

GROWING UP IN ST GEORGE, UTAH

Early Memories

My first remembrance is of my father dressing me to go to the hospital to see my mother and new baby brother, Richard I think Dick was the first child born in the hospital. I was five years old and had a new red felt hat with tassels and beads over each ear. My Dad accidentally dropped the hat and broke some of the beads, and it marred my whole trip to the hospital. I didn't remember the new baby, but I sure remembered the damaged hat.

The subsequent two brothers born after Dick were disappointing to me at the time of their birth because I was always looking and yearning for a baby sister, and even told my Mother so in no uncertain terms that she could have a baby girl "if she had wanted to."

Our First Home

At the time of my birth and until I was nearly twelve years old, we lived in a small one-room brick house with a cellar underneath it, and two wooden lean-to rooms attached. One of these rooms served as a kitchen and one a bedroom. They were both held up on stilts with wooden floors and one layer of wooden siding, making them very hot in the summer and very chilly in the winter. Each room had one glass window and one screen window, with a wooden shutter that closed in the winter and was held up by a stick in the summer - for air. In the winter, there were big cracks around it and through some of the wood sidings that let the cold air in. My brothers and I used to stuff rags and paper in the cracks to make it warmer.

The home had a wooden porch on the front with a wash bench that had the only running water that the house possessed.

There was a big black Fox wooden and coal stove in one corner of the kitchen, and it had a reservoir attached that held water, and the water heated up when the stove was hot.

Saturday Night Bath and Other Memories

Every Saturday night the stove was stoked up and the water heated. The No. 3 tub was brought in and we all took baths for Sunday. Usually, I got the first bath because I was the only girl and it was assumed I did not get as dirty as the boys. Then two or three of the boys bathed, and the water was changed, and the others bathed one after the other. The last man got the worst of it

I have many memories of that little old house. Summers were hot in Dixie. There was no air conditioning, no refrigerators, no ice boxes, so we all slept outside and under the stars in the summer because it was a little cooler than indoors where the kitchen floor sometimes got so hot it could burn bare feet. The brick room was a lifesaver. It seemed always dark and cool, and in the winter the circumstances were just reversed.

I remember one time one of the neighborhood boys, Jim Wade, crawled up under the stilts of the house beneath the kitchen. He was just about three years old. He went as far as the brick wall where it attached to the house. There he fell asleep. It was cool. His mother missed him later. She was an English lady who was very excitable, and she had the whole neighborhood out looking for Jim. She was out of her mind because she couldn't find him. Hours passed. My Dad found him still sound asleep

There was another thing that happened in that old house While our parents were away, some of the neighborhood kids came over. We were NOT supposed to be playing in the house. Mother was very fussy about that. I can just see us running back and forth in the kitchen. One of the kids had a knife. I don't know what game we were playing, but accidentally this knife went into the eye of one of the girls She lost her sight in that eye. It was one of the Morris girls. When the folks came home, we really "got it". In the first place, we were not supposed to be in the house.

Just because I was the only girl doesn't mean that I never had hand-me-down clothes. I got mine from my mother's younger sisters (Aunt Mildred and Aunt Nellie). They were much older than I was, so they had to be made over. I learned to sew when I was ten or twelve years old and I sewed all my life. I made the clothes over for myself

I remember when I was a teenager, I wanted silk stockings. The rayon stockings were thick and not pretty. So my aunts would give me their old stockings with runs in them. I had a stocking mender. It was a metal shank about 2" long, had a hook on one end, with a latch. This was quite an invention and difficult to describe. I would mend the runs one stitch at a time.

