

# COUNTRY BOY

Part I of an autobiography

by

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## Preface

It was probably in the '60's that a dentist said to me, "You ought to write up your life's story." Throughout the years the thought remained with me, but I did nothing about it. My work kept me so busy that I wasn't doing other things I should have been doing, such as spending time with my family. Even after I retired, my time was fully occupied with activities other than writing my life's story. Besides, was writing my life's story even something that I *ought* to do? I can't really explain it, but somehow I felt *compelled* to do it.

When I finally began writing my autobiography, I used a typewriter. Some time later my children and grandchildren tried to persuade me to get involved with computers. Having seen how computers seemed to capture their users, I was reluctant to become a user. However, when I was offered a computer that had seen my grandchildren, Jeremy and Gloria Nygren, through their high school years, I acquiesced. Very quickly I found that using the word processor capabilities of the computer so improved letter-writing activities that I began to respond quickly instead of putting off answering. Very soon I began using the computer to continue my autobiographical work.

My dictionary indicates that "memoir" and "autobiography" are virtually synonymous. I prefer to use the term "autobiography," because I am writing *my life's story*, not just *what I remember*. Memory can be very faulty, but written records sometimes can approach infallibility. In this writing I have used a diary, cards and letters, family trees, written reports, official records, log books and perhaps other things.

For various reasons I remember, rather vividly, a number of things that occurred early in my life. People have told me they didn't remember anything before they were of school age, but, in my case, the earliest instance I remember is one thing that occurred three weeks before my second birthday.

Early in this writing, often I would say, "As I recall," or something similar. After a time I ceased doing that, for so much of this is dependent simply on memory. In my editing I have done away with at least some of those expressions. This portion of my autobiography has been finalized after "Four Full Years," the middle portion of my telling of my life's story. This portion extends from my birth to December 7, 1941, the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.



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# 1

## Kansas Farms

My parents were both 43 years old when I was born on a farm outside of Idana, Kansas, December 29, 1923, the last of five children. My brother Waldo was 15 years older than I, Lillian was seven years older, a second brother, Wendell John, died shortly after his birth in July 1918, and Twila was just two years and 17 days older than I. To me Lillian was like a grown woman, but not so grown up that she couldn't join Twila and me chasing fireflies on warm summer evenings. One toy, one I wanted above all others at that time, was a "little-car-to-ride-in." To me that was one word. Others probably called it a pedal-car. Lillian promised me that when she grew up and got a job she would buy me a "little-car-to-ride-in."

Probably I was two years old when we moved from the Idana farm to a dairy farm west of Hays, Kansas. A Mr. Wahl owned the farm and Dad operated it for him. Whose choice it was, I do not know, but Waldo did not complete high school. My earliest memories of him were of his working full time on the farm.

As far as I know there is no connection between two things which, at least in my memory, occurred close together. The first was Lillian's getting teeth pulled in a dentist's office in Hays. The second was Lillian's death, at the age of eleven, in the spring of 1928. Evidently it was common in those days to take a picture of the dead. We still have a black and white snapshot of my beautiful, dearly-loved sister in her coffin, lying at peace in our living room.

Not long after Lillian's death I suffered another trauma, the country was not taken out of the boy, but the boy was taken out of the country. For many years I was somewhat unhappy with a faithful, godly minister, Dr. J. G. McElhinney, because he was, to some extent at least, responsible for our moving from the farm to the city, to Denver, Colorado.

How I had enjoyed the farm! I was too young to understand or appreciate the long hours, the demands of a dairy, the uncertainties of weather and prices, the many factors that have led multitudes to move from farms to cities. How many four year old boys in Denver got to drive the harnessed team of horses into place in front of an implement, then back them up astraddle the implement's tongue, so dad could complete the job of preparing for work in the field? How many boys in Denver had the privilege of driving the team while dad pitched feed to the cows from the back of the wagon? How many boys in Denver got their legs pinched between the horse and the saddle while riding behind dad? It hurt, but I do not believe I said anything to anyone about it, probably for fear I might lose the privilege of riding behind Dad.

Corn on the cob has always been a favorite food of mine. Waldo used to ride Beauty out into the field carrying a gunny sack and would pick the corn for **our** meals. He wouldn't walk anywhere for anything, if there was some way he could ride an animal or a vehicle. When he was small, long before I was born, he would ride a large dog between our parents' and grandparents' places.

Beauty was either a small horse or a large pony. She was quick and nimble. Waldo trained her to start out at a gallop when he placed his weight in the left stirrup as he was mounting. That neat trick led to Lillian's having a painful fall as she attempted to mount on one occasion.

