Orville had an alarm clock with a phosphorescent luminous dial that glowed in the faint light of the stars, the moon and the city. It was quite a magic thing to me, as I had never seen such a thing before.

Orville wanted an evening off to go to a show with friends one night and asked Raymond and me to stay with the turkeys. The complication was that we were also tending Shirley, but we took Shirley and went up to the wagon, which was by Box Elder Creek. Shirley still took a bottle and in preparing her milk we broke the bottle on the stove. There we were. Shirley was hungry and started to cry and we didn't know what to do. We were 10 and 12 years old. Across the creek up on the highway there was one house. We crossed the creek with Shirley and went over to that house and asked the people to give us a ride home. I don't know what those people thought of our being up on the flats alone with our baby sister. But in those days it wasn't a very uncommon thing because kids assumed responsibility pretty young and there weren't the fears of dangerous people around who might harm us, as there are such fears today. For all the years afterward I remember that incident every time we drive by that spot on the highway.

In 1937, I remember that Fred Forsgren's dad, Oliver "Ollie" Forsgren, bought a new Chevy Sedan. The Depression was easing up for some people if they had regular work and there were a few cars appearing.

Hyrum Malmrose always had a nice Chevy pickup truck. He kept such good care of it that it always looked like new even if it was several years old. Hyrum pedaled fruit with his truck and often bought fruit from my Dad. Hyrum was the janitor at Central School so we got to know him quite well. He had six kids the same ages as we children and we were good friends. Their names are Carmen, Elden, Ray, Dale, Donald, and David.

Orville's hobby with cars and the family farm came together in an interesting way in the Thirties. Orville worked for Rudd Victor, who had an automobile wrecking yard



**Image 18. The Whoopy in background with Merlin and Judith Larsen looking like ma and pa kettle. (000631)**

down on Main Street, just north of the Tabernacle. Through Orville's contact, Daddy obtained an old Dodge Truck that had been a delivery van. They cut the top of the body off even with the hood of the car, and left the sides with the doors removed so that the seat was open. There was no top and no windshield and the back served as a kind of pickup truck. We called this the "Whoopy", and it was the family's only car until 1941. It could go readily under trees in the orchards and was very useful.

Daddy was still working for Brigham City, and had worked himself up to Superintendent of all of Brigham's utilities, including the water and sewer systems, streets, parks and the cemetery. The electric power service was run by one of Daddy's old schoolmates, Orion Eskelsen.

To promote business and community spirit during the summer every year, the City would give tickets in conjunction with purchases from the stores of downtown Brigham. These tickets were numbered for a raffle drawing in the fall about the time school started. I remember the prizes were significant. They gave away two cars. One was a full-size American car, usually a Sedan. The other was a little British car called an Austin, which was smaller than our subcompacts today, hardly wide enough for two people to sit side by side. It was a magic thing to see that little car running around town. It was more like a toy than a car. There were other prizes in the raffle, such as bags of groceries, clothing, small appliances, etc.

I developed a special interest in geographical maps at this time and drew many maps. I would get large tag-board sheets from either the Reminder Office Supply Store or the Box Elder Journal Newspaper and drew large-scale maps of the different continents and of the United States. I drew a couple maps of the world. The largest map measured about 6 feet wide by 4 feet high and folded into four parts. I still have this map along with some of the others. Most of them bear the date of 1937 or 1938. I learned a lot about geography doing that and subscribed to The National Geographic Society's magazine.

One of the popular hobbies of the times was making wood carvings. You would take a piece of soft pine wood, shape it like a picture frame, draw a picture on it, then carve three-dimensional engraving into the wood. This was done in school as well as at home. I tried a few of them, but don't believe I was much of an artist, although I liked to fool around with it. I remember one carving I made that was a desert scene. There was a camel and its master in a desert oasis with palm trees. I thought it was beautiful. It was probably chopped up for kindling wood a year or so later!

In the Sixth Grade we put on an operetta. I was one of perhaps 24 boys who were called Night Serenaders. We dressed up a little like Italian Troubadours in bright colored pantaloons, vests, and shirts with big full sleeves, with a sash around the waist and a French beret. We came out between acts and entertained the crowd while they changed scenery behind the curtain. I think we sang soprano and alto. About the only song I can remember is "Fair Naples Sleeping". They were pretty songs. We were so exotic and romantic!

During these later 30's as the economy improved a little bit, our parents could afford to let us go to the movie once a week, which cost one dime. Before the main feature they often showed an episode of an adventure movie serial such as "Tarzan" or "Flash Gordon". The serials were cut into about 12 parts, with each segment ending with the hero in a precarious situation. You had to come back next week to see if he survived or perished, or rescued the beautiful girl. Also a feature of the weekly movie was the newsreels. The one I remember best was called "The March of Time". I still remember the theme music that played over and over every week. The newsreels acquainted us a little bit with what was going on in the world. It was a much kinder introduction into the world than our modern-day televisions where they bring into your front room all the gore, scandal, and tragedy everywhere, as it happens. In those days,

much of the “current” news on the newsreels was already a month or so old. We became aware of the approach of World War II, although no one could see what was coming, at least among the people I associated with. Japan was attacking China and the newsreels showed the Japanese warplanes bombing the Chinese cities. This was dreadful. It was unheard of for airplanes to be dropping bombs on human beings and machine-gunning them as they tried to escape. It was prelude to World War II.

After graduation, Harold took a trip with a man named Charles Dredge. Charles was a little bit older than Orville and had been out of school for several years. He had a small truck and had gone into the fruit peddling business. As he prospered he bought a larger truck. Today, on the highway you’ll see numerous big-rigs with C.H. Dredge and Company on them, so he has prospered. Charles was a “man about town” at that time. He had a car and some money and he invited Harold to go with him to the New York World’s fair. It must have been a great adventure for them. That was in 1938 or 1939.

## 1937 to 1943: JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH YEARS

School was interesting in junior high. We had friends who came in from other towns and schools in the county. Brigham City also had another grade school, the Lincoln School, which was in the north end of town and still stands today. As I said, the original Central School Building burned down in 1947 and was replaced with the building that is there today. (Sign of the times: That new building was torn down in 2001. It seems sometimes as though I've lived a LONG TIME.)



Image 19. Merlin Larsen at fourteen. (000622)

Raymond and I were expected to do more farm work now that we were getting older. Our annual job of gathering the limbs after pruning continued through all the years that we had the farm. Among our duties was to ride the horse when Harold used one horse to pull a row cultivator to cultivate cantaloupes, watermelons, and tomatoes. It was all he could do to guide the cultivator so it wouldn't cut out the plants. He needed one of us to ride the horse to keep it from walking on the plants. It was a hot, tedious job, but it was necessary and I think we contributed some real help by doing that.

Another of our jobs was to hoe out the weeds that grew around the fruit trees. First Harold would run a two-horse cultivator through the orchard. The cultivator had a wide blade about 8-feet long, which was pulled under the ground and removed the weeds. But you couldn't get the cultivator close to the tree trunks, so Raymond and I would use a grubbing hoe around the trees to pull out the rest of the weeds.

Daddy began to raise a lot of strawberries in the late Thirties. He had about three acres of strawberries. Strawberries are a very hard crop to raise, very labor intensive. It takes a lot of hands to pick them and they

have to be picked at the right time. He would hire a lot of school kids to help and my mother was the supervisor of the strawberry pickers. I remember getting up before dawn

on those mornings in May, having Corn Flakes for breakfast, and getting down to the farm before daybreak.

I wasn't much of a strawberry picker. I wasn't very fast and I think I spent a lot of time daydreaming on these jobs. Some of my friends were super pickers. Melvin Thayne was a very fast berry picker and bean picker, as were Clint Holmes and Wayne Whitworth, a neighbor. We picked several hundred cases each season and the berries would last through most of the month of June. I remember my friends gave my Mom a nickname, Missie Lassie, and she became good friends with those kids. My mother made friends with many of our school friends and neighborhood friends. She related very well to them.

Orville joined the Army Air Corps in the summer of 1938 and went off to Hamilton Field in California. He wasn't very happy with his decision. He didn't like the life-style and discipline, but he was going to have quite a bit of it in the next seven years with World War II on the horizon.

I turned 14 in 1938, just soon after the beginning of the Eighth Grade. I liked the Eighth Grade. It was an exciting year, especially Mr. Wilford Freeman's science class. Early in the fall we studied astronomy and I became acquainted with the constellations and planets. It began a life-long interest that I've had in astronomy. In the years since I've read books and drawn star charts and have constantly watched the sky, the motions of the planets, and especially the interesting motion of the moon through the months and through the years.

I had Austin Larsen for math and Roland Gourley for history, which was the history of Utah. I had Miss Davis for English and I Grant Prsbrey for gym. Ray Payne was my wood shop teacher. We had wood shop for half a year and art for the other half of the year, which Harold Madsen taught. I liked both classes very much, but especially wood shop.

One happy memory from the eighth grade is that at Christmas I was in charge of a committee to decorate the halls. We built some frame boxes covered with cellophane paper. Inside these boxes we mounted electric lights. The boxes were mounted at the corners of the hallway. We built a total of six, three for each floor, and we strung garlands across the halls and had some Christmas trees with ornaments. We did a good job decorating the halls for Christmas.

Another activity that I didn't have much success at was a partnership with John Stewart in publishing a little dittoed or mimeographed newspaper which we called "The Weekly Splash". It didn't last very many weeks. It wasn't my bag. I'm not much of a journalist, or writer. I have trouble getting my thoughts on paper (and also have trouble getting them onto tape). I drew a few illustrations for it and we had fun. John Stewart, incidentally, later married my second cousin, Alice Knudson. He obtained a PHD and became too impressed with himself.

In 1938 I obtained a job as a newspaper boy for the Salt Lake Tribune, a job which I held for four years or so. I was able to earn quite a bit of money with it and bought some interesting things, including a telescope through Montgomery Ward Catalog. I also designed and built a couple of different tripods to support the telescope. I



**Image 20. Merlin at 14 standing beside his telescope. “I designed the tripod. It was welded together by Lenny Reddlings (Orville’s friend) at Cook’s Garage.” (000628)**

enjoyed that telescope, but I have to admit that I got awfully tired of craning my neck to look up overhead. It was a long refractor type telescope, which meant it had to be supported above your head in order for you to look upward.

About the same time I became a newspaper boy, we were making a little more money with our fruit picking and our work on the farm. Raymond and I went in together and bought a new Schwinn balloon-tired bicycle. It was a beautiful cherry red and we were very proud of it.

Many changes come into a boy’s life as he reaches puberty. I was not rebellious at all, but I developed some habits that weren’t especially good. I pretended to hate girls, but secretly inside I really liked them and wanted very much to have girl friends. This created some kind of phoniness, or insincerity in my behavior. I was hypocritical, and developed some bad habits at that time. I acquired the bad habit of masturbation at that time which became a problem for years to come. I don’t know how much I

should say about that. People don’t talk much about their personal sex lives, but I want to put it on the record that I had that problem and it was a struggle of many years to overcome it. Older boys introduced me to it. It was one of the bad things that older kids taught the younger kids.

I was a deacon in the Priesthood at this time; attending Priesthood meeting occasionally but not regularly. I didn’t go to Mutual very often and boy scouting had died out in our ward. They didn’t have a scout master and it wasn’t functioning very well. I did enjoy passing the Sacrament and went to Sacrament Meeting occasionally to do that. We passed the sacrament in Sunday School too. I usually attended and liked Sunday School. I liked the class work, which was very much like school, which I dearly loved.

About this time, the Boy Scout program was revived in Brigham 6<sup>th</sup> Ward after several years lapse. J Edwin Baird became the scoutmaster. He was a big, handsome

Utah Highway Patrol man. The trouble was I was a little bit old for scouting at age 14. A better age to get into scouting is 11 or 12 and the magic that I saw in my older brothers' scouting experience never quite materialized for me.

Raymond and I did go on a Boy Scout camping trip to Camp Kiesel in Old Causey Canyon, which is east of Huntsville up Ogden Canyon and east of Pineview Reservoir. It was a disaster. (Huntsville is the hometown of President David O. McKay and his family.) We weren't well prepared. Our leaders didn't give us very good guidance on what to take for food. We carried some canned goods. We didn't know how to cook. We ran out of food after a couple of days and wound up eating all-day-suckers for the rest of the week.

On the first day the trucks hauled us up to the foot of Big Monte Cristo Mountain, and the plan was for us to hike seven or eight miles over the mountain into Camp Kiesel. Since our packs were filled with canned goods, they were too heavy, and it was a long hike. I had an accident which Raymond and I have enjoyed laughing about in the years since then. I had to go to the toilet and we were out on the bare side of the hill with only shrubbery and a 45 degree slope. I left the trail to take care of business, and as I was getting up I lost my balance and stepped in my own mess. It got all over my pants leg and I didn't have any way to clean it off, so I cut my pants leg off below the knee and that took care of the problem. I lived in Boy Scout camp that whole week with my one pant leg cut off at the knee and no one ever asked me for an explanation. Raymond was the only one who knew what happened and he really gave me a hard time that week. Every time he looked at me, he laughed at me. It was one of those things that turns out to be a life-long pleasure to recall - a mixed pleasure of embarrassment and humor.

One of my hobbies at this age was building things out of wood. My Dad in his job frequently brought home used lumber that had been used for concrete forms and then discarded. To me it was a real treasure. I liked to build wagons. I would use doll buggy or wagon wheels and build a car. I remember one time I came across a sturdy set of coaster wagon wheels and built a car out of one inch pine wood. Before I got through it must have weighed a hundred pounds or so. I even built a headlight, a square box with a glass front in which I'd mount a candle and supposedly it would give light for night driving. I lined the inside of the box with shiny tin to make it reflect the light. I don't think it cast much light on the road ahead, but it was fun. Building things as a boy was preparation for one of the great pleasures of my life. After Roberta and I moved into the Miller Street house I got into a "life-long project" of remodeling that house.

For Christmas in 1938 or 1939 I received a chemistry set. It was a very beautiful toy. I built a laboratory bench for it in our bedroom, which my brothers probably didn't appreciate since we all shared the room sleeping in two twin beds, which didn't leave much room for anything else. The table was about four or five feet long and two and a half feet wide. I cut a hole into it and inserted a laboratory sink that I built out of a tin pan. I soldered a funnel into the bottom of it and attached a hose to it, which drained into a bucket in the cabinet. Then I fastened the chemistry set cabinet to the tabletop. The whole set of little boxes and chemicals was enclosed in a wood cabinet with double doors that opened up out to the front. There was an alcohol lamp and some test tubes and couple of flasks and a couple of beakers along with a book of experiments. I don't remember performing many experiments with that chemistry set. I was much more interested with keeping everything in place on the little shelves. I liked keeping it in

order. That was much more important than playing with it. I've been that way about some other things - tools, and shelves full of books that I haven't read but enjoy looking at. It's a funny trait that I have.

With the money I earned from my paper route I bought a bookshelf, a nice piece of furniture, through the Montgomery Ward catalog in the fall of 1939 and began to buy books, which were not very expensive then. You could buy a well-bound book for a couple of dollars. I bought a lot of books, more than I could read, and some of them I haven't read yet. I also bought an Encyclopedia Britannica Junior set. Most of the money for that I made selling Sunday Salt Lake Tribunes.

World War II in Europe broke out in earnest in September of 1939 when Germany invaded Poland and Britain and France declared war on Germany. Gradually we all became aware of the approach of World War II. I guess most of us felt that we would get involved in it sooner or later.

My interest in building things extended to building little huts or little houses. Some of them were partly excavated, half in the ground, half above the ground with a willow bowery for a roof. Then I became quite sophisticated and wanted to build a hut out of wood. For some reason I built the hut behind the barn and attached it to the barn with nails. I don't know where I got the idea that I could nail a hut to the side of my father's new barn. It was only a few years old. It was a very fine barn when he built it as I described earlier. The first hut I built that way was about eight feet long, four feet wide, and five feet high. It wasn't a very good one. I lined it with pasteboard. The roof leaked, and it never was very satisfactory, but it gave me experience. A little bit of training in wood shop at school over the next couple of years helped me to build a finer hut, also nailed to the back of the barn. This one was about eight feet long, four feet



**Image 21. "Daddy's very fine barn." (000645)**

wide, and high enough that I could stand up in it. The roof didn't leak and I got more use out of that one. I'll talk about it more a little later I think. My dad never said anything to me about my presumption in nailing huts to his new barn, never criticized me, never told me to tear them down, and never punished me. He was an unusually understanding Dad.

In 1940 with World War II underway in Europe the United States government instituted a peacetime draft, the conscription of men into the armed forces. This was an election year. Franklin D Roosevelt was running for his third term, which was unheard of before that time. His challenger was a republican, Wendell Willkie. He was what is called a dark horse candidate, chosen in the Republican National Convention, but not very widely known in the nation. Radio made it possible for him to talk to the nation and he became well known and ran a very good campaign. He would have made a good president, but President Roosevelt was reelected.

At this time Raymond sold me his share of our Schwinn bicycle and bought one of his own. I think I was too finicky about his use of our bicycle. I was critical of him because he didn't stand it up all the time, and that he laid it down and wasn't as fussy with it as I was. I was probably overbearing and that was his way of solving the problem.

In the spring of 1940 Yvonne graduated from high school. That fall she was



**Image 22. Raymond Larsen on the Schwinn bicycle he and Merlin co-owned for awhile. (000653)**

chosen as Peach Queen for Brigham City's Peach Day celebration.

My sister Shirley who was just four years old in June of 1940 came down with a very strange illness that the doctors never did understand and could never explain. Her tissues swelled up. Her head swelled to twice its size until her eyes were just mere slits and all of her hair fell out. She was in the hospital for several weeks. Mom, Dad, and Harold took turns

staying by her bedside night and day until she was well. She recovered without anyone ever knowing what the problem was. The doctors were puzzled. It must have been some kind of strange virus. Her hair grew back in, but it took a couple of years.

In 1940 my father's farm was more successful than it had been ever before. He finally made a little bit of money and he bought a new Ford pickup. It had a stake bed, a flat bed body with rack sides and was a beautiful green color. The draft was beginning to take many men. My brother Orville who was in the Army Air Corp had been transferred to the Salt Lake Army Airbase which was near the airport at that time. He came home on weekends and began to court Gay Dahle who worked at the Peach City ice cream parlor where Orville met her. They fell in love. Gay lived in Clarkston in Cache Valley. Orville borrowed Daddy's Ford truck to drive over to Clarkston and have a date with her. He had been driving back and forth so often and at such late hours that he fell asleep driving. I don't know whether he fell asleep, but he must have been drowsy. Anyway, he wrecked the Ford truck out in Honeyville north of Brigham City. He hurt his back in that accident and it gave him trouble for years. He had other injuries, which led to his being discharged from the Air Corps about a year later, I think in 1941.

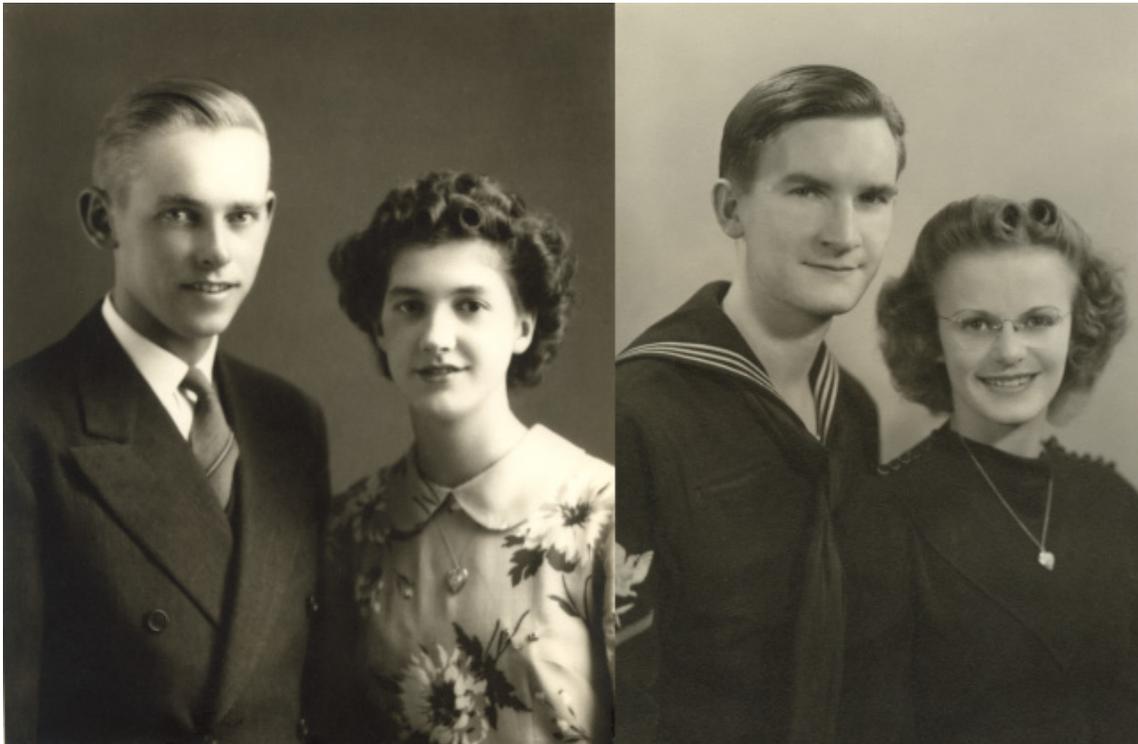
I was ordained a priest the winter of 1940-41, so I was permitted to administer to the sacrament in church. I enjoyed that, and started attending priesthood class a little more often. As I've said before, I always attended Sunday School and liked it. This winter I was invited to take a teacher training class that was administered by the stake. Ellen Roberry Hinkley, wife of the high school principal, FA Hinkley, taught it at the Box Elder High School Seminary. I enjoyed her class and after completing it was given a calling to teach a Sunday School class. The class was 16 year olds, kids my own age. I'm not sure how well that worked out. It probably was mostly an ego trip for me. The church meetings for our ward were being held in the stake tabernacle at this time while our ward house was being redecorated. Our Sunday School class was held on the north balcony. My Aunt Ann Cottam commented a number of times how proud of me she was that I was active in the church and teaching that Sunday School class.

The school year of 1941-42 was a time of considerable change in our family and in the country. On December 7th, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, taking us into World War II. In February of 1942 the federal government condemned a big block of farmland in southeast Brigham City for construction of Bushnell Army General Hospital. That took my father's farm and about 200 additional acres from other farmers around there. It was a terrible blow to my father. He dearly loved that farm and had worked on it for 20 years improving it continually. He had planted acres of new orchards, which were just beginning to bear. He had it at a point where he would have made a lot of money. He was an excellent farmer and would have been a wealthy man, and a happy man, if that had not happened. Actually daddy received less for the farm for his property than he could have made from the fruit crop from that year of 1942. Others who still had their farms farther south in Perry had a real bonanza of a year: good crops, good market, and high prices. Some of those farmers made more money from their one-year's crop than my father received for his farm itself. He was a broken hearted man, but he went on working hard for the city.

With some of the money from the farm Dad bought a Bucyrus Erie B15 power shovel with a dragline boom attachment, and began doing some contract work for construction jobs and land drainage jobs for farmers in the area, hired an operator for it, and put the shovel to work. My dad was an enterpriser and it looked like an opportunity for him to make some money.

Orville, Harold and Yvonne all married in June and July of 1942. All married in the Logan Temple. Orville married Gay Dahle, Harold married Alda Forsgren, a neighbor there in Brigham City, and Yvonne married Gordon Steele, a man from Salt Lake City. She had attended the LDS business College and taken a job in secretarial work and met Gordon at that time.

In July Orville, Harold, and Gordon were all drafted into the service. Gordon went into the navy, and Orville and Harold into the Air Corps. Harold enrolled in the aviation cadet program and was training to be a pilot. Orville was very upset about being drafted back into the Air Corps. He had already served in it for about three years, and had been given a medical discharge hardly a year before.



**Image 23. Harold and Alda Forsgren Larsen (000598). Gordon and Yvonne Larsen Steele (000599).**

I graduated from seminary in the spring of '42. I was the valedictorian of the class, and gave an address at our graduation ceremony in the Box Elder Tabernacle. That summer of '42 I was privileged to be one of about 20 or 24 high school juniors and seniors who were given pilot training in a Civil Air Patrol program. If we completed the course successfully we were given our private pilot license. I succeeded and have held a private pilot license since then.

That summer I had a job working with adult men at the Utah Concrete Pipe Company. Their plant was just east of the cemetery. I still had my Tribune route and was taking flying lessons everyday, so I had a busy, very exciting summer. I'd get up at 4 o'clock or 4:30, and deliver my paper route. Then I'd borrow Daddy's truck, which had been repaired, and drove out to the airport for my flying lesson, then go to work at 8 o'clock at the pipe plant. The work there was very hard physical labor. My job involved welding the wire frames that served as reinforcement in the sections of concrete pipe. I

would transport the new wet pipe in its metal form from the machine back into the drying room using a little cart like a wheelbarrow, strip off the form, then come back for another one. I enjoyed the hard work, and the busy summer was very rewarding.

In 1942 daddy engaged some builders to remodel our house. Now that the children were all old enough to leave we were going to have some more room. My father had a bedroom added to the west side of the house, and also a large back porch. He also finished excavating the other third of the basement, and changed the stairway around a little bit. With the bedroom added on the back they took my mother's and dad's little



**Image 24. Larsen Family in 1942. Left to right, front row: Yvonne, Merlin Russell, Shirley, Judith, and Barbara. Back row: Raymond, Merlin Nelson, Orville, and Harold. (000284)**

bedroom on the northeast corner, and added it to the front room so the front room stretched clear across the house, making a nice room out of it. The remodeling wasn't done quite the way my mother wanted it nor the way I would have done it, but that was the way my dad wanted it. It did make a lovely home out of it. He also installed a furnace with a stoker for automatic feeding of crushed coal, and a steam heating system.

Daddy traded the Ford truck in for a 1941 Chrysler Saratoga, which was a big sedan, a very fine car.

Gay went to live with Orville where he was serving in the Air Corps. I think they were in Fort Worth, Texas at that time. Alda went to live with Harold where he was training in Texas. Yvonne and Gordon moved to Logan where Gordon was stationed in a college detachment of the Navy at the Utah State Agricultural College.



**Image 25. Merlin Russell Larsen's 1941 Chrysler Saratoga. The boy is Fred Nelson, 6.5 year old son of Judith's youngest sibling, Leroy Nelson.(000687).**

During my junior year I served as class president, and on a prom committee that put on the junior prom. We called it "In Old Vienna" as it had the old baroque theme of the Johann Strauss days in Vienna. It was quite a successful prom. In the spring of my junior year I was elected to be secretary of the student body for the following senior year.

My senior year in school was somewhat affected by the war going on. We were engaged in a campaign to sell savings bonds and stamps to help raise money to pay for the war. As secretary of the student body I supervised that project.

An incident happened in connection with the campaign, which had a long lasting affect on me

psychologically. My first period class was physics taught by LA Richardson. Taking care of the savings bond and stamps project early in the morning frequently made me late for physics class and this annoyed Mr. Richardson. The thing that annoyed him more than my being late, however, was a bad habit I had, of answering a question, blurting out an answer to a question before I was called upon. I'd raise my hand and give the answer at the same time and this annoyed him very much. Well, I came in late one Monday morning and had hardly sat down in my chair when he asked a question. I raised my hand and blurted out the answer. It was so annoying to him that he made this remark to me. "Merlin, you're not very smart. You just have a way of talking that makes people think you're smart." He said that to me right in front of all my classmates and it was a deep cut, a psychological wound, that affected me for years. Later on I may remember to tell you how that incident affected me when I began college at the University of Utah a couple of years later. Anyway, I forgive the man. I provoked him terribly with my rude habit, and my being late. I had it coming.

I was the valedictorian of our graduating class. I surely had a difficult time composing my talk for that occasion. It seems that I've always had trouble getting my thoughts onto paper. I have too many thoughts going through my mind and can't decide just what to say, or can't decide how to say something to be impressive or whatever it is, or whatever my difficulty is. I have trouble composing my thoughts. I've encountered it many times in my life since then.

About the middle of June a terrible thing happened in the family. Harold's wife Alda died in Texas. They had been married less than a year. She died suddenly of a hemorrhage in her lungs, some kind of heart failure. Of course Harold obtained leave and brought her home. Her funeral was a very sad thing. I just can't imagine the grief that Harold felt. In just a few days or couple of weeks he had to go back to Texas alone and try to pick up his training. The men in charge of his training were not understanding at all of his mental and emotional state. He wasn't quite up to the demands of his training and asked his officers for a brief delay in his training, a moratorium so to speak, but they wouldn't give it to him. They insisted that he go ahead on his regular schedule as though nothing had happened in his life. He couldn't handle it, and he washed out of the program. He would have been a cracker jack fighter pilot. Of course he may have been killed in the war if he had become a fighter pilot. You never know. Harold went into the meteorological service of the Air Corps and spent the rest of the war years in the south where he was trained and served as a meteorologist.

## **1943 to 1945: WORLD WAR II YEARS**

On the 23rd of June I entered the service and went to Camp Kearns, Utah for basic training. Camp Kearns was a base where the city of Kearns, Utah now stands, or I should say that after the war the city of Kearns was built where Camp Kearns stood during the war. The city used the infrastructure, the roads and the sewers, water system, and the power system, and some of the buildings of Camp Kearns. Of course, through the years much has been done to make the present city of Kearns.

Camp Kearns was a rough place. We did much of our marching, calisthenics, and physical training in the sandy and rocky soil. It was hot and the sun was just merciless. I developed a terrible sunburn. The hats we wore offered no shade to our face, and my forehead and my nose and cheeks became sunburned so badly that the skin opened up in sores. I had blisters and scabs for several months after I left Camp Kearns.

I was unbearably homesick there. Although I was only 60 miles from home, to me it was like being on the other side of the world, and I wasn't the only one. Homesickness was a pretty common problem for young service men, especially for young kids just out of high school who had never been away from home. While most of the men were pretty well behaved there was a rough element in the service, but mostly it was just being away from home. I was with a number of men from Brigham City, a number of schoolmates who went into the service at the same time. One of them had a car, which was not really authorized, but he kept it off the base. He went home a number of weekends the two and a half months we were there, and he took a number of us with him. I was lucky to go with him a couple of times for a weekend at home. I guess it helped. I don't know whether it helped or hurt; whether it made the homesickness worse or not. But, I survived and in the latter part of August or the first part of September our training squadron was transferred to the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

We were known as a College Training Detachment. It was part of a pipeline in the training program for pilots, navigators, bombardiers, and gunners. Training took about a year and it had several phases, like this college training detachment, as a holding phase until facilities opened up for the actual training. We studied regular high school courses there like physics and math. I don't remember all that we studied. We had some special courses like meteorology, aircraft identification and civil air regulations; the sort of things that would be useful to us later on if we completed pilot training. I was there in North Dakota until about November 20th, just before Thanksgiving. I continued to be terribly homesick there. We stayed in fraternity houses, which served as barracks. There were very few men enrolled as civilians in the school. Most of the students in the school were women. The food was very good and I look back with pleasure on the activities there. It was just the homesickness that was unbearable.

A group of us formed a little branch of the church and held church meetings. That was not continued when I moved from there so I got out of the habit of going to church while I was in the service.

To show how homesick I was there, let me tell you this humorous, rather pathetic incident. Between North Dakota and Utah there are 1500 miles, and Utah is southwest from North Dakota. I was living in the northeast corner of the dormitory. I struck a bargain with a Brigham City man who was a couple years older than I who was living in

a room on the southwest corner of the same dormitory. I asked him if he would trade rooms with me so I could be on the southwest corner of the building and look out toward Utah thinking that might help my homesickness. Nothing helped except time. It gradually got better with time and as I matured a little bit.

I was quite immature I suppose, kind of a teachers pet. I wasn't quite ready for the adult world. About a week before Thanksgiving we were transferred to Santa Anna, California to the Air Corps training base. Our activity there was to attend ground school training. We took a whole battery of physical tests, scholastic tests, and endurance tests to determine our aptitude for different assignments. Theoretically we were all going to train to be pilots, navigators or bombardiers. If we successfully completed our training we would be commissioned second lieutenants. If we failed in our training we would be transferred to other training in the air force to be mechanics, gunners, or other service people, or we might even be transferred into the regular army into the infantry or the artillery. My test results indicated that I might succeed as a pilot, so my next transfer in January was to primary flight training.



**Image 26. Merlin visiting his Grandma Nelson in California. (000043)**

I had some interesting experiences while I was at Santa Anna. Santa Anna is south of Los Angeles. Most of my mother's brothers and sisters and also my grandma and grandpa Nelson lived in Los Angeles. So, for Thanksgiving that year I had a short leave and found my way into Los Angeles to the home of my grandparents. Being in the big city was exciting, finding my way onto the buses and the trains, and I looked forward to spending vacation with mom's family. During those couple days I was able to visit the home of Aunt Genevieve where I met my cousin Bud Schwarz for the first time. I got to see all of my mother's brothers and sisters and their families. We had Thanksgiving dinner at the home of Aunt Bernice and Uncle Jim Koutnik with whom I had spent a week in Ogden years before. They lived in the San Fernando Valley where Roberta and I would serve a mission together many years later in 1989 starting in the San Fernando Valley. I can tell you it was surely a different place in 1943 than it was in

1989; a different world altogether. In 1943 it was solid orange groves and great vineyards. In 1989 it was metropolitan city from one end of the valley to the other. Of

course, in that 46 years California's population grew from a couple million to over 30 million. It was a much more pleasant place in 1943.



**Image 27. The Koutnik family: Bernice, Mary, Bob, and Jim around. 1945. (000685)**

I enjoyed my time at Santa Anna. A couple things about it I can mention particularly. I loved the giant Eucalyptus trees that are all over the southern California area, at least in the residential areas. It was the rainy season while we were there, and it rained a lot. I liked the rain. We were dressed warmly with raincoats and good shoes. There is something intriguing and appealing about marching in a group of men, even in the rain. I

liked the discipline of marching formation. I especially liked a big gathering like a parade on some special occasion.

I should say here that I really enjoyed my time in the Air Corps. I was in about two and a half years. I was busy most of the time, although there were periods when we wasted a lot of time. I could have made better use of it if I had been wiser. I could have done a lot of reading or studying on my own. But we were kept busy, especially compared with other units of the armed forces in which the greatest part of the time was spent sitting around waiting for something to happen. In every phase of our training we had class work, studying some interesting subjects.

Flight training was very interesting and challenging. I enjoyed the discipline in the military, the orderliness of it. I like the camaraderie of the men although I didn't form any buddies. I didn't participate in any of the macho things like women chasing and boozing.

On January 20th we moved on to Blythe California, which is east of Los Angeles on the Colorado River, where we began Primary flight training. It was a combination of class work, actual flying lessons and physical training, exercises, calisthenics, that sort of thing. The food was good and the living quarters were very pleasant. We lived in a civilian air academy. It was called Morton Air Academy.

Just a note here of interest. I often wondered what happened to that place. So, in August of 1990 when Roberta and I were returning home from our mission in California, we traveled east through Blythe going to Phoenix. We drove up on the hill north of the town, I think it's north, and there were the remains of the Morton Air Academy. The buildings were still standing and were very recognizable. It hadn't change much except they were falling into ruins. The place had been abandoned apparently for a number of years and the land was for sale. But, it was easy for me to recapture the feelings that I had when I was there in 1944. I enjoyed my time there.



**Image 28. Aerial photograph of Morton Air Academy taken in 1994**

Our ground school courses were interesting. We had classes in aircraft identification and in meteorology and later on learning to send and receive Morse code messages. We had courses both at Santa Anna and at Blythe where we flew in an open cockpit bi-wing trainer. I believe it was called a Stearman PT17. It was a very sturdy little airplane with two cockpits, one front, one rear. The instructor was always in the rear one.

We wore close fitting helmets. In each earpiece there was a tube connected to a rubber hose that went back to the instructor's cockpit. There he had a little funnel on end of the hose and he could talk into that rubber hose and the student could hear him very well. That device is called a Gossport. I have a couple issues of a magazine that was printed there by the association of the cadet students and the base personnel. The magazine is called "Gossport", and it contains pictures of the cadets and the service people and trainers; very much like a yearbook in high school. I don't know how many hours we flew there, although I have record of that somewhere.



**Image 29. Boeing-Stearman PT17**

Training there lasted until March 31st. Then we transferred back to Ontario, California, which is just east of Pomona, about 40 miles east of Los Angeles, for our Basic flight training. There again we lived in a civilian flight academy that had been commandeered by the Air Corps for the training of military pilots. It was called the Cal-Aero Flight Academy.

Another current footnote on the past. While we were on our mission in California we visited with Bud Schwarz and his wife Eilene a number of times. They lived in Reseda, California, which was just four or five miles from Van Nuys where we were assigned as missionaries. On one occasion Bud and I drove out to Ontario,

California and particularly to Chino which was a little town south of Ontario where the airport was located on which we trained while I was assigned at Cal-Aero. The airport is largely unchanged. The hangars are still there and the words Cal-Aero are still painted on the roof. It's used by private pilots whose hobby is airplanes and the airport is surrounded by dairy land. Bud told me there was a great deal of pressure on those dairy farmers to sell their land so that Los Angeles could spread out some more. In fact, on the hills west of the airport just a few miles away the urban sprawl has crept over the hills. There are large subdivisions built on those lower hills and I'm sure in a few years the price of real estate and the growth of the metropolis will crowd out that Cal-Aero airport.



**Image 30. Vultee "Vibrator" BT-13**

Anyway, at Cal-Aero we lived in very comfortable quarters. The food was very good. Ground school classes were very similar, as I've described. We flew a Vultee aircraft. It was an all metal low wing monoplane, called a BT-13. The nickname was Vultee Vibrator because it did vibrate in not only straight and level flight but in any maneuver such as rolls, snap rolls, or loops it vibrated terribly, as if it might fall apart, but it was a sturdy airplane.

I was there from April 1st through June 1st, and at that point a decision was made by the instructors with reference to each man's previous record, whether the student pilot was more suited to become a fighter pilot or a pilot of a multi-engine airplane: a bomber or a transport plane, something like that. Fighter pilots are a different breed. They have to be a little bit crazy, more daring, quicker in reaction, more competitive; more macho I guess. A multi engine pilot would make a good bus driver. At least that's as I see it.

I was selected to become a pilot of multi engine planes so I was sent to Fort Sumner, New Mexico for my Advanced training. There we flew a twin engine Beechcraft aircraft made of fabric and plywood. It was not a metal airplane. It had two engines and a cabin and could haul a half dozen people if desired.