The New Home

When I was about nine years old and my last brother, Clare, was born, we had outgrown our little lean-to house and Mom and Dad decided to build a bigger home. And even though it was Depression years, Dad borrowed about \$2,500 from the Home Owners Loan Association and started to build on the lot just next to us that he owned

My Dad did most of the work in his spare time from the farm. He got black rock from the Black Hill and cut the stone for the foundation. A big job! He and my brothers (older) dug the two basement rooms and the foundation and did most of the cementing. Dad made gray cement brick four at a time, putting them out on wood platforms to dry. I used to water them down while they were drying so they wouldn't crack. He made adobes at the Old Adobe Yard for the insulation. In this manner, after two or three years, we had a nice three bedroom, one bathroom, large kitchen and front room home - but not without a lot of backbreaking work and disappointments. For the Depression had hit hard and the bank went broke and closed their doors that we had his \$2,500 loan in, and he lost it all and had to borrow another sum. So the house cost him double the amount of money he had anticipated. It took them many years to pay it off, even after doing most of the work

The house was a real luxury for us. Especially for me, because I had a bedroom all to myself and the five boys had to share the other bedroom. It was many years after that I had pangs of guilt over that.

Growing Up - Home Life

Right across the street from Julia's store was the first gas station in town. They did have Bowser's where there was a pump, but this was the first gas station in St George. The Standard Station. My father got a job there - the first job he ever had off the farm. He made almost \$100 a month -a little less. That was the most cash our family ever had. He worked there for several years. I remember mother complaining because Grandfather Schmutz (the only one with a car) would go up to the station and charge gas on my father's account.

When I was growing up, times were very hard for my parents, although I never really felt deprived or poor because my Dad was a farmer and always had a big garden, and my Mom canned and preserved, so we always had plenty to eat. As I grew older and we got into the Depression years, I realized I could not and did not have the nice clothes and opportunities that some of my friends did. However, most families around us were all in the same circumstances. Everyone but a few were having hard times.

Friends and Entertainment

My best friends were neighborhood children. We had a great neighborhood. Everyone cared and loved and helped each other. Summers all of the kids gathered on the street corner because it was the only corner that had a lighted pole in the area, and we played games like Run-Sheep-Run and Kick-the-Can and Prisoners Base, etc. The neighborhood kids were Elva Morris and her sisters, Alva Barton and Mary Cottam, who were my best friends, Elvin McArthur and Irvan McArthur, Frank Hamblin, Howard Wade, Nathan Barton and my brothers.

The light pole we played under was in the middle of the three blocks where we all lived. It was just two blocks from the temple, which was on the southeast end of St. George - the temple which Pres. Brigham Young predicted would someday be in the center of the city. Unbelievable at that time - in the 30's and the 40's - it has come true in the 80's and the 90's.

School Experiences

Elementary School

We lived about eight blocks from the center of town and when I started school, I had to walk those eight blocks four times a day - after the 2nd grade. I don't know why we didn't think of taking a lunch, but it was college days before we started to have school lunches, which consisted of a good hearty bowl of soup. So we would take a sandwich from home and buy a bowl of soup for a dime and have a good lunch instead of walking the 16 blocks home and back.

Those early years I usually ended up running most of the way because like any vain American girl, I spent too much time dressing and primping and didn't have enough time to walk. Much to my woe in later years, I developed muscular legs, and I always blamed that on the fact that I walked and ran those many blocks to school and back - sometimes more than four times a day. I didn't know then how much good I was doing for my general health.

It was customary in those days for women to make butter, have eggs, and take them to the market for a credit. The market would sell the produce. We did this and with the credit we would buy staples - flour, sugar, seasonings, etc. We grew most of our food. When I would come home for lunch, mother had the butter, bread and eggs read for the market. After lunch, I raced to the store with the products, and then raced onto school. I always started with the first market (the Mathis Market). If they wouldn't take it, I would go to OK Market. There was a mercantile store that also sold butter, eggs and a few perishables like that. It was the Julia Foster Mercantile Store on the corner of St. George Boulevard and Main Street (southwest corner). If she didn't want what I had, I would leave it there and pick it up after school and take it home. Julia Foster was a spinster and had a long chin. One day when I took the stuff up there, she looked at me and said, with her long chin quivering, "You always bring it here when you can't take it anyplace else." She kind of had a lisp. I'll not forget. It's funny what you remember.

High School and College

High School and College were in the same buildings on Main Street and First South (That is where the Washington County Library was built. The gymnasium was torn down but the old stone building to the south was preserved. There was another building across the street, where there is now a drive-in bank)

I dated a lot during high school and college and took part in most of the school activities. I loved athletics and did well in most of them. Somehow, I always managed to help my mother at home and hold my part time jobs and get fairly good grades.