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When cutting cows, Beauty would turn so sharply that occasionally her feet would slip from under her and she would fall on her side. Waldo got into the habit of taking his foot out of the stirrup on the inside of those turns.

Although Beauty was lively she was also gentle. We have a picture of five children on her back at one time. I was in the front, Twila was next and Lillian was third.

Not all odors found on farms having livestock are considered to be pleasant ones, but the ones I remember best bring back warm and pleasant memories and scenes. The smell of a dairy barn stimulates the recall of scenes of Waldo's squirting milk into the mouths of eager cats who knew, as well as the cows did, that it was milking time. Is there a sweeter smell than corn silage in the making as it flows into the silo?

Not all memories of the farm are of happy, enjoyable things. Maybe the following is based on my interpretation and on fallible memory. Our cows were Ayrshires, and they sported rather long horns. On one occasion a cow whose calf had been taken from her, started to attack me. Waldo threw a large rock at her which broke her horn, and I escaped unhurt. It seemed to me she thought I was responsible for her calf's being taken from her.

Another memory involving a cow involves something that doesn't make sense. It seems that somehow a cow got onto the roof of the barn. I don't remember there being a shed next to the barn that would have made that possible.

At the age of four I sometimes walked about with at least one shoe untied. As I was going down our front porch steps one time, a shoestring got caught between the boards, and when I moved that foot toward the next step, it stopped in mid-stride, and I fell to the ground and sprained my thumb. My most vivid memory of that occasion, apart from the pain, was Mother's holding me on her lap and seeking to comfort me.

Charles A. Lindbergh made aviation history in 1927. Even without radio or TV we knew about it in Kansas. I loved the farm, but I also wanted to be like him. To this date I thoroughly enjoy watching the graceful flight of hawks or other large soaring birds. Kansas has its share of hawks and of the thermals on which they rise. Flight was a mystery to me, and it was fascinating!

My attachment to "things" was too great. I don't know if the following happened at Idana or Hays. I loved farm machinery, harnesses and saddles, and animals, especially horses. We didn't have a lot of those things, but we did have many pictures of them in the Montgomery Wards catalog. I'm not sure the pictures in question were from a catalog, but they were, to me, precious pictures that Mother was going to throw into the fire in the pot-bellied stove. I tried to persuade her not to, but she threw them in anyway. I cried bitterly, and I wasn't faking, I was broken-hearted. It seems so trivial now, but to me then, it was earth shaking.

The auction of our possessions in preparation for our move to Denver was a sad time for me. It seemed to me that all our possessions were being sold. I think I had received a red wagon at Christmas, just a few months before we had the auction. It was sold.



## Radical Changes

### Boy Taken out of the Country

Our move to Denver in the spring of 1928 was made in a Model T Ford touring sedan. In good weather, in that type, one traveled with the windshield in front, a fabric top overhead and at the rear of the car, but nothing above the low doors enclosing the sides. In foul weather there were side curtains that could be fastened in place, and they had windows of sorts. Our trip to Denver was in foul weather, spring rains. If there were *any* hard-surfaced roads between central Kansas and Denver at that time, we weren't on them. Probably there were none. It was a muddy trip!

In the Denver area we first lived at 538(?) South Grant Street, just three short blocks west of the Covenanter Church building. While we were there, the Montgomery Ward building was completed at Broadway and Virginia Avenue, three short blocks west of us.

We must have lived in that house a very short time, but I remember so many things from that time that it seems it was longer. Weather-wise, Denver was a very pleasant place in the summer, especially as compared to Kansas. Although I remember lying awake in the front bedroom on the second floor, waiting for our parents to return from the midweek prayer meeting, I don't remember any discomfort from the heat, even though the bedroom was on the west side of the house, and the sun sets pretty late in the summer. I do remember thinking the prayer meetings kept my folks away longer than I liked.

On one occasion Twila and I were amusing ourselves by trying to roll a marble up a short grass embankment in front of our house, with the intention that the marble would roll back down. At four I didn't have the best of control. On one attempt I threw it far too hard and far too high. There was one large window in the living room, and the marble struck it and left its mark, all the way through. The marble didn't go through, but the hole did. When our parents questioned us, we lied. We said we didn't know anything about it. It seems Twila and I were as high in the house as we could get when the police arrived to examine the "bullet hole." The police were puzzled when they couldn't find evidence of the bullet in the living room. Twila and I were called down, and the policeman questioned us, but we stuck to our falsehood. It may have been about 13 years later that we told Dad what we had done.