Fort Sumner, New Mexico is near the east border of New Mexico and about halfway north and south. We got a lot of night flying there and some instrument flying. Incidentally, beginning here in Fort Sumner and in our later flight training that I'll mention, we had training in what was called a link trainer. It was an electronic mockup of an airplane, with an enclosed seat in which you would sit. Of course it had some little mock wings sticking out of it to make it look like a toy airplane big enough for a man to sit in. They'd pull a hood over you so you were enclosed and in front of you was an instrument panel. In that link trainer they taught pilots to fly by instruments without reference to a visible horizon so you could fly in weather when there was no visible

horizon, or at night when you couldn't see anything to direct you and you had to depend on instruments.



**Image 31. Link Trainer.**

We began that training at Fort Sumner and we also had night flights and cross country flights when we flew to airports 50 or 100 miles away both in the daytime and at night. Training there lasted until August 4<sup>th</sup>, about two months. On August 4<sup>th</sup> we graduated and were commissioned second lieutenants and received our pilot's wings and we were given a furlough of two or three weeks, long enough for me to go home from Fort Sumner. I traveled by bus to Denver then on a civilian airline to Salt Lake City. In those days airliners were all propeller driven and this

happened to be a DC3, which doesn't have a capacity to fly very high. It flew north to Cheyenne Wyoming and then west across the South Pass of Wyoming and down to Salt Lake rather than flying directly over the Rocky Mountains. To get over the Rockies you have to get up to about 15,000 feet. Instead, we flew about 10,000 and the air was very very rough. It's very hot in August and the thermal currents really tossed that plane around. I got quite airsick. I didn't have to throw up, but I was really green around the gills. So, here's the newly commissioned lieutenant, hot pilot Larsen, airsick on his first flight.

I had a couple of weeks to strut around Brigham City, visit a few people, show off my new uniform and my wings and my bars, and be the macho Air Corps pilot. I had largely overcome my homesickness by then and I was anxious to get back to my training. I went to Hobbs, New Mexico, which is south of Fort Sumner, close to Texas. There I entered B17 pilot training, learning to fly the 4-engine bomber, the Flying Fortress. That was a very challenging and exciting thing. This was a real airplane. We learned about the airplane itself, about its systems, safety procedures, crash landing procedures, and ditching procedures for landing in the water, hopefully safely.

The B17 was 104 feet across its wings, about 75 feet long, had about 4800 horsepower in its four engines, and carried a crew of 9 or ten men. Fully armed it had twelve 50 caliber machine guns, carried about 4 tons of bombs and about 2800 gallons of gasoline. Fully loaded it weighed about 75 to 80 thousand pounds. It was a big airplane.

We learned to fly formation. B17s and the B24 bombers usually flew in formation, a group of airplanes fairly close together. They flew this way for protection from enemy fighters. This was a disadvantage against anti aircraft guns, which shot up from the ground because it presented a bigger target. A formation of B17s would be about 25 times the area of a single B17 so it really gave a target to the anti aircraft gunners. However, that risk was worth the protection that we had from enemy fighters by flying in formation. A single B17 was quite helpless against a skillful pilot in a



**Image 32. The "Flying Fortress" B17**

fighter with guns. It was pretty hard to escape a good fighter pilot.

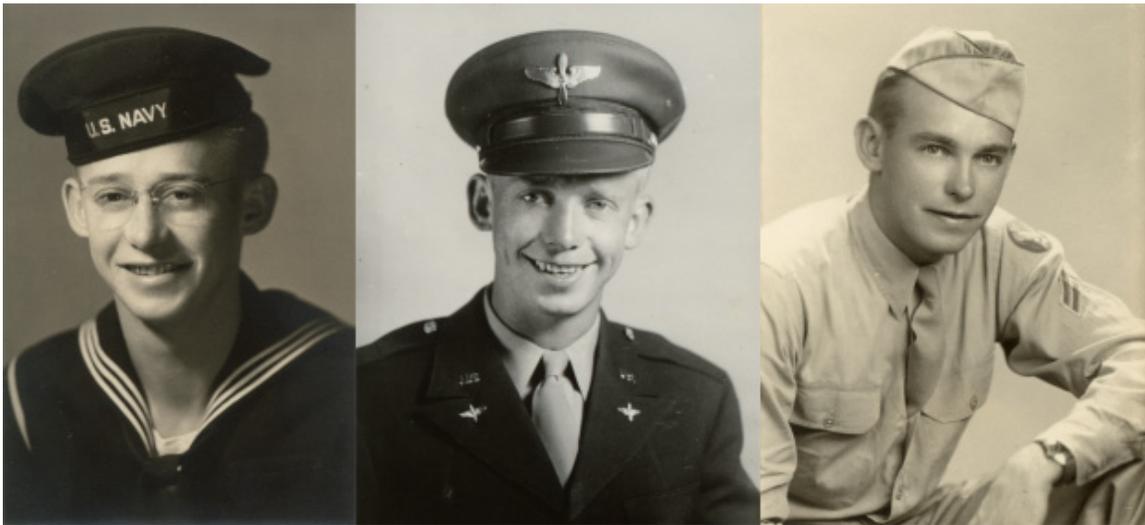
Again we had ground school training, mostly about the B17 itself, and crew management. Because as a pilot I was going to be in charge of a crew of 9 or 10 men, and they were going to call me an airplane commander, I had to have some training in working with a crew.

I enjoyed being at Hobbs, enjoyed the thrill of flying the big airplane. I was there until about November 1<sup>st</sup>. From there we went to El Paso, Texas, which was a just a short hop, a hundred miles or so, farther south and east to Biggs Field. There the crewmembers were assembled. The gunners, the pilots, the radio operators, the navigators, the bombardiers, and the flight engineers all came there from their training schools, and we were teamed up and formed into a combat crew.

We had nine men in our crew: a pilot and a copilot, a bombardier and a navigator, an engineer who also manned the top gun turret immediately behind the pilots' seats, a radio operator whose station was just behind the wings, a ball turret gunner whose station was in the ball in the belly of the B17, a waist gunner who was in the waist or middle of the airplane and whose guns fired out to the sides of the B17. Some planes had one waist

gunner; some had two. We only had one. And there was a tail gunner whose station was in the tail of the airplane. The navigator was directly in front of and below the pilots' seats. He had a little work area there, with a table, where he could layout his maps and charts and do his work of navigating our course. The bombardiers' station was in the very nose of the airplane where the bombsight was located.

The bombsight was a device for aiming the bombs. It actually controlled the flight of the airplane during the bombing run through the autopilot. Through that instrument the bombardier could determine the precise time to release the bombs to hit the target; making calculations of altitude, wind direction, velocity, and the airplanes direction and velocity, and so forth. The bombardier also had two 50-caliber machine guns in the chin turret. The turrets were all driven by electric power: the chin turret, the



**Image 33. Raymond, Merlin, and Harold Larsen in uniform. (000036, 000046, 000047)**

top turret behind the pilots, and the ball turret in the belly of the 17 right in the middle in the bottom of the plane. All the other gun positions were operated manually.

We were put together as a crew in November, and we flew various training missions to learn how to work together. The navigator and the pilots had to work together. The bombardier needed some training in flying the airplane with the autopilot. The pilots needed more training in formation flying. The gunners needed some experience in shooting at targets on the ground and in the air from a B17. They needed to learn how to handle their guns and turrets. We all needed experience in handling our oxygen equipment for high altitude flights. We spent two months working together until the end of 1944.

On New Year's day of 1945 we took a fun flight. Our training was finished and we were scheduled to leave Biggs Field in just a day or two. We flew our plane northwest toward the Grand Canyon, clear across New Mexico into upper Arizona; flew that bomber down into the Grand Canyon. I'm sure that wasn't an approved procedure, but hot pilot Larsen wasn't above showing off. That was quite an experience. Down in the Grand Canyon we were below the horizon surrounded by those vertical rock walls, which are as much as a mile high. The canyon is a mile deep. Of course we didn't fly down all the way, we just flew close to the top. You lose your perspective, your depth



**Image 34. Merlin wearing his WWII uniform in 1999 (000692)**

perception, and can hardly tell how far away those canyon walls are. It would be very easy to crash into a monolith of stone standing up in the canyon. It was a foolish thing to do, but it was exciting, and we flew out over the tourist lodge on the south rim of the canyon. We buzzed the lodge, flew over it about 25 feet above the roof. We learned later when we got back to base, that one of President Roosevelt's sons and his new wife were in that lodge on their honeymoon. Well, we were lucky. Nobody picked up our numbers and we weren't reported.

We flew from Grand Canyon down the Colorado River. It was prohibited air space over Hoover dam. No plane could fly over Hoover dam because that would have been a threat to national security. We did fly down the Colorado River to Parker dam and then flew east back home to El Paso.

About January 5<sup>th</sup> we got on a train and traveled north to Lincoln Nebraska. Although they had snow in El Paso it wasn't bitter cold, but it was bitter cold in Lincoln. Lincoln was fairly close to where the B17s were manufactured in Kansas, and we were assigned a brand new B17. The only flight time was the testing time and the flight from Kansas to Lincoln. There we had a few operations to perform. One thing we needed to do was swing our compass, which meant that we had to make sure that the compass was aligned properly with true north and south so it would be dependable in future flights.

Life was miserable there, the barracks were very very cold, and the food was not too good. We were anxious to be on our way. We were going to fly that B17 over to England. The first leg of our flight began on January 25<sup>th</sup> I believe. The reason we were

held up there for what seemed so long a time was that the weather over the Atlantic Ocean was not favorable. They held us back because there wasn't room for us at the intermediate airfields en route to England. It took us from January 25<sup>th</sup> to February 10<sup>th</sup> to fly to England.

We flew first to Manchester, New Hampshire. I think the place was called Grenier Field. The snow was very deep there, and the weather was cold. It was a real winter in New Hampshire that year. We stopped there just over night I believe. Then we flew north to Goose Bay Labrador, way up in Canada near the ocean, across from Greenland. In Goose Bay we saw real snow.

When the B17 sits on the ground, the vertical part of its tail, is about 20 feet high. At Goose Bay the snow plows and snow blowers piled the snow off to the side of the runways. It was so high that the B17s could not be seen from the control tower. When a

B17 landed it flew down out of sight in the valley formed on the runway by those high snow piles. It was very cold there. It seems like we were there two nights. The quarters were warm and the food was good. They had heaters with which they kept the oil in our engines from freezing.

We flew from Goose Bay across the sea to a landing field on the west coast of Greenland. It was called Bluie West One. It was more or less straight east across the sound from Goose Bay. Landing at Bluie West One was quite a trick. You had just one

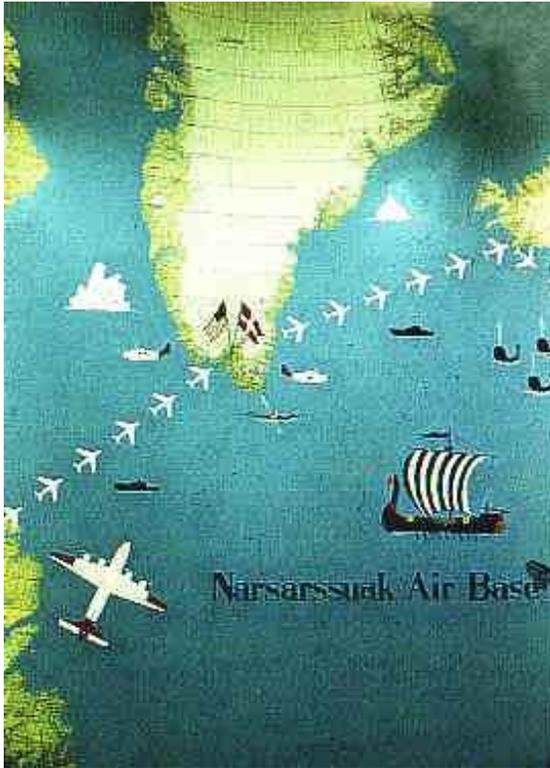


**Image 35. Bluie West One airbase in Greenland**

chance. You flew through a fjord which was a narrow canyon between high rock walls and the bottom of the canyon is the ocean. So, you're flying through this narrow canyon over the sea. If you have engine failure you have no way out because you can't climb out, you can't turn around, and you can't land. So you fly into this fjord and inland a ways and there's the airfield. The landing strip is an iron mat like a big storm mat on your back porch that slopes from the sea upward on a gravel bed formed by a glacier which is no longer there. You'd better touch your wheels down at the beginning of that ramp. And of course, the upward slope of the ramp slows you down as you climb up it. Then at the top you turn off to the side so you're out of the way of the next guy who's coming in.

Well, Bluie West One was just a fueling stop, but we did stay over night. In the morning we took off and to take off you again have just one chance. You start at the top

of the ramp and you have a full gas load of course. You fly down that ramp toward the ocean and you'd better be in the air by the time you hit the end of the runway. Then you fly back out that narrow fjord, to the open ocean, and there you can begin to climb and get your altitude. We climbed up to about 25000 feet I think, or 20000 feet, where the temperature was about 50 or 60 degrees below zero. We were glad to have electric heated flight suits besides that sheep skin lined clothing.



**Image 36. Map showing location of Bluie West One.**

Instead of flying over Greenland we flew down around the south end of it and over to Iceland which is northeast of southern Greenland. We landed at Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, and we stayed there one or two nights.

Iceland is a volcanic country and the entire area was littered with volcanic stones, some of a very great size, all the way from the size of a water bucket to the size of a house. There isn't much vegetation in Iceland. It is a barren land, and yet it isn't bitter cold. It's not nearly as cold as Greenland because it receives the warm ocean current, which comes up the east coast of the United States from the Gulf of Mexico. It swings out northeast past Iceland and over toward Scandinavia and Great Britain. That's the Gulf Stream, and that warm water and the heat that it picks up in the Gulf of Mexico is what makes life possible in north and Western Europe. If it weren't for the Gulf Stream, life there would be like life for the

Eskimos up in the Arctic region.

We landed in England at a place called Chorley, and there we left the new bomber with service personnel who would prepare it for combat duty. We moved from Chorley, which was just an airfield, to a holding station from which we were assigned to our combat location. Until that time we didn't know just where we would serve in Europe and England. There we were assigned to the 100<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group which was based in Diss, in east England, about 95 miles north and a little bit east of London near a town called Thorpe Abbots. There we would make use of all the training we had received in the preceding 18 months.

We arrived there about February 15<sup>th</sup>, and began our combat missions on March 3rd and flew 21 missions before the end of the war in Europe on May 8, 1945. A full tour of duty would have been 35 missions at that time, but the war didn't last long enough for us to fill a tour. So, we had to settle for 21.

At Thorpe Abbots we lived in Quonset huts. I think a Quonset hut is an English invention. It was a tunnel made of corrugated steel, which formed the walls and the roof in one continuous arch, a kind of half cylinder. It was a cold kind of dwelling, no

insulation whatever, and it housed about 50 men I think. These huts in various sizes served all purposes: a very large one for the mess hall, a large one for the recreation hall, a big one for the hospital, small ones for storage - almost every building was a Quonset hut.

On the base there were four squadrons. A squadron consisted of about fifteen or twenty planes with their crews and ground force personnel to support them. On the 100th Bomb Group base at Thorpe Abbots, I think there were about 2500 men at one time. The base had been there since 1943. We were coming over when it was occupied by very experienced men, some of whom had been there that whole time, others who were new comers like ourselves.



**Image 37. Quonset Huts**

I want to mention here the names of the men who were in the crew with me. Maybe just a general comment about the manner in which a mission was conducted and then I'll go on, maybe add more detail later.

My co-pilot was Arthur V Williams. He was from Colgate, Oklahoma, a great big jolly fellow; quite a grown up boy. He liked to play ball with the other crewmembers. The navigator was Archie A. Brock from the Bay area of California. He was about eight years older than I. The bombardier was Edmund Settle from West Virginia. Our engineer and top gunner was John P O'Connor from Orange, New Jersey. The radio operator was Jack Torogian from Wisconsin. The ball turret gunner was Allison M. Balfour, middle name Merlin, from Nebraska. The waist gunner was Robert L Tyre, also an older man, he had a couple of small children, and he was from Nebraska. The tail gunner was a Salt Lake City boy, Trent Parker.

The decision of what targets to attack was made at 8th Air Force headquarters. They decided which bomb groups should participate. They were notified by telephone early in the morning hours and group headquarters then decided which planes of the group would participate. The group had four squadrons, the 349th, 350th, 351st, and the 418th. We were in the 350th squadron. A messenger, a staff member from squadron headquarters, would come around to our barracks and wake us up. We'd dress, go to breakfast, and then assemble together in the briefing room where we would be told what the target was, something about the weather conditions and what German resistance to expect.



**Image 38. The “Hard Luck” crew of B-17G 46505 LN-V. Standing L to R: Arthur V. Williams – co-pilot, Archie A. Brock – navigator, Merlin N. Larsen – pilot, Trent J. Parker – tail gun, Edmund O. Settle – bombardier, Three ground crewmen. Kneeling L to R: Robert L. Tyer – waist gunner, Allison M. Balfour – ball turret gunner, John P. O’Connor – engineer and top turret gunner, Jack Torogian – Radio Operator.**

We would hack our watches so that we would have the same time. We were given set times for starting our engines, taxiing out to take off, and the point on the map over which we would assemble into formation. We were hauled on jeeps out to our plane, which were scattered over quite an area. They were not concentrated in one place, in order to minimize the chance of their being destroyed by the enemy. At the set time we'd start our engines, taxi out, take off, and begin climbing up to our specified altitudes, and at the same time circling over the designated point to make our formation. All of the planes from our group would fly together, rather close together in formation. We'd fly out to over the English Channel, climbing all the time. We usually flew at about 25,000 feet over the target.

We tried to stay in close formation. Sometimes we couldn't do that. Not all planes had equal power. Sometimes there were stragglers. On the missions that we flew, we nearly always encountered anti aircraft fire from the ground. We saw very few enemy fighters. The German Luftwaffe had largely been destroyed by the time we reached



**Image 39. Merlin flying B17 on a bombing run.**  
(000045)

Europe.

Our missions ranged all the way from the Kiel Canal up near Denmark, to Berlin, to Czechoslovakia, down into southern Germany, and many of them in the Rhur valley, which was a highly concentrated industrial area. Our targets were airfields, railroad marshalling yards, factories, canals, refineries, harbors, etc.

Somewhere after our tenth mission we had what was called a flak leave, which was about a ten-day vacation. The crew went to different places. The enlisted men went to one vacation spot and the officers went to another. There was a sharp distinction between officers and enlisted men. I was never very comfortable with it, but had no choice but to comply with it. All of the members of our crew were on good terms with each other, had a good time.

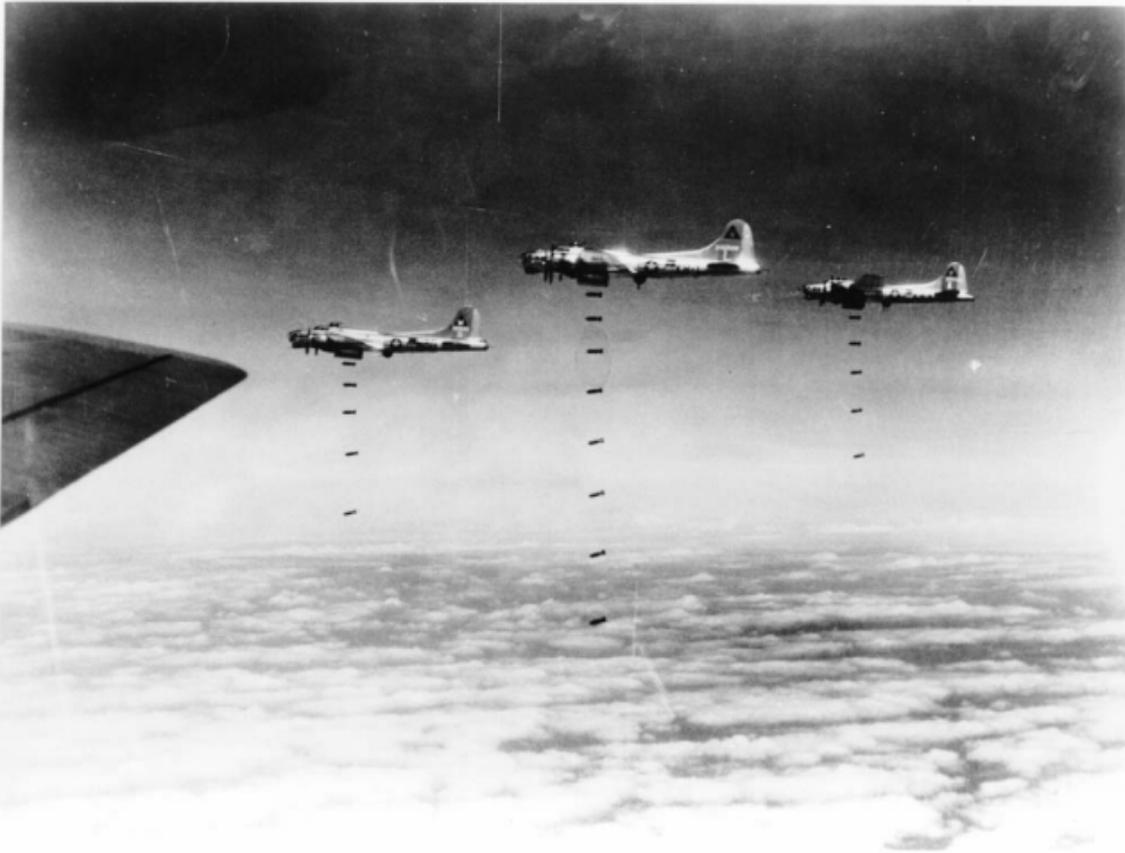
We were together rather a short time, and since the war we've drifted apart, although I have had contact with five of my crewmembers. Three of them, maybe six of them, haven't had

any contact with Art Williams or Arch Brock, nor have any of the other crew members heard from them.

On our flak leave, we went to a large manorial house in central England called Eynsham Hall. It was a very large house, three stories, many acres of gardens and woodland around it. We had a good time there. We also had one leave on which we were allowed to go to London where we had our meals at a large select club that was owned by and patronized by wealthy people during peace times. It had been turned over to the American military forces for the purpose of feeding military personnel who were in London. The officers had one place again, and the enlisted men a different place. The one where we ate was called Grosvenor Hall. It was near Hyde Park as I recall.

While we were in London we attended one live stage play. I don't remember the name of it, but it was a comedy and the main actor was a man named Tommy Trinder, a very good comedian. I enjoyed the play.

I remember another pleasant incident. We were in our hotel rooms on Regent Street in London in the evening after we had eaten, just before we went to bed. There were a number of English singers who came by and stopped below our windows and sang some beautiful songs. I remember Ave Maria particularly. They were very good and did



**Image 40. B17s flying in formation and dropping bombs.**

have the effect of lifting our spirits and helping us to think about something other than the war and the drabness of life around us.

England had been at war for 5 1/2 years when we were there. London had been severely bombed, much of it destroyed, but the British were a very hardy people. Their morale was high. They were not discouraged or depressed. They were very friendly and kind to the American military people; at least that's the way I found them.

After the war ended May 8th we flew a couple of interesting non-combat missions. Once we flew into Germany and picked up a load of French prisoners of war who had been freed by the advancing Allied armies and flew them back to Paris. When we left Paris we had a little fun buzzing the countryside between Paris and the English Channel on our way home, flying maybe a hundred feet above the ground. It was interesting to watch the cattle scatter in fright as we flew over them at that low altitude. It wasn't legal, but it was exciting, and we were just kids. I was only 20 years old at the time. I'm sure I thought I was a pretty hot pilot.

We flew another interesting mission to northwest Africa. When the war ended in Europe, the strategy was to transport military personnel to the Pacific theater of operations where the war with Japan was still in full force, and no one knew how long it would last. No one expected it to end as suddenly as it did, just three months after the



**Image 41. British actor Tommy Trinder.**

war in Europe. It was brought to an end suddenly and unexpectedly by the atomic bombs, which we dropped on Japan in August 1945. On this flight that we made from England to northwest Africa, we picked up a load of American army personnel and hauled them to French West Africa. We landed at a place called Marrakech, which is inland from Casablanca. That was an interesting flight. We stayed overnight, and saw just a little bit of the culture of the Arab desert people.

The Air Force began immediately to return personnel to the United States. Not many air personnel were transferred to the Pacific theater because the Air Force strength in the Pacific was considered adequate at that time. Japan had been beaten back to its homeland. Our navy was in complete control of the Pacific Ocean and our Air Force in the Pacific was in control of the air

space. American bombers were bombing Japanese cities very regularly without much opposition from Japanese air power. There was anti aircraft fire, but the B29s being used were much superior to and not as vulnerable to anti aircraft fire as the B17s and the B24s.

I was included in a group of about forty men who left Thorpe Abbots about July 1st to fly home as passengers in a C46 transport plane. We went to an airbase in Wales on the west coast of England where we waited for favorable weather over the Atlantic Ocean. When the weather improved we flew from Wales to Iceland, then west to Bluie West One in Greenland, then west again to Goose Bay Labrador, and south to Grenier Field in Manchester, New Hampshire. There we were loaded onto a train which traveled down to New York City and west across the country to Salt Lake City. We arrived about August 15th, and then we were granted a furlough to go home for about 30 days, with orders to report after that to Santa Anna California for processing to be discharged from the service. I went to Santa Anna about September 20th, and was there until about October 15th. As you can see, there was a lot of wasted time just waiting to be discharged. I didn't make very good use of those days, did a little reading, and visiting with other men. There were a few men there that I remembered from the preceding 28 months.

## **1945 to 1949: UNIVERSITY DAYS**

I went home and must have lounged around until the beginning of winter quarter at the University of Utah, which began about the 15th of December 1946. During those two months I went to Ogden and bought a 1941 Plymouth, which was then four years old. I paid \$1250 for it, which was more than it had cost new.

There weren't many cars around. No cars had been manufactured for civilian use since Pearl Harbor. Oh, there were a few manufactured in early 1942, but as quickly as possible the factories were all converted to the manufacture of military equipment. So a used car in good shape was highly sought after.

Well, I had saved most of what I had earned during the service, had a small bankroll, and thought I could easily afford to buy this car. As it turned out I had the car for nine years and it served well. I had a little trouble with it right to begin with. I hadn't had it more than a couple of months when the engine failed, and I had it replaced with a new engine, a Dodge block. Dodge is practically the same as a Plymouth of course.

When Aunt Barbara and Uncle Lester Hubbard knew I was planning to attend the University, they very kindly invited me to live with them in their home at 339 Douglas Street. Their two daughters were married and had moved away. They had the room and I was very pleased to live with them so convenient to the university. Of course, they gave me bargain rate too on my room and board.

In March of 1946 I had a little adventure, the only automobile accident that I have ever had, at least up to this time. I was returning to Salt Lake from home at Brigham during a rainstorm on a Sunday evening, and following too close to a car. The driver applied his brakes and slowed down to make a left turn off the highway. I was too close. I'm sure it was my fault, and I smashed into the rear end of that car battering in the front end of mine. It didn't hurt his much. I was very embarrassed, and it took several weeks to have my car repaired, as parts were scarce. I learned a lesson. I always leave a lot of room between my car and the car ahead. I also slow down when the roads are slick, either with rain or snow. It made a cautious driver out of me.

Winter quarter at the university taught me something about myself in a very traumatic manner. I enrolled for a course in beginning physics, which of course began in the fall quarter, with a study of basic mechanics and statics. In the winter quarter the subject was electricity and magnetism. As I said earlier when I was discussing my life as a student, I always got good grades, generally A's. In fact in my high school career I only had one grade that was not an A. That was a B+ that I got in a half-year art class. B+ was probably a better grade than I deserved, but I was quite offended at that teacher for not giving me an A. Well, you recall I told something that happened to me in my high school senior year in my physics class taught by LA Richardson, how he had attacked my ego and embarrassed me in front of my friends by telling me that I was not very smart, just had a way of talking that made people think I was smart. Well, that wound went deeper than he intended probably. At the time he said that to me we were studying electricity and magnetism. Now three years later I'm studying electricity and magnetism and I had trouble with it. I did not understand it as well as I wanted to and needed to. More disturbing than that, I could see I was not going to get my customary A in that class. This was very disturbing to me. It was very immature of me really to be

more concerned about the grade I was going to get than about what I was doing and where I was intending to go in my studies.

I had dreamed since I was an 8th grader of being an astronomer. I thought I wanted to be an astronomer. I have since learned that I wouldn't have enjoyed that life, having learned about how astronomers live and work just by observation, but at the time that was my goal in my university studies. In my mind I'm sure I decided at that time that I would not be an astronomer. You can't be an astronomer without mastering physics, chemistry, mathematics, and other subjects. That was very immature of me, but at any rate, my reaction to that C in physics was to enroll for Spanish the next quarter in the place of physics. Spanish seemed like a subject in which I could get an A.

Looking back through my life I've decided that by getting A's all through school and being praised for it was not really good for my development. It would have been better if I had had some C's and D's maybe mixed with the A's. I would have learned to handle praise and criticism much better and to handle success and failure much better. In the years following my college there have been times when my reaction to circumstances has not been very mature.



**Image 42. Roberta Carpenter, 1949.** (000298)

Brigham City. Charlie was peddling fruit into Idaho and had a fruit stand there on his dad's farm, on the highway. So I worked for Charlie on the farm and in the fruit stand and also made a couple of trips into Idaho with the little truck that he had hauling fruit for the Safeway Stores in Pocatello.

There were a number of quite significant things in my life during the year of 1946. That fall I didn't live with Aunt Barbara and Uncle Lester. Their daughter Neva had returned home from Kentucky with her husband and children and was living there. So, for the fall quarter I lived in an army barracks near the annex building on the university campus, and ate meals in the annex cafeteria. It was a little bit like being back in the service. I had had enough of that, so at Christmas time I looked for room and board in Salt Lake. I found it at a boarding house at 563 East 300 South. I also found something else in that home although I didn't know it at the time. There I met a beautiful redheaded girl in the front hall of the boarding house. She lived there in an apartment with her mother. Her name was Roberta Carpenter.

During that summer I had a job with Charlie Dredge whose father had a fruit farm on the highway south of

Bishop Floyd Jenson in Brigham City 6th Ward asked me if I'd like to go on a mission. That must have been in the summer time when I was home. I very selfishly turned him down. The reason of course was that I had become very inactive in the church and drifted quite far away from it in my feelings, not that my behavior was so bad. I hadn't done anything bad or immoral during my service years, but I wasn't very enthusiastic about the church and I was pretty much interested in what I wanted to do. My good friend Lowell Young and a number of others who were in the service went on missions when they came home. It was a happy experience for them. It would have been a good thing for me too, but I didn't go.

When I went back to school in the fall, my good friend Clinton "Tough" Holmes, helped me get a part-time job at the Hotel Utah garage parking cars, a job which I was to have during the next three school years. Tough worked there too, of course. He had learned about this job through his sister Rula whose friend Arch Eliason worked as a desk clerk in the Hotel Utah.

I did a little bit of flying that summer at the Brigham Airport. I didn't enjoy it very much. A Piper Cub is not a B17.

In the summer I took a trip with four of my friends, Clint Holmes, Lowell Young, Clark Olsen, and Ardel Christopherson. We went up through Yellowstone Park to begin with, then up through the northwest as far as Glacier National Park in Canada. Next we went over to Seattle then down the coast to San Francisco and finally home. I really had a funny selfish attitude on that trip. It still bothers me. I did all the driving. It was my car and I guess I didn't trust anyone else to drive it. It seems like a really strange thing to do as I look back at it now. It didn't bother me then. My friends didn't comment about it.

I lived during the winter and spring quarters on into June of 1947 there on 3rd south, taking board and room with Mrs. Meyers. She had bought the home from Roberta's mother. Roberta's mother and father had bought the home when they moved to Salt Lake City from Vernal at the end of 1940. Roberta's father became very sick and needed to be where he could get good medical attention. He attended the temple during the last months of his life. He died in 1942. When Mom Carpenter sold the home to Mrs. Meyers, she retained the right to rent the apartment where she and Roberta and Doug, Roberta's brother lived, and also the upstairs apartment where Kay and Don Nebeker lived. Since my lifelong relationship with Roberta began at this time I'd like to tell a couple of interesting things about how it began.

I'm a very conservative person. When I was made an officer during 1944 I had bought some very expensive clothes, uniforms, including some nice slacks and a couple of nice overcoats. When I came out of the service I decided to wear some of those clothes. I had the epaulettes taken off the winter coats so I could wear them as civilian clothes. I was wearing one of those coats when I came seeking board and room where I met Roberta. I thought she must have been very impressed with my appearance and with me. She has told me many times since that quite the opposite was true. She felt that I was very cold and conceited.

Well, Mrs. Meyers apparently didn't like Roberta's mother, and maybe not Roberta either. At any rate, she told me that Mrs. Carpenter spent a lot of time with gentlemen friends and that Roberta was a pretty fast girl. Well naturally I waited for Roberta to make a pass or two at me seeking a date. I waited and waited and waited. It never happened. Then in February I learned that the Nebekers and Mrs. Carpenter had bought a home out in Murray at 296 East 45th South, and that they would all be moving out there in April. Well, since Roberta hadn't asked me for a date, I figured if I was going to get to know that red headed girl I'd have to ask her for a date. So I did and we had a date or two before she moved away in April. I learned later that Roberta had become engaged and assumed she married. After they moved I became acquainted with Roberta's sister Leah and her husband Alfred Tuckey. We always called him "Tuckey". They lived in the apartment where Roberta, her mother, and brother Doug had lived. It was fortunate that I got to know Tuckey, as I'll explain later.



**Image 43. Leah and Alfred Tuckey. (000078)**

In the summer when school let out I went home to Brigham and had another very interesting part time job. My good friend Clint "Tough" Holmes had helped me get this job through a friend of his, Wynn Davis, who was the Uncle of Marian Davis with whom we had both gone to school in Box Elder. The job was to serve as an inspector of fruit and produce for the Utah Department of Agriculture. I was to have this job during the summers of 1947, 48 and 49, and enjoyed it very much. I surely am grateful to Tough for helping me get these two good jobs.

On a February weekend I went flying with my friend Clark Olsen and I became airsick. This was quite an embarrassing blow to the ego of a great World War II pilot.

My little brother Raymond was married in July to Kirma Snow in the Logan Temple. They held their wedding reception in the American Legion hall in Brigham City, and he asked me to be his best man. I'm amused to look at the pictures of that occasion and see that I was wearing a little goatee beard. I think I was trying to raise a beard for the 24th of July, which was a crazy custom in those days.

About July 24th I took a trip to California in the Plymouth, taking along my mother, and sisters Barbara and Shirley, to visit my mother's family, all of whom lived in California. One memorable event on the way down was our overnight stay in a cow pasture in Panguitch, Utah. We slept in a pasture overnight and in the morning we were a little bit chagrined to find that we slept in the midst of a bunch of cow pies. Fortunately, any that we slept on were dry. We had a pleasant visit in California, met with all of

Mom's brothers and sisters and families, and I renewed my acquaintance with Bob Koutnik and his sister Mary whom I had not seen since we were about six years old. I also had a good visit with my cousin Bud Schwarz who had obtained his private pilot license during the war. We flew together in a small airplane taking off from the airport in Montebello near where Uncle Norman lived. I don't think I enjoyed this flight much more than the one in February with Clark Olsen in Brigham City. So I haven't flown a small plane since that time.

In the four years since I graduated from high school I had become very inactive in the church especially in my feelings. My testimony had become very weak. I went to church occasionally when I was home in Brigham City. I wasn't committing any serious sins, but I was surely far from the church.

In the fall of 1947, the beginning of my third year of college, I looked for board and room and found it at a home, 212 South 13th East, a two story house owned by Mr. and Mrs. Harris. I lived there for the remaining two years of my time at the University.

In September I bought an accordion at Summerhayes Music Store, and began taking accordion lessons. My practicing wasn't very popular with the 8 or 10 other boys that lived in the Harris home, and so I practiced in the back seat of my car out in the garage.

During my second year I had registered for calculus, which was a three quarter class. I enjoyed it very much, and got good grades. I decided to major in mathematics. I didn't know exactly what I'd do with it for employment, but the "important thing" was that I could get A's in math. In my 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years at the University I was hired a few quarters as a teaching aid, teaching college algebra.



**Image 44. Front row (LtoR): Kirma, Yvonne, Norma, Gay, Judith, Merlin. Back row (LtoR): Raymond, Gordon Steele, Harold, Merlin Russell, Orville. (000070)**

As I look back on my behavior and my feelings of that time as well as I can remember, I'm astonished at how preoccupied with myself I was. My mother and dad were very unhappy in their marriage at this time, as they had been for many years. I'm astonished at how unaware I was of their unhappiness. I was also quite unaware of my



**Image 45. Merlin graduates from University of Utah in 1949. (000681)**

sister Shirley who was 12 years old at this time, and my sister Barbara who was 17. Barbara was a junior in high school at the same time I was a junior at the university.

My father was drinking quite a bit again at this time. My mother did my laundry for me all through my college years. I went home regularly on weekends, a couple times a month, took my dirty clothes home, and she did up my laundry, and I took it for granted. I hope I remembered to thank her, but I'm not sure I did.

I started dating a number of girls at this time. I hadn't dated very many until this time. I hadn't had any counseling on what was proper and what was improper and fell into a bad habit of necking and petting, if the girl would allow it. The girls seemed to think that was an okay thing to do on a date too, but it didn't really get out of hand. It was just improper and developed some incorrect attitudes about man/woman relationships.

I enjoyed my summer job as a fruit and produce inspector. It made me think of my dad's fruit farm that had been gone for six years. It made me really wish that he still had it. He must have deeply regretted the loss of his farm. It must have seriously affected his outlook on life, and no doubt contributed to his drinking problem.

A few weeks ago my sister Barbara reminded me of something we did together in that year. She didn't have a date for her junior prom so I asked her if she'd like to go with me. We had a good time and went to Peach City ice-cream parlor afterward.

I graduated from the University of Utah in June of 1949. I had taken a variety of classes in history, English, Spanish, science, and majored in mathematics, with a minor in English and another minor I believe in history. My plans for the future were very indefinite, however. I didn't know what to do with a math degree. But, the important thing, I guess, was that I had got good grades, got the A's in the classes, and I was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, honorary scholastic fraternity, and also Phi Kappa Phi, another such fraternity. Big Deal! I didn't know what to do after that.

## 1949 to 1950: TEACHING HIGH SCHOOL

During my last quarter at the university I had begun to date a girl named Mary Knolema. She was an immigrant from Holland. With her I continued that practice of necking and petting. She was looking for an American husband. I was told that later on by her older sister who had married an American whom she met during the war. Mary was a member of the church but not much more active in it than I was myself. I wasn't particularly happy in my association with her, but as I look back now I realize I was being trapped by my lust and her desire to trap an American husband.



