

Richard Schmutz: My Personal History. Begun 2/26/06.

I was born to Wilford Antone and Martha Foremaster Schmutz. October 13, 1925 in the “Old McGregor Hospital” in St. George, Utah. Long since torn down, the hospital was located on 1st East about midway down the 100 South block, on the east side of the street. (Linda was also born in this hospital.) My mother has told me that she had a hard time carrying me and that she had to rest in bed a lot during the second half of the pregnancy to avoid a miscarriage.

My family was living at the time in the first house that they built on the 1/4th block they had purchased. It was the northwest 1/4 of the block lying south of 200 South and between 400 and 500 East. The house consisted of a one-room brick part, built over a basement that had a dirt floor. Attached to it on the south was a kitchen built out of wood and raised on cedar post stilts about four feet off the ground. East of the kitchen was another wood build-on containing two small bedrooms. We lived in this house until I was about five or six years old. One incident that remains in my mind was this: I accidentally swallowed a nail and, each time I had a bowel movement, my parents had me go into an enclosed but empty calf pen south of the house and rake through my feces until I found the nail!! That happened a few days later and life returned to normal. I also remember a snowy day when I was lying on a cot in the brick part of the house, looking out the window where Dad and another man were operating a fresno (a dirt scraper) with a team of horses and excavating the basement for the home they were planning to build, the home that is still standing at 454 East 200 South, where we all finished “growing up.” I remember the day for another peculiar reason. I pressed my fingers into small holes in the ornamental metal head of this cot and marveled how the hole left an impression on my finger that took a little while to disappear. Funny what impresses a kid and sticks out clearly in memory so many years later.

The home that dad was building was financed with a loan from the St. George Building & Loan, I think about \$2000. But it was finished in the 30's in the midst of the “Great Depression” and for a few years Dad had a hard time making his payments on the loan. However, he managed to avoid having the home go into foreclosure. He and hired hands, and skilled brick layers and carpenters built the house. Dad gathered lava rock from one of the Black Hills that bordered the east and west sides of our valley, I don't know which one, for the foundation and the walls of the two-room basement built under the south third of the house. The upper structure was built from sand brick made locally. The finished home had an open front porch, a front door leading into a combination dining room/ parlor that occupied the front side of the house. At that time the two rooms were separated by a glassed-in enclosure, which was later removed in a remodeling and carpeting that combined the two rooms. A door led from the dining room into a spacious kitchen. The home was heated by a wood/coal burning “heat-a-rola” in the dining room and by the wood/coal burning range in the kitchen. I remember how cozy these rooms felt in the winter when their fires were going. One of my jobs as a youngster was to gather in chips from the wood pile, used to start fires, and to keep the wood bin full (we used wood almost exclusively in the kitchen range, and “pitch-pine,” when we had it, in the heat-a-rola. Coal was also used in that stove, but many days, when the two front rooms were not used, the doors into them were kept closed and the kitchen stove furnished what heat was used in the house. The hall, bathroom, and bedrooms were unheated, except what came into them from the kitchen through the open door into the hallway. Some years later, Dad put in a coal burning furnace in one of the basement

rooms and the heat came up into the hallway via a grill in the floor. This furnace still later was converted to a heating oil burner.

The rest of the house consisted of the master bedroom at the north end of the hallway, which then opened to the bathroom. Two bedrooms occupied the south end of the main house. One was occupied by Janice and the other by five boys, after Bill and Clare came along and until David married! There were two beds, three of us slept in the larger and two in the smaller. I remember getting stuck between David and Donald in the larger bed. Bill and Clare, it seemed, were too small for that. Besides, Bill always had trouble sleeping, which has been the case all his life. Jutting out at the southwest corner of the house was a screened porch, accessed off the kitchen. It had a door leading out its northwest corner and another at the southeast end where you took two steps down to a landing. A right-hand turn took you out the back door, and a left hand turn brought you to the head of steps leading down into the basement.

The names of the five brothers and one sister were, descending in age from the oldest to the youngest, David Marshall, Donald Foremaster, Janice, Richard Antone, William Jay, and Clare Andrew.