To Twila and me, the sound of the steam whistle of the popcorn man's wagon was a thrilling sound. I don't remember ever having any of the popcorn or ice cream he was peddling, but we were excited when we heard him coming, with his horse plodding along so patiently. Even doing it yourself, you couldn't get popcorn any fresher, for he was popping it as he went along. The wagon was a box-like structure with windows all around from the waist up, except for the opening at the middle of both sides, through which business could be conducted. Was it a Coleman-type gas light that was lit as it got darker? I'm not sure, but it seemed pretty bright.

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Although in Denver we had electric lights and indoor plumbing, as contrasted with the farms in Kansas, I don't remember that they made any particular impression upon me.

Dad worked for the Carson Crockery in downtown Denver. Several members of the Carson family, a first generation family from Ireland, were members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (the Covenanter Church).

The Ford Motor Company opened an assembly plant on South Broadway across from and south of the Montgomery Wards building. Dad worked there for a time, but it may have been after we moved from our first home.

While we were still on Grant Street, Dad bought an enclosed Model T Ford four-door sedan. What an advance over our previous cars! How exciting it was in the back yard, to stand on the running board, holding onto the door handles and looking through glass into this modern vehicle!

Dean Gillespie and Will Chestnut were cousins of Dad's. They and their families lived in Denver. Dean was a dealer or perhaps a distributor of White trucks. His wife had an electric car. I'll not try to describe it, except to say the passengers rode in the front seat, facing backward, and the driver rode in the back seat facing forward and steering it with a tiller that guided the back wheels, somewhat like one steers an outboard motor boat while sitting in the stern. The body was virtually a square glass box. How quietly that car moved!

Social life revolved about the church and relatives. Washington Park was a delightful place for a church picnic. The food was set out and eaten in a pavilion, and children had the choice of slides, swings and merry-go-rounds or acres of grass on which to run and play. Although I'm sure I enjoyed all the food, I remember particularly the ice cream. Brown Canon, the owner of Windsor Dairy (I may not have the dairy's name right) always brought a good supply of ice cream. The ice cream was packaged in paper cups, and we ate it with small, flat wooden spoons. It may not have been gourmet ice cream, but I don't remember ever having any that tasted better than it did to me at age four. Then the dry ice, which had been packed with the ice cream to keep it cold, when it was tossed into the lake, was fascinating to watch and wonder about.

Both Dad and Mother had relatives in Colorado, in Denver, Fort Lupton, Greeley and Fort Morgan. Another Gillespie family lived in a town north of Denver, in the Greeley area, but I can't recall precisely where. I don't recall many contacts with relatives that first year in Denver, but we have a picture, probably taken in Washington Park on the Fourth of July, with our family, the Will Chestnuts and others.

## Englewood

Precisely when we moved to the little frame house in Englewood, I don't know, but it probably was in the fall of 1928. I think we had running water in the kitchen, but we also had an outhouse. We had a goat for milk, and the area was not well built up at that time, so it was a little more like being on a farm. Dad, however, worked in Denver, and I never was with him in his work as I had been on the farm.

You might have wondered why I remember so many things from an early age (and I have other memories I'm not writing about at this time), but what I'm about to relate may be part of the reason early years made such a lasting impression. Mother had

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had medical problems, including tuberculosis. I really have very little knowledge of medical details concerning her. Neither do I recall anything leading up to her hospitalization in Denver. I do remember vaguely there being grave concern for her, and I remember acutely that she died of pneumonia December 23, 1928.

Mother's funeral was held in the Covenanter Church building at South Pearl and Virginia in Denver. The Psalms, versified and put to music, are used in the worship services in the Covenanter Church. From Psalm 91, and set to the tune commonly sung with the words, "Just As I Am," we sang, "The man who once has found abode, within the secret place of God, shall with Almighty God abide, and in His shadow safely hide." Evidently this was one of Dad's favorite Psalms, as may be demonstrated in something I may say later.

Mother's burial was in the home church's cemetery, the Hebron (Covenanter) Church in the country near Idana, Kansas. It was probably while Dad and Waldo were in Kansas for her burial that Twila and I were kept by a kindly, older couple, the James McGaws, members of our church in Denver. By our standards they were very well to do. They had a beautiful, large house just across from Washington Park, at the southeast corner of the park. They bought me a warm pair of flannel pajamas, which I didn't like! The pajamas had feet in them. I had never had such a thing before. I think my problem was that my feet felt too restricted, I'm quite sure I didn't complain to Mr. or Mrs. McGaw about them, but I probably said something to Twila.