**Image 46. Merlin with Mary Knolema.** (000678)

During the summer I worked as a produce and fruit inspector again, and about the time school started I became restless wondering what to do with myself. I went to a placement agency and looked into a possible teaching job. They had a number of openings in smaller towns. They had one in Weston, Idaho. I drove up and inquired about it, but it didn't seem to feel right. I went back to the agency and they had one in Blanding, Utah. I had never heard of Blanding, but it's located in San Juan County, about 350 miles southeast of Salt Lake City.

I wonder, looking back, if I was subconsciously looking for a job far away from Salt Lake City. At any rate, I accepted the job to teach in Blanding. My duties would be to teach English to students in grades 8 through 12, and to teach one class of plane geometry to high school in grades ten through twelve.

On September 7th I started the long trip to Blanding in my Plymouth. It was a memorable trip. It took me two days. I left home late in the day from Brigham City, spent the night in a motel in Murray, Utah. When I got to the hills just north of Monticello, I began climbing up that long grade; my car over heated and boiled all the water out of the radiator. Fortunately

there was a ranch house a mile or so away and I hiked over there and got some a bucket full of water to put in the radiator. Then I drove over to the ranch house and filled up. I was able to make it up the grade to Monticello which is at an elevation over 7000 feet and on over to Blanding which is about 50 miles south of Monticello.

I stayed that night in a motel in Blanding. The next day I went to the school, and reported to the principal who was LaRay Alexander, a nice fellow. I asked him and the other teachers, there were about six teachers in the school, if they knew of a place where I could find room and board in town. They referred me to the home of Mary and Ed Stevens. They had just built a new home that year, and had included in their plans a private bedroom with an outside entrance for Mary's father. But, before the house was finished her father died. So, the teachers thought that Mary would be happy to have a boarder.



**Image 47. San Juan High School in Blanding, Utah.**(000351)

I drove down to Mary's house and had a most interesting spiritual experience as I walked up to her front door. When she opened the door I felt that I knew her. I still feel that I knew her before that day. Mary was older than my father and mother by ten or fifteen years. She was not a pretty woman, large woman, had worked hard all of her life, not in very good health, had difficulty walking, didn't have good eyesight, but

she had a beautiful spirit. She welcomed me into her home and into her life.

It was in Blanding that I found the church again, not that day that I met Mary on her porch, but during the next nine months that I lived in her home. Ed was older than Mary and he was rather quiet, spent most of his time reading the newspaper, or reading

any other printed matter that came to his attention, but he was a pleasant fellow too. He had been a farmer all of his life. My experience in Blanding was wonderful. It didn't start out that way and it wasn't all wonderful, but it transformed my life, turned me around and sent me in the right direction.



**Image 48. Marv Stevens.** (000181)

Teaching was very difficult. I hadn't had any training. The English that I knew saw me through it because I had had some excellent instruction in English grammar and literature in all four grades of high school. None of the English that I had studied in college helped me much. It was those high school classes that saw me through the struggle to teach English myself in high school.

The main difficulty I had in teaching was discipline problems with students who didn't want to be in school and whose only function was to give the teacher a bad time. I didn't know how to handle it, became very discouraged, and

gradually decided during the year that I would not be a good high school teacher. That

may have been a poor judgement, however. My main problem during my months in Blanding was my unhappiness with myself.

During the Thanksgiving break I came back to Salt Lake and up to Brigham. In Salt Lake I dated Mary Knolema again and we became engaged with plans to get married in January, not in the temple however. Neither one of us was at all worthy or prepared to go to the temple. When I got back to Blanding and told Mary Stevens my plans, she broke her usual pattern of being cautious and listening and not giving advice, and made it plain to me that I was making a very serious mistake to be married anywhere but in the temple. She made it plain too that my example to the students in the school and the people in the town would be a very negative thing. It was a Mormon town and most of the people there were active members of the church. They knew that I was a member of the church and I would surely let them down. I was influenced by what she said, but mostly I was influenced by my own feelings. I was not happy to be engaged, and I was not happy at all with the prospect of being married to Mary Knolema.

During the Christmas break I went to Salt Lake again and home to Brigham. Mary Stevens rode up with me to visit some relatives and friends in Salt Lake City. Mary Knolema and I discussed our plans, made arrangements to have our announcement appear in the paper, and picked up the wedding reception invitations from the printer that had been printed up earlier. I took them with me back to Blanding planning to address them and mail them from there. I went to visit Raymond and Kirma who then were living in Salt Lake City on 200 East and 13th South. They knew that I was very unhappy. In fact, I remember that I cried while I visited with them.

It was very late on Sunday afternoon when I picked up Mary Stevens to start on our way back to Blanding. It was a seven or eight-hour drive in good weather from Salt Lake to Blanding and the weather was bad. Going over Soldiers Summit between Spanish Fork and Price, Utah we ran into deep snow on the highway. I had to get out and put chains on the car, the only time I have ever had to put chains on a car I was driving. When we got east of Price and down south of Moab, we ran into severe icing on the road. Conditions were so slick that we had to go very slowly with one wheel in the gravel off the road. We got home to Blanding about 3 o'clock Monday morning. It was hard to get up and be at school at 9 o'clock that same day.

I believe this was the lowest point in my whole life to date, these weeks in the fall and early winter of my time in Blanding. I was so unhappy with myself, so disappointed in myself. I knew I was on the wrong track. I talked with Mary quite openly and she counseled me to break the engagement, which is exactly what I wanted to do; so I did. I wrote a letter to Mary Knolema, and told her that I did not want to go through with the wedding plans. I threw the wedding invitations into the furnace, and began to repent. I started going to church. The people in Blanding were very kind, friendly, and understanding toward me. Most of the kids were that way. There were a few who gave me a hard time.

One of my regrets as a teacher was losing my temper one day in class. One of the sophomore boys had taunted me for weeks, and we had a confrontation. I wound up slapping his face right in class, very embarrassing to me and harmful to him. I regret it very much.

A very traumatic thing happened to my parents in Brigham City in November. My father's job with Brigham was an appointive job. It depended on the outcome of the

periodic elections in the city. On the evening, either before or after the election, my Dad and some of his employees, including some women, were having a drinking party or a celebration of some kind in the city shop. The husband of one of the women, who was also one of my Dad's employees, struck my father over the head with a shovel cutting his scalp open and injuring him very seriously. They took my Dad to the hospital. The next day, while he was in the hospital, without any consultation with him or discussion, the city council met and fired my father from his job. A few days later they regretted what they had done. I don't know whether they had found out that they were mistaken or just felt that they had been unduly hasty. I never knew many of the details about it, but the mayor came to my father and said, speaking for the council, that they deeply regretted what they had done, that they regarded him very highly and wanted him to take his job back. But that's something my father's pride would just not permit him to do, so he refused. My dad was born and raised in Brigham City and it was very precious to him, but during the next six months he and Mom made plans to sell the house and move out of Brigham.

1950 started as a different year for me. As I said, I started going to church. I continued to struggle with discipline problems in school. By the time school was out in May, I had had quite a change of heart where the gospel and the church are concerned. In May I paid my tithing for the first time in my life, paid a full tithing on my teacher's salary for that whole year. Right after school was out I went home for a visit with my folks who had in the mean time made plans to move to California. They moved on July the 5th to North Hollywood, California. So, that was the last time I visited my family in the old family home.

That spring of 1950 I had received a piece of mail from a company that sold a single volume encyclopedia called "The Volume Library". They sent this letter out to



**Image 49. Merlin enjoying an idle moment at training class to sell encyclopedias. (000350)**

many schoolteachers offering them a job selling this book during the summer. After visiting my folks I went to Albuquerque, New Mexico for a two-week training class in selling this encyclopedia. I went back to Blanding after the class was over and spent the next couple of months selling this encyclopedia to everyone I knew in Blanding. Then I went over to Monticello and tried selling it to people that I didn't know. I learned something else about myself; I'm not a very good salesman.

I was feeling much better about myself spiritually and decided that I'd like to have a patriarchal blessing. So, I met with Bishop Grant Bayles of the Blanding Ward. He issued me a recommend and I made an appointment with Brother Albert R Lyman. He was an old man at that time and a very prominent man in the community. I think he was a little baby at the time the Hole in the

Rock pioneers came into San Juan County, about 1878 or 80. He told me some things in that blessing that I am still trying to understand and figure out how to respond to them.

My school teaching experience had taught me that I didn't have the right disposition for handling the discipline problems that you encounter in the public schools. My selling experience in the summer had told me that I wasn't a salesman. So, again I was in the position of wondering what to do for an occupation. During the school year something had happened which gave me a lead. In Salt Lake City there was a business school known as Stevens Henager Business School that had been purchased by a man named Irvin W Stevens. He was a nephew of the Ed Stevens in whose home I lived in Blanding. At Henager they formed a basketball team from the students. They brought that team down to Blanding to play a game of basketball with an ad hoc team of men from the town, not the high school team, but a team of older men. IW Stevens visited his uncle Ed and Aunt Mary, and I visited with them. He talked with me about my plans. I told him of my uncertainty. He said, "Well why don't you come to Salt Lake City and come to Henagers. We'll make an accountant out of you." Well that sounded like a possibility. I knew that accounting makes use of mathematics. That's about all that I knew about it.

In the summer, after this selling job came to an end, I moved out of Mary's home and said goodbye for awhile and went to Brigham. There I visited with my brothers and sisters. I stayed a couple weeks with Orville and his family, slept in the basement, did a little painting on their house, and practiced my accordion; just about drove Gay crazy with my practicing. I don't think I was very good either at playing or practicing. At any rate, it was very disturbing to her. So, just in time I moved out and went over to visit with Yvonne and Gordon in Logan. They had just built a new home having moved to Logan in 1947. The yard was not yet landscaped. I remember digging a little bit of dirt, digging out a few weeds in their yard. That's about all I did for my keep while I visited with them.

When I left Yvonne's and Gordon's place I was on my way to California to visit my folks in North Hollywood. When I arrived there I discovered that Daddy had just left to go to Ogden to locate a place to move to. They had already decided to sell the apartment building after having owned it only for a month or two. My Dad had obtained a job at Hill Field and about November 1st they moved to Ogden.

One of my reasons for going to visit my folks was to look into the possibility of going to school at Woodbury Business College. I had obtained some literature about their school and had thought that my folks were going to be living in California. I looked around Los Angeles and became aware of all the temptation there was, particularly prostitution and pornography. I was afraid that I was not strong enough to resist that kind of an environment if I were to live there, especially as a single unmarried man. With my folks moving back to Ogden I decided to return to Salt Lake City and attend the Henager Business School as IW Stevens had invited me to do that spring.

I returned to Salt Lake and took board and room in a home on Wilson Avenue and 9th East, and started attending church at the Marlborough Ward. I wasn't too happy with the place I was living. I met a man at school named Lem Flores who invited me to move in with him where he was taking board and room. I decided to do so. I moved into a home owned by some Dutch people, the VanHoffs, at 958 East 1st South, where I lived during that school year.

I need to go back to 1947 and bring you up to date on the major moves in Roberta's life in the four years since I met her. Roberta became engaged about Christmas time when they moved to Murray in the spring of 1947. She didn't feel that



**Image 50. Judith and Merlin Larsen outside the apartment they owned in North Hollywood, CA (000001)**

she wanted to marry that man and broke the engagement in April. She went to California to live with her sister Bea and her husband Cliff Cash and stayed there for about 7 or 8 months, got a job that she really liked, and forgot about the man that she didn't want to marry. She returned to Murray about November. About that time I met Al Tucky, Leah's husband, on the street. He was driving a coal truck and we were stopped together at the same red light. He saw me, rolled down the window and shouted, "Hey, Merlin,

Bertie's back." Then the light changed to green and I was on my way to ask Roberta for another date.

I really liked her and didn't know that she didn't like me. So, we had a few more dates during that winter of 48 and 49, which was a winter of terrifically deep snow. I remember driving out to Murray on 45th South to pick her up for a date and parking my



**Image 51. Sister Roberta Carpenter at a street meeting on her mission to California with Elders White and Grigg. (000297)**

car right in the middle of the street because I didn't dare pull over to the curb. I didn't need to either because there wasn't much traffic on the road. So, during my senior year in college Roberta and I had a few dates. Then in the spring of 1949 she decided to get out of my life again by going on a mission, which she did, leaving in April to serve a mission in California. And while she was gone, as I related, I became engaged to a woman that I didn't want to marry, broke off the engagement.

So, now here in the fall of 1950 I'm attending Henager Business School and I've repented and decided that the church and the gospel are a good thing, and I can count 18 months from April of 1949 is October of 1950. About November 5th I called Roberta's home in Murray to see if she would like to have a date with me. She was very surprised to hear from me and not entirely disappointed because

she could tell by the way I talked that something had changed in my life. So she consented to go with me again. I don't remember where we went on our first date, but I've remembered the feeling that I had. When I returned to my room where I lived with Lem Flores in the VanHoff home, I told him, "Lem (his name was Lemuel), Lem I was out tonight with a girl that I want to marry." He immediately said, "What do you want to do that for?" Well, Lem was at that time involved in getting a divorce, or being divorced by his wife who had abandoned him, and he couldn't see why anyone would want to get into that situation. But, I really felt for the first time in my life that I would like to be married, and Roberta was the one I wanted to be married to. Incidentally, I had gone back to the Hotel Utah garage and asked for my old job back while I attended Henager. They very kindly hired me. So, I was back in the school-going, car-parking mode.

Roberta says that she had hardly had a date until she was about 20 years old, which was about the time that I met her in 1946. But now after returning from her mission she was a very beautiful and popular girl. She was having dates with about six different men, each one on a different night of the week. My night with her was Friday. We started going out just about every week, and it was the high point of my week. Other than that it was just school, study, work, and church.

## 1951: MARRIAGE

I was going to church regularly and enjoying it, feeling good about myself now. I decided to ask Roberta to marry me and she accepted and we made plans to be married in May. I was thrilled that she would agree to marry me. We were married on May 11, 1951 in the Salt Lake Temple, about 10:30 PM at night. We set up housekeeping in the upstairs apartment at 563 East 3rd South, the house where we had met over four years before. Roberta was then working at Zellerbach Paper Company, which she continued to do, and I continued my schedule of school and parking cars until September 1951.



Image 52. Merlin and Roberta around 1951. (000182)

I ought to enter into the record here some fun comments Roberta has made about the “weird” family she married into. On the night that we were married we waited in the temple until 10:30 for some member of her family or my family to show up who wanted to be present when we were sealed. Then we went down to Raymond’s and Kirma’s upstairs apartment on 2nd East and 13th South where she met other members of my family. I don’t know whether everyone was there or not. I believe they were. No one had prepared so much as a glass of punch or a cookie to celebrate our wedding. We just stood around and talked. There weren’t enough chairs to sit on. We talked until about midnight and everyone went home. We got to bed late. All of our belongings were in pasteboard boxes. We looked for our

nightclothes and bedding, and got to bed about 1:30 AM.

At 7 o’clock the next morning there was a knock on our door, and there stood my Grandma and Grandpa Nelson who had come in from California to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. They had been married just 50 years before in the Salt Lake Temple. I don’t know how they found out where we lived, but there they were. Yvonne and Gordon prepared a very nice luncheon at their home in Logan for the whole family to honor Grandma and Grandpa.

The next morning, which was Sunday morning, we were awakened early again by someone knocking on our door. There stood my mother and father. I don’t know why

they had come down so early, maybe because they were afraid they'd miss us if we went to church, but there they were. They had come down to visit us. I think Daddy was not with us Friday night, but there they were to congratulate us on our wedding, and Roberta really wondered what kind of a family she had married, a strange one, she was sure of that.

We didn't have a honeymoon when we got married. We didn't have a wedding reception or even a wedding party. I don't think Roberta even had a shower given to her, but I may be mistaken about that. During that first year we hardly had money for an ice cream cone or a hamburger. But in August, we felt that we ought to go on a little trip and call it a honeymoon. So we went to Yellowstone Park in the Plymouth. We borrowed my Dad's double sleeping bag; bought a used Coleman stove and took off with a few dollars in our pocket. The first night we spent in Willowmere Park in Box Elder Canyon, just below Mantua. We slept out on the grass and the mosquitoes nearly ate us alive. The stove never worked - wouldn't hold pressure in its tank.

The next night we were in West Yellowstone, it was raining and we didn't have a tent. That night we learned that we couldn't sleep together in that single sleeping bag sitting up in the back of the car, even though it was a big one. We couldn't sleep on the ground. In fact, it rained the whole week we were in Yellowstone. Every night it rained and we slept in the car, but not together in the sleeping bag. We took turns in the sleeping bag and the other slept with blankets in the other seat. One night after we had left the park and we were in Jackson Hole near Jenny's Lake, we slept out on a picnic table in the double sleeping bag. It was a little bit easier on the table than it was in the back seat of the car. Well, can you imagine Roberta going all week without a bath, and me without a bath, and Roberta without any way to take care of her hair, cosmetics, or makeup? But, we did it. Now, I guess we didn't look so strange among the crowds of people then because people were much less sophisticated, lived a simpler life than we do now when we have to have everything just so.

We arrived home with just 50 cents in our pocket. We had given our last five dollars to a little man that we picked up near the Wyoming border and gave him a ride to Salt Lake City. That's another change in our society. We would hardly dare do that today.

People that keep journals say that one of the benefits of that is to learn a lot about yourself as you grow. Well, I'm having that same benefit now as I look back through the years and try to remember my life, the things I've learned, and how I learned them. I don't mean things in school. I mean lessons of life. We're both surprised looking back to see ourselves going to the supermarket on Sunday, two days after we were married in the temple, shopping to stock our cupboards in our apartment. We didn't have a lot of money so we didn't do a lot of shopping, but the idea was the same.

We decided during that summer that we didn't want to shop on Sunday, and haven't done it since. But, we had to learn. We've learned a lot of things through the years, mostly by making mistakes and recognizing them. We attended church in the Salt Lake West 12th Ward. They gave us a joint calling teaching a Sunday School class of 8 year olds. Roberta did the teaching. I sat with the kids maintaining order, doing nothing really. I wasn't much help to Roberta and was asked to be one of the counselors in the Sunday School Superintendency.

We enjoyed our Sunday afternoons very much that first year. We read aloud to each other the book "Jesus the Christ". This was a tremendous spiritual experience for me as I was nourishing my sick spirit back to health. I enjoyed it a lot.

I also learned something about myself and about Roberta with a little black budget book. I started out with the notion that we needed to account for every penny, not only account for, but also record how we spent almost every cent. This annoyed Roberta terribly. She didn't say much about it. That's her way even today. She will put up with a lot without complaining. She never did complain about that budget book. She just waited for me to see the light and get rid of it. Well, I got very tired of it and after a few months threw it away. We lived happily ever after on what we thought was a very slim budget. We've learned since that we were very rich and prosperous then and ever since then compared with most of the people in the world.

In September 1951 in that first year of our marriage with a year of accounting study under my belt, I felt qualified to take a job in accounting. I got a job as office and credit manager working for Glen Mickleson who owned a business, Utility Trailer Sales and Equipment Company. It was located at 551 South 1st West, which is really 200 West. It's the place where the west entrance to the Quality Inn is located today.

I continued to take classes at night school. I had an excellent accounting teacher named Ray Closson. I credit him with teaching me all I ever knew about accounting. Mr. Stevens asked me if I would like to be one of his teachers, feeling that my AB Degree and experience qualified me. I began by teaching prerequisite classes. IW Stevens, and his family were very good to their employees, including me. They had four sons all of whom worked with him in the business. They first studied accounting there themselves and then they served as part of the staff.

Our first Christmas together was memorable. Roberta was able to buy Christmas ornaments where she worked at Zellerbach. We still have the ornaments that she bought then, four or five boxes full of them, and a lighted Christmas tree stand. Our first Christmas tree stood in the room upstairs until Washington's Birthday. It was a pinion pine and our front room was quite cool, so that tree remained fresh and beautiful and exciting for two and a half months. It was all right because our window was high up and nobody could see it from the street and we didn't have much company.

That first Christmas, Roberta and I did something which we have repeated every Christmas since then in one way or another, which has given us a great deal of private pleasure. We prepared a box of canned goods and goodies and put them on the back porch of a couple that we knew needed it and would appreciate it without anyone knowing that we had done it. It has been our secret every Christmas ever since, not always a box of goodies, usually some money that the people could spend as they needed it.

At Utility Trailers I met a man who was to be a good friend for some years to come. His name was Forrest E Bair, and we called him Bus Bair. He was the shop foreman. He had known my dad for years. He had worked for WS Hatch Company in Woods Cross who sold petroleum products including the kind of oil they use for making roads. He had supplied that road oil to my father for building roads in Brigham City.

## 1952: MOVE TO MILLER STREET; DOUG IS BORN

During the summer we learned that the apartment was extremely hot. We suffered through the summer, but as we approached the spring of 1952 we knew that we didn't want to spend it in that apartment. So we inquired of Kay and Don Nebeker and Roberta's mother whether they knew of a house we could rent near them. Well, they knew of such a home and it happened to be for sale also. So, we went out and looked at the house at 59 East Miller Street in Murray. We liked it and we liked the price of it. It sounded like something that we could afford to buy. Well, we didn't look very far ahead. It wasn't a very elegant home. It was a very old home, and it needed a lot of work. It had been built about 1900. We talked with the people who owned it who were James and Lucy Stacey. They lived up on State Street just north of 33rd South on Granite Avenue. We arranged to buy the house for \$9,500. They wanted a thousand dollars down and would charge us 5.5% interest. We didn't have a thousand dollars or even a hundred, so Roberta borrowed \$500 from her credit union at work, and we borrowed \$500 on my National Service Life insurance policy. We were a long time paying that \$500 back to Roberta's credit union. We never did pay the \$500 back to the life insurance policy. In fact, a few years later we let the policy lapse, which is another story.



**Image 53. Picture of the 59 East Miller Street home from a Realtor's book about 1931 (000032)**

I must put in here another very traumatic thing in the life of my mother and father and of all of us. In March my Dad asked for all the brothers and sisters to meet in our apartment. I don't know why they met there, never did know why, but we all met together. Roberta probably went to her mother's place while we met. My Dad announced that he was going to divorce my mother. That was a real thunderbolt to all of us, especially my mother, but he was

determined, and when my father made up his mind there was no changing it. There was to be a six-month waiting period with the divorce to be final in September.

My Dad moved out of the home they had bought in Clearfield, and rented a room in Ogden. I don't recall where it was. My mother was 50 years old and had never worked outside of her own home. She had to go out into the job market and find a job to support herself and Shirley, my youngest sister, who was just 16 years old. Roberta was pregnant at this time with Douglas, but she didn't say much about it although "morning sickness" was a terrible agony for her. I was hardly aware of it. That's been her way all our life together. She's never complained. She keeps her aches and pains to herself.

That was a very memorable spring. We had had a heavy snowfall during the winter, and the snow melted rapidly in the spring. It caused very bad flooding in Salt Lake City, especially around the area of 13th South where there is a big storm sewer under the street. There was a river about four to six feet deep flowing down 13th South between sand bag banks.

We were happy to move into the Murray 8th Ward, which had just been formed by a split of the Murray 3rd Ward a month before. They were in the process of building a new ward house and we were to be involved right in the middle of it. Roberta went to work I believe right away in the Relief Society.

I was asked to be the Deacon quorum advisor in the ward. That changed my life a little bit too. We went on an outing to Saratoga Springs down on Utah Lake. This gang of deacons felt it their obligation to try to drown me. They climbed up on me and started pulling my head and neck in different directions. They pulled my neck out of joint. The next morning my head was lying down on my shoulder and I couldn't move it. I went to a good chiropractor named William Seare who straightened me out in a few adjustments and told me that I would be aware of my neck for the rest of my life, that whenever I lean my head forward too long a time my neck would bother me. He was a prophet. I've done deskwork all my life and there's hardly a day that I haven't felt the weight of my head on my injured neck. But it remains functional and it's no great problem.

A study group formed in the ward and they included us, although we were new comers in the ward. There were five other couples besides us, Grant and Lois Hodgkinson, Leo and Betty Murray, Jack and Helen Barrett, Wendell and Carol Murray, and Don and Kay Nebeker. We met together, it seems like every week, for about five years. It may have been less often than weekly. We had a lot of fun. We did more visiting than studying, I believe, which was good for us. We're not great visitors, either one of us.

Bishop Murray, who had two brothers in this study group, suggested that each couple pay \$300 on the building fund. We didn't have the money, so we went to the bank and borrowed it. We repaid it at ten dollars a month for three years. The banker thought we were very foolish. Perhaps we were. The church has never encouraged people to borrow money to make donations. The church itself has avoided borrowing and we don't believe in borrowing except for necessities such as a home and perhaps a car. But we felt good about making that extra contribution. We managed to pay the money. Another good that came out of it was that it taught us how long it takes to pay back money that you can borrow in five minutes.

Our first child was born on October 9th, Merlin Douglas Larsen. Roberta gave



**Image 54. Merlin Douglas Larsen at 4 months, 10 Feb 1953. (000324)**

birth at home and was attended by Doctor Loretta Foote. That was a memorable day in another way. I picked three bushels of tomatoes in the garden that day in October. We shared them with Doctor Foote and her friend and with other people. Doctor Foote was a very interesting person. She was about the age of Roberta's mother and had spent most of her young adult years down in Emery County. She was a licensed doctor. She hadn't attended medical school, but had practiced as a midwife, had an MD

license. For years she was about the only medical person in that territory. She delivered babies until she was very old and feeble. She delivered all of our four children and all of Kay and Don Nebeker's children, among about 1500 total. She says that she never lost a full term baby and never lost a mother in any of her deliveries. She was very skillful and Roberta had a good delivery. Doctor Foote kept Roberta in bed for 9 days, and she felt very good. She was very anxious to get up I'm sure, when that nine days was over.

To give our children and grand children something to compare with, I'll state here that Doctor Foote charged us fifty dollars for delivering the baby, but we paid her one hundred. That's somewhat less than the thousands of dollars it costs today to have a baby.

Some years before we bought the house it had been divided into two apartments. We were living on the east side. With some redecorating and the purchase of an apartment size gas range, we prepared the west apartment for renting. Our first renters were Joyce and Eddy Loyal. Joyce was the daughter of Byron Gleason who was in our bishopric at that time. We continued to rent that apartment until 1957 having about five or six different renters in those five years. It added some interest to our life and probably we came out a little ahead financially, although we paid the water, and the power, and the gas bills for that apartment. I don't remember how much we charged for it either, probably in the range of \$60, including those utilities.

In December of 1952 we arranged to buy from James and Lucy Stacy the empty building lot to the east of our home, between our home and the home of Chil and Ruth Miller. We paid \$1200 for that lot and it was a very wise move. It gave us more privacy and a buffer between us and State Street and the business that was encroaching there. The automobile dealership Zion Motor eventually acquired all of the property east of us over the coming years, and we did have that buffer between them and us. It doubled the size of our property and made it possibly attractive for business purposes, and as we'll see in 1978, that opportunity came to sell our property to the Wilkinsons who owned Zion Motor.

I had been working for Glen Mickleson, "Mick" we called him, at Utility Trailers, for over a year and I felt that I had done a good job and should have at least a small raise. Mick refused to do that so I decided to look for another job.

## 1953

I believe that in the mind of every young person who studies accounting is the idea of becoming a CPA. To do that in Utah it's necessary to serve an apprenticeship for a couple of years in the office of CPAs. So in January I started to work for a CPA firm called Goddard, Sunnyville and Griffin as an auditor's assistant. I discovered that I didn't like auditing very much, but I enjoyed traveling to some different assignments with a man named Merrill Ellis who later became one of the partners in the firm. We audited half a dozen different businesses together. My work was very routine and very boring and quite pointless as I saw it. The most interesting assignment was to audit the books of the Producers Livestock Marketing Association. They had cattle feeding yards and cattle brokerage offices in a number of western cities, and we traveled to perform audits in those offices. There were offices in Denver; El Centro, CA, which is in the area of the Imperial Valley; Los Angeles; Billings, Montana; Phoenix AZ; and in Salt Lake.

The job didn't last very long. In March I was bumped out of my job by a returning serviceman who had the job before me. The law at that time required that a returning serviceman could claim his old job. This was during the Korean War. I took another job the first of April working for the Utah State Tax Commission as a sales tax auditor. Although the accounting aspects and the auditing itself were more interesting than they had been with the CPAs, there was an aspect about it that I disliked very much. The purpose of the sales tax audit, from the state's point of view is to discover deficiencies in the remittance of sales tax, to discover, if possible, some error in accounting that would indicate that the business owes the state more sales tax. I didn't like putting the pressure on people, or putting the "boo" on them, and charging them with owing the state hundreds of dollars more sales tax after they had already gone to effort and expense to collect and remit the tax at no expense to the state. So I really didn't enjoy the job very much, and worked at it only until the end of August.



**Image 55. Irrigation spigot for garden.**

All this time I was still in touch with Henager Business School because I was still attending night school Monday and Thursday of each week. Mr. Stevens talked with me and expressed confidence that I could do a good job as a teacher in his school. I did have a BA degree and had taught school in Blanding and briefly at the University and had a real aptitude for accounting and its associated subjects, English and mathematics. He offered me a job to be a full time teacher in both day school and night school beginning about the first of September. This was an opportunity to earn quite a bit more money. There were certain things about teaching school that I had enjoyed in Blanding, and I thought that the main disadvantage of teaching, the discipline problems with unwilling indifferent students, would not be a factor in a business school where students were paying their tuition, so I accepted the job. It turned out to be a very time consuming job, requiring

really long hours of preparation for both night and day school classes.

The summer of 1953 we began what was to be a very long project of remodeling the old house and making some changes in the yard. Especially things that we could do with our own labor and a minimum of cash outlay. First I removed a wall between our little kitchen and the smaller back porch to enlarge the kitchen. Outside I installed an irrigation system for the garden with a pump to draw water out of the irrigation ditch in the back of our yard in which we bought half a dozen shares to entitle us to the water. We tore down an old chicken coop that was in the space that we wanted for a garden. We gave the material to a neighbor, Howard Goodwin. I cut down four large black elm trees, three in the front by the sidewalk and one by the corner of the garage. I did that work with a handsaw, and removed the stumps with a pick, a shovel, and an ax. I had a lot of energy in those days. I did this in spite of the busy job at school. Also, I built a new gravel driveway by removing the topsoil and having it replaced with crushed roadbed gravel.

I apparently had quite a constant habit of grumbling to Roberta about things that we didn't have, things we were going without. It annoyed her. She took it in silence, but her response was very surprising to me. In November she informed me that she had applied for her old job back at Zellerbach Paper Company and had arranged with her sister Kay to tend Doug who was just a year old. I stormed and complained about what she had done without discussing it with me, and definitely against my wishes. She knew how I felt about her being at home and raising the children as a full time mother. But she just very calmly said she was tired of hearing me complain about the things we didn't have. She was going to work to make a little extra money that we could use to buy the



**Image 56. Merlin Larsen and Artie Bronson in front of new Murray 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Ward building. (000331)**

things that I thought were so important. She did say that she planned to work for just one year. So, that gave me hope and I decided I'd better shut my mouth and take my punishment. I had learned my wife had her limits and that I had gone too far with my griping. I learned she had the legendary English stubborn bulldog disposition when crowded into the corner.

It was November 1953 that Roberta gave her ultimatum. In April of that year I was called to be the second counselor in the bishopric of the Murray 8th Ward. In the fall the members of the 3rd ward and the 8th ward building the new church were alerted that the building would be completed in November, but

could not be dedicated until it was fully paid for. Another drive was launched to raise more money and many others and we were asked to give another \$300 to the building fund. We didn't have to borrow it this time. We were always willing and happy to contribute to the church, pay our tithing and offerings, and have always been blessed for it. We've never missed the money that we donated to the church. We always figured that we were just giving back a token portion of what the Lord had blessed us with.

I should mention here a factor in our married life that has been constant since the day we were married. We always gave some money each month to Roberta's mother to assist her with her living. She owned half interest in the home that she shared with Kay and Don Nebeker, but she didn't have much cash and needed a little. We always gave her some money each month, and we did that until her death in 1974.

## 1954

In the year of 1954 I continued my teaching job at Henager Business School until June. JC Penny Company had established a western accounting division office in Salt Lake City. I was asked by Mr. Stevens to go the manager of the office and acquaint them with the student employment placement service of the school, feeling sure that we could supply skilled accounting and secretarial employees for them. I was surprised to learn that one of the managers was a man named Jack Jennings whom I had known in the Air Corps. He was from New York City and we talked about old times and the present, and he invited me to apply for a job with JC Penny Accounting Division. He made it sound very interesting and a real improvement in my income. The wages would have been considerably more for an 8 hour day than I was making with Henager for many more hours than 40 a week. I applied and they hired me as the supervisor of one of its accounting departments in that big office. I started work for them in June. I was quite content there and heard of many opportunities for advancement with JC Penny. I was looking forward to a long time of employment with them.

Then, in October 1954, I was very surprised when Glen Mickelson invited me to come back to work for him. He made some very attractive (verbal) promises of salary, bonuses, and other benefits. Well, I liked the trailer business, associating with the big highway trailers and big trucks. It was an exciting business. I accepted the offer and began to work for him about the first of November.

When I'd been on the job for a little while I had contact with the Utility Trailer Manufacturing Company in Los Angeles and learned that they had urged Mick to hire me back because they had liked the job I had done before in reporting to them, and looking out for their financial interests which were sometimes "overlooked" in Mick's fast dealing ways. I think this made me rather overbearing and pompous at work. I look back and I see that I felt a lot more important than I was.

The summer of 1954 we sold the 1941 Plymouth for \$50 and bought a 1941 Ford. It was a gray sedan and we paid \$250 for it. In September of that year a couple moved into our ward who had emigrated from Holland, Huibert and Elizabeth Wholer. They became life long friends of ours. They had a son Eddie who was about 8 years old, and later on they had a daughter who was a year older than our son John. Their story was interwoven with ours for all the years to come to the present time. They were very faithful members of the church and were very poor. Huibert was a piano teacher, an excellent player, and also a tuner. He worked very hard, but never made much money. They were always very grateful for the things they had, and for the privilege of living in America, and of being members of the church.

We were able to buy a few things during 1954 with the money that Roberta earned. We bought a gray and chrome kitchen set and a green hide-a-bed for the front room, a Philco radio and record player, and of course the 1941 Ford. For Christmas that year Santa Claus brought to Doug a beautiful tricycle, which was to be in the family until the present time. All of our children rode on it. I rode on it with a child. Doug's children have all ridden on it and it's still going.



**Image 57. Tricycle in use: Doug (000094) , Doug and John (000389), John (000683), Mark (000407), and Lori (000424)**

We were able to do a little more remodeling. We installed a bathtub in the east bathroom, and in the process discovered that the bathroom and our kitchen had previously been a screened porch. We built a fence around the back lawn for an enclosed play yard for Doug, and shared cost with Chil and Ruth Miller for a chain link fence between our properties.

We were raising a good crop of very tall weeds in the vacant lot we had acquired and Chill Miller was quite unhappy with our weed forest. So one day he pulled all the weeds that were next to his yard and just left them in a pile. I was quite offended at him, at his presumption. Roberta told him that if he'd do some of my church work I'd have

more time for yard work. I don't suppose Chill appreciated that advice, but we were always good neighbors on good terms with the Millers. Maybe they had just forgotten how it was to be young and just starting a family, being so busy with everything.

When my mother and father were divorced in 1952 my mother had found a job at the Ogden arsenal, the United States Government installation next to Hill Field, and had worked there not much over a year. The Korean War ended and the government cut back on employment at the arsenal. My mother lost her job in April. She then sold her house in Clearfield and moved into an apartment in Salt Lake City, feeling that she could find employment better in Salt Lake. This began a series of moves that my mother made from one apartment to another. During the next eleven years she moved at least a dozen times, and I wound up doing most of the moving. I generally had some help from friends in the ward and also from Bob Baldauf after he and Barbara came to Salt Lake in 1958.

My mother moved three times between April and November 1954. This was very disturbing to Shirley who had just graduated from high school that spring. While living in Clearfield Shirley had met Hilton Mose who was stationed at the Clearfield Naval Supply Depot. Hilton and Shirley were attracted to each other. Shirley became quite disenchanted with the constant moving about, and for her own good reasons she decided to go to Texas to see what her prospects might be there. She went down in November and she and Hilton were married that fall. This was very disturbing to my mother. All of these traumatic events in my mother's life the last couple years made her quite unstable emotionally.

My mother obtained employment in drapery work. She worked for a while for Auerbachs and also for South East Furniture, but she somehow had the idea that moving to a different apartment would make her happier. So, she moved frequently. With each move she became more and more upset and discontented.

Our remodeling project was progressing. I had taken a look into the attic through a trap door in the ceiling of the hallway and saw the possibilities of building a large upstairs bedroom area. So, this fall I began to build a stairway. This involved cutting a big hole in the ceiling, which opened up our front room to the attic. I sealed it off with a sheet of plasterboard, which could be slid in and out of place, but it made our house very cold. Roberta studied her Relief Society lessons, prepared her lessons, sitting on the stairs near the ceiling to keep warm. Our whole apartment was heated with just one space heater that stood in the corner of the dining room. People who came into our home were convinced that we were crazy and didn't know what we were doing. We knew we did, however, but it took some years to be justified in what we were doing. For a while everything we did made it look worse.

Our water heater failed in the fall of 1954. It was located in a cellar area beneath our bedroom. Access to it was through a trap door in our kitchen floor. I installed a new heater and finished the job late in the evening and we went to bed. I would normally go to sleep in just a few minutes in those years. I was always tired physically. But, that night something, either my guardian angel or the Holy Ghost, kept me awake and I tossed around fitfully for an hour or so, unable to go to sleep. I was prompted to go down in the cellar and check that water heater. I did so and I found the water heater literally jumping around. It was so hot. It had never shut off since I lit the flame after installing it. I shut off the gas, rushed upstairs and woke Roberta and we hurriedly opened all the hot water faucets in the house, and the steam filled the house from the ceiling halfway down to the

floor. The next day we had Mountain Fuel Supply send a man out to check it. He discovered that I had failed to replace a spring in the automatic shutoff valve. That water heater was located directly under Doug's crib. If it had exploded it would probably have shot up through the floor like a rocket and would surely have killed or injured perhaps all three of us. We were surely spared a serious tragedy at that time. I've always felt that it was the inspiration of the Holy Ghost that saved us.

## **1955**

During 1955 I worked for Utility Trailers and I also had a part time job teaching night school for Henager Business School. In the spring Bishop Fenton Murray moved out of the ward, which resulted in the releasing of the Bishopric. Byron Gleason became the bishop. His counselors were Dale Ahlberg and Grant Hodgkinson. Leo Murray, Bishop Murray's brother, was made the ward clerk and I was called to be the assistant clerk for finances.

Roberta was teaching the Spiritual Living lesson in Relief Society, which she would do for the next six years. Following that she taught the Cultural Refinement lessons for 12 years. She has often commented since what a hard thing it was for her to prepare her monthly lessons. She would literally spend days every month preparing that lesson. It never became any easier, but she always did an excellent job of it. No one realized the labor and anxiety that she put into her lessons.

