

Memories of Toquerville

By Carol Stapley Kemple

I was born at home on December 7, 1938 in Toquerville, Utah to Woodrow Stapley and Neta Smith Stapley, in the old "Milt Wallace" home on the main street. I am the oldest child in our family. My sister, Juaneta, is two years younger than I, and Ellen is 11 years younger than I. My brother, Darwin is 17 years younger than I. We lived on the main street of Toquerville, just two houses east of Uncle LaRoy Stapley's General Store.

When it came time to start school, Lorena Jones and I were told we were too young as our birthdays were in December. Lorena and I wanted to go to school along with our friends, so our parents contacted the school superintendent, Milton Moody. Mr. Moody made arrangements for our parents to pay \$25.00 for each of us and we were permitted to start school in the first grade in 1944. My teachers in first, second and third grades were Bernice Bringhurst, who taught the morning session and Fern Klienman who taught the afternoon session. There was no school lunch so we went home at lunchtime. The children who lived too far away had to bring their own lunch.

For our Valentine day party we had a big box decorated with red hearts and paper, where each child could deposit their valentine cards. During the party, the teacher would call our names as the valentines were passed out. It was a thrill to receive so many valentines. Each child had decorated a smaller box to take our valentines home. It was a fun time delivering valentines to our friends homes. A favorite trick was to tie a string on a valentine then hide nearby. When the person reached for it, a jerk on the string brought many laughs. Bobby Dean (an older man), would give the most beautiful, big, valentines to the children in the neighborhood. I wish I had kept mine.

Lorena Jones was my best friend and we had many fun times together. A favorite time was a stay over (now it's a sleep over). We didn't get much sleep as we talked and giggled all night long. On one occasion at breakfast, the next morning, we were eating Shredded Wheat. Lorena's Dad, Marvin Jones, teased us about eating Shredded Hay. He was a big tease.

Lorena had learned to play the piano. I wanted to learn too. She gave me my first piano lessons at 25 cents each, teaching me the way her piano teacher had taught her. We had no piano in our home, but I was able to practice on a big upright piano at my Grandma Stapley's home. My friends, Lorena, Jackie Theobald, and Zelda fish could all play very well. I often wished I could play as well as they could. Jackie was the best. She is still a great piano player. As for me, I never learned to

play very well. Lorena had a pump organ that belonged to her Grandmother. We were a sight to behold as we enjoyed pumping the pedals and playing that organ.

Jackie Theobald and Lorraine Slack were my special friends. Jackie and I used to play Tarzan and Jane. We would pretend we were in the jungle of Africa. Jackie could yell just like Tarzan. Her home had a basement and we often played there. Her family had a “solar” shower, (way ahead of the times) outside. It had a tank of water on top where the sun would heat the water for a warm shower. I thought that was a marvelous invention, as very few had showers in their home and none had them outside. When Lorraine’s mother died, Bishop Howard, and Bessie Fish were a good influence on Lorraine. I went with Lorraine to visit them. They taught all of us about family prayer and we were sometimes invited to join their family in prayer if Howard was leaving on a truck run. This was my first experience with family prayer.

I had Whooping Cough one year and had to miss school. I was allowed outside the house for short times during my confinement, but no one was to get close to me. My friends, Lorena, and Lorraine, came by to talk to me but were careful to not get too close.

Ruby Klienman and Patsy Bringhurst lived across the street from me. We loved to pick pomegranates and eat them with almonds. The three of us went behind the old garage that was between their houses and built a fire to roast our almonds. We mixed our roasted almonds with pomegranate seeds and made a wonderful tasty treat.

Independence day celebration was always a fun time for the kids in Toquerville. There was a parade, races, sack races, and three legged races. All the girls got new dresses. It seemed almost like Christmas. I had a sleep over at the home of Beryl Slack on the night of the third. During the night I got scared and decided I wasn’t going to stay so I walked home.

Mr. A. Bert Sullivan was our fourth grade teacher. His wife came to the school on the day we were to present a program. She put makeup on the girls to help them get ready. It was my first time to have lipstick and makeup on out in public.

Christmas was a special time at our school. In fifth and sixth grade we put on a Christmas program. Antone Bringhurst and I were chosen for the leading parts. Antone played the Father and I was the Mother in the program. Our teacher for those two years was Mr. Charles Hansen. He taught us square dancing and we had a great time. The Primary also put on a Christmas program for the town. After singing Christmas Carols, Santa would come. Usually Howard Bringhurst’s Dad, Leland Bringhurst would play the Santa. He would bring a bag of candy and always an orange for each person. These are fond memories of growing up in Toquerville.