Another vivid memory from the McGaw home was associated with breakfast. As far as I know I had never before had toast with honey on it. I don't remember any other food we had there, but that toast I remember well!

### Motherless

Grandmother Black was 78 years old when she came to Englewood to take care of Twila and me. In later years we learned Dad's philosophy on child training while Twila and I were growing up. It was, "If you have to spank your child, your child has gotten the best of you." He believed in discipline, but not via spanking or any other application of physical pain. Once, before Mother died, I had a bad cold. For some reason my parents believed melted butter was good medicine for a cold. I refused to down a spoonful of melted butter, I hated the taste of it! After persuasion was ineffective, Dad picked me up, carried me outside (it was night), and carried me down into the cellar. Notice, I didn't say "basement," I said "*cellar*." The cellar was simply the dug out area under the house. The four walls and the floor were "bare earth." And there was no light there. Dad carried me down and, as far as I could tell, was going to leave me there. I said, "I'll be good. I'll be good." Dad carried me back upstairs and again offered the spoonful of melted butter. Again I refused. Again Dad carried me down to the cellar. Again I cried out, and even more desperately, "I'll be good. I'll be good. I'll be good." He carried me back upstairs. Evidently the melted butter didn't bother me very much. I don't even remember taking it, but neither do I remember any further hassle concerning it. Before the first or second trip to the cellar, I had even tried to escape by crawling behind the couch, but that attempt had proved totally ineffective.

Grandmother Black didn't have Dad's philosophy of child training. The only spanking I recall ever receiving was administered by her, and that was via the proverbial

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hair brush. I don't recall the occasion for the hairbrush routine, but I'm confident I deserved it. I do remember, on another occasion, being on top of a shed on our place in Englewood, under the branches of a hawthorn tree. Grandma wanted me to come down, but I wouldn't do it. I don't remember the outcome. I only state this as further evidence that discipline was needed.

One Sabbath (Covenanters emphasize via that term, that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath), for some reason Grandma stayed home from church. On our way home I was doing something Dad didn't like. He told me, after a time, that if I did that again he would make me walk the rest of the way home. As I mulled it over, I decided that wouldn't be too bad if it wasn't too far. I don't have the slightest remembrance of what it was he didn't want me to do, but whatever it was, when we got within reasonable walking distance of home, I did it again. Sure enough, Dad stopped the car, and I got out and walked the rest of the way home. One thing I hadn't taken into account in my scheming, Grandma was waiting at home. When I arrived home, not another word was said by anyone, but I was embarrassed, knowing that she knew of my misbehaving.

For nearly a year and a half after Mother's death we remained in Englewood. I don't believe Grandma stayed with us very long. For a period of time Dad would take Twila and me and leave us with Valera Chestnut, Will's wife, in Denver, as Dad was on his way to work. He would pick us up after work. I'm not sure whether he worked 10 or 12 hours per day, but I do know we got up early and went to bed late, especially for our ages.

Probably I started to school, in the first grade, in January 1930. Denver Public Schools divided their grades into B and A sections. One started with 1B, then went on to 1A, and so on through the 12 grades. Since I turned 6 on December 29, 1929, perhaps I started in January 1930.

The Chestnuts lived fairly close to Central School. Probably it was because of our getting up so early and going to bed so late that I had a problem staying awake during school. I don't remember learning anything, but I do remember the teacher being concerned about my falling asleep.

Another occasion of having a cold stands out vividly in my mind. The adults concluded it would be better if I would remain overnight with the Chestnuts instead of going home with Dad and Twila. It was not at all that I didn't like the Chestnuts, I have nothing but good memories of them, but I didn't want Dad to leave me. I expect there may have been some fear that I would lose Dad as I had Mother. Whatever the cause, I cried bitterly as Valera was holding me, and Dad and Twila were leaving. It was just to be overnight, but I cried as if it were to be forever.

Will and Valera had two children, Myrtle and John (Johnny at that time). Myrtle was about two years older and Johnny was about five months older than Twila. We enjoyed our relationship with them.

## A New Mother

A Mrs. Collins was Twila's teacher. She was a widow with three children. She and Dad married in 1930, and we moved with them to 444 Bannock Street in Denver. Her son, William, was about Waldo's age, her daughter Gladys was about Lillian's age (had she lived), and her son, Gordon, was about half way between William and Gladys in age.