We took a little trip that summer down to Blanding to visit with Mary Stevens. Her husband had died a couple of years before. So she was alone. Her main interest was her daughter Elaine and her family who were living in Provo at that time. So, she made frequent trips up to see them.

## 1956: John is Born

In 1956 we continued our remodeling working on the upstairs. The whole house had been on one single circuit of number 14 wire. It was a wonder that it had not burned down. I divided the rooms into four circuits and installed a load center. I did the work myself, getting some guidance as well as materials from Brinton Electric which was just across the street from us up on State Street. We had a forced air furnace installed by Rick's Furnace Company. It cost about 600 dollars.



**Image 58. Doug Larsen with new brother John at 6 months. (000322)**

Our second son John Robert was born on March 24, 1956. Doctor Foote delivered him at home. His umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck and he was a blue baby, but she saved the day and prevented any serious damage to John. He was born about 8 AM and Roberta's mother and sister Kay came to our aid and were a very great help at this time and at the births of all of our four children.

We agreed to be sponsors for a brother of Huibert Wholer and his family who wanted to immigrate to America. They arrived in August 1956, and I was able to help John Wholer obtain a job working in the shop for Utility Trailers. John was quite interested in the gospel and had been active in Holland, but his wife, Koby, was much less interested, and because of her influence, I feel, the family drifted away from the church during the next few years.

## 1957

In 1957 I was called to be assistant stake clerk for finance. My duties included auditing ward records. This was done in the meetinghouse offices for several of the wards, but in a couple of the wards the clerks did the work in their own homes. It was an interesting aspect of auditing, but coupled with my office work all day I quickly tired of it.

Around the end of June 1957 I changed jobs. Glen Mickelson had not kept the verbal promises he made to me when he hired me in 1954, and I couldn't see any future staying with him. I took a job with a new business called Transport Equipment Center, in the same industry of over the road trucks and trailers. Nick Galanis and his sons John and Robert owned it. It was located in the same building where I had first worked for Utility Trailers, 551 South 1st West, which was really 200 West. Nick had owned the building for years.

I taught Huibert Wholer to drive. He had never driven a car before. He obtained his license and then we gave him the 1941 Ford.

We bought a 1952 Pontiac just at the time I changed jobs, and we took our first vacation. Kay took care of our kids Doug and John, and we went on a trip to Cortez, Colorado to visit Barbara and Bob Baldauf. From there we went to the Grand Canyon, Zion Canyon, Hoover Day, and Bryce Canyon.

With our family growing and our financial affairs improving a little bit, we decided to discontinue renting the apartment and take over the whole house for our family's use. That involved some changes that would be quite messy so Roberta and Kay took all of her children and our children out to Vernal for a couple of weeks to visit with Teddy, their oldest sister, and husband Ralph Walker. They stayed there while I changed the front room. It involved removing the wall between the front room and the dining room and reinforcing the ceiling so it wouldn't fall down. This old house was built with 10-foot ceilings. The ceilings in the front room and dining room had been lowered to 8-feet. Between the two ceilings where I removed the wall I built a truss to support the 8-foot ceiling, which had been supported by the wall, and the old 10-foot ceiling on which the new floor upstairs would rest.

I removed the front entry foyer, which had been built in the corner of our front room to accommodate the apartment, and changed the entry so that it went into the hallway near the bathroom rather than going into the bedroom. I removed a closet that was in the corner of our front room and rebuilt the floor in that corner where our Christmas tree later always stood.

When Roberta and the kids returned after that messy first phase we redecorated our front room. We painted the woodwork gray, put a harlequin design vinyl linoleum in the dining room, which was then the north half of our front room, and put some nice wallpaper on the walls. It had a pretty design. It was colorful and the design was a scene in a Chinese garden.



**Image 59. John Larsen crawling on harlequin linoleum. Notice the Chinese garden wallpaper in background. (000090)**

This was about the first thing that we had done in our home that made it look better rather than worse. Our friends and neighbors commented, “Oh you really did know what you were doing didn’t you.” We were finally justified for all of our messy project of the last five years.

My mother was becoming continually more nervous and

emotionally unstable. We bought a gray carpet from her that she wasn’t using and put it on our bedroom floor. I don’t know what her price was, maybe \$100, but we paid her ten dollars a month and we decided to continue to pay her every month, which we have done every month to the time of her death, gradually increasing the amount as her need increased.

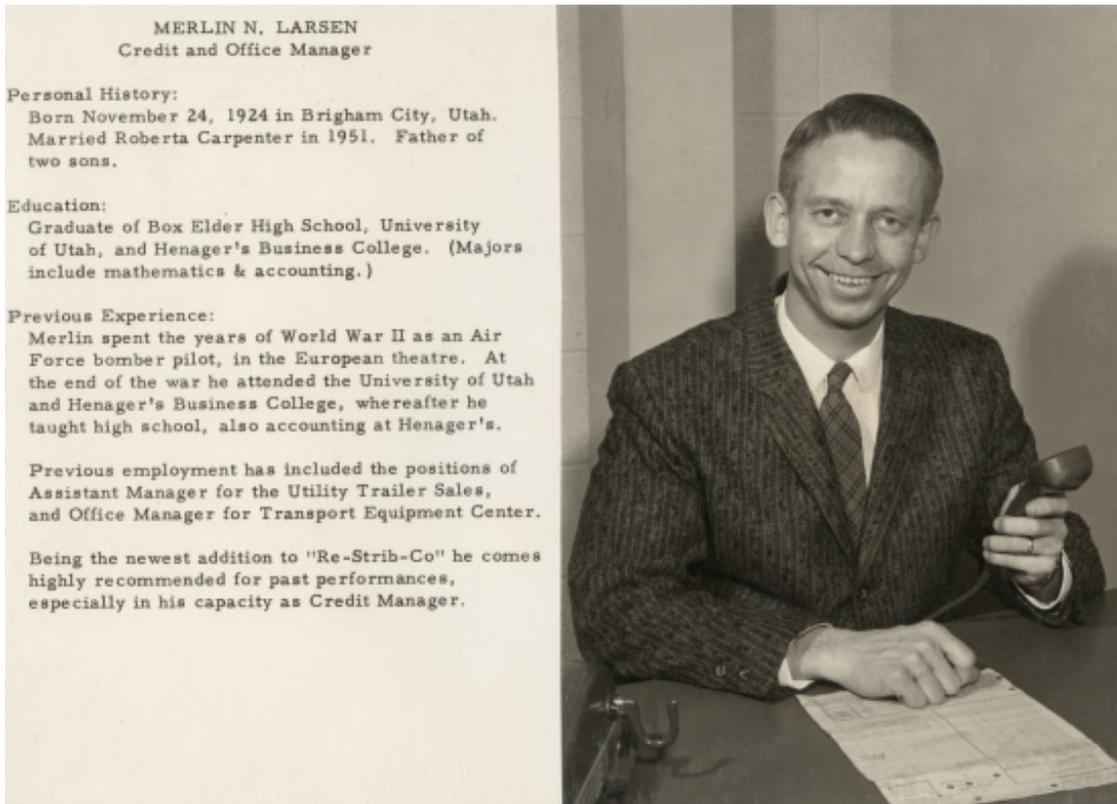


**Image 60. Roberta Larsen in front of flower garden planted on empty lot next to Miller St. home. (000105)**

In our yard we made a little improvement that pleased the Millers. We planted lawn on the front part of our vacant lot, to the east of us. Then we had a flower garden strip north of the grass clear across the yard. It made our place and Millers’ place look much better. They were pleased.

## 1958

The company I was working for was not very stable, not very well managed. The Galanis boys didn't have very good money sense and I could see that the business was not going to succeed so I began to look for another job again, and as it turns out, for the last time. On April 10, 1958, I began to work for Refrigeration Distributors Corporation. It had the nickname of Restribco. Ted R Brown and his brother Warren B Brown owned it. The business was a wholesaler in the air conditioning, refrigeration, and heating industry. It had associated companies in Boise Idaho and in Denver. I continued to work with that company until February 28th, 1986.



**Image 61. Merlin Larsen biography sheet from Re-Strib-Co shortly after he started working for the company. (000193)**

My mother had a nervous breakdown in the spring of 1958. She came to live with us from March to September. She received some help from a psychiatrist, Doctor Mench, who administered to her a series of electric shock treatments during May, June and July. Roberta took her to the clinic twice a week and I took her on Saturdays. Roberta was pregnant with Mark at this time and she was very sick, and this was a very hard time for her. The treatments helped my mom stabilizing her emotions. When she was well enough in September she went to live for about 18 months with her mother in California. I've always felt a duty and a tenderness toward my mother and a desire to help her, to look out for her.



**Image 62. Merlin Russell Larsen and his second wife Ethel visiting at the home of Merlin and Roberta Larsen (000179)**



**Image 63. Roberta at piano purchased from Huibert Wholer with John and Doug on Christmas day. (000162)**

This reminds me of some friction that I had with my dad at the time of their divorce or a year after it. My dad remarried in 1953 to a woman named Ethel Morby Blomquist. She was from Morgan, a widow who met my father through his work at Hill Air force Base. My sister Shirley was still a minor child age 16 when my folks were divorced. For the next two years my father paid child support to my mother and felt that that entitled him to take Shirley as an exemption on his tax return. But I felt that my mother should have the exemption since she supplied the greater part of Shirley's maintenance and support, so I encouraged her to take the exemption on her tax return. Well, the IRS challenged this and my father was not permitted to claim the exemption. I have always felt this produced a division between my Dad and me, and that he always resented me for it.

In 1958 we bought a refinished piano from Huibert Wholer, which he had remodeled nicely. We bought it partly to help him, but we still have the piano. It's an excellent piano, has an unusually good harp in it, a good tone, although it has seldom been tuned.

Doug began school in 58 in kindergarten. He had a young inexperienced teacher. About all she taught the kids was how to play in school and have fun. This poor start

plus some less than ideal teachers in his next couple of years gave him a bad start in school.

My job with Restribco was as office manager and credit manager with some duties in connection with the Boise and Denver operations. In December I went to Denver with Warren. It was a very beautiful Christmas season with a lot of snow, and Denver was beautifully decorated. I remember the very warm and friendly feeling that I felt in our store in Denver, especially the way I was treated by the employees there. Lee Bullock and Bill Lazear were co-managers of the business. They had four or five employees, Maude Zimmermeyer, Bob MacPhearson, Gene Church, and Max Walker, and a part time person I can't recall. All of those employees stayed with the business for many years and worked well together. Lee Bullock was an excellent manager, generated a high morale among his crew, and treated everyone with kindness and fairness and respect. He had the firm belief that if a business took care of three groups of people it would not fail. Those three groups are the company's suppliers of the merchandise it sells or handles, the customers who buy the services and merchandise, and the employees. He very faithfully followed that theory and was a very successful effective manager, and a good friend through all these years. We're still in touch with Lee and his wife Dorcus who still live in Denver.

## 1959: Mark is Born

Our third son, Lincoln Mark, was born on February 5, 1959. We named him for Abraham Lincoln. He was very compact and solid, a stocky little baby, and we called him “little keg of nails.” We never did suppose he’d be a long thin man six feet one inch tall. He had then and still has very large and beautiful eyes.



**Image 64. Lincoln Mark Larsen sitting on Doug's lap with John to the side, 1959. (000194)**

We installed furnace ducts to heat the west side of the house that we had taken over. I did this myself and I remember hating the creepy feeling of crawling around under the house in that crawl space filled with dust and spider webs. It gives me the shivers even now.

We didn't do much playing in those years, no vacations out of town, just work, and busy with the kids in school and our church work and family gatherings, working on the house and in the yard, raising our family - but they were very happy years. I look back on them with great fondness, warm memories.

I helped my mother move numerous times. She was very unsettled and unhappy especially during the years from 1954 to 1964. During all her years alone we asked her to join us for Sunday dinner and most of the time she did so.

At this time a very tragic change came into the life of our friends Huibert and Elizabeth Wholer. Their daughter Wilma who was just about a year older than our John was a bright and friendly and very musical girl until she was about three or four years old. She would even sing harmony in the congregational singing in church, standing up on the bench beside her parents. She was just a lovely young child. About this time some tragic change took place in her life and she began to retrogress into infancy. It continued until she became just like a newborn child, unable to speak, no control of her bowels, and unable to feed herself. They had to care for her just like a helpless infant from that time for the rest of her life. It was a sad thing, but it was an inspiration to see how Huibert and Elizabeth handled the problem. It was both admirable and regrettable.

It was hard to understand why they would not put her in an institution where she would be trained to be as independent as possible. But they insisted on keeping her home. It was always a question whether they had done the right thing, but it was obvious that they had been motivated by love for the child and a strong sense of their duty as parents.

## 1960

In winter of 1960 we bought a 1955 Oldsmobile 98 from Restribco where I worked. It was a big car with power everything. It had been Ted's car. Almost immediately after we bought it I was sorry we had. We tried to sell it or trade it without losing money on it but were unable to. I gradually learned to like the car. In fact, in hindsight, it was about the best car we ever had, new or used. We had it until 1965.

This pointed out a trait I have of immediately having second thoughts after I have made a decision. I do that quite often. I decide to do something and then wish I hadn't. It's a little bit like a trait that my mother has. I have other traits that I see in my mother, some of which worry me. I wonder what kind of an old man I'm going to be. Of course, that implies that I'm not an old man now at age 67.

In the summer of this year we launched another phase of our remodeling project. In 1957 we had discontinued renting the apartment and taken over the whole house for our own use. Now we began to build a new kitchen where the kitchen of the apartment had been. We were using the front room of the apartment as our bedroom now, which makes available our previous bedroom, our former bedroom, as a playroom for the children, which it continued to be as long as we lived in the house.

The kitchen was an interesting project. It involved some kinds of work I had never done before. The old kitchen had in its west wall a large wooden double-sashed window. The north wall was solid brick. We decided that we wanted to reverse that, close up the west wall which faced the afternoon sun, and also faced an apartment building that had been built close beside the west side of our home. So I devised a method for opening up the north wall of the kitchen, which was brick with adobe liner inside wall. Doing it without disturbing the whole wall, without disturbing the roof, by taking out a few bricks at a time and inserting a metal prop support plate and strut. In that way we were able to install in the north wall of the kitchen a very large picture window with a door beside it. The width of that whole structure was about eleven feet. Then I used the bricks from that to brick up the unwanted windows on the west side. I was a pretty slow brick mason, but I was proud and pleased with the job that I was able to do, never having laid a brick before in my life.

It was also interesting how the old house lent itself to our remodeling plans as if it were just waiting for someone to come along and do that. For instance, in the northeast corner of that old kitchen there had been a fireplace diagonally across the corner, and the brickwork of that fireplace and chimney above it extended from the ground up through the floor up through the ceiling and through the roof, and I had to remove all of that, opening up the corner of the room and also opening up a doorway between the new kitchen, which had been the old kitchen, and our former bedroom which was now the playroom. Also, I installed a closet underneath the stairway with an opening into the playroom right by the kitchen door. It's interesting that there was a space beside that new doorway, all the way from the cellar underneath the room up through the roof of the house, which was just large enough to accommodate the furnace vent pipe, leaving enough room for a 24 inch door which was wide enough for that particular spot. It lined up with everything upstairs where I had previously built bedrooms and storerooms. Everything seemed to line up just perfectly. We were always impressed with that. The old house lent itself so well to remodeling.

We worked on the kitchen through the fall months. We bought some new birch cabinets and they were packed in pasteboard boxes of course which we stacked in the middle of the room. At this time Doug was 7 years old, John 3 ½ and Mark seven or eight months. The boys painted doors and windows and things on those pasteboard boxes so they looked like buildings, and had a lot of fun pretending they were a city. They had a ball and I'm surprised that I was so tolerant having them under foot all the time while I worked.

We listened on the radio during those months to a program by Gordon Owen. He had the late night program from midnight until five in the morning on KSL. We



**Image 65. The kitchen cabinets still looked beautiful 18 years later.**  
(000249)

sometimes worked until two or three in the morning. We loved his program, which was a mixture of poetry and beautiful music. His theme song was a tune called "Forgotten Dreams". We really learned to love that song and his program and to like him.

Our remodeling projects followed somewhat a pattern, we finished "just before Christmas". I was released from being

assistant stake clerk at this time, a job that I had had for about three years. I was really tired of it. I did office work all day and clerk work at the church all night it seemed some nights. I was called in the ward to be Sunday School Superintendent, and asked Fritz Barthel and a young man named George Vaieland to be the counselors. I enjoyed that assignment and my association with those two men.

George was about seventeen years old, eighteen perhaps. His mother Auslag was both deaf and blind. They were from Norway and were sponsored into this country by a woman in our ward, Rayola Andersen, and a missionary companion of hers when she served a mission in Scandinavia. Auslag was an inspirational woman.

In July, Artie Bronson and his wife Marjorie went on a mission to England. He was 60 years old at this time, and quit his job to go. I remember the comments of some of the people in the ward who thought he was foolish to do that. I don't know whether it was good or bad for them in the long run. Their marriage was quite unhappy during most of the years that we knew them, which were the last years of their lives. We related pretty well to them. Artie was just about three months younger than my Dad. We sent them ten dollars and a little note each month to help them with their mission all the time they were gone. From that time we have continually participated in the missionary program, assisting some missionary close to us or sending our own children on missions

or going ourselves. We have always felt good about our contributions to the church and have always been blessed for doing so.

Grant Hodgkinson became bishop of the ward at this time.

A little footnote here about our nutritional activities. We began to buy raw milk from Arion Erekson, which we would do for quite a number of years. We had been buying milk from Robert Murray. We preferred raw milk to pasteurized homogenized milk, so long as it was clean. These men did a good job of keeping the milk clean.

## 1961

In 1961 we celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary. I'm sure we didn't have any lavish celebration, didn't go on any trip, didn't buy any elaborate gifts, celebrated it by working hard all day. We continued our remodeling of the house. We bought new carpeting in the front room including the stairway to the upstairs and had it laid "just before Christmas".

In our assignment in the Sunday School Superintendency, we met weekly and met in our homes, alternating from one to the other. We had our business and then some refreshments, some cookies and punch. This was pleasant and helped us to enjoy our assignment. I didn't like a church administrative job then, and don't like it now, but it seems to have been my fate to have that kind of church job most of the past 50 years.

John started kindergarten in 1961. Doug was beginning the third grade I believe. He had quite a hard time for the first three years of his schooling. The teachers just weren't the right ones for him. His kindergarten teacher taught him how to play in school. His first grade teacher was very hard on him. His second grade teacher Miss Doran was physical. She really knocked the boy around. Roberta reminds me that he came home at times with the buttons torn off his shirt and the teacher had done that as she grabbed him and threw him around. Roberta tells me that I was aware of it at the time. I don't recall that I was, but it is hard for me to understand now why I didn't do something then. Doug had also had bad experiences with a couple of little girls who were real little witches. They gave him a hard time emotionally. His third grade teacher, Miss Nielson, helped him a great deal, and he had a friend, a girl named Cherise, who was a real little lady. She treated Doug in a kind and friendly way and gave him a better viewpoint on girls and friends. In the fourth grade the sun came up for him. He had a really good teacher, Mr. Frolic.

These years when the kids were small and in grade school sort of blend together into one continuous round of work, church work, remodeling, yard work, raising our children, putting them to bed, reading to them in the evening, giving them a bath at night, a lot of normal repetitive tasks that filled the happy years as the children grew. We had no big troubles, just normal illnesses, none serious.

## 1963

In 1963 I built a tree house in one of the big willow trees that stood in the back of our yard and built a huge sandbox. This became a very attractive place in the neighborhood for children to play, and for years to come we had many children in the yard, almost all the time when the weather permitted it.



**Image 66. Tree house, Tarzan swing, and corner of the sandbox in the backyard of 59 East Miller St. (000237)**

In September I had a hernia operation. Malcolm Jeppsen was my doctor and did the operation at Cottonwood Hospital, which had just been completed that summer. I was one of the first patients. I remember my feeling of confidence in Doctor Jeppsen and the nurses, how wonderful it was that I could just go to sleep and wake up with my problem solved. I missed four or five days of work, the first days of work that I had missed in many years. I've been greatly blessed with good health and steady employment.

This summer Kay and Don did us a real favor, a real kindness. They let us take their little trailer up to Bear Lake for a vacation, and tended our children for us in the bargain, a really thoughtful gift. We enjoyed it so much that we decided we would buy a trailer too.

## 1964: Lori is Born

In 1964 a number of great things happened in our life. Our daughter Lori was born May 26th. We were so happy to have a girl. All of our neighbors rejoiced with us and she was given seventeen dresses as baby gifts. Before she was born Roberta had redecorated our bedroom in lavender colors. We named her Loretta in honor of Doctor Loretta Foot who delivered her and all of our boys. All went well with this. We were richly blessed.

In September we bought a little camp trailer and went camping with the Nebekers to Granite Flats up American Fork Canyon during the Utah Education Association recess in October. We did this for many years through the 1980s. This was a most enjoyable



**Image 67. Loretta (Lori) Larsen at about 6 months.**  
(000204)

tradition that fostered love and closeness in our family. We missed it a few years for bad weather. After Lori graduated in 1982 we have gradually discontinued that Granite Flat camping, but we have continued camping at Redman Campground up Big Cottonwood Canyon.

At work a great change took place this year in February. Warren and Ted sold their Salt Lake business Restribco to three former employees, and Warren began to devote his whole energy to a business called Ice-All-O-Matic which would last for four or five years until the business failed. This created a great conflict between Warren and Ted, which grew in seriousness and bitterness, ending in lawsuits in the 1980's and 1990's until Ted's death.

I had a very pleasant calling given to me this year in the ward. I was called to be the Gospel Doctrine teacher, which I would do for three years. It was a most enjoyable and growing experience. I learned to appreciate the Old Testament, especially to love the book of Isaiah.

My mother moved this year to a duplex at 3008 South 9th East where she would live for ten years. I had told her that I was through moving her. She showed real strength and determination

and stability in the years since and made a great effort to be happy, to keep busy, and to help others to be happy.

We set ourselves a goal to have our house paid for by November when I would have my 40th birthday. To do this we paid extra principal. We had gradually increased the amount we were paying on our home as my salary increased, and during the last six months we paid four times the required amount in order to meet our goal.

## 1965

In 1965 we traded the Oldsmobile in on a 1962 Chevy Belair, which proved to be a very fine car. We took a vacation trip to California in June pulling the trailer. We took the three boys but left Lori with Geniel Dawes, a young girl in the ward, who took care of



**Image 68. Visiting Bea and Cliff Cash in Reedley, CA in 1965. (000101)**

her with the help of her mother. We had a wonderful trip, no real trouble. We visited Disneyland and Marine Land and the Hollywood wax museum near Knotts Berry Farm and Calico, a restored ghost town, out in the desert. We visited with Grandma Nelson, with Bud and Eileen Schwarz and their five sons, and with Ward and Rita Phelps, friends and converts from Roberta's mission, and with Roberta's sister Bea and her husband Cliff Cash. We had a good time. While we were gone Restribco had quite a problem in Denver. On June 15th the South Platte River flooded over a wide area and flooded our business there, which was built in the river flood plain along with hundreds of other businesses. There were six feet of water in the building. It posed a real threat to the business, which Lee Bullock and his crew accepted as a challenge. They overcame the loss, and not only survived, but thrived and became stronger than they were before through their teamwork and assisted by a Disaster Loan from the United States government.

Lori had a light case of pneumonia in February and was in the hospital a brief time. She recovered fully.

In April we moved our accounting office from 234 West 13th South to 1233 Wilmington Avenue in a space that we rented from Milton Christensen who became a good friend during the seven years that we stayed there. Our time there was pleasant in many ways. The most unpleasant aspect of it was that we were almost totally neglected by Ted and Warren who were busy in their own affairs, and we were left out of it. We weren't considered for raises when other people were, nor for Profit Sharing Trust



**Image 69. Bea and Cliff Cash, 1965.** (000103)

contributions when others were. Our good friend Lee Bullock in Denver became aware of what was going on and made it a point to see that we were included in raises and bonuses and other benefits that his employees were receiving as his business prospered. He made it very clear that he considered us and the office as part of his team. We have always been grateful to him for this.

Doug now became 12 years old, of MIA age, but didn't like to go. He didn't particularly like scouting and he was persecuted by a group of three or four boys who made it their business to give him a bad time in the ward. We gave him the option of going to Mutual or not, and he very seldom went. We felt that way about all of our children when they reached that age. They went to church every Sunday, and they were taking seminary in school, and we were having some kind of family home evening, and they and we figured they were getting enough religion without making it mandatory for them to go to mutual. We had required them to go to primary, feeling that the teachings that they

got in primary were very vital to their having a testimony of the gospel. Looking back through my own life during the teenage years I know that I didn't attend MIA very often, didn't amount to much as a boy scout, and wasn't very active in the priesthood. But I did go to Sunday School and primary regularly, and feel that I got a good foundation of the gospel in my childhood, even though my parents were not active in the church. With our children Roberta and I went to church every Sunday. We never missed unless we were sick or out of town. Our children grew up feeling that going to church was just part of life. So, I'm sure we were right not to be too demanding on the issue of going to MIA.

## 1966

In my penciled notes that I made in 1982 I describe 1966 as a nondescript year wondering what happened. I think either this August or the year before we began our annual family campout at Redman Campground up Big Cottonwood Canyon. Christmas this year was memorable. We bought Roberta a gas clothes dryer and we bought a television in self-defense. We had not wanted to have a television but our children were spending quite a bit of time at the neighbors watching television watching what we knew not. So, we decided to try to get control of it. Santa brought to the boys a slot car racetrack, which of course required a lot of floor space. To provide for this I finished the west bedroom upstairs and that room became the neighborhood slot car center, an activity that lasted until the summer of 1971 just before Doug went on his mission. At that time he turned the track over to his friend Rocky Russo and the room became Lori's bedroom.

These changes remind me of the evolution of that room and some of our remodeling in the past, and also some of our relationship with my mother. In 1958 when mom had the nervous breakdown and lived with us for 7 months I brought her furniture home and put it in our garage. When she felt a lot better in September she went down to her mother's in Los Angeles and lived there for about a year and a half. At that time I finished part of the floor in that west bedroom upstairs and moved my mother's furniture upstairs where it remained for the time that mom was gone. Now, when Santa brought this slot car racetrack for the boys, I finished the room, plaster boarded the walls, and it remained in that state until 1969 when we had the walls finished and painted and the floor carpeted. Some of these things sound as though they hardly belong in a life story, and yet these events and these activities are the substance of my life during these family raising years.

## 1967

In the fall of 1967 I was called to serve a two-year stake mission. It was mostly a pleasant experience. With my companions I helped convert ten or twelve people, and they included Gus and Millie Beckman who were faithful in the church. We kept in touch with them for a number of years, but they moved away and we don't know how they are, whether they're alive or not at this time. We haven't heard from them for almost ten years as I write this in 1982. My companions on the mission included Jerry Ipson, Lee Hilton, Larry Collard, Paul Pratt, and John Riches. During the last year I was a counselor to the mission president, Ron Oveson.

On the street in Sugarhouse I met Searl Beecher who was my 9th grade algebra teacher, one of my very best and favorite teachers. He was partly blind, living alone at about 20th South and 9th East. He spent his time working in the temple almost everyday. In the years since he was my teacher he had had some very tragic and disappointing events in his life. His wife, he suddenly learned, was a closet vodka drinker and was also having an illicit affair with a man where she worked at Thiokol. They had two sons and his wife and these events estranged them from Mr. Beecher, and they became very indifferent and inactive in the church. Because of the divorce that followed, Mr. Beecher lost his home and family. Then the Box Elder Board of Education attempted to fire him from his job. His fellow teachers united in his support and preserved his job. He lived for some years in the basement of the home of Robert Reese, the auto shop teacher. I kept in touch with him not closely, but somewhat, for the rest of his life, and drove him to Brigham City a few times in the next few years to visit friends and to attend funerals. He lived until May of 1974.

I learned something this year (1967) about schoolteachers, which had escaped me when I was in school. I always thought that teachers were ten feet tall and everything was under control. I never gave a thought to the fact that they had lives of their own with families, problems, heartaches, and disappointments. Mr. Beecher told me that two things he loved most to do were to read and to drive his car, and now he couldn't do either one. I felt real sympathy and sorrow for him. I'd like to tell you something about his teaching style, which was most unique and memorable, and an enjoyable factor in our becoming reacquainted at this time.

Mr. Beecher was a small very stocky built man with a jolly disposition. In his algebra classes almost every time he began with this pattern. He would come into class and either at the beginning of the class or the ending of the class he would wish us a merry Christmas, no matter what day of the year. He always had on his desk a fruit jar full of paper clippings and on each clipping was a joke that he had enjoyed. He would fish in that jar with his hand and pull out one or two of those clippings and tell us a couple of jokes, and we all enjoyed that. Then he would give us some arithmetic gymnastics where he would give us a series of numbers and a function. For instance, start with five, add two, square it, add one, divide by five, and what do you have? Of course, the answer is ten, but he would go on for a minute or so and they would become quite challenging. It was fun and stimulating and would prepare us for the work of the day.

Well, when I met him on the street in Sugar House in 1967 he told me this joke. A little old lady was out on the street at night and suddenly a mugger jumped out from

behind the bush, stuck a gun out at her and said, "Give me all your money lady." And she very composedly said, "Well, young man I don't carry any money with me." "You don't, huh", he said. "We'll see about that." So, he frisked her all over feeling here and there to discover her hidden purse or money belt. He finally had to give up and said, "Well, you're right lady. You don't have any money on ya." She said, "Well, I told you young man that I never carry any money, but if you'll do that again, I'll write you a check." Well, we both had a good laugh, and the memorable part of it is this. In 1974 Mr. Beecher lay in the hospital in Brigham City under an oxygen tent and he was dying. Roberta and I went to visit him, and I leaned down close to him and said something. He didn't seem to hear me, and I said do you have a joke to tell me today? He shook his head weakly. I said, "Well I'll tell you one." So I told him this same joke that he had told me and he chuckled a little bit, as much as he could in his weakened condition. That was our visit. A day or two after that, he died.

I haven't said much about my teachers since grade school. I should take this time to mention some of them in junior high and high school and even in college, and in situations other than school. Of course our relationship with teachers becomes very different as we grow older and more independent ourselves and approach adulthood, but a good teacher can have a lasting impression and effect on us whether we are little children or grown adults. I've had some really great teachers through my life. Mr. Beecher was surely one of the great ones. Another very wonderful teacher in high school was Rulon Manning. I had him for two years of English in my sophomore and junior years. His mastery of English grammar and his method of presenting it were truly unique. He had what he called the verb story, which was a concentrated discussion of all of the verb forms and tenses that just made English grammar much simpler, and he was a master of diagramming sentences. I don't think they diagram any more in English. It and other techniques have been lost and discontinued at great loss to the students. But, it was my recollection of Mr. Manning's teachings that enabled me to teach a year of high school in Blanding, Utah to five grades of students without having had any teacher preparation classes.

Another really great teacher was Floyd Jenson who taught 7th grade mathematics. He was also an outstanding Sunday School teacher in the Brigham City 6th Ward. He later became the bishop of that ward during war years. He had a great influence on me, all positive. Bill Griffiths was a great teacher in math. He was really an old timer. He taught my own father in high school, and taught for a number of years after I graduated. He taught Barbara, for instance, six years later. I think he lived to be in his middle 90s, a vigorous, very high quality person. I think I had about 25 or 30 teachers during the six grades 7 through 12. I can mention almost all of them but I won't do that nor will I comment on many others. Another outstanding teacher was Ray Cawley who taught me to fly during the summer between my junior and senior years. I've mentioned that course of instruction sponsored by the civil air patrol in which I was privileged to be a student. I was always impressed with his precision and mastery of everything to do with flying. He made it very clear that there was not much room for mistakes in flying, and yet, he didn't discourage us by being intolerant of our imperfections. He later became a pilot for Western Airlines and was killed during a snowstorm in Montana. I think it was during the war years. The plane crashed into a mountain during a snowstorm.

I've mentioned before the accounting teacher I had at Henager named Ray Closson. He had a unique way of teaching the very basic relationships in accounting in such a way that I could apply them in solving the most difficult problems. It also enabled me to teach accounting in my job at Henager both day school and night school. All I did was teach my students what he had taught me.

I had one teacher in college who was quite memorable and had the opposite effect, a negative effect upon me. His name was Clarence Wylie. He came from Ohio and had been an instructor at Wright Patterson Field in the Air Force. He was an austere man to me, not much humor, a very brilliant man, but he made higher mathematics appear so awesome and unreachable for me that it utterly discouraged me from pursuing math beyond a bachelor's degree. It no doubt had quite an effect on the course of my life, directing me into accounting. Another teacher that I had at college who was very competent was a woman named Mrs. Henrietta Henriques, a French name. She taught me for three quarters and made calculus very logical and understandable. I also had her for a couple other classes, analytical geometry for one.

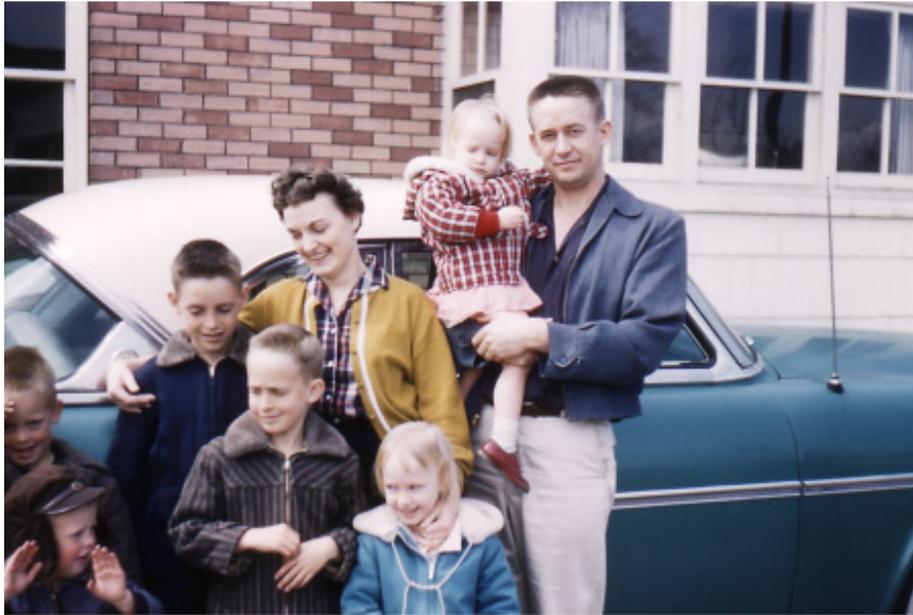
Another memorable teacher that I had taught the gospel doctrine class in the Murray 8th Ward. He was a very young man, just returned from a mission. His name was Brent Hanson, just about Doug's age. He had the ability to teach a single concept in one lesson time and to include and blend into his own presentation any and all comments that members of the class might make. It's most unusual in religious instruction in which most teachers attempt to teach far too many concepts in the class period time. He was a real master in reaching the objective of the lesson. He taught that class for a year or two while I was the bishop of the ward.

Well, I have great respect and affection for the many teachers during my lifetime. I think a skillful and honorable teacher is the very finest type of human being. Of course the greatest teacher of all was Jesus Christ who showed us that the very best way to do good teaching was through love, simple presentation, devoted service, and personal example.

## 1968

The summer of 1968 the Nebekers moved to Clearfield and then to Layton, and Raymond and Kirma and their family moved from Magna to Tempe, Arizona. We greatly missed these families in the years following. We had spent a lot of time visiting with them. They were our closest visiting relatives.

In 1968 Roberta and I became restless about our house, feeling that we should have a bigger or finer home or a better location. In the fall we considered moving. We engaged the help of my friend Melvin Thayne who was in real estate, and selected a home in southeast Murray and put a deposit on it of \$500. Then we began to consider what we should have considered before. We had no sale or much prospect of a sale for our present house so we would have had to go into debt deeply to buy the other home. We could have rented our old house but when I thought seriously I knew that I could not stand to be a landlord and tolerate what renters do to a rented house if that house belonged to me. Well, we stewed about it for about a week or so. During that week I was hardly able to accomplish any work on my job. My mind was so confused and



**Image 70. Raymond and Kirma with their children David, Michael, Judy, and Karen visiting at the Miller Street home about 1960. Doug and John are on the left. (000177)**

focused entirely on the dilemma that we were in. I knelt down in my office one noon hour when I was alone and really prayed earnestly for help in making a decision. And when I got up from my knees I knew what we should do. We would drop the deal, even if it meant losing the deposit. Fortunately, the people we were dealing with, an older couple, were very understanding and let us out of the deal without any penalty. We got our deposit back, paid Mel Thayne something for his time and help, and decided to stay where we were. Mel told us the older couple had said, “We wondered if those young folks knew what they were doing.”

We decided to borrow some money, finish remodeling our house, and make it into the kind of home we wanted; even though the location wasn't ideal, being right next to an expanding business area. We knew that we could make some improvements in the house just for our own enjoyment and live there for many years if need be and be perfectly



**Image 71. Trip to Yellowstone National Park in 1968.** (000548, 000550, 000549, 000547)

comfortable and happy.

Several other things happened in 1968. Doug turned 16 and I very reluctantly became the father of a teenage driver. Trouble developed at work. The Ice-All-O-Matic venture failed and the business was closed out at a total loss, a very heavy loss for Warren Brown. That summer we took an enjoyable trip to Yellowstone Park pulling our little trailer. Roberta's mother began to decline in health and mental alertness. We weren't aware of it at the time but looking back I can see that it began to appear then. I

first noticed it in my gospel doctrine class about 1966 when she was 80. I had asked her to give a five minute report and she spoke for 15 minutes and never mentioned the subject, so unlike her. She had been so alert and such a student of the scriptures and so knowledgeable and effective in discussing the gospel with other people on whatever level of learning that other person might have. To see her so muddled and confused and unfocused indicated a sharp turning point in her life which became more and more pronounced during the next few years.

## 1969: Family Room Added



**Image 72. Construction of new family room. The picture window has been moved and plastic put in its place. Roberta, Lori (dressed as a witch), Paul Larsen (Harold's and Norma's son) and Mark Larsen. (000422)**

Our children had all been happy with our decision to stay on Miller Street. The beginning of 1969 we borrowed \$6,300 from the Profit Sharing Trust at work, and with that we set out to make some great changes in our house. We observed to ourselves that this amount of money was approximately equal to three years of only the interest on the mortgage we would have had on the house we nearly bought last year. With this money we bought a lot of exciting improvements. We bought a new Magnavox stereo. We finished the upstairs room, had the walls perfataped, and the floors carpeted. We put in new walls and drapes in the front room. We built a new family room on the back of the house



**Image 73. Looking south at the new family room. This picture was taken in 1978. (000238)**

north from our kitchen. We moved the big picture window we had built nine years ago, opening up the space as an archway between the kitchen and the new 24 by 20 foot family room. I built the family room myself except for the concrete foundation and the brickwork, which was done by contractors. Roberta and Kay then painted the entire interior of our house. They must have put on 25 gallons of paint. We finished all of this “just before Christmas”. We were all very delighted with the home improvements and very happy that we had not moved. Even now 35 years later I am certain that we were directed to make the correct decision then not to move. Later on as we’ll see in 1978 conditions were very different and the correct decision then became time to move.