In college I loved my classes. I took business classes from Miss. Miriam Alsthrom (short hand, typing, accounting and English). I also loved history and took it from H. L. Reid, but my biggest interest was in homemaking. I took some cooking classes from a teacher whose name I can't recall, but my big love was sewing and dress designing, which I took from Miss Annallis Bougart. She and her parents came to St. George in 1940, after she graduated from the BYU. Miss Bougart also taught athletics. She married Kenneth Ence and lived in Santa Clara and had a fine family of boys. I really loved her. She taught me so much and we ended up making and designing the dress I wore when I was D Queen of the college. The same dress we altered into a wedding dress

I Learned to Work

Ironing for Grandma

After Grandpa Marshall died, my grandmother went to work as a laundress. She did the laundry for the old Liberty Hotel (St. George Boulevard and where the new Zion's Bank is). Just east of there was where the OK Market owned by the Miles family was.

She started in her home. She had two Maytag washers, and she did sheets, pillow cases, towels, and white shirts for the merchants who stayed at the hotel. Then her business grew and she started to do laundry for the old Arrowhead Hotel (Tabernacle and Main - First Security Bank there now). She finally got a building with all the latest laundry equipment - commercial washing machine and mangles. Her children (Mildred and her husband, Kenneth Judd; Nellie and her husband, Jack Sutphin - a CCC boy from Kentucky or Tennessee; and her youngest son, Norman Marshall, and his wife, Vodie) all worked together in the laundry for many years.

I worked there from the time I was about 12. I used to hang clothes on the line (before dryers) and then I dampened clothes, ironed, washed dishes, and did housekeeping. I just worked for her. I ironed shirts. We ironed sheets and pillow cases, and then she got the big mangles that took care of the flat items. But we still had to hand-iron white shirts. Then of course I had five brothers, for whom I hand-ironed shirts. (When I was married I had calluses across the top of my palm from wielding irons for so many years. They are all gone now. Thank goodness) That was my first job - helping my grandmother.

Work for the Neighbors

I had another job when I was about 14. I worked for Mrs. Rex Frei who lived in our neighborhood. She had three children, and I did housekeeping and ironing for her for 10 cents an hour. Even 40 cents was a lot of money in those days - 4 hours for 40 cents. In addition to that, I always had my chores at home to do. I was a busy girl.

The Optometrist's Office

When I was in college I got a job at an optometrist's, Dr. Burgess. I worked after school and on Saturdays. I did office work - typewriting, shorthand and bookkeeping. He had a technician that worked there and then himself. They both were heavy smokers, and it was very hard for me. I would always come home and hang my clothes out on the clothes line because I had a hard time with smoking. The technician bothered me too. He "came onto me" and I didn't like him at all. I had to quit. The Doctor went to Escalante, Boulder and Torrey every week, and many times I was left alone in the office with this technician. Uncomfortable times.

The Telephone Company

I got a job in the telephone company. The fellow who was at the head of it was Mr. Jones. There were just half a dozen telephone operators when I worked there: Ruth Cottam, Helen Fawcett, Elsie Haradence (who was the chief operator), Lillian Riding, Norma Esplin, Evelyn Hawkins. We each had a switchboard. That was when you had all the plugs on the base and the holes on the upright with holes in them with numbers on them. When the light by the hole lit up, you would take a plug (any plug would do) on a cord and you would insert it into the hole on the upright and that would connect you with the person calling. They would tell you the number they were calling and then you would take another plug

and plug it into the number of the person they wanted to talk to and that would connect the two. If someone else called wanting a number in use, you would have to say, "I'm sorry that number is busy." There were three or four banks of plugs. As St. George grew they would add more banks. There were not that many phones. Sometimes there was only one operator on duty (slow time) to handle all the banks, but usually there were two or three. Long distance calls required different plugs. It is very difficult to describe, but I did it all and loved it. I enjoyed the people I worked with. I worked there for about 1-1/2 years until I was married.