On Halloween the Primary would put on a party for the entire town. Everyone, including adults, would dress up in costumes and have a dance. Since we had no pumpkins, we used squash instead, decorating them to look like jack-o-lanterns. We went trick-or-treating all over town. Milt Wallace always gave us walnuts for our treat, which didn't make us too happy. Many people gave us apples. The old Con Naegle home, or as we knew it, the storage for Spilsbury grain, looked just like the classic haunted house. The wind would blow through the poplar tree and make it sway as it made an eery swishing sound. We would run real fast to get away from that place. Also at Halloween the older kids made a haunted house, or dungeon, in the basement of the schoolhouse, which was really scary. It had cobwebs and haunted music. When we were older we had a great time decorating and scaring the younger kids.

Miss Tillie Winsor, came from the school district office to tell stories to the children at our school. My favorite was the one about the selfish giant. She could make the characters in the story seem alive and real as she quietly told us the story. I was so impressed by that story that I later purchased the book "The Selfish Giant" so I could read the story to my own children. Miss Winsor also gave us a spelling test. For some reason I was nervous about taking that test. I didn't do very well on it.

Some of the games we played were marbles, poison, and ball games.

We sometimes had a big bonfire in back of the school to roast wieners and marshmallows. This may have been for Mutual parties.

Harry and Rowena Slack ran the general store, right in the center of town. After my Uncle LaRoy and Aunt Geneva Stapley purchased the store, I worked for them as a clerk and loved waiting on the customers. They had an old fashioned scale to weigh cheese and meat. The pop machine was the style you would put in your quarter and slide the bottle to the end of the row to get it out. The pop was suspended in cold water to keep it cool and refreshing.

All Toquerville kids had fun roller skating and riding their bikes. Once I fell off my bike and cut the palm of my hand on a piece of glass. I still have the scar. At school one day during recess, while I was skating, I was stung by a bee, right behind the ear. The teacher let me go home for the rest of the day.

My Dad, Woodrow Stapley, was in the Army during World War II and was gone for two years. My Mom, my sister, Juaneta and I lived in Toquerville while he was gone. When the war was over and dad landed in New York City, he called on the phone to the only phone in town. It was in Sam Bringham's home. They came and got my mother, sister, and I. I got to talk to him and still remember how hard it was to hear with the static and crackling on the line. This was the first time I ever used a telephone. Not long after, dad came home. I was in school when he arrived, and someone came for me to tell me he was home from the war. I got to miss the rest of the day of school. It was great to have my dad back home.

Mr. Hansen took us on a field trip over near Leeds to show us some petrified wood. This was the first time I had heard of petrified wood, and there was a lot of it. I don't remember exactly where it is.

When I was in fifth grade, Helen McIntyere was in fourth grade. She was very sick and had a hard time in school. Sometime later she died. This was my first experience with death. I found out later that she died from Leukemia. It was very sad.

Bishop Howard Fish had a great influence on my life. He had a pleasant laugh and was kind and friendly to everyone. When he was Bishop, he taught genealogy to my Sunday School class. That was my first introduction to genealogy and I have loved it ever since. I was impressed that our Bishop took the time to teach a class to us teenagers. Later, Bishop Fish was killed in a trucking accident. It was a tragic time for me, and everyone in Toquerville.

In the summer of 1954, Jackie Theobald and I taught a 4-H club class of second year sewing. The girls in the class were Linda Bringhurst, Judith Anderson, Aloma Bringhurst, and Darlene Adams.

Picking fruit and hauling hay was an occupation of all Toquerville kids. Lorraine, Lorena, Jackie, and I, and probably others, picked strawberries for Arch Klienman. It was a back-breaking job with all the leaning over, but we had a fun time doing it. I picked peaches for my dad. It was a miserable job with all the peach fuzz and the sweat. By the time we were through for the day, we were really itching all over. Every time I have a peach I recall those peach-picking experiences. I don't really care for peaches that well to this day. At hay hauling time my sister, Juaneta, and I had to tromp hay on the wagon for my dad, because we had no boys in our family. It was hot work and we had to be on the lookout for snakes that might be in the hay. The boys in Toquerville took great delight in scaring the girls with snakes and other wild animals. We were really frightened, I'll tell you.

After the peaches were harvested, my dad would take my sister, Juaneta, and I with him in our old pickup truck to peddle it in Cedar City. The highlight of that experience was being treated to lunch in the old Sullivan Café. I always ordered the Hot Roast Beef Sandwich, which was Dad's favorite. A real treat for us as we seldom got to eat out.

These are some of my great memories of growing up in Toquerville.