**Image 74. Pool table in family room. Mark and Doug playing the hockey game around 1975. (000551)**

For Christmas we bought a pool table that was a great source of fun for our boys and all of us. We still have that pool table in our basement after 23 years. It wasn't a slate bed, just a composition bed table that is not supposed to last for 20 years, but it has, and the bed is still in good shape, gives a pretty good game.

I completed my stake mission at this time and was called for the second time to be the deacon's quorum advisor. I didn't enjoy that job and do not do that kind of job very well. I don't have much rapport with teenagers.

In the summer we had a very enjoyable vacation trip. Went up through Yellowstone Park and east through

Wyoming, visited the Devil's Tower, went over into South Dakota where we saw the Passion Play presented by a group of Protestant churches at Spearfish. Then we traveled south into Colorado and there visited with Warren Brown and part of his family. They were living in Fort Collins Colorado following the failure of Ice-All-O-Matic.

I became very restless on my job in 1969. I considered changing jobs and looked around at different prospects and possibilities. I discovered that at my age, 45, I was not a very hot item in the job market and it was unlikely that I could move and match my present income. So, to improve my prospects I took several computer classes at the University of Utah, at LDS Business College, and at Trade Tech, and discussed with my bosses the possibility of upgrading our accounting system with a computer. Warren had returned from Fort Collins, Colorado, and had begun to take a more active roll in a business in Price, Utah, called Price Trading Company in which Ted and Warren had ownership interest. Our accounting office through the years provided general accounting

services for the several businesses in which Warren and Ted had ownership interest, which now included Price Trading Company.

Our work was increasing. We needed to improve our accounting system to handle the increasing workload. We experimented during the next couple years with a couple of systems and even with the idea of an outside accounting firm. None of these was very successful, but we did learn a lot about what would not work. I apparently had decided to stay put in my job. I think I was afraid to change. Looking back at it from this vantage point, even from ten years down the road, which would be more than ten years ago, I had some regrets about this, but who knows what lay down the road not taken.



**Image 75. Picture of "Buttons" taken in 1978. (000546)**

Mary Stevens, my dear old friend in Blanding, died in May of 1969.

A new member came into our family in 1969. John had a Deseret News paper route. One of his customers farther down on Miller Street was a young couple both of whom worked and who had a little white poodle dog that took a real liking to John. The dog was lonely during the day and every day when John came around to deliver the papers this dog would follow him around.

She developed a real attachment. The owners of the dog observed this and knew that the dog was not getting the attention from them that it should have, so they asked John if he would like to have the dog. Well, we had no great desire for a dog. Roberta especially thought dogs were a nuisance. I remembered pleasantly our old dog Buck when I was a boy. At any rate, we agreed that John could have the dog provided it lived outside. So, Buttons came to join us and would live with us for about twelve years. We named her Buttons. She was all white and we thought her bright black eyes looked just like buttons against her white coat. She lived in the garage for a couple of years. Then she became pregnant and had a litter of pups. It was cold, it was in March or February, and Roberta's motherly heart was touched by the little dog's efforts to take care of her puppies. So, she allowed the dog and her family to move into the utility room. There was a door between that room and the rest of the house and it seemed that we could confine the dog to that room. The dog could hardly believe what was happening when Roberta moved her and her puppies into the house. She was a very intelligent dog and understood her place very well.

After she had raised those puppies up to the point where they could be given to other people or sold, we decided to have her spayed so there wouldn't be any further problem with pups.

## 1970

A very eventful year in our lives began on New Year's Eve of January 1st, 1970. Doug wrecked our car at the Woodland Drive-in Theater.



**Image 76. Dr. Malcolm Jeppsen with his wife Marion and their children taken in 1972. (000553)**

Other than wrecking our car the only injury was to Doug's lip that was cut completely through by his teeth. We woke Dr. Jeppsen up in the middle of the night, 3 o'clock, and went to his office where he repaired Doug's lip very skillfully and it healed with hardly a scar. Another thing happened that New Year's Day in our kitchen. Roberta's brother-in-law Ralph Walker broke the legs off our kitchen table during an enthusiastic game of "spoon".

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1961 Cadillac about the tenth of January for \$650. During the next year we spent about \$400 on repairs. We thought we were killed. But as it turns out it was a very modest investment. The old Cadillac ran faithfully after that for six years with very little trouble.

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**Image 77. Playing "spoons" on New Year's Day before Ralph Walker broke the legs off the table. (000552)**

About January 15th our water line from the street broke under the driveway and began to flood the driveway. I had to dig a trench to repair that.

President David O'Mckay died around January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1970. He was my very favorite President of the Church during my lifetime to date. I had great affection for President Kimball also, but President McKay was special. He had been in the first presidency since my primary days. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1970 my father died of heart failure. This was, of course, a time of sorrow and regret and self-examination. I wasn't on the best of terms with my Dad. I

had offended him a number of times. I didn't have a really warm easy association with him although I loved him and have learned in the years since that I loved and admired him very much. An incident at his burial in Morgan Utah was very memorable. Dad's second wife Ethyl had said that he wanted to be buried in Morgan and not in Brigham City. Well, being his wife she had the final say and we didn't challenge it, although all of us would have preferred to have him buried in Brigham City. The day of his burial was a stormy day. It snowed during our trip up Weber Canyon. As we reached the cemetery it stopped snowing. The sky opened up and the sun came out during the graveside ceremony. As soon as the prayer was said it clouded over and began to snow hard again, almost as we said, "Amen."

I was called again to be Sunday School President in 1970. I wasn't excited about the job. As I've said before I don't like an administrative job. But we had some success and pleasant associations and kept the work going. My counselors included two young men, Robert Barrett and David Folland, who were in their 30's, perhaps 40 years old. In December we bought a 1971 Volkswagen, a bright orange car, and we were enjoying our enlarged and beautified home, glad all the time that we had decided to stay.

Lori was now six years old and began school this fall. Another happy family tradition started this year. We bought season tickets for all the family at Pioneer Memorial Theater at the University of Utah. Our little gal Lori was probably the youngest patron in the audience. We attended these plays until 1989. Our lives were enriched by the plays and by the experience of attending them together.

At work we finalized our search for a computer and bought a small machine from Burroughs, a system called the B400. My philosophy about our work in the accounting office was that our first duty was to keep current on information needed by the businesses we served and that any changes should be made with a gradual transition to the new system without any interruption of our workflow. This B400 system worked in very well and we had it for about eight years.

Roberta's mother became unable to live alone any longer. She went to live with Roberta's oldest sister Teddy Walker in Vernal.

## 1971: Doug Graduates from High School

It must always be an awful shock to parents when their first child graduates from high school. We had that shock in 1971. Doug graduated in June, went to Calgary Canada with the Murray High School band to be in the Calgary stampede. John also



**Image 78. Doug Larsen graduates from Murray High School in 1971.**  
(000554)

went. He was in the 9th grade that year, and Roberta went along as a chaperon. They had a grand time. The boys earned part of the money they needed working for Distributors Incorporated helping it to move back into the building at 234 W 1300 South. This was the only work that Doug did during the summer as he waited to go on a mission to New Zealand North Island in November. We're surely pleased that Doug chose to go setting this good example for John and Mark, and Lori. Our son Doug hears a different drummer. He's imaginative and creative and very honest, but he's not ambitious in a conventional way although he has great energy for the things that interest him.

While Doug was on his mission Roberta and I took turns writing to him each week. We all enjoyed his letters back home. He generally filled most of the page with drawings, often of a cartoon nature. We enjoyed his mission.

Mom Carpenter came back to Salt Lake from Vernal and lived for some time in the Salt Lake Stake Home located on 200 North and West Temple.

John moved on to a different job working for Utah Food and Catering, and Mark took over the Deseret News paper route. Both he and John were excellent paperboys. In those days the carrier also collected from his customers, which I think was a wonderful part of that job. It really trained a boy how to handle money, how to deal with customers, and how to conduct a business. I think it was a serious loss to newspaper carriers when

they took away from them the responsibility of collecting from customers and paying their bill to the newspaper company. They really lose out on some important experience there. But it seems to work a lot better for the newspaper company in our fast moving society.



**Image 79. Elder Doug Larsen with Elder Dudley in Parnell, New Zealand. (000555)**

## 1972

I received a different calling in the ward at the beginning of 1972 as membership clerk. The church was just beginning the conversion of membership records to data processing. Their first effort was quite troublesome and frustrating. They had a different form for each ordinance or piece of information, and these forms were to be read by an optical reading machine. The data had to be typed in a very precise manner by a certain kind of typewriter. The typewriter was not the least of our problems. There were many many errors both on our end and the Presiding Bishopric's Office. The system was really too sophisticated and too complex for untrained ward clerks, but it was gradually simplified over the next six or eight years along with other computer progress in the church's administration.



**Image 80. Raymond and Kirma with their children: David, Karen, Barbie, Gail, Alan, Judy, and Mike, in Mesa, Arizona. (000556)**

In the summer of 1972 we went on what we called our “Dam Trip”. We pulled the trailer with the old Cadillac and went down to visit Raymond and Kirma and their family. We had no serious trouble at all with the car and we had a fine time. The reason we called it our “Dam Trip” is we visited four dams on the way, Glen Canyon dam, Parker dam, Havasu dam, and Hoover dam. Before we left Raymond's place we picked about 70 pounds of Thompson seedless grapes on the farm of one of his friends and we ate grapes all the way home. We also bought about 300 tootsie pops for a penny each. They had broken sticks so we got a bargain on them. Boy, did we enjoy grapes and tootsie pops without limit on that trip.

At work we moved our accounting office from Wilmington Avenue back to 1300 South.

Mom Carpenter was still living in the Salt Lake Stake Home. In the summer of 1972 she ran away from the home breaking her foot in the process. This was about the time we were going on our “Dam Trip”. She had to be in a nursing home anyway, so we

placed her in the Bonner Nursing Home for a month while we went to Arizona. When we came back she went to live in a group home in the Holiday area, a very depressing place. She wasn't very happy and we weren't happy to have her there. In January she went again to Vernal and lived with Ted until about July. After that she lived alternately with Kay, with us, and with Ted for two or three months at a time until the early part of 1974.



**Image 81. Family vacation in 1973 to Arches National Park in Colorado. (000557, 000558, 000559, 000560)**

One time while Mom Carpenter was staying with us, something that's rather humorous happened, humorous but pathetic. Much of the time Mom Carpenter didn't know where she was or who she was and she didn't know Lori who was only 9 years old at the time. Mom Carpenter frequently got into Lori's drawers and closet and into her books and things, which upset Lori. Being a very spunky girl, Lori would challenge her on it and tell her to stay out of her stuff, and Roberta was between them as the referee.

One time Mom Carpenter came to Roberta and said pointing to Lori, “Who is that girl anyway?” Roberta said, “Well Mom, she’s our daughter.” Mom said, “Well, I’m sorry sorry sorry for you!” We’ve laughed about that many times since.

In September 1972 we had the 30 year class reunion for my graduating class. On the way to the affair in Brigham City, we visited with Cyril Beecher in a rest home. I will always regret a really dumb thing I did at that time. After visiting with him we should have invited him to go with us to the reunion. He would have enjoyed that immensely, but we didn’t. He died the next May in 1974 as I’ve related earlier.



**Image 82.** Christmas day at the 59 East Miller Street home. LtoR: Lori, Merlin, and Mark Larsen. (000737)

## 1973

We took a family vacation to Arches National Park in Colorado in 1973. We also rode an old steam powered train from Durango to Silverton Colorado.

Doug came home in November 1973 from his mission. Roberta and I discussed at length what our policy should be with respect to our grown children after high school and after missions. We decided that Doug should have a couple of choices. We decided if he went to school he could live at home free. We'd provide room and board and we'd help him with transportation by furnishing a car for him that he could buy on a mileage basis. He would be required to work part time and pay his school expenses. If he didn't want to do that he could get a job and either stay at home paying room and board, or find some place else to live. We felt he should begin to act like an adult. The policy worked really well for Doug and all of our children followed about the same pattern. Doug enrolled at Utah Technical College studying commercial art, a two-year program. He launched into it with good faith and good intentions.



**Image 83. John, Mark, Merlin, and Lori eating lunch during family vacation to Silverton, Colorado. (000558)**

## 1974: John Graduates from High School

Early in 1974 I received a call to serve on the Murray Stake High Council and I was assigned as a liaison to the 18th Ward. I enjoyed this new type of service in the church. John graduated in May and was only 18 so it appeared likely that he would want to go to school for a whole year before going on his mission which was different than Doug's case because Doug's birthday was in the fall rather than in the winter or the spring. So we bought a second Volkswagen to accommodate the transportation needs of our growing boys. Doug was using the orange Volkswagen and was buying it from us paying a certain amount per mile, toward the purchase. We still had the old Cadillac, but we didn't want John or anyone to be running that very many miles. I had started riding the bus to work, having good bus service along State Street. So, we allowed John to use the new yellow Volkswagen.



**Image 84. John Larsen graduating from Murray High School in 1974.**  
(000561)

On September 8th, I was called to be the bishop of the Murray 8th Ward. It was a calling that I surely never wanted and never expected to have. I was almost 50 years old. It proved to be a very difficult, challenging, rewarding, and humbling experience; what you might call a terrible wonderful job. I was to serve for exactly four years. I started out retaining Dale Ahlberg's counselors. Dale Ahlberg had been bishop for nine years preceding my call. His counselors were Paul Fitt and Robert Meier.

This calling changed many things. I spent about thirty to forty hours a week on my bishop's duties, probably doing a lot of them the hard way. Looking back at the job I remember that I became aware very soon that I couldn't do it all, that some things would just never get done. So, I concentrated on the most pressing things. One of those was the raising of money.

We had a continuous building program in the stake. The first phase of it was to raise money to remodel our ward building and enlarge it to serve as a stake center for Murray Stake. We also had to raise ward budget and stake budget, and we spent a lot of our time figuring out ways to raise money. Another thing that seemed to change in my life during those four years was my feelings about Christmas. I don't know exactly why, but Christmas time was a very hectic time for bishops. There were temple recommend renewals and there was tithing settlement, the year end reports, plus all of the

normal things such as keeping the ward staffed, interviewing people, arranging for sacrament meetings; all of the things that a bishop does; taking care of the welfare needs of people, counseling with people. Christmas time became a very stressful time and it

seemed to take out of me all of the pleasure that I had always felt at the approach of Christmas.

One of the interesting duties of a bishop that I was introduced to just a couple of weeks after my call was funerals, helping to arrange and conduct funerals. My first one was the funeral for Lois Hodgkinson's mother who had been living in the ward close to Lois's home so she could help take care of her ailing mother.

Roberta's mother died on October 4th out in Vernal. She was buried on her 88th birthday, October 8th. She was a grand lady. Her last six or seven years were a sore trial for her. She lived with Ted for her last six or seven months.

After John graduated he enrolled at Utah Technical College in electronics. John has loved electronics since he was eleven or twelve years old. We've always said that John got his start in the junkyard. The reason we say that is that when he was about eleven or twelve he and his friend David Collard would go to the city dump looking for treasures. One of the things that he brought home was a television set, and he was fascinated with all of the little tubes and components and devices in it. He began to disassemble it and to read books and teach himself to understand how radio and television worked. Of course, that has been his main focus careerwise to the present time.

My mother suffered a very traumatic experience about May of that year. She was fired from her job with Chet Bailey in his drapery shop. She was 72 years old, still able to put in a long hard day, an excellent drapery maker, an excellent seamstress. She enjoyed her work very much, especially her association with the other women in the shop. She's never quite forgiven Chet Bailey. She's never understood why he fired her when she was still so able to do skillful work for him. I think it was childish spite on Chet's part. Mom took a few days off to be with her mother who came from Los Angeles to visit.

That summer I built a drapery worktable for mom and she continued to make drapes at home, primarily for her children and grandchildren. She never did earn very much doing this work, practically gave her labor away as a gift to her family. She applied for her social security but that was hardly ever much more than enough to pay her rent. So my mom needed some support from her children not having any substantial savings or other income. So all of us brothers and sisters, her children, began at that time to give her money each month. Each one giving whatever he or she felt was enough to help subsidize her meager income. That has continued to this present time and in one month my mother will be 90 years old.

## 1975

In 1975 I really felt the weight of my bishop duties. One of the pleasant parts was interviewing young people to go on missions. I had the pleasure of helping prepare John for his mission on which he left in September. Roberta wrote to him every week. I didn't seem to find the time very often but I wrote every month or two.



**Image 85. Missionary farewell at airport for John Larsen in 1975.** (000563, 000562)

The Nebekers brought back some sunshine to our life. They moved back to Murray from Layton. They had never sold their home in Murray. They rented it during the eight years they were gone. They took the job as custodians of our ward building. Bill Ohwiller had been the custodian since the building was built in 1953, but he was now about 70 years old, and needed to retire. The building was undergoing remodeling and enlargement at this time and that project went on for a year. It was really a man-sized job to be the custodian under those circumstances. We were surely glad to have the Nebekers back. Roberta was especially because Kay is her dearest friend.

We had our family camp at Redman again in August 75. We had an interesting experience with the car. We pulled the trailer up with the old Cadillac but the car quit before we reached the camp. We had to disconnect the trailer and have it pulled to camp by one of the other cars. I decided to take the Cad back to town to see if we could get it fixed. So, I turned it around and we coasted down the canyon without power, which means practically without brakes or steering. We did have brakes and steering, but they required a lot more physical force to operate them without the boosters. We coasted from Silver Lake Village just below Solitude down to the corner of Highland Drive and 7200 South. Then we tried again and the car started. We took it over to Bob Plowgian's Garage in Sugar House. He told us that our gas filter was plugged up and the altitude change made it impossible for the gas pump to supply enough fuel for the engine and that's why it quit. He replaced the gas filter cartridge and we were on our way. That old Cad was a faithful car all the years we had it.

John had a really bad experience on his arrival in his mission field in Toulouse France. His flight had been delayed six hours due to mechanical problems so they arrived late. The elders from the mission home picked him up from the airport stopped on the way at a restaurant to get some dinner. They left John's luggage on the top of the car instead of locking it up inside. When they came out it was gone. Everything he had was stolen except what he had in his shoulder pack. Fortunately that was his identification and what little money he had, but all of his clothes were gone except what he had on his back. Well, it was some weeks and months before that problem could be solved. The clothes he wore on his mission were a combination of clothes donated to him and some clothes that he bought and some that we were able to send him from home. But it was a hard blow for any missionary. He handled it quite well. John and all of us get a good laugh imagining some French guy 5 feet 4 inches tall wearing John's clothes. John is 6 feet 4 inches.

Doug graduated from Utah Technical College in about June and accepted a job with the O.C. Tanner Company as a die cutter. He has worked there since that time, and is still there now in 2003.

## 1976

1976 was the bicentennial of the declaration of Independence. We took a vacation trip in the summer, traveled to Colorado Springs in two Volkswagens. Roberta and I were in one, Mark and Doug in the other, and Lori took turns riding with them and with us. I had learned of a reunion to be held in Colorado Springs of the former personnel of the 100th Bomber Group. It sounded like an event I would enjoy. We lived in a Motel called the Blue Fox. We ate our meals out or we bought groceries and just pieced. Roberta had no meals to prepare and she was delighted with her first real



**Image 86. Family vacation to Colorado in 1976.** (000564)

vacation.

The experience at the reunion was not what I had hoped it would be. It turned into kind of a drinking party. I might have guessed that because most of the men in the service took up drinking and smoking. That's one of the main activities today when they get together, drinking and smoking. It didn't appeal much to us. So, I haven't attended any other reunions since then although they're held every year or two. I have kept in touch with the 100th Bomb Group Association, and through it I've had contact with all of my former crewmates. Later on in this story I'll tell about a reunion we had in 1993.

Bishopric duties continued to be a full load through this year. We had completed the work of

remodeling our building and making a stake center of it. Now we began to raise funds to build a new ward house for the First and Twelfth Wards on Vine Street near Murray Park. So, we still spent a lot of our energy and time raising money for the building fund, etc. Bob Meier who was one of my counselors in the bishopric moved away and we called Lynn Bloxham to take his place. Both Bob and Lynn were excellent counselors to me. I still had Paul Fitt as my other counselor.

In January of 1976 Roberta's oldest brother John Lyle Carpenter, Carp we called him, died in the Veteran's Hospital. He suffered for about nine months with cancer that was wide spread throughout his body. He wasted away until he probably didn't weigh more than 85 pounds although he had weighed well over 200 pounds in his prime manhood. His death was quite a spiritual experience for all of us including him. He had grown somewhat closer to the family in recent years as he joined with us in our summer camping trips. In the last weeks of his life his sister Kay helped him prepare to go to the temple while he was still in the VA hospital. Carp had solved his word of wisdom problems some years before and had been paying his tithing for years. He always had a

testimony of the gospel. He was always a gentle and kind Christian man, just out of the habit of going to church. With Kay's help he had interviews with his bishop and stake president who came to him in the hospital. Then Kay, Roberta, and their brother Doug took Carp to the temple in a wheel chair and he received his endowment. It made him very happy and I'm sure his parents rejoiced. I'm sure they were aware of what happened from the other side. We learned to love Carp through our closer association with him.

Carp had had a living trust prepared covering all of his estate, which wasn't much, primarily his home and a couple of cars and some savings. He asked Kay and me to serve as executors of his trust as trustees, which we did. We were able to sell his home and close out his affairs and distribute the resulting money among his heirs, which included his children and his ex-wife and a little grandson born to his son Kenny who was killed in an accident some years before. Our duties as trustee continued until that grandson Michael became an adult and we turned over to him his share of Carp's estate which had grown by about 300 percent from \$7,000 to well over \$20,000. It was a real gift to that boy and we encouraged him to make the use of it that Carp intended. The boy had been living with his mother's parents since Kenny died.

We bought a 1971 Buick Skylark from Peck and Shaw in August, trading in the old Cad.

## **1977: Doug is Married; Mark Graduates from High School**

During 1977 I continued to be very busy with my bishopric duties. Paul Fitt, one of my counselors, and I were developing increasing tension and difference of opinion over a lot of things, not working well together. So I asked that he be released. I didn't want him developing bitter feelings about the church because of me and thought he would be happier doing something else in the ward. We called Jeremy Meier who was Bob Meier's younger brother to take Paul's place and it increased the harmony in our bishopric counsels and activities.



**Image 87. Wedding reception for Doug Larsen and Gwendolyn Maughan Larsen held 10 Feb 1977. (000565)**

Another milestone for us as parents and for Doug occurred in 1977. On February 10th he married Gwendolyn Maughan in the Salt Lake Temple. Her parents Gordon and Jean Maughan live in Palos Verdes, California, south of Los Angeles. Two receptions were held, the first one here in the 24th Ward chapel, and the second one in Palos Verdes. Doug asked me to be his best man in both of those receptions. That's a bit unusual but it was very pleasing to me that he felt so warm and friendly toward me. Both receptions were very enjoyable. It was a pleasure to get to know Gwen's family. The trip down to California and back was pleasant. The Buick that we had bought operated well.

Our good neighbors Chil and Ruth Miller sold their home to the Wilkinsens who owned Zion Motor Cottonwood Chrysler. They moved up into the east Holladay area. We bought from them their washer and dryer that were like new and gave them as a gift to Doug and Gwen. Doug and Gwen moved into Nebeker's apartment where they would live for about a year. They remained members of our Murray 8th Ward and I was pleased with the way they started their financial management, paying their tithing and offerings and generous contributions to the building fund, very pleasing to me as a father and as a bishop.



**Image 88. Mark graduates from Murray High School, 1977. (000567)**

Mark graduated from high school this spring and enrolled at the University of Utah in the fall. He obtained a job working for Reams Bargain Annex Grocery Market. It's interesting how he obtained that job. Roberta had traded at the store for years and often took Mark shopping with her when he was a little boy. One time he stole a pocket full of candy from Reams. When his mother discovered it she took him back and made him confess to the manager. She had previously called the manager and told him what she was going to do and that she wanted him to cooperate and be stern but kind. We think Mark learned a crucial lesson in honesty right there. Reams hired Mark partly because he was honest and later on made him a night crew manager because of his honesty. They had a lot of difficulty with employees stealing from them, so when they found one who was honest they really valued him.

John returned from his mission in September and enrolled at Utah Technical College for his second year in electronics with the idea of graduating there and then going on to the University of Utah. Roberta's oldest sister Teddie (Theodocia) became quite ill during the summer months. She had not felt well since spring, but didn't do much about it. She developed a really bad cough and felt poor, unwell for many months. She finally went to the doctor about it late in November and discovered that she had cancer of the pancreas, which is

terminal. She was very brave and uncomplaining about it, never complained, never grieved or felt sorry for herself. It's a sad thing that she never had the privilege of living in their new home. She had lived in a basement home in Vernal for 30 years. During the year preceding her illness they had built a nice home on top of that basement. It was almost completed when she became so sick. She died in December about three weeks after her cancer was discovered.

In my work at Distributors Incorporated another crisis developed. Warren had previously installed his son Reynold as a manager in Price Trading Company in which he and Ted were Equal part owners, doing this against Ted's wishes and their business agreement. Now Warren moved Reynold to Denver as an employee with the idea that Reynold would become manger of the store when Lee Bullock retired, which he was planning to do in about three years. This greatly upset Ted. He and Warren were equal partners, equal owners, and had always had the understanding that none of their children would be hired without their mutual consent.

This greatly increased the tension and the strife and ill will between them. It made me wish that I had left the company and found other work ten years before when I was so much inclined that way. But now I'm 52 years old and it's hardly the time to give up a good paying job for such a reason. I had lived with tension between them for all these years. I figured I could see it through to my retirement.



**Image 89. John returns home from his mission to Toulouse, France. (000568)**

In August Mark had his turn wrecking a car. He wrecked our Buick on the way home from a drive-in. No one was hurt fortunately. We needed a second car with John back in school and I bought a 1969 Toyota, which was beautiful little car but a very bad mistake. We let John drive that car while we operated the yellow Volkswagen.



**Image 90. John waxing the 1969 Toyota. (000545)**

## 1978: Move from Miller Street to 4602 S. 600 E.

1978 started out as a normal year and then some major changes came along. (Maybe that *is* a “normal” year!) On April 30th Roberta and I became grandparents when our first grandson Jeffery was born to Doug and Gwen. In May the Wilkinsens, the owners of Zion Motor, offered to buy our property. The price they offered indicated that they were really interested. We were not urgently desiring to move this time, so we told



**Image 91. Doug and Gwen with their first child, Jeffrey, in summer 1978. (00569)**

them that we would be interested only if their price was sufficient to enable us to buy a comparable home in a desirable location, and buy that home debt free since our home was already debt free. Roberta, Mark, Lori, and I had already made plans to take a trip to Denver on the Denver & Rio Grande train. So we told the Wilkinsens that we would think about it and do some looking for another home when we got back.

The train ride through the Rocky Mountains was a delightful thing. It took all day, and when we arrived in Denver Lee Bullock arranged to let us use a company car and had arranged a motel room for us up in the north part of Denver. We had a delightful week seeing the sites in Denver and visiting some of the Denver crew, particularly the Bullocks.

At about this time our duties as a bishopric to raise building funds took on a new dimension. The people of our stake were asked by the stake presidency to raise money simultaneously for a new stake center to be built in the old second ward area and to be used later by a new Murray North Stake that would be divided

off from our stake, and also to fill our stake’s assessment for the building of the Jordan River Temple. The stake president, Michael Holmes, obtained permission from the General Authorities to raise money for these two projects in one program and to apply any excess funds raised to the retirement of the stake budget. The president didn’t assign any specific amount to the individual wards in the stake, but he asked the bishops to interview their families and members and invite them to make a sacrifice, a financial sacrifice, toward this project. We had been asking our members for over three years to contribute generously several hundred thousand dollars toward the building projects, and now we were going to ask them to raise seven or eight hundred thousand dollars. I don’t remember the exact amount.



**Image 92. Lee and Dorcus Bullock in Denver, Colorado, 1978. (00573)**

I could hardly tell them that I had thought a thousand dollars total and they had meant a thousand dollars for each of the three of them. Those were examples of the kind of effort people made.

By the end of August throughout the stake funds had been contributed or pledged to be contributed that completely paid for our local share of that new stake center, the Jordan River Temple, and covered the stake budget for the year. I was tremendously impressed with the faith of the members in our humble ward. There wasn't a rich person in the ward. We had many widows, and many people who worked hard just to get by. I was so impressed by their devotion to the church and their love for the gospel. This experience was surely a wonderful finale or climax to my four years as bishop.

When we returned from our trip to Denver I engaged the services of my friend Melvin Thayne, a real-estate man, and looked at maybe a dozen homes in areas where we thought we might like to live. We weren't able to find a home that I considered an adequate replacement for our own home for the amount of money the Wilkinsens had offered us. So I went back and told them that we were not interested in selling at their offered price. If they'd like to make a better offer we'd consider it.

During the months of June, July and August, I interviewed most of the families in the ward. I had some wonderful spiritual experiences talking with people who contributed far more generously than I had ever thought possible from people in our financial circumstances. One widow had been saving a few dollars a month for a couple of years towards the purchase of an air conditioner for her apartment, which was extremely warm in the summer time. She insisted on contributing the hundred dollars that she had been able to save toward this fund raising project. Then other members gave her a big floor fan and others installed a good screen door on her apartment. Another family, a man and wife and one little girl who was mentally retarded, and the husband was dying of emphysema, asked me if a thousand dollars would be a sacrifice, a generous contribution. I assured them that it would be more than generous. When they brought their money to me they brought three thousand dollars. I was astonished and almost speechless. They didn't know how to interpret my reaction and asked me if I thought that was enough. I



**Image 93. Miller Street home in August 1978, just before the move. (000249)**

They came back with an offer of \$73,000 for our property, which Roberta and I felt we could not turn down. We had seen a home on 600 East, but Wilkinsen's first price offer was not enough to buy it. When they increased their offer we decided in August to sell. It was unlikely that anyone else would want our property that badly. We closed the sale of our home and the purchase of the new home on the 21st of September, and we moved into this new home at 4602 South 600 East on the 28th.



**Image 94. Miller St. in August 2002 looking west where the Larsen home used to stand. The apartment complex can still be seen. (000688)**

I'm most amazed at myself that I could make such a difficult far-reaching and emotionally impacted decision so easily. I don't make decisions easily and as I've said before in this story. I have a trait that causes me to have second thoughts and regrets soon after having made a decision, even a trivial one. So, I'm sure that we had

spiritual help in making this decision.

It was a good move for John and Mark and especially beneficial for Lori. Lori



**Image 95. Home Merlin and Roberta purchased in 1978 at 4602 South 600 East. This picture taken in June 1985 the day John and Doug started the trip to New Hampshire. (000574)**

was having a very difficult time in junior high school. Three girls from our Murray 8th Ward had made a project, a personal campaign, out of making Lori's life very miserable, at church and at school. It was so distressing to Lori that it's quite likely that she was



**Image 96. Lori Larsen and Lori Wharton at 9th grade graduation spring 1979. (000502)**

headed for some kind of emotional or nervous breakdown as a result of their persecution of her. She was thrilled of the prospect of going to a different school. So when school began near the first of September she rode the bus up to 5th East and 37th South and attended the Granite Park Junior High School. There she met one of her dearest friends, Lori Wharton. They've been good friends ever since that time.

The timing of the sale of our home was

very fortunate. Not many weeks after the sale was completed the public became aware of the deep financial crisis facing Chrysler Corporation. They were faced with bankruptcy and were saved from it only by the federal government guaranteeing or underwriting a loan of several billion dollars for that company to help it restructure its affairs. The crisis resulted in the Wilkinsens giving up the Chrysler Plymouth dealership and concentrating on the Honda line. It also caused them to delay their plans for expansion for about six years after they had purchased our property. If we hadn't sold to them and moved when we did we wouldn't have been so unfortunate so far as the home was concerned. We enjoyed living on Miller Street, but it might have been a tragic delay for Lori.

Before I was released from being bishop I had the privilege of extending a mission call to Mark. He accepted it and submitted his papers just before we left the Murray 8th Ward.

I traded in the red Toyota, which we had bought a year before and which was such a bad mistake, on the purchase of a 1972 Buick Le Saber. We kept that Buick until October of 1994. It was a very dependable, enjoyable and fairly economical car.

There was a significant change in the accounting office. In September we bought a newer Burroughs B700 computer, which was much more powerful than the one we had used for about nine years. This was an enjoyable challenge to adapt this computer to the heavy workload in our office without interrupting our service. In November I went to



Pasadena, California, for a one-week training and orientation seminar to help in that transition.

On December 2nd a very tragic accident happened in Roberta's family. Her brother Douglas, for whom we had named our son, was involved in an accident as he was returning from his work at Kennecott Copper. A drunk driver crossed over into his lane and hit his car head-on. Doug lay in a coma until the 22nd of December and then died. He was buried on the day after Christmas. This was the fourth death in Roberta's family in four years: her mother, her oldest brother, her oldest sister, and now her youngest brother. The way Roberta has handled this series of losses has been very impressive to me. She's a very strong person, has a deep faith in the gospel, in the Lord, and a very spiritual understanding of the role of death in our life on earth.

**Image 97. Douglas Bernard Carpenter, brother of Roberta, taken in early 50s. (000123)**

## 1979: John is Married

After that very sad ending of 1978 we had a happy beginning of 1979. Mark left on his mission in January. His farewell meeting was held of course in our ward, Millcreek 8th Ward. About half the congregation was from the Murray 8th Ward. Mark was not at all sure that he wanted to go on a mission, but it was his decision. When we took him to the MTC he told us as we left him there that if he didn't like it he would be home in a few days. Well, in a few days we received a letter from him in which he described the joy and satisfaction and the spiritual thrill he had from the atmosphere and the program at the MTC. He was convinced that he had made the right choice to go on a mission and we were thrilled with the change in his feelings about it. We wrote to Mark every week during his mission. He went to the Switzerland Geneva Mission, which included the southeast corner of France and the west part of Switzerland.



**Image 98. Elder Mark Larsen (2nd from left) serving in the Switzerland Geneva Mission.**  
(000570)

We had sold the yellow Volkswagen to John in 1978. He had an accident on April 19<sup>th</sup> near home on the intersection of 7th East and 45th South and the Volkswagen was totaled. He was not hurt at all, which was miraculous. He was hit broadside by a westbound pickup truck that ran the red light as he made a left turn to go north. At any rate, the other driver was cited as being at fault. John had paid us for the car by borrowing and the insurance enabled him to replace the car with a 1976 Chevy Nova, which he had until 1991. We thank God that he was not hurt in that accident. He could have been killed.



**Image 99. John standing beside the totaled 1974 Volkswagen. (000689)**

In March 1979 John met Joyce Acomb in a Latin American Ballroom Dance class at the University of Utah where he was then enrolled. They fell in love and were married on September 8th in the Salt Lake Temple. The wedding and the reception following were very happy events for them and both families. Doug's and John's marriages have been happy since they began, husband and wife in each case working hard to make the marriage work. That's true of Mark's marriage and Lori's also, although they come along several years after this. We'll get to them in the story at the appropriate time.

We proceeded to make some remodeling changes in this home. It's an excellent home, but we didn't like the way it was arranged. Some of the rooms were small and the basement area was quite chopped up. We first installed the draperies in the front room and then prepared the boys' bedroom downstairs. We wanted a garden. When we moved here the yard was entirely in grass so we had a job there. We cut off the sod and gave it to the Art Ball family down the lane. We got a start on Lori's bedroom in the basement by removing a wall during the last couple days before Mark left on his mission. I had some ideas for a new larger kitchen using the bedroom upstairs next to the kitchen, which was Lori's bedroom when we came here.



**Image 100. Wedding of John Larsen and Joyce Acomb on 8 September 1979 in the Salt Lake Temple. (000690)**

In October Clint Hastings moved in with us and lived in the room that Mark had used. Clint had been a good friend of the family, particularly of John and Mark, since early grade school.

I was very busy at work in the accounting office during this whole year developing programs and converting our accounting work to the computer. By the end of the year we had a good accounting system functioning well, but it had taken many hours of overtime.

In October there was another very unhappy development at work that led to much trouble between Warren and Ted. Warren and his son Reynold acquired the voting stock of Lee Bullock and Bill Lazear, which gave them voting control of the Colorado Corporation. This was done in secret without Ted being aware that it was going on and was very improper. Ted was now a minority stockholder whereas for all the years that he and Warren had been in business they were equal partners. This was very disturbing to

Ted and also to me. All during the 21 years that I had worked for them I had always felt obligated to treat their interests equally and impartially. This change made that even more difficult.

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1979 Doug and Gwen were blessed with their second child, another son whom they named Conrad.



**Image 101. Taken in 1979 during the annual Easter hike to the “U Mountain”**

## 1980

In 1980 we had aluminum installed over all the exterior wood on our house. We're very pleased with the excellent job that was done. We accepted the highest bid on the job and learned something from this.

I finished Lori's bedroom in the basement about May. Roberta and I decided to ask Clint to find another place else to live by August so that Lori could move to the basement. We felt that it was not quite right for Lori to be in the basement where Clint lived and often brought in his boy friends. He understood our viewpoint perfectly well. He moved to Spring Meadows, an apartment complex about a half a mile from here. We invited him to keep coming to our home for Sunday dinner. We were glad he would do that. It was a good change for Clint. He became active in a singles ward, the Millcreek 11th Ward. This was a good change in his life. He hadn't been going to church for several years with any regularity.

In May we became very concerned about Mark and the influence upon him of the undisciplined improper behavior of his missionary companion, Elder Freedbom, a Jewish convert to the church. He didn't believe in obeying the rules of the mission and was doing things that were totally inappropriate. We have always been grateful that Mark would tell us what was going on. I called and talked with the mission president about the situation and he straightened it out. Mark was a little bit upset that I had done that. Of course, his companion would have been outraged if he had known it, but Mark did not tell him that I was the one who had alerted the mission president.

I began work on our new kitchen in October. The situation was very convenient. I was able to do most of the work right in the room, which had been Lori's bedroom and could close the door on it and confine the dust and the mess to that room until it was practically complete, about six months later.

In January I was called to be the high priest group leader. This is the third time that I have had this position having had it twice before in the Murray 8th Ward.