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As far as I know, our stepmother did what she thought was best for us. Whereas we may not have had enough sleep while commuting from Englewood, we had an "opportunity" for more than enough sleep under our stepmother's supervision. We had to go to bed at 6:30 p.m. and get up at 6:00 a.m., winter and summer. Mid-summer, daylight is long lasting. Twila and I would hear neighbor children shouting and playing long after we had gone to bed. The radio program, "Amos and Andy," either came on or was over at 9:00 p.m. Particularly in the summer when the windows were open and we were sleeping on the front porch, a sun porch, we could hear the program from neighbors' radios and thus know the time. We could hear well enough to identify the voices, but not well enough to understand the dialogue.

One time Twila and I were sitting up in our beds well after bedtime, talking or watching the neighbor kids. (At that time our beds were in the glassed-in front porch.) From my bed I could see through the living room and dining room and into the kitchen. One or both of us saw our stepmother walking toward us from the kitchen. We both knew she was coming, and we both knew we were not supposed to be sitting up or talking. Twila plopped down as quickly as she could. I reasoned that our stepmother might not notice if I went down very slowly. I was wrong! I was caught, and Twila was not. Whatever punishment was meted out, only I received it.

It was only recently I learned from Twila that she thought the reason our stepmother did not allow us to walk together to and from school was she was afraid we would talk about her. Perhaps she was right. Normally we were not permitted to play with other children or outside of our yard. We didn't have a lot of time for play, anyway. Chores are good for children, but most of us would agree there is a limit. We indeed learned to do many useful things, such as peeling potatoes and preparing other vegetables for cooking; cleaning and painting, grocery shopping and running other errands. These experiences would come in handy earlier than one would usually expect.

Normally it took Twila and me almost all day Saturday to complete our house cleaning responsibilities. One Saturday Twila decided she would do her cleaning as quickly as possible while doing it as thoroughly as usual. She finished in record time, but when she told our stepmother her cleaning was finished, our stepmother said she could not have done an adequate job in that short a time. Without inspecting Twila's finished work she told her to go back and do it over. From that time onward, Twila dawdled through her Saturday house cleaning at 444 Bannock.

Dad's hours were such that he was gone before we got up in the morning, and he got back after we went to bed, six days a week. Before their marriage, Twila told me in recent years, our stepmother had promised Dad she would attend the Covenanter Church with him. She didn't. She took us to Central Presbyterian Church at 17th and Sherman. We saw very little of Dad. For no reason that I can think of, other than lack of contact with him, I became afraid of Dad.

The house was large, and the times were tough, so different parts of the house were sometimes rented out to others, and our living arrangements changed from time to time. For awhile we lived in an apartment over the garage. Some of the time we lived on the second floor of the house. One winter, or part of the winter, Twila and I slept on the enclosed back porch. There was no heat there, and Denver's winters usually include

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some very cold periods. We sometimes went to bed with heated bricks wrapped in something for insulation and placed at our feet.

One time, when my bed was in the dining room on the first floor and I was supposed to be asleep, Mrs. Collins was talking with her son Gordon. She asked him why he didn't like me. He said it was because I was too good. I cried, silently. I liked him, and I wanted him to like me. I couldn't understand his not liking me for that reason.

Sunken Gardens is an attractive park across Elati Street from West High School. In the 1930's there was a large, but shallow, pool for swimming in the summers. Probably the water was between 3 and 4 feet deep. At that time I was afraid of water, and I think Gladys knew it. I couldn't swim, and I expect I had never before had my head completely under water. Gladys wanted to carry me. Perhaps I was suspicious of her. I didn't want her to carry me. She promised me she wouldn't drop me, and I finally gave in. Sure enough, she did drop me into the water. I can still see those bubbles rising as I was sinking to the bottom in that gray-green water. Apart from swallowing some not-so-clean water I was no worse for the wear. Gladys claimed she had slipped. I was gullible, but not that gullible.

For the most part Twila and I were pretty much in the same boat in our relationships with the various members of the Collins family, but there were some times that Twila was taken in with Gladys' schemes against me. I don't recall there ever being anything of a serious nature. It was just meanness, as I saw it. Gladys and Twila probably had some other name for it.

Mrs. Collins probably is due some credit for my academic achievements. I don't recall any specific help from her other than remembering that she made sure I worked on spelling. She probably encouraged me to read, also. During summers I would check books out from the public library.

Skipping half grades was not uncommon for those students who were doing well. I skipped 1A and 4A. That put me with those who were older than I.