The half of the quarter block that lay west of the house was vacant, except for the smaller first home and an unused horse corral tucked in the back corner. The half of the quarter block that the new home set on had a lawn in front and large garden plots back in back and on the east side. The latter ran down the lot to the barn, pig pen, cow corral, and chicken coop that collectively occupied the southeast part of the half block. The wood pile, where winter wood was stored for splitting and chopping, and where we fed calves and chopped off chickens' heads was west of the chicken coop, and there was a small calf pen nearby. So that was the layout of the block and the two houses. City irrigation water, taken in approximately weekly turns during the season, watered garden, lawn and two ailanthus trees on the west side of the house. There was also one of these at the back of the house, and there was a sweet cherry tree at the north east corner of the half block. Grape vines aligned the small ditch that carried the water down the west side of the house to the garden. The ditch continued south from the corner of the garden and went on down past the east side of the old house. At that point it irrigated some fig trees. That pretty well describes the home property, and it remained that way, basically unchanged until sometime in the 1970s or so, when Dad raised the old house and sold off three lots on that half-block and sold a lot on the front half of the east garden plot.

The Farm

Dad was a farmer and was raised in a farm and ranch family. His dad and mother were John and Clorinda Schlaepfi Schmutz. His grandparents, Johannes and Elisabetha Schmutz joined the Church in the home country, Switzerland, and emigrated to Utah and St. George in 1874-75. John was raised on a farm in Switzerland and it was quite natural for him to pursue that occupation in the new country. A few years after their marriage they bought a farm in what came to be called the Washington Fields. It had a house on it. Grandpa favored horticulture and planted orchards and vineyards. He also acquired additional parcels west and south and in other locations in different parts of the Fields. As his sons grew and married a partnership was established consisting of Grandpa, and my uncles, John, Marcell, and Clarence. After a mission to Switzerland, Clarence sold his interest and went east to college. The partnership also acquired ranching properties some 75-80 miles southeast of St. George, on Nixon Mountain and in Tuweep Valley and a still wilder place they called Canaan, over the hills east of Tuweep Valley.

So, they were farmers and ranchers. When grandpa died, the brothers divided the property. John went on his own and Dad and Marcell became partners for a time. Dad loved ranching, but mom didn't like having him away from home for days and weeks at a time, and she didn't take to the out of doors. Besides, her father died of a horse fall, out on the range, when she was two or three years old. That may have had something to do with it. Anyway, after a few years, Dad and Marcell divided up. Marcell took the ranch and the cattle and Dad the farm. That's the way it was when I came along, so I grew up a farmer. Before they were replaced by tractors, we did have about a half dozen work horses and a one saddle horse. Dad eventually had a beautiful white team that people in town sought to pull floats in town parades.

We weren't too original with names. Most of them were named after their color. There was Blackie and old Nig, and one named Shortie. That's all the names I can remember. We never gave the saddle horse a name, just calling him the sorrel, or the saddle horse. He was around for a long time and lived into his 30s, which is old for a horse.

We also always had other livestock on the farm. Dad always fattened cattle in his feed yard during the winter. He would buy yearlings off local ranchers in the fall, fatten them out during the winter months, and ship them to the Los Angeles Stock Yards as finished beefs in the spring. He also kept a small herd of sheep that were turned into the fields after haying or other cropping. He kept a litter of pigs in a pen below the canal, and he usually raised a flock of turkeys every summer, finishing them for the Thanksgiving market.

Grandpa's orchards and vineyards were not very profitable. It was hard to compete with fruit shipped in from California, was too labor intensive for the size of the operation and the small return, and early frosts sometimes took the crop anyway. So, overtime gradually eliminated the orchards and vineyards and converted the land they occupied to field crops. I think the first to go was the mixed almond, apple, and cherry orchard that stood west of the house, and after that went the small fig orchard that stood between the house and the others just named. As a kid, I remember these well. The large peach and pear orchards that occupied some 12-15 acres north from the house lasted longer, but they went too, and the vineyards on the west, plus an old pear orchard beyond them, or surrounded by them. I remember all of these, and remember hoeing weeds in them, irrigating, picking fruit, and even herding turkeys and grazing the small flock of sheep in and around them.

A canal that brought the irrigation water ran from the east to the west all along the south side, uphill side of the farm land. The house, shaded on the south by two huge mulberry trees, lay on a small plot below the canal but the barns, corrals, stack yards, and feed yards were spread along an area south of the ditch toward the west end of what I've been describing as the home/farm property, and it was bordered along its entire south length by the county road that ran from town, along the dugway, and out to the farms lying east beyond us. South of the road, which is still in the original location, was some 500 acres of hill property that belonged to Dad but that, at the time, was pretty worthless, the habitat back then of coyotes, jack rabbits, cottontails, squirrels, chipmunks, horned toads, snakes, and lizards, including an occasional rattler, plus . . . and chuckwallas.