A situation developed at work in our office, which was very trying emotionally. There were just three of us in the office, two women and myself. Alice Day had worked for the company two years longer than I had. Kathy Flitton had worked for Ice-All-O-Matic and came into our office in 1969 when Ice-All-O-Matic failed. During the last year or so Kathy had been becoming rather silent and unfriendly toward me and also somewhat toward Alice. I got the impression that she did not like me at all personally and also because I was a man. Kathy had been divorced since just before she came to work for us and she had had some unhappy experiences with men, her ex-husband and other men. I guess I was one of the crowd of people she didn't like for that reason, I was a man. I always felt that I was in charge of the office and should make decisions on the systems that we should use and the procedures we would follow. Our workload was very heavy and we had to be accurate and not waste time with mistakes. We all had to work in a way that each of us knew what was going on.

Kathy resented very much my telling her how the work was to be done in some instances. This became very upsetting to me. It triggered the same trait in my nature, my disposition, that gave me trouble when I was a teacher in the public school. When I'm in charge as a teacher or as a supervisor it's very upsetting to me if someone challenges my authority openly or even subtly. I had asked Kathy many times to please do it the way I asked her to do it so that all of us would know how it had been done and what had been done and had not been done. It was important that we be able to understand the other person's work and the status of that work. Well, she continued to challenge me and disobey. That plus her very unfriendly and hostile behavior developed to a climax in September and I fired her. Alice was on vacation at the time and I realized that firing Kathy would leave me with the entire operation to take care of myself, but I told her that I would work all night long to do it myself rather than have her in the office another day. I was especially upset a couple days later when I became aware that Venice Holt over in the office of Ted Brown's business, one of the companies that we served, had hired Kathy the day after I fired her. They didn't even bother to ask me why I had fired Kathy. They took her word for it, which was not correct. She never did tell them the actual reason for which I had fired her.



**Image 102. Left to Right: Eldon Rasmussen, Merlin Larsen, Venice Holt, Warren Brown, Alice Day, Ted Brown, Kathleen Flitton, Robert Haedt, and ?, taken in 1982. (000192)**

Well, time blurs hard lines and the hard feelings. In the years since 1980 this disturbing confrontation between Kathy and me gradually mended and I'll tell more about that about six years down the road in my story.

In the summer I had another confrontation with one of my personal weaknesses or traits. The roof over our breezeway was bad, needed to be replaced, so I bought some asphalt roofing shingles and replaced that roof. It was a frightening thing for me. I'm really frightened to be on a roof. I'm frightened by heights, very uneasy, and on a roof I'm afraid of stumbling and falling off. I managed to get that roof put on assisted by a safety rope around my waist.

In October a sad little thing happened. Our little dog Buttons was killed in the street in front of our house. She had run out in the street to welcome Lori home from

school and was struck by a pickup truck that came up over the hill from the south much too fast as most cars do. Buttons was a very good little dog, intelligent and pleasant and we all got a lot of pleasure out of her through the years. We had her about twelve years. We probably had more pleasure from her than we deserved considering our casual care of her. Ever since she won Roberta's heart for being such a good little mother to her litter of puppies long ago she's been allowed to sleep inside the house, inside the back door. Fortunately here in our new home there is also a door between the house and the back entry where Buttons made her home at night. In the daytime she was generally in the yard. She was a very good pal. Lori was broken hearted at her death and wanted us to have a little funeral for her. So we did, Lori and Roberta and I. We buried her north of the house under the lilac bush.



**Image 103. Taken at a Larsen Family reunion held in 1980 in Brigham City**

## 1981

Mark returned from his mission in January of 1981 and started work at Reams about a month later in early March I think. Then, later in March he enrolled again at the University of Utah. He hadn't had much success in the mission as far as baptisms were concerned, but like John, who also served in France, he came home with a firm testimony and has always been glad that he served that mission. Doug and Lori too and Roberta and I have always been glad for the contribution we've been able to make to the missionary program both in time and money.

We completed our new kitchen in July. The great inflation in the cost of everything is well demonstrated in our remodeling. We spent as many dollars remodeling this house from 1978 to 1984 as we spent on the Miller Street house in 26 years. The changes there were much more extensive than those we made here. I'm surely glad that we've been able to modify this home to make it more comfortable, more beautiful and convenient.



**Image 104. Taken in 1981 at the annual camping trip to Granite Flats**

In June we took a nice trip in the old Buick. We went down to Tucson, visited Raymond and his family, then went over to San Diego, up to Los Angeles where we visited with the Maughans, then up to San Francisco and home. The Buick was almost dependable. It gave us trouble three times, but always where help was available. We were treated very fairly and honestly everywhere we went to have that car repaired. At Cameron, Arizona, east of the Grand Canyon there was a service station run by Navajo Indians. Our water pump failed there. Those Indians repaired it. They had to get a new

water pump from Flagstaff, which is about 50 miles away. They didn't charge us a thing for the trip down there to get the water pump. They just charged us for the pump and a few dollars to install it.

We had a good visit with Raymond and his family. Only three of his children are at home, Barbie and Gail and Allen. The others of course are married and out on their own raising their own families. Raymond was the bishop of his ward in Sahuarita, serving from October of 1978 until October of 1983. He and his family have been really great assets to their ward and helped increase the level of attendance and activity considerably while they've been there.

In the nation we had the highest rate of inflation that we have had in this century. The prime rate of interest went up to 21 percent. Our profit sharing trust lost money that year. It lost more money than was invested in new contributions by the company and the employees while other profit sharing plans were making earnings as high as 20 and 30 percent. We had really bad management through the trust department of the bank.

## 1982: Lori Graduates from High School

With both Lori and Mark at home, going to school, and working, we needed more transportation in our family, so in January of 1982 we bought a 1981 Volkswagen Rabbit, a dark green one. Then in September we bought a second Rabbit, a white one with a diesel engine in it. Our youngest child Lori graduated from Granite High School in May and enrolled in the University of Utah. At this time we had three children simultaneously enrolled at the University of Utah, which thing I could never have imagined 33 years ago when I graduated from there.



**Image 105. Clint Hastings leaving on his mission on 27 Sept 1982. He is holding Heather Larsen, John's and Joyce's first child, born 8 Feb 1982. (000576)**

At work this year and into 1983, I began to develop several new software programs on the computer with the help of Gail Miles who was an expert programmer. He lived in Ogden. These programs were to improve our accounting for accounts receivable, to give us invoice number control, and to account for jobs and commission sales and commissions received in the activity of Ted R. Brown and Associates. This was a long-term program and it enabled us to keep up with the increasing volume of sales activities in the companies, at a very nominal expense to the company. It was always the philosophy in our accounting office to do the job with as little expense as possible. Over the 29 years that I worked for them we never had more than three people full time in that office, yet we handled the work entailed by a 500% or 600% increase in sales activity. I have always felt that we did a good job for our employers and I believe they thought so too. They gave me a lot of liberty to do the work the way I thought it

should be done. They placed complete trust in me and I am grateful for that.

This year Gary Nebeker, son of Roberta's sister Kay, went on a mission to northern Germany. Clint Hastings went also on a mission to the same mission Mark served in, the Switzerland Geneva Mission. He lived in some of the same apartments that Mark had lived in, and met a number of people there who remembered Mark and thought Clint must be related to him. He looked so much like Mark I guess, tall and blond and American. This surely marked a miraculous change in Clint's life, and we're happy to see him living the gospel way. That continues to the present time, 2002. Clint married a

wonderful girl, Nina Whitaker, from central Utah. She has been a really stabilizing and motivating influence for good in Clint's life. Nina worked to help Clint through the University of Utah and to get out of debt. Today they have two boys and a girl, Curtis, Nicole, and Spencer. They live in or near Dallas, Texas.

I forgot to mention back a couple of years at the time that I terminated Kathy Flitton's employment with us that we hired a very lovely lady in her place named Myrtle Rappley. Mert worked for us for about five years, did excellent work, and was always very pleasant to work with. We were always fortunate in our office to have people who

were accurate. Whether they were fast or slow they were accurate and we didn't have to spend a lot of time correcting errors. This was a big factor in enabling us to carry the increased volume of work that we did through the years.

My boss Warren Brown had an aneurysm in his brain about this time. That's a very serious thing, often fatal. He recovered from it quite well physically, but his continual worrying about it plus other problems including the strife at work with his brother Ted, caused him to become more and more depressed and withdrawn during this year of 1982.

Early in the spring we discovered that one of the employees in the Salt Lake branch of Distributors Incorporated, Colorado, had been stealing from the company. She was in a position that enabled her to alter and forge checks. She stole something over \$30,000. It was my duty during the later part of this year to assemble the information necessary for her to be charged with this crime and be tried for it. My experience with the court system in this matter was very disillusioning. We had all of the evidence to convict her but the county attorney's office plea-bargained the matter and she spent 30 days in jail, two weekend days at a time, for fifteen weeks. She never repaid any of the money. The white-collar crime that goes on in this country, and I suppose elsewhere in the world, is just astonishing, and most of it goes undetected and or unpunished.



**Image 106. Lori graduates from Granite High School.**  
(000584)

During the 80's a number of instances of this in Wall Street activity were discovered and exposed, some involving hundreds of millions of dollars stolen or taken by fraud. Some of the criminals were punished, most of them not very heavily.

In 1969 we bought a Magnavox stereo in a beautiful cabinet. Now, thirteen years later, the electronic components in that system had worn out, and were not functioning very well. In June of 1982 I removed them and replaced them with modern electronic components, a record changer, a new amplifier, and a tape deck. We were able to keep the beautiful cabinet, which Roberta and I really like very much.

Two new grand children were born in our family in 1982. Heather was born to John and Joyce, their first child, on February 8th, and Alex, Doug's and Gwen's third child and third son, was born on July 2nd. Both were in good health, and were beautiful whole normal children. We've certainly been blessed with good health in our family.

On September 26th there were some unusually heavy rainstorms in the mountains particularly over the Big Cottonwood area that caused heavy flooding along that streams through the valley. This cause a lot of damage including here in our Millcreek 8<sup>th</sup> Ward and in the Murray 8th Ward where there's a mobile home park called Cottonwood Cove. The water there was about four feet deep and flooded and destroyed a number of mobile homes.

It's always inspiring to see how people rally together in an emergency. Neighbors who didn't even know one another's names gathered together to build sand bag banks along the river and around the homes to help minimize the damage to their neighbors' homes. It made no difference whether they were members of the church or not. People really rise to the occasion when there's serious emergency.



**Image 107. Taken in 1982 during the annual Easter hike to the “U Mountain”**

## 1983

The winter of 1983 was the wettest winter in recorded history here in Utah. There was severe flooding in the spring. Water running down State Street made a river banked up with sandbags, and another river ran down 13th South as it did in 1952. Flooding was very destructive throughout Utah, but wasn't as damaging in our area as it had been in September 1982.



**Image 108. Looking north on State Street at sandbag river spring of 1983. (000577)**

This year I helped to build a bathroom and bedroom and do some other finish work in the basement of Doug's and Gwen's home. Gwen's folks bought the materials and I furnished the labor. They did have to hire a plumber to do some of the plumbing for the bathroom. Here at home remodeling is my favorite thing, my favorite hobby. I continued making improvements. I removed a closet from our front room, which was located right by the front door, something we didn't like at all. It was never used, was unsightly, and made the room appear smaller and crowded. I widened the doorway from the front room into the hallway from 30 inches, just a normal door width, to eight feet, removing the whole wall, and installed a folding door there so the room could be closed off from the kitchen area. Then I built some bookshelves down in our family room under the front room. There's a fireplace in the basement. These bookshelves surround the fireplace. It includes a nice mantel across the width of the

room.

Cloy Griffiths, a good friend in the Murray 8th Ward, died in June of bone cancer. He had suffered terribly being bed ridden for two years. This cancer first appeared in the prostate gland about nine years before and he thought it was controlled, but it went into his bones. His wife cared for him at home all that time. They couldn't do anything for him in the hospital. She was very dissatisfied with the attention that he got in the nursing home so she cared for him at home. It was a most impressive and beautiful thing to see the love and devotion that she had for him and he for her. He was a very brave man and never complained. It was always uplifting to go and visit him. We were supposed to lift his spirits. He was the sick one, but he always uplifted the spirits of those that visited him with his courage and his acceptance of this terminal illness.

We finally finished the programs for the computer at work that Gail Miles and I had been working on for a year and a half. I had devoted many overtime hours to this,



working into the night, on Saturdays and on Holidays. In all of the years that I worked for Restribco (which became Distributors Incorporated with a name change) I was never paid any overtime, but the bonuses at year end were often very generous. Sometimes there were no bonuses. But, I never felt abused by not being paid overtime. I enjoyed the work and was willing to put in the time that it took to do it. There's one thing that I do regret looking back through the last thirty years or more that we've been married. I haven't spent as much time with my children as I should have. I don't think that they've felt neglected, but I know I could have devoted more time to them especially individually. That's one regret I have and I imagine my long hours at work contributed to that problem.

**Image 109. Jeffery, Conrad, and Alex Larsen taken early summer 1983 in their West Jordan home. (000575)**

## 1984

At the beginning of 1984 I had a very great disappointment at work. Reynold Brown who had become the manager in Denver when Lee Bullock retired in 1981 rejected my new computer programs. He would not allow us to use them on our work for his operation without even a trial. He didn't even try them. He didn't have the courage to tell me himself. He passed the word to me indirectly. His reasons became clear when he said a little later in February that he was going to move the accounting function to Denver. This foreshadowed the end of our accounting office and my job. I felt and still feel that Reynold and Warren were very deceitful and unfair in their treatment of me and the others in our accounting office. Warren had assured me through the years directly and personally that I would have work with him, with the company, until I wished to retire. But here, before I'm 60 years old I'm getting the word that my job will soon be terminated.



**Image 110. Taken in 1984 during the annual Easter hike to the “U Mountain”**

In August of 1984 we discovered that a long time employee, Venice Holt, who had worked for Ted since 1957 has been stealing money from the company for ten years. The amount was approximately \$375,000. It's a long story how she could get away with that without being discovered. I don't know how much of that if any of it to include in my life's story. Maybe I'll write a novel about my dealings with Ted and Warren Brown and their enterprises with whom I worked for almost thirty years. She was charged with the crime, a second degree felony. She never served a day in jail. Ted required her to forfeit

her profit sharing trust account. She turned over to Ted the titles, the deeds, to two or three pieces of property she owned but which were heavily indebted, and other things, other personal property and possessions that she surrendered. She probably paid back about a third of the money that she stole, about \$125,000 total.

In the spring of 1984 I made a big change in our home by building a new stairway to the basement in the end of our front room next to the kitchen. This stairway transformed the use of the space in our basement. It made a very nice family room directly under our entire front room. It created an excellent storage under the utility room. There was no heat or light in that room making it an excellent food storage room. This change made our whole basement much more useful and much more attractive. We put new carpet in our front room and on the stairway, bought a new couch and chair and a love seat, and finished the family room downstairs with carpet and a repaint. We installed an aluminum roof that should last much longer than we will.

On August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1984, Doug and Gwen were blessed with their first daughter Suzanna, our second grand daughter. Gwen has become quite expert at having babies, taking quite naturally to this mother business, not just having children but caring for them.



**Image 111. Taken at Larsen Family reunion held in Brigham City in 1984**

## 1985

1985 was a year that had many large changes in our life. John graduated from the University of Utah in June and had already interviewed for and accepted a job with Sanders Electronics in New Hampshire. So, soon after graduation, just days after, he drove their car to New Hampshire. Doug accompanied him then flew back home. It took them a whole week to get back there. He looked for an apartment for his family and on the 22nd of June Joyce and the children flew away. Bradford, their second child, had been born on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, just a three month old baby.



**Image 112. The much used family go-cart. LtoR: Conrad, Heather, Alex, and Jeffery Ammon Larsen on June 16, 1985. (000700)**

In July and August 1985 Lori made a trip to Europe with a group of university students arranged through an association in the east, and was gone for most of three weeks. She had a very enjoyable trip, learned a great deal about the world and about herself and about other people. It was a real growing experience for her. She had worked hard and saved her own money for this trip. She was thinking about going on a mission and I think this trip developed the maturity and judgment that she needed to make a good decision.

Lori decided to serve a mission and was called to go to Costa Rica and Panama. So, in September she went into the MTC and in November left on her mission. My Aunt Barbara died in September just a few days after Lori went into the MTC. Aunt Barbara had felt a lot of love for Lori and we've all been glad that Lori was able to visit with her one last time when she was failing rapidly. Aunt Barbara was my father's only sister, and was the last one of his family to die. She was 88 years old.

Mark graduated from the University of Utah in December. He also had been interviewed for employment by a business back east, a firm of professional consultants in computer software and computer operations, a company called Lackman and Associates

based in Chicago. They contracted to place employees in Columbus, Ohio. That's where Mark went on the 30th of December and worked with Bell Laboratories, part of AT&T, a research division. He still has that job now in 1992 which is very unusual. Most of their contract arrangements are much shorter in duration, just a year or two. Mark has enjoyed his work there but it was hard on him and on us when he moved out. He was terribly homesick and I really could relate well to his agony. He inherited that malady from me. We did a lot of talking on the phone. For several weeks we talked almost everyday or several times a week at least.

A big change occurred in my own employment. Ted R Brown and Associates, which was one of the companies we serviced, was sold in June to a firm called Mantle and White, two young men who were into the leveraged buyout activity which was sweeping the nation all during the 80's. I'll tell you something about leveraged buyouts. It might be appropriate a little later when we discuss other activities with Mantle and



**Image 113. Chief Wasatch located in Murray Park.**

White having to do with Distributors Incorporated. But, we were informed that our accounting services for Distributors Incorporated Colorado would end with 1985. This was a real blow to me. It of course indicated the end of my job since our office existed to service these corporations.

I joined the Olympus Male Chorus in September and that year we sang Christmas Carols at Temple Square. Learning these songs and singing with these men was a most uplifting experience for me. I really needed something like that because I was feeling mighty low about the approaching end of my job.

I had another hernia operation in November. Doctor Hugh Voorhees, a young surgeon, did this job. Malcolm Jeppsen, our doctor, was no longer doing surgery, hadn't done for several years. The technique for hernia operation had been greatly improved. It was in and out surgery. I didn't stay in the hospital even overnight. I was just a little bit uncomfortable for a few days and

recovered really well.

On the 23rd of November Roberta and Kay and I went down to the Murray Park where we saw them dedicate the huge wooden sculpture called Chief Wasatch, which is still located there. It was carved by a young man in honor of the Indian Tribes of the Utah area. His name is Peter Toth and he is an immigrant from Hungary and became very much impressed with the culture and the troubles, the travails, of the American

Indians. To honor them he created a sculpture similar to this in every state of the union and in Canada.

Well, with just Roberta and me in the home now, all of our little birds having flown, we decided to have an artificial Christmas tree this year. I didn't seem to have the heart to go out and look for a tree without Lori to go with me, none of the kids at home. So, we bought a full height tree, seven and a half feet high, which we've used every Christmas since. We enjoy it. It has a beautiful shape. It also called for a change in lighting. The old lights that we had used for years were now worn out. The wire had become old and decomposed, so we bought a half dozen strings of these little lights, these miniature lights. They're also pretty, but not quite as beautiful as the larger lights with reflectors behind the bulbs. Our Christmas was quite different with none of the children home. Of course Doug and Gwen and their kids were still nearby and that helped.



**Image 114. Taken at a Merlin's and Roberta's home the day John and Doug left for New Hampshire**

## **1986: Open Heart Surgery**

1986 was another very different year. My job ended February 28th after 28 years. I took a half time job continuing accounting service to the new owners of Ted R Brown and Associates starting March 1st. Then on April 4th I started a second half time job for those men, Mantle and White, which made me eligible for their group insurance. Lyle Christofferson, the young man running their office was very kind to me in this situation. He made my group insurance effective to April 1<sup>st</sup>, back dating it a few days, which was fine, perfectly proper. But as it turned out, that kindness of his saved Roberta and me about \$22,000.

On the 14th of April 1986 I was diagnosed by a doctor named Michael Preece as having very severe heart trouble, a blockage of the cardiac arteries. Interestingly he's the son of a man that I had met many years ago when I first started working for Glen Mickleson in Utility Trailers. Bill Preece, the father of this doctor, was a good friend of Glen Mickleson. Well on May 14th I had heart bypass surgery, six bypasses. The surgeon was Doctor Lynn Stevens Richards. He did an excellent job and I had a good recovery. Doctor Richards was just the age of my brother Raymond, both born in September. He is a grandson of Stephen L. Richards, an Apostle and counselor to President David O. McKay.

That was quite an experience for me. There's hardly any way I can put my feelings of the time onto this tape, but right away I had a humbling experience, a very ironic one. You remember in my story I told about my having fired Kathy Flitton in 1980 and my resentment that she had been hired a couple days later by Ted R Brown and Associates. She was still working for them at this time and we worked closely together through all of the intervening years because we were both involved in their office work. I trained Kathy for a few days before my surgery, taught her how to do the urgent parts of my job on the computer so the work could be kept going. She was able to keep my job going for me during May and June and part of July. During July I was gradually able to pick it up again, and by the middle of July I could handle it myself. I appreciated very much her help and the kindness of Lyle Christopherson.

My emotions were very abnormal following this surgery for most of a year. I was unusually tearful and a little more openly affectionate than normal. I had a very rosy outlook on life. Everything was wonderful. I felt I could jump over the house if I needed to. I was really in an emotional high. At Dr. Richards' recommendation I did not look for another full time job. I retired in March 1987 when my job with Mantle & White ended. I really appreciated my part time job during this next year.

James Scott, a fourth son and fifth child was born to Doug and Gwen on July 16, 1986. We went camping up to Redman in Big Cottonwood Canyon again in August and it was really fun. I enjoyed camping this time more than I had for several years. A happy thing occurred there. Mark arranged to come home for the camping time and his cousin Gary Nebeker introduced him to a young lady that Gary had met in a singles ward that was meeting in our chapel. Dixie Christensen was from Oregon but was living and working in Salt Lake. Gary and Dixie were good friends and Dixie had told Gary she was about fed up with the dating game, had about decided she'd never find the kind of man she wanted to marry. She told Gary what she was looking for and Gary said, "Say... you ought to meet my cousin Mark."

Dixie told Gary that she was going home to Oregon for her vacation just at the time that Mark was going to be here from Ohio, but Gary urged her to come back to Salt Lake a day or two early and that he would introduce her to Mark. So they came up to our campground the last evening that we were to be there and Mark and Dixie sized each other up through the glow of the campfire. The next morning, Saturday, as we were breaking camp, they and Gary and a girlfriend who had accompanied him up to the camp the evening before all went on a hike. And in those few hours Mark and Dixie discovered that they liked each other and would like to know each other better. So, over the weekend they spent some hours together mostly talking and on Monday morning Mark flew back to Columbus Ohio and Dixie went back to work. They courted during the rest of 1986 by way of long distance telephone. They became engaged about Thanksgiving time and the happy event is part of the story for next year, 1987.

Robi and I flew to Nashua in October 1986. It was a very enjoyable trip. I was on my emotional high so everything was wonderful. John and Joyce took us sight seeing. We went up to Sharon, Vermont, to visit the memorial there to Joseph Smith at his birth place. We went to Boston and walked through some of the historic part of that city. We saw some of the historical places, including the "Old South Church" of Paul Revere fame. We went onto the famous ship USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides". We went down to Plymouth, Massachusetts, where a village has been restored very much like the village that pilgrims built there when they came to America in 1620. The New England countryside was beautiful in its fall colors. So we had a fun trip.

Mark flew to Boston from Columbus and spent several days with John's family and us, and then Mark, Roberta and I flew back to Columbus together and we visited for a day or so with Mark.



**Image 115. Merlin and Roberta visiting John, Joyce, Heather, and Bradford Larsen. This picture taken 18 Oct 1986 on the deck of "Old Ironsides". (000582)**

We had an enjoyable time and discovered that Mark was an excellent, very fastidious housekeeper even though no one else came into his apartment. He kept it spotlessly clean. Mark took us out to Dayton, Ohio, which is about one hundred miles west of Columbus, to visit the Air Force Museum there at Wright Patterson field. That was a real treat for me especially, being an alumnus of

the Air Force. It's a wonderful place. I'd like to get back and see it again when we could spend more time. We had just a few hours because Mark had to be to work the next morning and the museum closed at 6 o'clock that evening. It was surely enjoyable.

I was quite upset by the ending of my job back in February of 1986. At that time Warren and Ted paid me a termination bonus equal to about three months salary, but a much bigger benefit had been a long time in building. Back in 1956 they had created a profit sharing trust in which I had participated I think since 1961. Now with my termination and the dissolution of the company, my account in the profit sharing trust was transferred to me in the form of an IRA with Tracy Collins Bank and Trust Department. So in 1987 I began to look for ways of reinvesting that money more profitably. I was not impressed with the performance of the bank's trust department. They had dropped the ball many times and had lost money when they should have made money.



**Image 116. Taken in 1986 in Merlin's and Roberta's living room**

## **1987: Retirement Begins; Mark is Married**

My part time job with Mantle and White ended March 31, 1987 so I retired, being 62 years old. The previous November I began drawing social security benefits. I continued walking for exercise; had done since my surgery and still do. At that time I was walking 4 miles in an hour everyday including Sunday. I discontinued walking on Sunday about June of 87 and no longer walk on Sundays. In the winter months from about the 15th of December to the 15th of February more or less I walked in the Fashion Place Mall in South Murray, an excellent place for walking in bad weather. I walk around the mall about six times to cover four miles.

From February 1987 to the present time 2002 Roberta and I have been going to the temple one day each week (Wednesday or Friday). We go in early arriving at 5:30 and attend an endowment session and a sealing session or two sealing sessions as proxies. Since 1998 we have also served in the laundry or clothing department.

In May of 1987 I resurrected part of my past. I took my old accordion out of its case where I had put it soon after our marriage in 1951 and tried to play it again. Amazingly the instrument was still in excellent condition and played perfectly. I decided to put some time and effort into it and try to develop some competence on it. I had played it for about four years way back before I was married from 1947 to 1951. I never did become really good at it, but I did enjoy it, and I enjoyed it again now when I began playing in 1987. I'm still playing in 1992 and I'll tell about the development of that as this story goes along during the 80s.

That summer I erected a new steel storage shed out in the yard and we filled it with junk from the basement, valuable property that we had stored down there that no body had the courage to throw away. Getting that stuff out of the basement made it look a lot better and Robi was very pleased.

Lori returned from her mission on March 13th and reentered the University of Utah. I had registered her before she came home and had made one wise choice for her, a course called "The Miracle at Philadelphia". It was to be a series of ten lectures on the Constitution of the United States and its creation in 1787. Roberta and I attended this series of lectures along with several hundred other people. The course was taught by professor J. D. Williams, head of the political science department. They enrolled two hundred students who took it for credit and made room for two hundred people from the community who took it just for fun. We enjoyed it immensely. It was informative and thrilling and was especially impressive to Lori. The maturity of it and the appeal of it to her patriotic sense and her love for America were very strong.

Professor Williams paid Lori a compliment in writing at the conclusion of that class which truly was a superlative compliment. On her final examination paper, which was largely a composition rather than merely answering questions, Professor Williams wrote approximately these words. He said, "In my 38 years of teaching at the University I have never read a better paper." A real compliment and very well deserved.

Mark and Dixie were married on March 20th in the Salt Lake Temple, and very happily John and Joyce were able to fly out to be in the temple with them. On the next day, March 21st, Joyce's brother Stanford and his wife were married in the temple. So, between us and Joyce's parents, Kent and Jeanine Acomb, we arranged to fly John and Joyce out here for this occasion and a little visit. Their reception was quite memorable. They held it in our Millcreek 8th Ward building and the catering was quite unusual. We engaged a woman to do the catering who had been recommended to us by friends. The reception began at 7 o'clock. No one showed up from the caterers until 7:45. Then when they came they were unprepared. They served second hand food from earlier receptions that they had catered. It was disgraceful and most embarrassing. Kay Nebeker and others of Roberta's family stepped into the breach, went up to Smith's market and bought some additional pastries and punch for refreshments and salvaged the evening, at least for the last half of our guests. Those who came from 7:00 to 7:45 must have wondered what kind of affair we were presenting and inviting them to. We were in the line of course and didn't really know what was going on until half way through the affair when Kay had it under control.



**Image 117. Wedding reception for Mark and Dixie Larsen. (000583)**

Mark and Dixie had a second reception at Dixie's home in Burns, Oregon, a week later. Lori and we traveled up for that affair. Mark and Dixie took one of our Volkswagens on their honeymoon for a week and met us there for the reception. It was held in Dixie's home ward and it was a very fine, enjoyable time. Dixie's parents took us all out to dinner for a wedding breakfast at a restaurant there in Burns called "The Sages". It was one of the best meals I have ever eaten in a restaurant. The trip up and back was very enjoyable too.



**Image 118. Family reunion held July 1987 in Rose Park, Utah. (000691)**

On July 25th we held a large Larsen family reunion in Rose Park here in Salt Lake. Lori had taken charge even before she went on her mission. She had set this time for the reunion. At the end of her mission and immediately after she got back, she circulated a mailing to all the family members here and there around the country, informing them of this reception. It was to be held in honor of my mother for her 85th birthday. My mother at that time had a total progeny of about 125 people. Of those about 90 were there. It was a very happy occasion for everybody. It was good to see that many family members together, many who hadn't seen each other for years, if ever.

We've seen Mark enter an airplane and leave us several times. When he went on his mission and when he went back to Ohio to work and a number of times since, and every time it happens we rejoice that he is married and not living back there alone. It was really hard to see him go the first time to Ohio. He was so utterly desolate. But, when he and Dixie went back together after their marriage it was a joyful thing. Even bidding him good-bye was joyful and not sad just because they were together and happy.



**Image 119. Taken at Larsen Family reunion held July 1987 in Rose Park, Utah**

## **1988: Traveling; Lori is Married**

In March 1988 Roberta and I did a most unusual thing. We hadn't done much vacationing and traveling in the years we've been married, at least not much compared with some people. But in March we bought senior citizens passes on Eastern Airlines for \$1,300 each. These passes entitled us to fly once a week for a year anywhere in the United States that Eastern flies. During the next twelve months we managed to take 13 trips. A requirement of the pass was that the round trips span a weekend so that each trip would take two calendar weeks. We could have made 26 trips in a year's time, but we did pretty well. We made 13, and we did have a most wonderful time.

Our first trip was in March to Houston, Texas, to visit my sister Shirley and her husband Hilton and their family. This was a real vacation for Roberta. We went out to eat everyday in a different restaurant. We visited many points of interest. We went up to the Dallas Temple, and down to Galveston, an interesting place built on an island in the Gulf of Mexico. We had a very enjoyable visit with Shirley and her family. Not many of us have been to Texas to visit Shirley. They were delighted. My mother has been very good to visit Shirley many times. I don't know how many. Perhaps a dozen times in the 35 plus years that she has lived there.

We took our second trip in April to Denver and visited with Lee and Dorcus Bullock just a couple of days. I don't remember why we didn't take more time to see Denver a little more fully. It was enjoyable. We rented a car over there, and enjoyed the time.

In May we went to Columbus Ohio and visited with Mark and Dixie. We spent about a week there and had a good time with them. They showed us some of the sights. We would have liked to go see Mark's workplace but were not allowed. It was restricted to employees only.

In June Roberta and I went to Washington D.C. That was a real thrill for both of us. Neither of us had been in any of these places that we visited before these trips. It was a thrill to see our nation's capital and the huge shrines built there in honor of Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson. We enjoyed the Smithsonian Institution and were in for a great surprise. We were used to museums that were housed in one building. The Smithsonian is housed in about eight or ten buildings, vast things, each one about a quarter of a mile long and three stories high; great beautiful buildings built of marble and granite, filled with exciting interesting things. We saw the Capitol building, not as thoroughly as we would have liked. We went down to visit Mount Vernon and of course visited Arlington Cemetery.

On most of these flights, especially eastward, we flew first to Atlanta, Georgia, which was the main hub for Eastern Airlines. We would land in Denver then fly to Atlanta. From there we'd transfer to another plane to our destination. Even when we flew to Houston we flew to Atlanta, several hundred miles to the east of Houston and then back to Houston, but that was all right. We became very well acquainted with the beautiful airport terminal in Atlanta, one of the most modern airports in the world and one of the largest. It was a great pleasure every time we went there.

In July we flew to Rochester, New York, which is near Palmyra, New York, where so much early church history took place. It was in Palmyra where Joseph Smith was living when the angel Moroni appeared to him and delivered the gold plates from

which the Book of Mormon was translated. We visited the church historical sights there and also attended the Hill Cumorah Pageant, which the church members back there have presented every July for many years. We enjoyed it, but somehow not quite as much as we expected. That was the first year they presented a revised and enlarged version of the pageant. To me it was more of a spectacle than a message; lots of lights and lots of electronic enhancement; somehow much less impressive to me than the small pageant presented at the Manti Temple here in Manti, Utah.



**Image 120. Merlin and Roberta visiting John and Joyce in New Hampshire**

In August 1988 we went to Nashua to visit with John and Joyce again. We had a real purpose in this trip. Joyce was going to have a new baby, their third child. Stanford was born on August 5th and Roberta and I timed our visit to them so Roberta particularly could be of help to Joyce during this time. I wasn't as much help as Roberta but did a little puttering around and taxied Heather back and forth to her kindergarten class, which she attended in the summer preparatory to her entering school in the fall. So this wasn't a sight seeing trip; it was a working trip. One thing I did that's memorable to me. I installed a ventilator fan in their bathroom. The climate is very humid in New Hampshire and in an area like a bathroom it promotes a lot of mildew and mold because of the moisture. So, they needed a ventilator fan to exhaust the moisture and minimize the mildew and mold. Roberta scoured the tile of their bathtub and shower enclosure. That and the ventilator were helpful to them. It was memorable to me because of how I

perspired. I had never worked that hard in a humid climate and I have never perspired that hard ever. My head was as wet as if I had dipped it in a bucket of water.

We had two other grandchildren born in the family that year: Natalie, Doug and Gwen's second girl, was born on September 4<sup>th</sup>. Elizabeth, another granddaughter, was born to Mark and Dixie on November 10th, their first child. We're surely thrilled that all three of these grand children were born well and normal, and that they and their mothers came through it all very well.

Our weather this year was really dry, the driest year in all of my lifetime I think. We had less than half an inch of rainfall during the summer between Memorial Day and November 2nd when 38 hundredths of an inch fell. It was a different kind of fall also. We normally have a killing frost in the later part of September, but this year, 1988, we didn't have a killing frost until November 7th. It finally came and took the garden.

My progress on the accordion suffered during all this traveling this year, but I kept with it and managed to make a little progress.



**Image 121. Undated picture of Barbara and Bob Baldauf (000057)**

A terrible thing in the life of my sister Barbara happened in May. Her husband Bob Baldauf died in St. Mark's hospital. Bob had been sick in one degree or another ever since shortly after they married in 1952 with serious kidney trouble. About ten years before this in 1978 Bob had one kidney removed that had become non functional. For about seven years before he died he had no kidney function at all had been on dialysis. Right at the first of this year he developed a serious cough, which persisted until it became so severe and painful to him that he finally went to his doctor. Although he

was seeing a doctor twice a week for his dialysis he hadn't seen a doctor about his cough. They put him in the hospital immediately. He suffered and declined for about three weeks, and died of pneumonia as it was revealed by an autopsy performed after his death at Barbara's request. As it turns out, pneumonia is extremely difficult to detect in a person who is on kidney dialysis. Somehow the dehydrated condition created in the body by dialysis makes it difficult or impossible to detect pneumonia. So, in spite of their best efforts to discover what Bob's problem was they didn't discover it until after he died.

Roberta and I took a trip to New York City in October. This was a great thrill for us. We'd neither one been there and had heard of New York and Broadway and the Statue of Liberty all of our lives. We had a little adventure staying the first night in the YMCA. We knew that hotel rooms were extremely expensive in New York and a friend had recommended that we try the YMCA. We did. The rate was half price, but the facility was pretty primitive. It was about a 9-story building and on each floor there were perhaps one hundred guests in small rooms about the size of a prison cell. The only thing in the room was a television set that didn't work, one chair, a 25 watt light bulb, and an iron double bunk. Fortunately the bunk was clean but the room itself was filthy and the bathroom facilities were more primitive than anything I had seen even in the military service. They had one bathroom for the hundred people on that floor. It was really run down. In the women's room both water faucets put out scalding hot water. There was no cold water for them. The showers were open stalls with no privacy and no place to hang your clothes. So, four toilets and four shower stalls for a hundred people; very primitive.

Well we stayed the night because we had arrived late in the evening and our chance of finding different quarters that time of night would have been very slight in that strange city. But the next morning we went out looking for a hotel to stay in. We found one close by on west 57th Street, the Henry Hudson Hotel, and moved in there. It cost \$91 a night instead of \$45. It was a very pleasant place. The building was called "Building 13" because PBS Channel 13 was located there. The offices of the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour were also there.

In New York we saw many exciting wonderful things. We went to the Statue of Liberty and climbed all the way up in it. As you know it had been reworked and restored, strengthened and repaired extensively and totally during the couple years before for celebration of the Statue's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1986. It was a thrilling thing. They did a beautiful job of restoring it.

We went up in the Empire State building of course. We went to two plays on Broadway in the evening. We saw a play "Cats" that was a fantastic musical that Roberta immensely enjoyed. It had some memorable music in it. We saw a drama in a theater called "A Circle On The Square", referring to the theater in the round idea and the square referring to Time Square. We would have liked to see more plays and maybe we'll go back another time and spend the time going to Broadway plays.

We did a lot of walking around in Manhattan through Central Park, down to Wall Street, and to Battery Park at the bottom of the Manhattan Island where you can look out across the water at the Statue of Liberty far out in the harbor. We saw a museum there made of a World War 2 aircraft carrier. I don't remember the name of it, but it had been docked and converted into a museum. It was an exciting trip. We rode the subways of New York. We had heard a lot about them. We enjoyed it. We were never frightened by any incident. We had heard a lot about the vandalism and the violence in New York and

also in Washington D.C. but we never saw anything out of the way or threatening in any degree during our trips there.

The last week of November and a few days of December we went to Florida and asked my sister Barbara to go with us. We went to Disney World and the Epcot Center, which is part of the Disney tourist attractions there and enjoyed them very much. We rented a car and traveled down the east coast of Florida to Miami and farther down onto the Florida Keys on our last day. The day before we had gone to the Everglades National Park which is in central Florida between Miami on the east coast and Tampa on the west coast. We were very surprised by the appearance of the Everglades. The movies had prepared us to expect a swamp with great overhead trees and ropes hanging down on which Tarzan could swing, and filled with alligators and ferocious wild animals. Well, the Everglades is really a great wide river, fifty miles wide and a few feet deep flowing slowly to the south and is filled with grass. It's just a great sea of grass. The highest thing in the park is only about ten feet above sea level. We did see many alligators, dozens and dozens of huge alligators. We got as close as 25 or 30 feet to some of them. Even at that time of the year the weather in Florida was in the 80s. It was actually uncomfortably hot.