(All of the girls who worked at the telephone office, who live in St. George, get together two times a year - once in October and once in March. We have lunch together and renew old acquaintances and talk about what we had to do in the phone office, compared to what they do now. One of the girls has a piece of an old switchboard that she keeps in her home.)

Romance

I had many boyfriends. My first date was at 12 or 13 to a show with Elden McArthur, a neighborhood friend. I went with Franklin Hamblin, also a neighborhood friend. When I was a few years older, I dated some of my brothers' friends - Bernard Seegmiller was one of them, and I can't remember the names of the others. They were just Mends of my brothers.

I also had a great crush on Billy Seegmiller, who lived in our ward. It was the rage at the time for girls to pluck out all their eyebrows and then paint them on. I did it. I went someplace with Billy, and he looked at my painted brows and he said, "I don't like that on you. My sisters wouldn't do that." I never liked him after that. He would call me and call me, and I wouldn't even talk to him.

When I was in the last year of high school, I met Fay Reber, who came from Hurricane to go to college in St. George. My girlfriend, Hilma Esplin, met Fay's friend, Hal Bradshaw, who also came from Hurricane to go to college. In time we made a foursome and had wonderful times that year. I really liked Fay. At the end of my high school year, Fay and Hal went on missions. Fay went to the State of Washington, and I don't remember where Hal went, but the day after they left, Hilma and I stayed out of school and cried all day.

My first college year, I dated other boys: Dewayne Esplin, who was a 'star basketball player for Dixie. There was Bish Whitehead. I went with Bish to Salt Lake with and danced at the old Saltair pavilion. The dances were sponsored by the LDS Church MIA program. All over the state the young people would learn dances (waltz, fox trot, and specialty dances). Those who could afford it or were the best would travel to Salt Lake City and perform simultaneously in the grand ballroom at Saltair. We stayed with chaperones in a hotel and it was a wonderful experience. Also, there others I dated briefly.

About three or four weeks after Fay went on his mission I had a date with a shy boy from Washington, LeRoy Nisson, son of WILLARD ORLANDO MASON and MARIE NEILSON (NISSON). He and his friends and cousins (Paul Neilson, his brother Rodney and another cousin, Junior Neilson) made a fun group. We had a lot of great times together. Unfortunately, years later, Paul, Rodney and Junior were all killed in the 2nd World War.

Roy and I were officers in the Institute Program. We saw each other a lot and did many things together. He was very shy but very appealing to me and was always there for me. I loved his cousins too and as a group we had many wonderful good times together. Near the end of the last year of college, I felt I was in love with Roy and he with me.

My mother was very much against Roy and very much in favor of Fay. As I had been writing to Fay most of this time, and as I remembered I had great feelings for him, I felt I had to see him before I made this very important decision. Fay came home from his mission just weeks before I was voted D Day queen at the college - a great honor for me because I was a common girl from a common family in St. George. After Fay came home, I went with him only once and felt I knew my answer. I then had the painful experience of telling him that Roy was the one for me. Fay said to me when I told him that he knew about Roy and I had been honest with him, but he didn't know how much competition he had. The whole school and the town had been keenly aware of this dilemma I was in. When I chose Roy to take me to the D Day dance, everyone was waiting and watching. Years later, Roy always told how appreciative he was for the missionary program.

We were married about a year later on February 7, 1942. At this writing, we have been married 56 years (1998). Unfortunately, Fay enlisted in the Air Force and became a tail gunner on a bomber, which was shot down over Germany and he was killed.

Marriage

Although we did not have the full approval of my Mother, we were married in the St. George Temple February 7, 1942. My Aunt Lucille Pitchforth went through the temple with me as my Mother was ill, but she did come to see us get married. I might say here that my Father had a big family of brothers and sisters (three brothers and five living sisters). My mother had three brothers and four sisters. Most of my aunts and uncles married and remained in St. George and I loved them all and they had a big influence on me as I was growing up and many years after. My grandparents on both sides died within a few years of each other, when I was between 13 to 16 or 17 years old.