Dad also ran a 20-acre field further west, called the Middle Field, because it once did lie in the middle of land that Grandpa and the partnership had acquired, and now adjoined land still further west, stretching to the dugway, that Uncle John received in the split up. Another 25-acre parcel lay around the hill and about a mile east on the county road. It was called the New Land, an inventive name given it at the time of its acquisition. Another 20 acres, around the hill but

south was the Woodbury Land, named after the previous owner. Then, for years we farmed about 35 acres that we rented from the Snow family. It lay about two plus miles from the homestead at the very south end of the Washington Fields. If this was not enough to keep us busy, for years before and during World War II dad leased what we called the Rosenberry farm. It stretched along the county road between the river bridge and the dugway and is the present site of a large residential project, and that has a developing large commercial parcel fronting the residential. It was marginal farming land when we had it, but it consisted of some 200 plus acres, much of it in a rocky hillside and the steeper hill behind it. Dad reached a time, when we boys were gone, that he could no longer work it profitably and turned it back to the owner, who had long since moved to the Northwest. He was offered all of it for the cash price of \$9500, or something like that. Today the land is worth millions.

St. George

St. George was first settled in 1861-62, The Tabernacle was completed in 1873 and the Temple in 1877. The St. George Stake stretched from Bunkerville and Mesquite in Nevada to Hurricane, Rockville, and Springdale, and from Mt. Trumbull (Bundyville) to Enterprise and By 1925 it had three LDS wards and a population of The town grew steadily in the 30s and into the 40s. I think the population during the 30s remained in the 2200-2600 range, and into the 3000-3500 range during the 40s. By the end of the 40s perhaps 3800-4200 people called it home. It was always the county seat which, with a college, the temple, a court-house and all, made it seem like a pretty good place to us, growing up in it. We didn't feel deprived of anything. Cedar City was bigger than St. George in those days, but they had a railroad spur, which helped their economy.

Education

My grade school years began in the Woodward School (now the renovated School District building on 100 West Tabernacle Street. I did attend 3rd grade in the lower level of the old college building (now the city leisure center on 100 south Main) and by the time I was in the 5th grade a new elementary building (now razed) was built across the street west from the Woodward Building. The town library, now gone, was situated between the Woodward building and the Tabernacle. When I was in grade school I loved to go there, into the lower level, and read the Sunday funny papers. There was also a time when our East Ward Primary was held in that basement.

After the elementary school opened, the Woodward School was used for the 7th and 8th grades and the first two years of high school. The second two years of high school was held in the Dixie College buildings, along with the freshman and sophomore college students that constituted it as a junior college. Students who wanted to continue their education after junior college usually went to BYU or the University of Utah or Utah State Agricultural College, as it was known as then. That educational system seemed fixed forever in that configuration, which lasted through the World War II years and beyond.

I was a pretty good elementary school student and usually led the reading circles. Miss Harmon

graded my papers 110% A penchant for learning continued through the Woodward School years, except during the last two years of high school my notion of becoming a farmer cooled interest in other academic classes. I gave up band (I played a clarinet) and the last math class that was required in those days was 8th grade algebra. Better school counseling and more stringent requirements would have been in order. But, to me then, what mattered was the ag classes taught by Wayne Hinton, and membership in the FFA (Future Farmers of America). I also raised a couple of show calves that I took to the State Fair, and some feeder pigs that brought me a fair profit. I also had an onion seed raising project one year in our back yard garden.

The lack of higher math handicapped me when I returned to college after my World War II military service and after my mission. Common sense or a wise counselor then would have had me back up and take the higher math courses. Upon beginning college, the life science courses offered by Arthur Bruhn interested me the most. I took every class he taught in biology, zoology, genetics, and geology, and I also took chemistry and physics but I couldn't go further in those two field, given my math limitation. I did manage to earn A's in the introductory chemistry and physics classes that I took from Morris Miles, but I don't think they would pass muster today. But I did become a member of the Dixie College X Club, which required a 4.00 grade point average.