We stayed in a motel near Orlando about four days. It was first class, everything except warm water. There was no warm water in the motel. It was interesting to hear the excuses that the management came up with why there was no hot water, but with temperatures like that we didn't suffer too badly. That hot water in the YMCA in New York made up for it. There we didn't have any cold water.

Our family camping this year, 1988, was most enjoyable. We had three campouts: Redman in August, Payson Lake in September where we had never been before, and camped in October in the Spruces in Big Cottonwood Canyon. This was the most enjoyable camping we have had since the days when our children were very small and we went down to Granite Flats.

I'd like to take you back to that spring quarter in 1987 at the University of Utah and Lori's story. It was quite a remarkable quarter for her, the spring quarter of 1987. When Lori graduated from high school she obtained an Honors at Entrance Scholarship to the University, which meant that her tuition and books would be paid for provided that she kept her grade point average at 3.6 or higher during the previous year. So, the first year was free. The second year depended upon her grade point average of the first year and so forth. When Lori returned from her mission her grade point average was about 3.62, just barely over the line. So it was necessary for her to get a straight A average during that spring quarter to preserve her scholarship for the next year, her senior year. She did it. She got straight A's in all of her classes that spring quarter.

While she was at the university she attended Institute of Religion classes every quarter and attended the student ward there at the institute. In April 1988 she met Christopher Weintz who about a month before had been baptized into the church. Chris was from California where his parents still lived in Cupertino, a city on the south end of the San Francisco Bay. He was then attending school at Salt Lake Community College. That's the new name of what had been Utah Technical College where John and Doug had gone to school. Lori and Chris began to date several months later about the first of June. They had a couple of dates then Chris went home to California for the summer. They liked each other and did a little bit of courting during the summer by telephone and Lori

was invited to come to California and meet Chris's family, which she did. She stayed about a week. Well, things developed rapidly and they became engaged to be married and set the date for September 16th. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple.



**Image 122. Christopher and Lori Weintz Wedding Day (000881)**

I hope Lori won't mind my making some rather personal comments about her marriage. I think each person has to make two decisions regarding marriage to begin with. First, each person must decide whether he or she wants to be married at all, and then he or she must decide on the person, the right person to marry. I think in Lori's case she made the second decision first. She liked Chris very much and he liked her. They loved each other, and decided to get married apparently before Lori had decided whether she wanted to be married or not. So her honeymoon was not a happy time, but Chris was a very understanding man and gradually she got used to the idea of being married. But, the first months and the first year were hard for Lori. She's a very independent person, very conscious perhaps excessively conscious, of a prominent issue in our society during her lifetime, this business of discrimination against women, the male chauvinist dominance in every situation. This is a big thing in Lori's feelings. It affected her feelings about being married at all. I don't think she had quite figured it out before she was committed to be married. But now, looking back four years from 1992, Lori would

say, and I'll say here for her, that she's happy that she married Chris. They are happy together. We hope that will continue and increase in the years to come.

Lori and Chris moved into Kay and Don Nebeker's apartment, which had been very useful to many members of the extended family through the years. Quite a number of the family members on both Roberta's side and my side of the family, have lived in that apartment.

## **1989: More Traveling; Mission in Ventura, California**

In 1989 we continued our flying around the country on our Eastern Airlines passes, and decided that we should use some of our trips to visit family again. In January we flew down to Mesa, Arizona, to visit with Raymond and Kirma, and stayed at the Motel 6 where they were managers. We had a real bargain on the room rate, totally free, on the house. This was a wonderful gift from Raymond and his company. He could provide accommodations for any of his family members who wish to visit them. We haven't tried it to see how long they'd let us stay there, but a week is about as long as I can stand to be away from home.

It seems that on every one of these trips a peculiar trait in my nature enters the picture. As the time approaches that we have set to leave I develop a real dread of leaving the house. I hate to pack, and I could easily change my mind and not go, right up to the last minute. Roberta on the other hand says that she is a late blooming gypsy and I think she would love to travel somewhere continually. At least she'd like to go somewhere every month for a week or two, and she looked forward greatly to these trips, and the momentum of her great desire overcame my great reluctance. By the time we got out of the house and to the airport I felt better about it. When we got on the airplane I felt it was okay to leave, but after a week I would become restless and want to get home.

Anyway, in the latter part of January we took a trip down to visit Roberta's sister Bea and her husband Cliff Cash. They live in Reedley, which is south of Fresno twenty miles. The nearest that Eastern Airlines or Continental Airlines could get us was somewhere in the Bay area, so we flew into San Jose, rented a car, and drove into Reedley. We enjoyed the drive and we enjoyed the visit. We just visited family there, Bea and Cliff and Jeff and Carol and their family. And that's all we did in Mesa where we visited with Raymond and Kirma. We did a little sight seeing there but not much. Of course, Raymond and Kirma were quite busy with their duties most of the time we were there.

In February we made a trip back to visit Mark and Dixie. There again we didn't do much sight seeing, stayed pretty close to home, and visited the family. Mark, of course, had to continue working. He did take off a few days and we visited a museum, watched a few videos, but mostly just visited. In the latter part of February we made another trip to visit with John and Joyce and their family again. We wanted to see that new baby boy.

We had one last trip that we could make before our passes expired in the middle of March. We went to San Diego, rented a car, drove around, and had a delightful time. We visited Del Coronado Beach, saw the harbor at San Diego, and visited the Mormon Battalion Monument. We drove inland quite a ways and saw something I had wanted to see ever since I was 14 years old, the Mount Palomar Observatory. I wanted to see that 200 inch telescope I had read about when I was just 14 or 15 years old. It was a thrilling thing to see. Palomar is quite remote and not a great tourist attraction. They don't go too far out of their way to accommodate tourists. But they do have a glass enclosed observation room and some displays relating the building of that great telescope, still the largest in the world I think, still the best.

When we went back to Rochester, New York, the year before we had made a side trip down to Corning, New York, where we visited the Corning Glass Works. Of course Corning is a famous household word in America. They make all kinds of dishes, kitchenware, casseroles, and Pyrex dishes. Corning Glass invented Pyrex glass and the



**Image 123. Mount Palomar Observatory.**

mirror of the great telescope at Palomar is made of Pyrex glass. They had to make two of them. The first one that Corning made way back in the 1930s failed. It had flaws in it. They cast another one, which proved to be useable, perfect. The one that failed is on display at the Corning Glass Works back in New York. So now, at Mount Palomar I got a chance to see the telescope that is built around that great piece of glass more than 20 feet across.

We also visited the San Diego Wild Animal Park where the visitors are behind the cages and the wild animals run free in vast open areas. Of course they're enclosed also by trenches and fences. We enjoyed that trip very much. We came back on March 14th. Our passes expired on the 15th.

The night that we reentered our home we got a call from the executive secretary in the ward who said Bishop Trost wanted to see us on Thursday night. The bishop called us to fill a mission. Well, we didn't have to think very long about it and accepted the call and began right away to get ready, filling out our papers and obtaining medical exams and dental exams during April. We decided that we'd like to be gone just for a year, not more. We talked with Lori and Chris about the problem with our house being



**Image 124. Merlin playing his Titano accordion (000684)**

empty during the time we were gone. They agreed to move their home out of Kay's apartment into our house and take care of our house and this huge yard while we were gone. They could live here rent-free if they would take care of our place. We thought that was a fair exchange. That took a great worry off our minds and we began to look forward eagerly to our mission.

In May of 1989 just before we went on our mission while we were still preparing, I bought another accordion, a new used one, "just like new". It is a Titano made in Italy. Many good accordions are made in Italy. I paid \$2,200 for this accordion but it cost about \$5,000 new, so it was a real bargain. I had just begun to play this, was intrigued by its greatly superior quality as compared with my old Frontelini student grade accordion. I really hated to leave my accordion playing during the year that we'd be gone, but I thought it was not proper to take it along, especially because I was still a student needing to practice everyday. If I were an accomplished accordionist and could take it along just to play for special church events as an entertainer, part of a program, that would be one thing, but to take it on a mission with the intent of practicing it every day seemed to be very improper. So, I left it home, regrettably.

We went into the MTC at Provo on July 19th and spent about a week and a half



**Image 125. Lori Weintz and Judith Larsen visiting Merlin and Roberta Larsen at the MTC in July 1989. (000699)**

there, had a few days home, and then traveled to our mission in Ventura, California. When we received our call to serve in the Ventura Mission, Roberta really had a shock. That was the same part of the world in which she had served her own mission in 1949 and 50. Then it was called the California Mission and it embraced southern California and most of Arizona. There were now 13 missions in

California. She thought that was a low blow to call her back to the same mission where she had served 40 years before. But, of course, we went where we were called.

We arrived in Ventura on August 9th and were assigned to serve in Sherman Oaks Ward in the San Fernando Valley in the city of Van Nuys. We were welcomed warmly in the Sherman Oaks Ward. Our assignment would be to work with the ward leaders trying to locate and activate inactive members. We spent a lot of time trying to find people from lists of Ward members. We discovered that the home teaching and the visiting teaching were



**Image 126. Merlin and Roberta at the Missionary Training Center in July 1989. (000696)**

almost nonexistent in the ward and the ward was suffering because of it. So, most of the time we spent there trying to find members of the church. We did some proselyting or teaching with non-members. In particular we met two women that we are still in regular contact with: Judith K Owen, was not a member and had had many missionaries teach her for the past 13 years. We continued to teach with her and she was baptized about the



**Image 127. Judy Owen being baptized by Merlin Larsen on Nov 18, 1989 in Van Nuys, CA. (000698)**

20th of November. The other woman we met, Mary Gail Hobbs, was not a member, had two children; Harlan, a boy age 13, and Hailey, a girl age 9. We taught her for about a month before we left Van Nuys. We met with a number of other people of course.

After three and a half months in Van Nuys President McKinley Oswald asked us if we would come into the office and assist another older couple. We didn't particularly want to. I didn't want to. I had had all the office work I wanted during my working years.

Roberta had a vague notion

that she would like to work again in an office. Anyway, we decided that we should do what the mission president asked us to do if we possibly could. We knew we were qualified and able to do office work. So on November 1st we moved to Ventura. We served the rest of our time there.

When we arrived in Ventura to begin our work helping in the office we quickly learned that, while President Oswald wanted us to serve in the office, Brother and Sister Severenson, who were primarily in charge of the office, did not want us there. It was a very uncomfortable seven months ahead of us.

I had a very shocking experience the very first day that we lived in the apartment there in Ventura. We woke up with red welts on our legs and discovered that the apartment was infested with fleas. Before we could have the place fumigated to get rid of them they had bitten us hundreds of times. As it turns out I am extremely allergic to them and they just made hamburger of my legs from my feet to my hips mostly below my knees fortunately. That's quite a long story. After we got rid of them through fumigation, I tried to get rid of the sores by using Aloe Vera products, but they were not effective. About the middle of January I finally got smart and went to a dermatologist. He prescribed an ointment that had an immediate affect of starting to heal those hundreds of fleabites, which were infected. Well, I fought the battle of the fleas all the rest of our

mission time, still having trouble when we left in August. I still have effects of them



**Image 128. Sister Roberta Carpenter (left) on the swinging bridge in Arroyo Grande in 1949 (000375). Sister Roberta Larsen (000347) and Elder Merlin Larsen (000348) on the same bridge in 1989.**

more than twelve years later in 2002. The fleabites apparently left some toxic substance in my skin, which can be activated by rubbing or scratching or in my case too hot water in the bathtub. Some of them come to life and itch like crazy. They apparently disrupted my immune system.

## 1990

Well, we did our best to be of service in the office. The president was glad that we were there. He was quite concerned about the health of Brother Severenson, afraid that the excessive hours he was putting in and the stress could be damaging, could even be fatal to him, if he had a heart attack. Brother Severenson was a hundred pounds over weight and could have worked himself into a heart attack because they put in very long hours. They served for three years and returned to Salt Lake in May 1990, two months before the Oswalds. They were very devoted and did a good job of running the mission office. But, President Oswald was glad we were there and we stuck it out and tried to keep a low profile. Roberta got along better with them than I did. They both interpreted my presence as a threat to Brother Severenson's standing or service, his position in the mission, as though I were there to take over his job. They didn't know that was the last thing in the world I wanted to do. There were a lot of very cool feelings between us in the office. We tried to keep it to ourselves and not let it affect their service or ours or any of the young missionaries around us. I think we did a pretty good job of being of service and putting up with the hostility that the Severensons directed toward us. I'm particularly pleased that I exercised the self-control that it took to endure the situation in view of my touchy disposition and my need to be in control of the situation. I thought I did pretty well to keep peace between us. The Severensons came home about three months before we did, so we had a more pleasant time for the balance of our mission.

We greatly enjoyed our association with the members of the Ventura Third Ward. Looking back our time in Ventura was very pleasant. The weather there is nearly perfect year round. The weather is never hot or cold, and there was hardly any rain. We would have enjoyed a few rainstorms. They had been having a drought for several years, and are still having a drought in southern California. They would like a lot more moisture than they are getting. After all, southern California does have a desert climate.

One really pleasant aspect of our time in the mission office was our close relationship with President Oswald and his wife and with their children. They had six children. One of them married that December. The other five were with them in Ventura. They were a delightful family, very musical and very spiritual. The young people sang as a group in many of the meetings with the missionaries particularly at the testimony meeting each month as missionaries departed for home at the conclusion of their missions. These young kids, the Oswald kids, sang several songs that were very appropriate and quite emotional, really touched the hearts of the departing missionaries. That testimony meeting was a very spiritual meeting each month. We got to attend that. We ate many excellent meals in the home of the Oswalds, which was the mission home. It was about a mile or two from the mission office. We were made to feel very welcome there.

The Oswalds must have spent quite a bit of their own money in their service. President Oswald also had the ability to charm contributions out of well to do members of the church in the mission area. They made some generous contributions to the missionary work. President Oswald used that money for many of the special activities that he had. We learned to appreciate and understand the great calling of a mission president. Someone said being mission president is like going on a scouting campout for two years with two hundred boy scouts. Of course it would have to be boy scouts and

girl scouts. Both the Elders and the Sisters contributed problems and worries to the life of the mission president. He was very devoted to them personally and spent a lot of time counseling them in his interviews. He made a great effort especially to help missionaries complete their mission who under different circumstances might have gone home. He felt it was very important that they have the success of completing their mission and he went all the way, far beyond the point of duty, to help any Elder or Sister succeed who would make any effort at all. He earned the gratitude of many parents and missionaries who succeeded and who without his devotion and patience might have failed.

He did some things that were not according to the rulebook, somewhat improper, but a little bit dangerous like competitions and rewards for achievement and attainment of goals. He handled it well and got good results. He doubled the number of baptisms in



**Image 129. The Oswald family taken December 1989 at mission conference held in Camarillo, CA. LtoR: President Oswald, Sarah, Melissa, McKinley, Greg Freeman (fiance of Emily), Emily, J.J., Sister Oswald, and LuLu in front. (000697)**

the mission over the levels under the previous president and had a good relationship with the church members in the stakes of the mission. There were 17 stakes comprising about a hundred wards in the mission. Sister Oswald helped him greatly. She spoke at most zone leaders meetings and general mission meetings and was a very inspiring speaker. They were very popular with the missionaries, and we learned to love and respect them.

One thing for me personally was complimentary and also enjoyable. We had been in the office only a couple of months when President Oswald asked me if I knew anything about reconciling bank accounts. Of course I do because in my working years I reconciled bank accounts many hundreds of times. So I told him that I was somewhat of an expert at it. He was pleased because he had a number of bank accounts, his own and his wife's checking accounts and savings and investment accounts, that had not been reconciled for most of a year. So he turned them over to me and I reconciled them through the end of 1989. This was a real help to him. He had his tax affairs to take care

of for the year, and it was a form of recreation for me. It relieved the tedium of the strained relationship I had with Elder Severenson. And there's a nasty little streak of vanity in me that made me glad that the president would ask me to do it rather than asking Elder Severenson. In June of 1990 just before the President and his family were to be released and return home to Salt Lake City I reconciled those accounts again bringing them up through the month of May.

The Severensons are also from Salt Lake City and went home in the month of May. They were replaced by Warren and Peggy Avey who were from St. George in recent years but had raised their family in Pennsylvania. Our association with them was friendly and cooperative and it made our last couple months in the mission very pleasant.

President Oswald and his wife were released the first of July and returned with their family to Salt Lake City. They were replaced by a young couple, President Jack K. Nielson and his wife Trudy, and a family of six daughters and one son, the son being the youngest in the family. They were a beautiful family, very friendly and from quite a different background than the Oswalds. The Oswalds had been accustomed to having more money than the average family. The Nielsons on the other had been accustomed to having much less. He was a seminary teacher and didn't make a great deal of money. President Nielson's ideas and methods for running the mission and Brother and Sister's Avey's ideas on how to run the office were very different than those of the Oswalds and the Severensons.

President Nielson also had served as a counselor to prisoners at the Utah State Prison so he came from a rather somber background compared with that of President Oswald. The missionaries noticed it right away. President Oswald had done a lot of things to make the work fun, maybe a little bit too much. The dress standards were very very relaxed, almost disgraceful, especially on P-day. Most other days, Sundays and work days, most of the missionaries were dressed according to general mission standards, but on P-day they would go out of their apartments and come into the mission office dressed in a most inappropriate way. President Nielson noticed this right away and corrected it and discontinued many or all of the programs, some of which had been quite a bit of fun for the missionaries. So he had a job on his hands to win their support in view of his much stricter standards. This was especially true for missionaries who had been out for many months and were nearing the end of their service time. The number of baptisms dropped way down below the number that were recorded or accomplished in the latter months of President Oswald's time. The termination of those special programs greatly reduced the workload in the mission office. It made more time available for training of a couple to take our places when we should leave August 10th.

The couple that took our place was Lee and Theo Butters from Blackfoot, Idaho. They came into the office about the 20th of July and we worked with them for about three weeks. We left on August 10th and had a very pleasant trip going to Phoenix. In the area of Palm Springs, California, along Interstate Highway 10 we saw a most interesting thing. For five to ten miles the hills and the valleys on both sides of the highway were covered with hundreds of windmills, which were being used to generate electricity. These were very large very high windmills having two, three, or four blades, pointed in different directions. I've never seen anything quite like it before or since.

In Blythe California I had a little visit with nostalgia with World War 2 days. You remember in my story that I had taken primary flight training in the Air Corps in Blythe from January to March of 1944. A private flying school called Morton Air Academy was on a plateau north of the town of Blythe. We drove up and took a look at what was left of the Morton Air Academy. Most of the buildings were still standing but they were in a state of decay, very recognizable, but obviously unused for many years, and the land was up for sale. The place was really full of ghosts for me. I was glad to get a final look at it before it disappears.

In Mesa we stayed of course in the Motel 6 managed by Raymond and Kirma. Their job as co-managers of the motel required that they be present 24 hours a day unless they were officially away on vacation. They had an apartment in the motel, but at this time they were on sick leave and were living in a home farther east in Mesa, which they had purchased a year or two before this. They were using some sick leave while Kirma recovered from her second major surgery in four months. For most of a year before this Kirma had been having some serious abdominal pains and it was discovered that her intestines were full of abscesses caused by acute diverticulitis. In April or May she had



**Image 130. Windmill farm in Palm Springs, California.**

surgery to disconnect her large bowel from the rectum and portions of her intestines had been removed. She had been using a colostomy bag for about four months. At the time we arrived she had been just a few days out of the hospital for surgery in which they reattached her large intestine to the rectum. So Raymond allowed us to live in their apartment at the motel for a couple days and we also of course spent a good part of the

time visiting with them in their home. Kirma was recovering quite well, but as months went by it became necessary for her to have surgery twice more. One time was to reduce a lot of scar tissue around sutures that were not healing properly. Another time was to insert a nylon mesh reinforcement in her abdominal wall to prevent hernias which had developed. At this time, 1992, she is in good health apparently having recovered completely from her near fatal illness.

We arrived home on the 16th of August. We had taken our little white Volkswagen Rabbit Diesel on our mission with us, which served us very well. We drove

about 10,000 miles during the year, which was about as many miles as we would have driven at home, going back and forth to the grocery store and wherever. Actually as it turns out, we lived on less money in the mission than we would have spent at home.

The Monday after we arrived home we went camping on our August family camping in Big Cottonwood Canyon at Redman Campground. It was enjoyable but very hectic. It was such a change of pace from what we had known, and perhaps our having lived a year at sea level was a factor also since the camp ground is at about 8,000 feet above sea level. In the months following we gradually fit back into the routine we had before our mission. Our sacrament meeting homecoming was about a month later around the 20th of September.

We discovered that it was much more difficult to adjust to coming home from a mission than it was to adjust to going out. It was for us anyway. We both commented on it to each other many times in the next six to nine months. It seemed to take about that long for being home to feel normal. I was not at all thrilled to get back into yard work, but it's one of those unavoidable things if you're going to have a home. Lori and Chris lived with us until about the first of October when they moved into the Mark Twain apartments just west of the Jordan River on 48th south.

I had a difficult time recapturing any enthusiasm for the accordion. I had felt really good about my progress in the two years just prior to our going on a mission, but it was like learning all over again to play, and now for the third time I was starting all over. I began to play in latter October, hadn't touched it much before that. In the 16 months that I had been playing again before the mission, I managed to relearn about a dozen of the numbers that I had known years before, when I knew about twice that many. But the thing that was most noticeably absent was the excitement and enthusiasm that I felt for it during those two years just prior to our mission. Actually, the thing that was missing was the discipline of regular practice. I did not practice everyday. Sometimes I went for two, three, even four days without practicing. That was very detrimental to my progress. I found that my mind is quite undisciplined both on the accordion and in reading and study and pursuit of any activity requiring mental discipline. I waste a lot of time.

In September I rejoined the Olympus Male Chorus. It was just a shadow of what it had been previously. Morris Cannegieter was no longer with it. Quite a number of the old members had left. There were one or two new men. Margaret Bingham was still the principal accompanist as she had been since the chorus was founded 43 years ago in 1949. The new conductor was a man who has been a member of the chorus for some time. He was much less professional than Morris, and much less efficient. He spent a great deal of time talking about how we should sing instead of letting us sing. We had to have instruction and correction of course, but we were all amateurs. Virtually non of us had formal musical training, and we learned best by continuous repetition of the numbers. I also began again to sing with a male quartet, which I had joined about five years ago. It was now a quintet. In my absence the men had asked Vaughn Fotheringham, one of the 1st tenors in the chorus, to join them. He and I have both continued as 1<sup>st</sup> tenors.

Roberta and I also began again to go regularly every Wednesday morning to the temple. We had been doing this since February of 1987, and we were pleased to be serving again with Doctor Richards and his wife.

Robi and I went to visit John and Joyce for Thanksgiving. We bought eight coupons each on Continental Airlines. These coupons are made available to senior

citizens aged 62 or more at a fraction of the regular fare. We paid \$80 each for the coupons and two were required for a round trip making the airfare \$160 round trip to Boston, which was a really good discount. At the time of Thanksgiving while we were away on a mission John and Joyce had invited us to come to their home for this Thanksgiving after our return. As I recall, Mark and Dixie and Elizabeth were going to spend Thanksgiving with Dixie's brother Tom and his family. Tom had accepted employment in California and was to be moving there very soon. It had been really nice for Mark and Dixie to have Tom so close, only about 200 miles from Columbus.

Roberta's sister Kay had commented very unhappily many times about Roberta's being gone for 13 months on a mission. While we were gone she and Don bought a middle sized mobile home at a bargain price and had moved it to Mesa Arizona. They decided that they were going to spend their winters in Mesa beginning this year, 1990. They left about October 1st and were not to return until about April 30th of 1991. Their daughter Jerilee and her family had moved to Mesa about four months before we went on our mission. Their son Paul and his family had lived in a Phoenix suburb for years. They had good reason for wanting to spend the winters down there in addition to the much milder weather. We've kidded them a little bit about taking excessive revenge on us for having gone away for thirteen months.

In September Roberta and I enrolled in a Church Educational System class being taught by Brother David Christensen. Roberta and Kay had attended that class for several years. It was taught in the Emigration Stake on Second Avenue. My original motive for attending the class was to accompany Roberta since she didn't have Kay with her. I wasn't sure that I liked Brother Christensen's teaching method nor his personality, but as I attended week after week I gained a great respect for his scholarship and his testimony of the gospel. I learned to appreciate his unusual sense of humor, and actually enjoyed the class very much. I'm a convert to Brother "C" now.

In October we attended the first reunion of missionaries who served in Ventura under President Oswald. Neither Roberta nor I found the reunion very exciting. I can easily see three or four reasons for this. First of all we didn't have the typical experience of serving with different missionary companions. Our mission was not a proselyting mission. Office work is not very exciting. We didn't get really close to very many of the missionaries, maybe a little bit closer to those in the same zone to which we were assigned. Then Elder and Sister Severenson were there and were very prominent in the picture, having served in the mission the whole time the Oswalds were there.

We were happy to be home for Christmas of 1990. In the fall I removed the large shrubs from in front of our house. They were old and overgrown, all sprawled out, and not at all pretty anymore. This exposed the front of our house to view from the street and we strung our outside Christmas lights on the framework of our front porch, the pillars and the railings. It looked quite festive. We enjoyed Christmas. We had enjoyed Christmas in the mission the year before, but Christmas has never been the same as when our children were small.

## 1991

We had a very severe winter in 1991. The temperatures all along the Wasatch front were below zero for several weeks in a row. The severe cold killed many fruit trees and shrubs so there was no fruit crop here in Utah in the summer of 1991. The snow accumulated on some roofs enough to be dangerous. When it finally slid off our garage the pile on the driveway was about five feet deep.

In May we went to St. George for the spring outing of the Olympus Male Chorus. On the way down we visited with George and Blanch LeBaron, who lived in Cedar City, and had been with us in the MTC. We also visited with Warren and Peggy Avey who had returned from their mission in April.

On March 23rd Doug's and Gwen's seventh child was born whom they named Richard Mark. We had Gwen and Ricky come here to our home for a week following the birth and Gwen's mother Gene Maughan came up from California to stay with the other six children and Doug. I hope Doug doesn't mind the implication that she took care of him also, but she was a great help to the family, and it was a real boost to Gwen and the child to have a week's rest here removed from the considerable chaos that usually prevails in their family life and maybe in the life of any family with that many children.

In May we went to visit John and Joyce to assist them at the time of the birth of Phillip, their fourth child. Our being there really was a support and comfort to Joyce and enabled John to continue going to work. We had a pleasant time visiting with the family. Roberta really is an expert in a home with those children, fixing their meals and supervising the household. In addition to her many duties with the family, she and I redecorated their bathroom. We refinished the walls and papered them, refinished and painted the ceiling, put a lovely border around the room near the ceiling, repaired some ceramic tile in the bathtub shower enclosure, replaced the flooring, put down new vinyl flooring, and repaired the plumbing under the wash basin. The bathroom was really attractive when we finished. John and Joyce especially were thrilled, and I suppose the children were too, although I don't think children pay much attention to that kind of thing.

For Mother's Day John bought Joyce a new mixing faucet for their kitchen sink. Their old faucet was really a disaster, had been worn out for ten years or so. He bought a deluxe one and I was able to install that the last day we were there. It was really an improvement in their kitchen. John was a little bit hesitant to buy such an impersonal thing for Mother's Day, but Joyce was really delighted with it.

In the summer we went to Redman for our family camping and we were in for a shock about the cost of camping now in "our" canyon. For years the fee to rent a campsite has not exceeded \$30 for the whole week. This year the management of the campground had been turned over to private enterprise by the forestry department and the total cost was about \$150 for the week. Jerilee and her family came up from Mesa. Doug and his family missed it this year. They had a Maughan family reunion in Washington State. They did enjoy it but we missed them and I believe they missed the Redman Camping. In August we had another camp but this was just for the old folks, no little kids. I enjoyed it a lot more without a bunch of little kids around. I must be getting old.

Roberta launched some projects this summer for updating the interior of our home. We also had the concrete foundation plastered all around. It looks much better than the naked concrete. Roberta and Kay painted our guest bedroom downstairs, which had been the boys' bedroom and also our bedroom upstairs, and Roberta redecorated our bathroom. It needed it. It hadn't been changed for years before we moved here. The



**Image 131.** Extended Larsen family picture taken in 1991. (000693) (See Image 135 for name index)

project included new carpet in the bathroom and bedroom and in the back entry stairway. Roberta also bought new drapes for the bedroom and a new bedspread. I wasn't exactly the soul of enthusiasm for this project. The cost of it was a real shock. The inflation that we have experienced in the last 15 or 20 years has really been a cruel tax on working people.

In the last part of July 1991 we had a most enjoyable event. John and Joyce and their children and Mark and Dixie and Elizabeth all came to visit us. Mark and Dixie stayed with us the entire time they were here, but Joyce's parents live just a half mile away from us, so they spent part of their time there and part here with us. This was the first time that our whole family had been together in six years since John and Mark and their families had gone off to work in the east. We had some nice pictures taken, a really nice family group picture of all 22 of us. We were glad we had the old 1972 Buick, and that it still ran well. It was very handy to have. Joyce and her children stayed over for a whole month, but John had to go back and was here only about a week or ten days.

When my father died in January of 1970 he was buried in Morgan Cemetery at the direction of his wife who said that was his wish, at least his wish not to be buried in Brigham City. My mother and all of us brothers and sisters have always wished that daddy's grave was in Brigham City where it really belongs. So, on September 13th we had daddy's grave moved to Brigham City. I know that it doesn't make any difference where a person is buried. So many millions of people are not buried at all. Daddy was born in Brigham City, lived there most of his life, loved the place, and had been responsible for the beautification of the Brigham City Cemetery. All of these things and other considerations made it desirable that his body be buried in Brigham City. I feel really good about it and I believe all of the family members do. I hope he does also.

I should say here that some years ago daddy's second wife Ethel gave permission in writing for my mother to be sealed to my father even though they had been divorced. The church of course does this, counting the divorce as a nonbinding civil action, just as a civil marriage is nonbinding in the eternal picture. But my mother and father were sealed and all of us children have been sealed to them. We all hope that Daddy's feelings have changed and that he would desire to have his family sealed to him and Mom, and approves of our having done this.

In September 1991 I was called to be one of the instructors of a temple preparation class held in our stake. It's called "Eternal Riches". The class repeats every 12 weeks, so three times during the school year. I didn't really want to accept this calling. I had become very attached to my easy lifestyle, but I recognize that it's an extension of the kind of work we were called to do on our mission, and didn't get much of a chance to do it out there. We were originally called to contact and help reactivate members of the church. That of course is the object of these classes, to get people back to church and hopefully get them to go to the temple. It's easy to have mixed feelings about a class like this. There are always a number of people who begin the class and then drop out as the weeks go by. But it's satisfying to see the renewed interest in the gospel and the improved feeling about the church on the part of those that stay with it.

Robi was called to be the education counselor in the Relief Society Presidency. This is the third time she has served in this capacity. They know a good counselor when they see one. She does an excellent job in any calling that she accepts.

In October 1991 we made another trip to Washington DC. This time we asked my sister Barbara to go with us. We were gone from the 14th through the 26th. We spent about eight days in Washington visiting the historic places and the Smithsonian and the seat of our government. We went to Mount Vernon, and took a one day trip down to Williamsburg, which was the colonial capital of the Virginia colony. Then we went to Philadelphia and on the way visited Gettysburg Battlefield National Park and the monument at Valley Forge where the Colonial Army spent a bitter winter during the Revolutionary War. We enjoyed everything we saw, and enjoyed the trip as well.



**Image 132. Merlin and Roberta making popcorn balls. This picture is from 1977 but the method hasn't changed much. (000473)**

We enjoyed our visit to Philadelphia, the city where the Continental Congress had proclaimed the Declaration of Independence that gave birth to America as a nation, and also where our Constitution was formed. It really gives us a greater appreciation for our nation to see these historic places and the seat of our government.

We spent one day visiting in New Jersey the parents of Elliott Rachlin, a Jewish convert to the

church, who is a friend of Lori and Chris and also our friend. His parents are Jewish of course and are very warm, friendly and pleasant people and we enjoyed our visit with them. They were really pleased that we would make the effort to come and visit their home in a town called Freehold, New Jersey, near the Atlantic coast.

Christmas this year was much the same as recent years with our very traditional Christmas tree. I put the lights on the porch again. We made about 600 popcorn balls as we have done for a number of years, distributing them to friends and family. I ate only one or two popcorn balls this year, almost no candy at all.

This brings us right up to the end of 1991. I may add more to this story later if the Lord grants me a further extension of my life.



**Image 133. Extended family picture taken 11 May 2001 commemorating Merlin's and Roberta's 50th wedding anniversary. (000587) (See Image 134 for name index)**



**Image 134. Name index to 11 May 2001 extended family picture (Image 133)**

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Andrew Larsen                 | 16. Stanford Mark Larsen          |
| 2. Kimberlee Sue Larsen          | 17. Bradford John Larsen          |
| 3. Elizabeth Ann Larsen          | 18. Heather Roxanne Larsen        |
| 4. Lincoln Mark Larsen           | 19. Phillip Edward Larsen         |
| 5. Dixie Christensen Larsen      | 20. Richard "Ricky" Mark Larsen   |
| 6. Merlin Nelson Larsen          | 21. Jeffery Ammon Larsen          |
| 7. Roberta Carpenter Larsen      | 22. Amy Tamara Larsen             |
| 8. Hunter James Weintz           | 23. Gwendolyn Maughan Larsen      |
| 9. Marnie Weintz                 | 24. Sarah Matilda Larsen          |
| 10. Randy Weintz                 | 25. Conrad Jared Larsen           |
| 11. Loretta "Lori" Larsen Weintz | 26. Aaron Alexander "Alex" Larsen |
| 12. Christopher Weintz           | 27. Merlin Douglas Larsen         |
| 13. Joyce Acomb Larsen           | 28. Natalie May Larsen            |
| 14. John Robert Larsen           | 29. James "Jimmy" Scott Larsen    |
| 15. Julia Dianne Larsen          | 30. Suzanna Jean Larsen           |



**Image 135. Name index for 1991 extended family picture (Image 131)**



**Image 136. Name index for 1987 family reunion picture. (See Image 118 )**

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Bill Price (3)                  | 43. Aaron Larsen (S11)                            |
| 2. Orville Larsen (6, S44)         | 44. Judith Viola Nelson Larsen (Matriarch of all) |
| 3. Darlene Larsen Price (1, D2)    | 45. Gordon Steele (40)                            |
| 4. Melanie Price (D3)              | 46. David Larsen (S17, 38)                        |
| 5. Janelle Cragun (D19)            | 47. Rebecca "Becky" Larsen (D46)                  |
| 6. Gay Dahle Larsen (2)            | 48. Alex Larsen (S49)                             |
| 7. David Taylor (10)               | 49. Merlin Douglas Larsen (66, S83)               |
| 8. Michelle Taylor (D10)           | 50. Kelly Ray Adams (S80)                         |
| 9. Eric Taylor (S10)               | 51. Amy Lynn Adams (D80)                          |
| 10. Elayne Larsen Taylor (7, D60)  | 52. Kevin Larsen (S11)                            |
| 11. Michael Larsen (18, S17)       | 53. Shawn Adams (S80)                             |
| 12. Dorothy Larsen McCann (cousin) | 54. Conrad Larsen (S49)                           |
| 13. Alan Larsen (S17)              | 55. Suzanna Larsen (D49)                          |
| 14. Gail Larsen Snow (24, D17)     | 56. Ryan Larsen (Grandson of 60)                  |
| 15. Michael Taylor (S10)           | 57. Norma Whitaker Larsen (60)                    |
| 16. Kirma Snow Larsen (17)         | 58. Layne Larsen (S46)                            |
| 17. Raymond Larsen (16, S44)       | 59. Shirley Larsen Mose (65, D44)                 |
| 18. Annette O'Dell Larsen (11)     | 60. Harold Larsen (57, S44)                       |
| 19. Bonnie Larsen Cragun (27, D2)  | 61. Karen Larsen Huish (64, D17)                  |

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 20. Scott Steele (S35)                  | 62. Adam Huish (S61)                           |
| 21. Barbara Larsen Baldauf (28, D44)    | 63. D.J. Huish (S61)                           |
| 22. Barbara "Barbie" Larsen (D17)       | 64. Jack Huish (61)                            |
| 23. Daniel Lorenzo Snow (S14)           | 65. Hilton Mose (59)                           |
| 24. Mark Snow (14)                      | 66. Gwendolyn Maughan Larsen (49)              |
| 25. Loretta "Lori" Larsen (D83)         | 67. Jeffery Ammon Larsen (S49)                 |
| 26. Jeffrey Daugherty (S35)             | 68. Sarah Larsen (Granddaughter of 60)         |
| 27. Dewey Cragun (19)                   | 69. Cari Jo Nichols (D76)                      |
| 28. Bob Baldauf (21)                    | 70. Wendy Lee Adams (D80)                      |
| 29. Colleen Stevens Steele (37)         | 71. James "Jimmy" Larsen (S49)                 |
| 30. Dixie Mecham Whitaker (cousin)      | 72. Angela Oniones (friend of 66)              |
| 31. Robyn Marie Larsen (D46)            | 73. Steve Berges (77)                          |
| 32. Joyce Acomb Larsen (John's wife)    | 74. Carey Nichols (76)                         |
| 33. Bradford John Larsen (S32)          | 75. Taryn Nichols (D76)                        |
| 34. Nicole Steele (D37)                 | 76. Jolene Larsen Nichols (74, D60)            |
| 35. Kathleen Steele Daugherty (39, D45) | 77. Antoinette Mose Berges (73, D59)           |
| 36. Jason Daugherty (S35)               | 78. Stewart Adams (80)                         |
| 37. Greg Steele (29 S45)                | 79. Heather Roxanne Larsen (D32)               |
| 38. Marjorie Anderson Larsen (46)       | 80. Judy Larsen Adams (78, D17)                |
| 39. Brent Daugherty (35)                | 81. Melanie Larsen (D46)                       |
| 40. Yvonne Larsen Steele (45, D44)      | 82. Roberta Carpenter Larsen (83)              |
| 41. Christina Steele (D37)              | 83. Merlin Nelson Larsen (82, S44)             |
| 42. Christopher Kevin "KC" Steele (S37) | 84. Michelle Steele (D37)<br>(Baby held by 29) |

Key: Number only indicates spouse's number  
Number with a D in front means Daughter of that person  
Number with an S in front means Son of that person

## **APPENDIX A**

YEAR BY YEAR SUMMARY  
1900 to 1991

- 1900 • March 25th. My father Merlin Russell Larsen was born in Brigham City Utah.
- 1902 • March 14th. My mother, Judith Viola Nelson, was born in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1918 • September 11th. My parents were married at Farmington, Utah.
- 1919 • August 26th. My brother Orville Russell was born in Brigham City. All of the seven children to be listed later on were born in Brigham City.
- 1920 • November 7th. Brother Harold J was born
- 1922 • The family home was built at 424 South 300 East.
- Grandpa Lars Larsen died in October.
- My father and his brother Ira purchased from the family estate a 51 acre farm in the south east corner of Brigham City.
- On September 26th, sister Viola Yvonne was born.
- 1924 • November 24th. I was born.
- 1926 • September 13th. Brother Raymond Nelson was born.
- 1927 • I broke my left elbow in the fall while playing. I was attended by Doctor Cooley. The elbow mended perfectly.
- 1928 • Fell on the jagged lid of a tin can. Nearly severed my left thumb. Doctor Cooley attended me again, and the thumb mended perfectly.
- 1929 • Parents bought a used Victrola phonograph and a few records which had a memorable impression on my life.
- Buck, a black springer spaniel dog, entered our life to live for 13 years.
- At Christmas, Aunt Anna Cottum, Grandpa Larsen's sister, gave Orville and Harold a beautiful Flexible Flyer sleigh.
- 1930 • Visited for a few days with cousin Bob Koutnik in Ogden.
- 1931 • February 20th. Sister Barbara LaDean was born.
- This year a bathtub and toilet were installed in the home.
- I began school in the fall at the Central School.
- 1932 • Cut a large deep wound in my right thigh with a pocketknife.
- Brother Raymond's leg was broken in an accident with the Flexible Flyer sled.
- Brother Orville obtained his first car, a model T Ford by working for Dan Jeppsen in his wrecking yard.
- My father began work for Brigham City. That employment to last for about 17 years.
- Concrete floor was laid in the basement where we four boys slept.
- Franklin D Roosevelt was elected President. My father was a very vocal Republican, my introduction to politics.
- A little Knudson boy, about age 3, was killed in front of the school, run over by a truck. A very traumatic event which I witnessed.
- 1933 • Daddy built a new stable and barn.
- 1935 • Uncle Will Sorensen (married to Grandpa Larsen's sister Mary) built a new back porch on our home and room partitions in the basement dividing it into

- two bedrooms and a store room.
- 1936 • June 1st. Sister Shirley June was born.
- 1937 • Completed the sixth grade in school  
• Brother Orville graduated from high school and joined the air force.
- 1938 • Brother Harold graduated from high school and went a trip to the New York World's Fair with Charles Dredge.
- 1939 • Had a memorable science class from Wilford Freeman that began my life long interest in astronomy.  
• I bought a telescope with my own earnings obtained from a Salt Lake Tribune newspaper route which I would continue about four years.  
• The boy scout program revived in our Brigham City 6th ward. I took a scout camp trip to camp Kiesel with my brother Raymond and other scouts.  
• World War II began in Europe in September.
- 1940 • Bought a book shelf and a set of Britannica Junior Encyclopedias.  
• Sister Shirley had an unexplained very serious illness, nearly fatal.  
• Sister Yvonne graduated and was peach queen in the fall.  
• I attended a stake Sunday School teacher training class, and I was called to teach a Sunday School class of my own age group.
- 1941 • A peace time draft and other aspects of World War II encroaching on our lives.  
• Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7th and the United States declared war.
- 1942 • The Federal Government built Bushnell Army General Hospital on land which included my father's farm.  
• In June and July Orville, Harold, and Yvonne were all married in the Logan Temple  
• Orville, and Harold and Yvonne's husband Gordon Steele all were drafted into the service.  
• I graduated from LDS Seminary and was Valedictorian of the class.  
• During the summer I took flying lessons in a program sponsored by the Civil Air Patrol and obtained my private pilot's license.  
• The family home was remodeled and enlarged.  
• I served as junior class president in school.
- 1943 • I served as student body secretary  
• graduated from high school, and was valedictorian of the graduating class.  
• I volunteered into the army Air Corp in a program to become a pilot.  
• My brother Harold's wife, Alda Forsgren, who was living with him in Texas, died suddenly. They had been married less than a year.  
• I began active duty at a basic training camp at Kearns, Utah.
- 1944 • I continued aviation cadet training begun in 1943 and completed pilot training in August.  
• Received my pilot's wings and was commissioned second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps.  
• I was trained to be a B17 bomber pilot and became part of a combat crew

- preparing for overseas duty.
- 1945
- Flew a new B17 bomber to Europe with a combat crew for service with the 100th Heavy Bombardment group in England.
  - Flew 21 combat missions over Europe prior to the end of the war in May.
  - Returned to the United States in August
  - Was discharged from the Air Corps in October
  - Enrolled at the University of Utah in December.
  - I bought a 1941 Plymouth with some of the money I had saved during my service years.
- 1946
- Attended University and worked part time.
  - Lived with Aunt Barbara and Uncle Lester Hubbard for six months.
  - On December 26th I arranged to take room and board at 563 East 300 South, Salt Lake City, where I met a beautiful red headed girl, Roberta Carpenter.
  - My friend Clinton Holmes helped me get the part-time job parking cars at the Hotel Utah Garage, which I would have during my four years at college.
- 1947
- In the fall I bought an accordion and began taking a few lessons.
  - In July Raymond married Kirma Snow in the Logan temple.
- 1948
- A year of school and part time work.
  - Drifted quite far from the church by this time. No longer going to church. Quite critical of it. On the wrong track.
- 1949
- June 9th. Graduated from the University of Utah with a BA degree in mathematics, with high honors.
  - Elected to Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi, honorary scholastic fraternities.
  - My plans for the future were quite indefinite. I had met a woman named Mary Knollema and in November became engaged to her.
  - In September I took a teaching job in Blanding, Utah to teach grades 8 through 12.
  - In Blanding I lived in the home of Mary and Ed Stevens.
  - In November my father had a terrible election day experience. He was fired from his job with Brigham City, by the city council. Later Mayor Bott invited him back with tearful apology, but he refused to take the job back again.
- 1950
- My experience in Blanding was very beneficial to me. I broke my engagement with Mary Knollema and began going to church again. Began paying tithing.
  - My parents moved from Brigham City on July the 5th to North Hollywood, California, where they bought a six unit apartment. They were very unhappy, my mother particularly. They sold the apartment and moved back to Utah, and rented a house in Ogden about November 1st.
  - I enrolled in Stevens Henager Business School in an accounting course in September.
  - About November 5th I called Roberta Carpenter to see if she would go out with me on a date. She had just returned from a mission to California. She

- accepted my invitation.
- 1951
- In school at Henagers.
  - I proposed to Roberta and she accepted.
  - Married in the Salt Lake Temple May 11th.
  - In September I took a job as office credit manager for Glen Mickelson, who owned Utility Trailer Sales and Equipment Company.
  - Roberta working for Zellerbach Paper Company.
  - We lived for a year in the upstairs apartment 563 East 300 South.
- 1952
- May 1st. We moved into our home at 59 East Miller Street in Murray, which we had bought from James and Lucy Stacey. The house was divided into two apartments. We rented out the west side.
  - In March my father informed the family that he was going to divorce our mother. The divorce became final in September.
  - October 9th our first son, Douglas, was born at home, delivered by Doctor Loretta Foote at about 3pm.
  - I left Utility Trailer December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 1953
- January through March worked as an auditor's assistant for a CPA firm, Goddard Sunnyvale and Griffin.
  - April through August worked for the Utah State Tax Commission as an auditor.
  - In September began work as a full time teacher in day school and night school for Stevens Henager Business School.
  - April became the 2nd Counselor in the bishopric in the Murray 8th Ward.
  - November our new ward house was completed and dedicated.
  - In the summer we bought the vacant lot east of our home from the Staceys, a very wise move as it turned out years later.
  - Began what would be a 20 year remodeling project.
  - In summer my mother sold her home in Clearfield and moved into an apartment near Liberty Park in Salt Lake City.
  - My father married in May to Ethel Morby (Her maiden name).
- 1954
- Taught school at Henager until June.
  - Worked for the JC Penny Company Western Accounting Division from June to November.
  - November I went back to work for Utility Trailer Sales.
  - My sister Shirley graduated from Davis High School in Kaysville in June
  - November Shirley went to Texas where she married Hilton Mose. This was very disturbing to my mother.
  - Recent events in Mom's life made her very unstable emotionally. She began a series of about twelve residential moves that lasted for eleven years. I was very much involved in her frequent moves and her troubles.
  - We sold the 1941 Plymouth and bought a 1941 Ford.
- 1955
- Bishop Murray moved in April resulting in the release of the Bishopric.
  - Called as assistant ward clerk for finances.
  - Roberta called to teach Relief Society, the spiritual living lesson, which she

- would teach for six years. Then she taught literature and cultural refinement for twelve years.
- 1956
- March 24th. Our second child, John, was born at home, delivered by Doctor Foote. John's umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck and he was a blue baby. We don't know how lucky we were that all of our children were born normally.
  - Still working for Utility Trailer Sales
  - Continued work on remodeling building bedrooms in the upstairs.
- 1957
- Called to be assistant stake clerk for finance.
  - Changed jobs about the first of July. Took a job at Transport Equipment Center.
  - We bought a 1952 Pontiac
  - Took our first vacation to Colorado and Grand Canyon.
  - Gave the Ford to Huibert and Elizabeth Wohler and driving lessons to Huibert.
  - We discontinued renting the apartment
  - Remodeling accelerated
- 1958
- Started work on April 10th for Refrigeration Distributors Corporation owned by Ted Brown and Warren Brown, a job which I would continue until 1987.
  - My mother had a nervous breakdown in April, having come to live with us from March until September.
  - Mom received some medical care and in September was well enough to go to California to live with her mother for 18 months.
  - In the summer we bought a used piano from Huibert Wohler
  - Doug started school this year, in Kindergarten. His teacher was young and inexperienced, a poor start for him in school.
- 1959
- February 5th. Our third son, Lincoln Mark, was born.
- 1960
- Built the new kitchen with new birch cabinets and a big picture window.
  - Called to be Ward Sunday School Superintendent.
  - Artie and Marge Bronson went on a mission in July. We sent them ten dollars per month. Since then we've almost continually helped some missionary or supported our own until this very day.
- 1961
- Our tenth wedding anniversary.
  - Busy the whole year with our home, our job, our children, church jobs. Life was good.
- 1962
- John started school. He got off to a better start than Doug.
  - Doug's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, Miss Nielson, helped him quite a lot, after three bad previous years in a row.
  - Called to be High Priest Group Leader in the ward.
- 1963
- Built the tree house this summer and a big sand box.
  - In September I had a hernia operation. I was one of the first patients in the new Cottonwood Hospital.
  - Kay and Don let us take their little trailer for a trip to Bear Lake and tended

- our boys. What a wonderful gift. We enjoyed it so much that we wanted a trailer too.
- 1964
- May 26th. Lori was born. We were so happy to have a girl. All our neighbors rejoiced with us. We named her Loretta after Doctor Loretta Foote.
  - In September we bought a trailer and went camping at Granite Flats during the UEA institute in October. We've done this each year since then when the weather allowed. This is a tradition that has fostered love and closeness in our family.
  - I enjoyed my employment with Restribco, but changes took place this year which developed increasing tension and division between Warren and Ted Brown, which continued to increase in intensity through all my remaining years with them.
  - Called to be the Gospel Doctrine teacher in the ward, a job which I had for three years, a most enjoyable and rewarding experience.
  - My mom moved to 3008 South 900 East where she would live for ten years. She became much more stable and settled in her life, much happier.
  - We reached a milestone in November: finished paying for our house, a birthday gift to me for my 40th birthday.
- 1965
- We bought a 1962 Chevrolet Bellaire which proved to be a fine car.
  - Used Chevy to pull our trailer on a trip to California, taking the three boys with us, but Lori was left with Jeneal Dawes, a baby sitter.
  - In February Lori had pneumonia. She was in the hospital briefly, but recovered fully.
- 1966
- Began our annual campouts at Redman Campground in August.
  - Christmas was memorable. We bought Roberta a gas clothes dryer and a TV for the family. Santa bought the boys a slot car race track.
  - Finished the west bedroom upstairs which became the neighborhood slot car center. This lasted until the summer of 1971 when Doug went on his mission. Then the track went to Doug's friend Rocky and the bedroom became Lori's.
- 1967
- Called in the Fall to serve a two-year stake mission which was mostly a pleasant experience. For the last year I served as a counselor in the mission presidency.
  - The Nebekers moved to Clearfield, Utah to be closer to Don's teaching job.
  - Raymond and Kirma moved to Tempee, Arizona. We missed these families very much. They were our closest visiting relatives.
  - On the street in Sugar House I met Cyril Beecher, my 9th grade algebra teacher, and began an association with him that lasted until his death in May of 1974.
- 1968
- Roberta and I became restless about the house and considered buying another home. But as we carefully and prayerfully considered all that was involved financially and socially, and its effect on our children, we decided to stay where we are.
  - Doug is 16 and I am reluctantly the father of a teenage driver.

- In the summer we took a fun trip to Yellowstone Park.
- Roberta's mother is beginning to decline in health and mental alertness.
- 1969 • Borrowed \$6,300 to further improve our home. That money bought a lot exciting improvements: a new Magnavox stereo; finished the upstairs rooms and carpeted them; new walls and drapes in the front room; built a new family room, complete except for the lights. We finished all of this "just before Christmas".
- In the summer we took an interesting vacation trip to South Dakota by way of Yellowstone Park and the Devils tower.
- 1970 • An eventful year that began New Year's eve. Doug wrecked our car at the Woodland Drive in Theater.
- We bought a 1961 Cadillac, which after some trouble, proved to be a good car until the summer of 1976.
- On January 24th my father died of heart failure.
- We bought season tickets to the Pioneer Memorial Theater for the whole family. We've been able to do that each year until the present time, 1989. I
- In December we bought our first new car, a 1971 Volkswagen Super Beetle.
- 1971 • Doug graduated from High School.
- He and John went with the school band on a trip to Canada and Roberta went along as one of the chaperons.
- Doug accepted a call to serve a mission to New Zealand, North Island, and he left in November. We were very pleased that he chose to go, setting this good example for the family.
- Roberta's mother was living at the Salt Lake Stake home after she had lived about a year with Ted, Robi's sister.
- 1972 • We had an enjoyable vacation trip to Arizona in June. Pulled our trailer with the old Cadillac. Enjoyed our visit with Raymond and his family.
- Called to be the ward membership clerk. Church is Beginning conversion of membership records to data processing, a very troublesome system, and it took six or eight years before it worked well.
- 1973 • Doug returned from his mission in November
- Doug enrolls for a two year course in commercial art at Utah Technical College.
- Roberta's mother's health continues to be poor and she is unable to live alone. She has lived with Ted in Vernal and with Kay and with us for two or three months at a time.
- Family trip to Arches National Park in Colorado.
- 1974 • John graduated from high school.
- Called to the Stake High Council in April.
- We bought a second new Volkswagen, a yellow one. Doug is using the orange Volkswagen, paying us for it on a mileage basis.
- On September 8th I was set apart as bishop of the Murray 8th ward and served in that calling for just about four years.
- October 4th Roberta's mother died in Vernal and she was buried on her 88th birthday, October 8th.

- My mother was fired from her work with Chet Bailey in his drapery shop. She was 72 years old but still very able in her work and this was most upsetting to her.
- 1975
- A very busy year for me with my bishopric duties and the job.
  - September John went on a mission to France.
  - June the Nebekers moved back to Murray from Layton.
  - Doug graduated from Utah Technical College and took a job with O. C. Tanner Company as a die cutter. He still works there at this time in 1989.
  - During my years as bishop we had to raise a lot of money. Church members were asked to contribute to Ward Budget, Stake Budget, Fast Offering, Welfare Budget, Building Fund, Missionary Fund, in addition to Tithing - a faith-building test.
  - During 1975 we raised money to remodel the ward building and make an addition to it to serve as stake offices.
- 1976
- A very enjoyable vacation trip to Colorado Springs. We traveled in two Volkswagens.
  - This was America's Bicentennial year and Roberta and I attended a reunion of the 100th Bombardment Group Association.
  - In my job as a bishop we are now raising money to build a new first and twelfth ward chapel.
  - In January, Roberta's brother John Lyle Carpenter, Carp we called him, died of cancer. He died slowly over about nine month's time, very painful, but it was a spiritual time for him and all of us. He grew closer to the church and closer to his family in the last few years of his life. With Kay's help he went to the temple while he was confined to the Veterans Administration Hospital.
- 1977
- Doug and Gwen were married on February 10th in the Salt Lake Temple. We traveled to California for a second reception in her home ward.
  - Mark wrecked our car in August.
  - Chil and Ruth Miller, our neighbors for all these years sold their home to Zion Motor (the Wilkensos) and moved.
  - Began in September to take the bus to work, walking part way on each end of the bus ride. It turns out to be a good practice for me, a good exercise.
  - Mark graduates from high school and enrolls at the University of Utah.
  - John returned from his mission in September and returned to school, his second year, at Utah Technical College.
  - Roberta's oldest sister Teddie (Theodocia) died in December. She had not been well since spring. She was very brave and uncomplaining. She died of cancer of the pancreas I think. Sadly she never had the opportunity to live in the new home that they had just built on the top of their basement home where she had lived for thirty years.
  - At work Warren Brown had previously installed his son Reynold as a manager in Price Trading Company in Price, Utah, in which Warren and Ted were equal owners. This was against Ted's wishes and their business agreement and greatly increased strife between them. Since that rupture

- Warren moved Reynold into the business in Denver as a “manager trainee” along with Wayne Bullock, son of Lee Bullock, manager of the Denver store. This caused another unrepairable trouble in years to follow.
- 1978
- Very busy as bishop. In the stake we were raising money for a new stake center to be built in the Murray second ward area, and raising our assessment for the Jordan River Temple. This was a spiritual high for all of us and climactic for me as bishop.
  - Released as Bishop on September fast day.
  - In June we had a very enjoyable trip to Denver, Roberta, Mark, Lori, and I, on the Denver and Rio Grande train.
  - In May the Wilkinsons, Zion Motor, offered to buy our property.
  - The deal on house closed in September and we moved into home on 4602 South 600 East on September 28th. This move, this change in our life, was remarkable and somewhat miraculous in many ways. The timing, the favorable price, and the smooth closing, the fine new home and ward and school and location, and the ease with which we made this great decision. The change was good for John and Mark and especially for Lori.
  - Mark accepted a call to serve a mission before I was released as bishop, and later left on his mission from our new ward.
  - At work we bought a new computer in September which was to prove very interesting and stimulating in my job.
  - On April 30th we became grandparents when Doug’s and Gwen’s first child was born.
  - A terrible thing happened on December 2nd. Roberta’s brother, Doug, was struck head-on in his car by a drunk driver. He lay in a coma until the 22nd of December when he died.
- 1979
- Mark departed on his mission on January 25th. His experience in the MTC assured him that he had made a good choice to go on his mission.
  - Sold the yellow Volkswagen to John.
  - Yellow Volkswagen wrecked April 19th at 7th East and 45th South, a total loss. We thank God that John was not hurt.
  - Clint Hastings moved in to live with us in October and would live with us for about ten months.
  - John met Joyce Acomb in March and fell in love.
  - John and Joyce married in the Salt Lake Temple on September 8th, a very happy affair.
  - At work I was involved in working very hard to get the new computer operational, spending long hours on the job.
  - Doug’s and Gwen’s son, Conrad, was born October 30th.
  - Disturbing and threatening change at my employment. Warren and his son Reynold and Lee and Wayne Bullock took stock control of Distributors Incorporated Colorado. I don’t like how it was done. It was most unfair and immoral in its treatment of Ted Brown who is now a minority stock holder rather than an equal owner.
- 1980
- We had aluminum siding installed over all of the exterior wood on our

- home, very pleased with the job.
- Finished a bedroom for Lori in the basement about May
  - Asked Clint Hastings to plan to move out by August so that Lori could move to the basement, enabling me to start work on the new kitchen. Clint understood our viewpoint and moved to Spring Meadows Apartments and there he began to become active in the Millcreek 11th Ward.
  - Called to be the High Priest Group Leader in January.
  - At work there was a disturbing friction developing between me and Kathy Flitton which increased and continued until I felt that I had to terminate her employment. I fired her on September 4th.
  - Lee Bullock who was manager of our business in Denver, and who had been a good friend for 25 years, retired in September.
- 1981
- Mark returned in January from his mission and enrolled at the University of Utah.
  - Mark starts working for Reams.
  - In June we had an enjoyable vacation trip. We, with Mark and Lori, went to Tucson, Arizona to visit Raymond and Kirma; then to San Diego, up to Los Angeles, then to San Francisco and home. We traveled in the old 1972 Buick which behaved quite well. We visited Gwen's parents, Gordon and Jean Maughan, in Los Angeles. Raymond has been bishop of his ward since October of 1978. He and his family have been great assets in that ward. He served until November 1983.
- 1982
- We bought a new 1981 Volkswagen Rabbit in January and bought a second one, a 1982 Rabbit Diesel in September.
  - Lori graduated from High School in May and enrolled in the University of Utah. We have three children who have graduated from the U, which thing I could never have imagined when I graduated from there 33 years ago.
  - We completed our new kitchen in the summer.
  - Gary Nebeker went on a mission in July to Northern Germany.
  - Clint Hastings went on a mission to the Switzerland Geneva mission. This marked a miraculous change in Clint's life.
  - In June I installed new stereo components in our Magnavox stereo cabinet which we had bought in 1969. We enjoy it very much.
  - John's and Joyce's first child, Heather Roxanne, was born February 8th.
  - Alex was born July 2nd, Doug's and Gwen's third son.
  - A very disturbing thing at work. An employee at the Salt Lake store was discovered to have stolen over \$30,000 from the company.
  - On September 26th torrential rain storms caused very serious flooding along the canyon stream beds through the valley. Many homes in Cottonwood Cove mobile home park were seriously damaged or destroyed.
- 1983
- Wettest winter in our history. Severe flooding in the spring. Very destructive throughout Utah.
  - I helped build a bathroom and bedroom and do some finish work in Doug's and Gwen's basement.
  - Continued remodeling our home. Removed the closet from our living room

- and widened the doorway to that room to 8 feet with a folding door.
- Built bookshelves in the family room.
  - At work I spent many extra hours, nights, Saturdays and holidays, developing some new computer software programs.
- 1984
- I had a very great disappointment at work. Reynold Brown rejected my software programs without even using them, without even trying them. His reason became very clear when he announced that he was going to move the accounting function to Denver. This foreshadows the end of our accounting office and my job. Very disappointed in Warren and Reynold and their actions.
  - In August we discovered that Venice Holt, an employee at Ted R Brown and associates, has been stealing money for ten years, a total of \$375,000.
  - I built a new stairway to our basement in the front room, transformed the basement from storage area to living space. Then we bought new carpet and furniture in the living room.
  - Finished the family room.
  - Put an aluminum roof on the home.
  - Suzanna was born to Doug and Gwen on August 16th, their first girl.
- 1985
- John graduated from the University of Utah in June and accepted a job with Sanders Electronics in New Hampshire. He and his family moved in June.
  - Bradford was born to John and Joyce on March 2nd.
  - Lori made a trip to Europe in July and August, which was very enjoyable and very beneficial for her.
  - Lori accepted a mission call and went to Costa Rica in September.
  - Aunt Barbara Hubbard, my father's only sister and the last of his family, died in September.
  - Mark graduated from the University in December and accepted a job with Blackman and Associates of Chicago, Illinois, and moved to Columbus, Ohio, on December 30th.
  - At work, Ted R Brown and Associates Incorporated, was sold to new owners, Mantle and White. Our accounting office services to Distributors Incorporated Colorado ended in December.
  - I joined the Olympus Male Chorus in September. This was a most uplifting and enjoyable activity for me at this low point.
  - I had another hernia operation in November and recovered very well. I was merely uncomfortable a bit for a few days.
  - Another great change, we bought an artificial Christmas tree.
- 1986
- The job which I have had since 1958 ended on February 28th.
  - Took a half time job with Ted R Brown and Associates' new owners, continued their accounting service until March 31st, a year later.
  - In April, I was diagnosed by Dr. Michael Preece as having severe coronary artery disease.
  - On May 14th I underwent heart bypass surgery, had six bypasses. The surgeon was Doctor Steven Richards. He did an excellent job. I recovered well.

- A humbling experience for me this summer: Kathy Flitton, whom I had fired in 1980 and who has since worked for Ted R Brown and Associates came to my rescue. I trained her for a few days before my surgery and she kept my job going for me through May and June and into July. I was able to handle it alone after July. I appreciated her help very much.
- James Scott was born to Doug and Gwen on July 16th.
- Our August camping was fun again, the most enjoyable it has been for some years.
- Mark was introduced to Dixie Christensen by Gary Nebeker. Mark and Dixie courted by long distance telephone and they became engaged at Thanksgiving time.
- Roberta and I flew to Nashua NH for a week in October. Wonderful to visit with John and Joyce and their children.
- 1987
- Retired March 31st when my part time job with Mantle and White ended.
- I began drawing my social security.
- Since my surgery I have been walking everyday for aerobic exercise, four miles in an hour each day.
- In May I began playing my accordion again, the instrument I bought in 1947. It is amazingly still in excellent condition. I feel determined to stay with it and try to develop some competency on it.
- Lori returned from her mission March 13th and reentered the University of Utah.
- Lori, Roberta and I attended a wonderful class on the US Constitution called "The Miracle at Philadelphia". Lori took it for credit and all of us for much pleasure. The professor was J. D. Williams. It was a real high for all of us. JD paid Lori a superlative compliment on her final paper. He said that from all of the students he had taught in 37 years he had never read a better paper.
- Mark and Dixie were married on March 20th in the Salt Lake Temple. John and Joyce were able to fly out to be with us.
- Joyce's brother, Stanford, was married the next day in the Salt Lake Temple.
- Mark and Dixie had a reception here and then we traveled to Burns, Oregon, for a second reception. We had a delightful trip. Mark and Dixie are very happy.
- On July 25th we had a big Larsen family reunion in Fairmont Park. My mother was the guest of honor of course. They honored her 85th birthday. Her total progeny counting the in-laws are about 125 and about 90 of them were present.
- In February I began singing, with a male quartet composed of Morris Cannegieter, Leonard Berg, Marvin Beckstead, and me.
- Roberta and I begin attending temple every Wednesday to serve as proxies
- 1988
- In March Roberta and I purchased senior citizen airline tickets on Eastern Airlines, good for one year. We could fly once a week anywhere Eastern Airlines flies in the United States.

- Our first trip was to Houston, Texas, in March to visit Shirley, Hilton and their family.
  - In April we went to Denver to visit Lee and Dorcus Bullock.
  - In May we visited Mark and Dixie in Columbus, Ohio.
  - In June we went for a week to Washington, DC.
  - In July we went for a week to Rochester, NY, the Palmyra area, and witnessed the Palmyra Hill Cumorah Pageant.
  - In August we went to Nashua NH to visit John and Joyce and their family.
  - In October we spent a week in New York City
  - End of November and first of December we spent a week in Florida. My sister Barbara went with us on that trip.
  - On September 16th Lori and Christopher Adam Weintz were married in the Salt Lake Temple. They had a lovely reception. The refreshments for the guests were prepared by family members, Roberta's cousins and her sister Kay.
  - This has been the driest year in my lifetime. The only rain we had from Memorial Day to November 2nd was 38 100ths of an inch. There was no killing frost until the middle of November.
  - Three grandchildren were born in our family this year.
    - To John and Joyce Stanford Mark was born August 5th.
    - To Doug and Gwen Natalie was born September 4th
    - To Mark and Dixie Elizabeth Anne was born November 10th.
- 1989
- We continued our flying vacation trips on Eastern Airlines and Continental Airlines. The first week of January we visited Raymond and Kirma in Mesa, Arizona.
  - The last part of January we visited Bea and Cliff Cash, Roberta's sister and brother in-law, in Reedley, California.
  - The first week of February we flew to Columbus, Ohio for a visit with Mark and Dixie.
  - The last part of February we flew to Nashua, NH again to visit John and Joyce and their family
  - In the first part of March we made our final trip, our 13th trip to San Diego California.
  - After all of that traveling, on March 4th we took down our Christmas Tree.
  - On March 16th Bishop Trost called me and Roberta to fill a mission. We accepted the call and since then have been preparing papers and undergoing medial and dental examinations getting ready to go.
  - One great relief to us, and a great favor to us; Lori and Chris have agreed to move into our home and take care of it while we are gone.
  - July 19<sup>th</sup> arrive at MTC and then drive to mission field in Ventura, California
  - August 9<sup>th</sup>: Assigned to Sherman Oaks Ward in Van Nuys, California
  - November: Called to serve in the mission office. Spend rest of mission there.
- 1990
- July. President and Sister Oswald released and replaced by President and

Sister Nielson.

- August 10<sup>th</sup>: Released from mission. Returned home via Mesa, Arizona to visit Raymond and Kirma.
  - Kirma recovering from diverticulitis. Has multiple surgeries.
  - August 16<sup>th</sup>: Arrive home.
  - Late August: Camping at Redman.
  - October: Lori and Chris move into Mark Twain apartments.
  - September: Rejoin the Olympus Male Chorus. It has really degraded since Morris Cannegieter quit.
  - Begin serving in temple again every Wednesday morning as proxies.
  - November: Visited John and Joyce in Nashua, NH.
  - Kay and Don Nebeker begin living winters in Arizona in a mid-sized mobile home.
  - September: Started attending class taught by David Christensen.
  - October: Attended 1<sup>st</sup> reunion of Missionaries who served under President and Sister Oswald. Not a very exciting reunion.
- 1991
- Very severe winter. Temperatures below zero for several weeks in a row.
  - In May went to St. George with Olympus Male Chorus.
  - March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Doug's and Gwen's seventh child born, Richard Mark.
  - May. Went to Nashua, NH to help John and Joyce at the birth of their 4<sup>th</sup> child Phillip Edward. Renovated their bathroom during our stay.
  - In summer camped at Redman. Rates have skyrocketed.
  - Roberta and Kay repaint rooms in house.
  - Have foundation of house plastered to cover bare concrete.
  - July. Family reunion with all our children and grandchildren. Have family group picture taken.
  - My father's grave is moved from Morgan, Utah to Brigham City.
  - September. Called to be a Temple Preparation Class instructor
  - Roberta called to be education counselor in Relief Society
  - October. Trip to Washington DC. My sister Barbara went with us.

## **APPENDIX B**

### OBITUARY AND FUNERAL PROGRAM

## **Merlin N. Larsen** **1924 ~ 2008**

Merlin Nelson Larsen died, due to complications of old age, on April 2, 2008. He was 83. He was born to Merlin Russell Larsen and Judith Viola Nelson on November 24, 1924, in Brigham City, Utah. He always loved school and learning, and said that teachers have the highest calling. Merlin had a great love for his country, and after graduating from Box Elder High School, he joined the Army Air Corps. He served as a 1st Lieutenant and was a B-17 bomber pilot during World War II.

Merlin majored in mathematics at the University of Utah, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1949. He taught high school English in Blanding, Utah, for a year, then returned to Salt Lake and obtained an accounting degree from Stevens-Henager Business College, where he later taught accounting classes. He married Roberta Fay Carpenter in the Salt Lake Temple on May 11, 1951. Merlin was a talented craftsman. Roberta and he extensively remodeled both homes in which they lived during their 57 years together in Murray, Utah.

Merlin spent his working years as the controller for Distributor's Inc., Ted R. Brown & Associates, and other affiliated companies. He was actively involved in the LDS Church, holding many callings including bishopric counselor, bishop, and high counselor. He served a mission in the Murray Utah Stake, and served a full-time mission with Roberta in Ventura, CA.

Merlin had a fine tenor voice and sang for years with the Olympus Male Chorus. He also enjoyed playing the accordion. Merlin served for several years as a member of the Murray City Library Board. One of his most satisfying activities, in later years, was tutoring five grandchildren in reading, as well as being a tutor in an adult literacy program. Merlin had a great love of good literature, music, movies, and the theatre, especially when shared with his family. He valued others and always made an effort to remember the names of everyone he met.

Merlin is preceded in death by his parents; two brothers and a grandson. He is survived by his wife, Roberta; and their four children, Doug (Gwendolyn), John (Joyce), Mark (Dixie), and Lori Weintz (Christopher); twenty grandchildren; one great-grandson; and siblings, Yvonne Steele, Raymond (Kirma), Barbara Baldauf, Shirley Mose (Hilton); and many nieces and nephews.

Viewing, Monday, April 7, 6-8 p.m., Jenkins-Soffe Mortuary, 4760 S State, Murray, UT. Funeral, Tuesday April 8, 11 a.m., with a viewing one hour prior, in the Millcreek Stake Center, 4220 S 420 E, Murray, UT. (Approach the Stake Center from 500 East using the narrow paved road that is just south of Stonehedge Apartments.) Interment, Redwood Memorial Estates, 6500 S Redwood Road. If an alternative to flowers is desired, Roberta asks that a donation be made, in Merlin's honor, to the LDS Church Perpetual Education Fund, the Missionary Fund, or to a charity of your choice. Online condolences may be shared with the family at [www.jenkins-soffe.com](http://www.jenkins-soffe.com)

(Published in the Salt Lake Tribune on 4/6/2008.)



In Memory of  
**MERLIN NELSON LARSEN**

Born – November 24, 1924 – Brigham City, Utah  
 Died – April 2, 2008 – Salt Lake City, Utah

Son of – Merlin Russell Larsen &  
 Judith Viola Nelson

Husband of – Roberta Carpenter Larsen

**Pallbearers**

Douglas Larsen	Ammon Larsen
John Larsen	Conrad Larsen
Mark Larsen	Alex Larsen
Christopher Weintz	Richard Larsen

**Honorary Pallbearers**

Raymond Larsen	Randy Weintz
Hilton Mose	Phillip Larsen
James Larsen	Andrew Larsen
James Logan	Bradford Larsen
Hunter Weintz	Clint Hastings

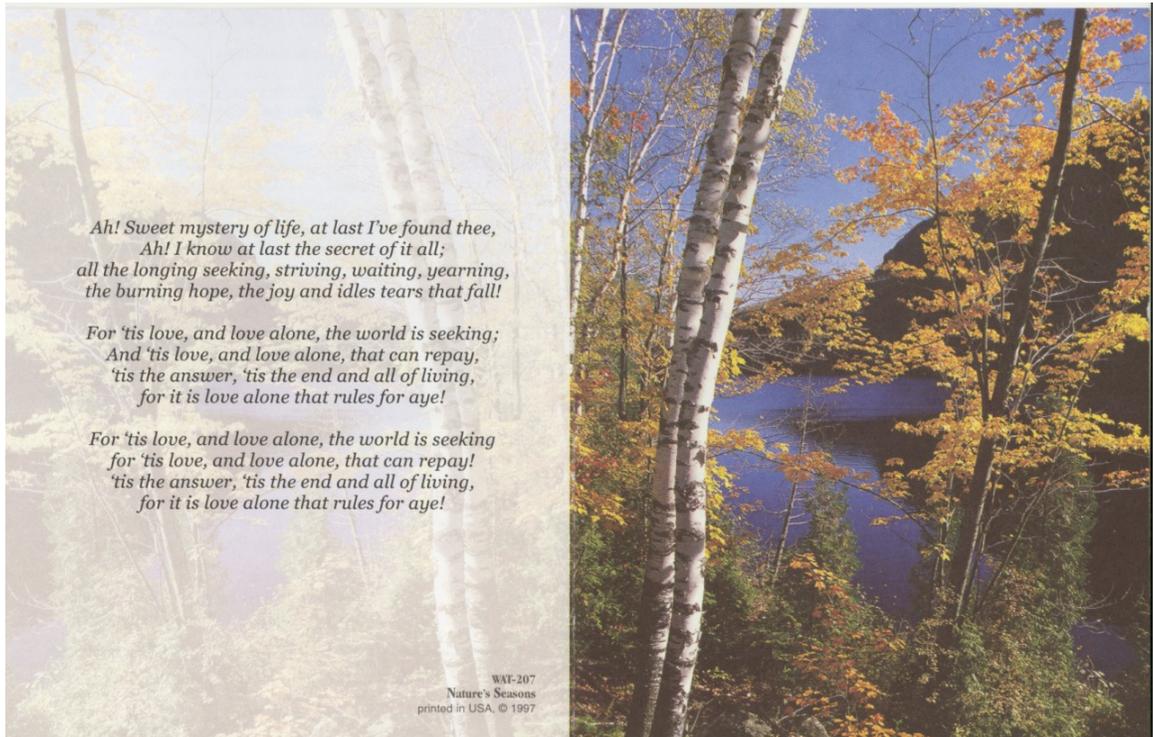
**Funeral Services**

Tuesday, April 8, 2008 – 11:00 a.m.  
 Salt Lake Millcreek Stake Center  
 4220 South 420 East, Salt Lake City, Utah

Conducting ..... Bishop Wayne H. Jepsen  
 Family Prayer ..... Raymond N. Larsen  
 Prelude & Postlude Music ..... Linda Ball  
 Chorister ..... Gwendolyn Larsen, *daughter-in-law*  
 Opening Hymn #124 ..... *"Be Still My Soul"*  
 Invocation ..... Hilton Mose, *brother-in-law*  
 Eulogy ..... Doug Larsen, *son*  
 Musical Number ..... *"Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life"*  
 Merlin's favorite song (words on back of program)  
 Performed by Elizabeth Larsen, *granddaughter*  
 Speaker ..... Lori L. Weintz, *daughter*  
 Speaker ..... Mark Larsen, *son*  
 Musical Number ..... *"Where Can I Turn for Peace"*  
 Performed by members of the Larsen Family  
 Accompanied by Arline Wright  
 Speaker ..... John Larsen, *son*  
 Closing Remarks ..... Bishop Wayne H. Jepsen  
 Closing Hymn ..... #152  
*"God Be with You Till We Meet Again"*  
 Benediction ..... Melvin E. Thayne, *special friend*

**Interment**

Redwood Memorial Estates  
 6500 South Redwood Road, West Jordan, Utah  
 Dedication of the Grave – Christopher A. Weintz, *son-in-law*  
 Military Rites – VFW, District 2



*Ah! Sweet mystery of life, at last I've found thee,  
 Ah! I know at last the secret of it all;  
 all the longing seeking, striving, waiting, yearning,  
 the burning hope, the joy and idles tears that fall!*

*For 'tis love, and love alone, the world is seeking;  
 And 'tis love, and love alone, that can repay,  
 'tis the answer, 'tis the end and all of living,  
 for it is love alone that rules for aye!*

*For 'tis love, and love alone, the world is seeking  
 for 'tis love, and love alone, that can repay!  
 'tis the answer, 'tis the end and all of living,  
 for it is love alone that rules for aye!*

WAF-207  
 Nature's Seasons  
 printed in USA, © 1997



**Image 137. Extended family picture taken 8 April 2008 at luncheon after interment**