At some time I did not grow, physically, as rapidly as most others did. Being a year younger and small for my age didn't help my self-image. Being overly protected and prevented from having contact with other kids other than at school probably contributed to my being considered and called a "sissy." Perhaps I didn't develop the world's biggest inferiority complex (I was so inferior I couldn't be the biggest in anything), but, whatever its size, it was a big one. One afternoon, on my way home from Fairmont School, I was jumped by three or four boys. I think I knew them vaguely, but I didn't have the slightest idea of why they beat me up. I arrived home with a bloody nose.

Evidently I was cooperative and obedient at school and did well in my work, so I was liked by my teachers. I remember vaguely being called "teacher's pet." Perhaps that lay back of the ambush and beating,

On more than one occasion I was given a leading part in school plays. Before my voice changed I was also given solo singing parts. On no occasion did I seek out these special positions, I just did what the teachers wanted me to do.

If I remember correctly there was an elective office of "Head Boy" and one of "Head Girl" in the sixth grade. When I was in the sixth grade I was chosen Head Boy, The responsibilities were minimal.

As I have been writing about my grade school experiences I have gotten ahead of some changes that took place during grade school, radical changes.

### Released!

One day in the spring of 1933 I was called out of the auditorium class. I didn't have the slightest idea of the purpose. I think it was in the hallway, but it might have been in the principal's office, that I met Dad. He was taking Twila and me from our stepmother's home.

Dad had made arrangements for us to stay for awhile with a family on about the 500 block of Galapago Street. We didn't go back to 444 Bannock, except for a brief visit several months later. Dad got our clothes and other possessions. The break was clean and quick. Though I had been somewhat afraid of Dad, I had no desire to return to 444 Bannock.

The temporary arrangement was far from ideal, but it didn't last very long. Before long we moved into a small apartment at 202 Broadway, owned and managed by "Aunt Pearl," a member of the Covenanter Church. Pearl Alien wasn't our aunt, but this is what she was called by many, and it suited us fine so to call her.

It wasn't too long before we moved into a larger apartment, and Waldo moved in with us. Waldo had never lived with us at 444 Bannock. I only remember seeing him once during the three years we were with the Collins family, but it may be that I saw him more times than that.

From our move to 202 Broadway onward, with the exception of one period of time when we were in junior high school, Twila and I did the grocery shopping, cooking and cleaning. She was eleven, and I was nine years old when we moved to 202 Broadway. I know we didn't do the best shopping, cooking or cleaning, but we survived. We were thin, but, apart from colds like other people also had, we were healthy.

Lacking parental or other adult supervision from early morning to late evening, we did a number of things I would not have wanted my children to do. We lived at 202 Broadway and later at 228 Broadway for quite a period of time. Broadway was then Denver's main north/south street. There were no play areas nearby, worthy of the name. Many times we climbed telephone poles to get to or from roofs of buildings, flat roofs. For some activities these were safer play areas than was the alley between Broadway and Lincoln. However, we did play in the alley. Probably we played some on the sidewalk on Broadway, but I don't remember any specifics about playing there.

Sometimes we went west to the railroad yards in the Sante Fe Boulevard area. We climbed into and over box cars, but only when they were still and unattached to an engine and when no one else was around. One time when we were going from the top of one box car to the top of a lower one, Twila sat down on the end of the wooden walkway, then she slid forward to put her feet on the lower one. Girls didn't wear jeans or slacks then, they wore dresses. She got some slivers.

There were some swampy areas near the railroad yards. In our exploring we found a water-soaked raft. With the two of us on it there was perhaps only an inch or so of water covering the raft. Neither of us could swim, but we poled the raft around very carefully. On at least one occasion we saw a snake in the swamp. Probably it was a harmless one, but we were not sure, and we made sure we didn't see it very close up.

Although we did many things of the foregoing nature, we didn't become involved in immoral activities. The simplest answer to why we didn't is "God's grace." We can

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point to some of the human factors God used, however. Although our parents had taken us to church all our lives, the first positive remembrance of hearing and believing things about God are concerning my mother. In Hays, Kansas I asked my mother how we would be dressed in heaven. I didn't like her answer. I believe I was then dressed for bed, wearing a nightshirt. She said we would be dressed about like I was then. I'm confident she was thinking of the clothing of biblical times. The thought of going about in public in my nightshirt was abhorrent to me.



### 3 Winners!

In 1933 both Dad and Waldo were working as salesmen for the Happy Home Bakery, delivering baked goods door to door on assigned routes in Denver, using horse-drawn wagons. At that time they did not receive paid vacations. The company held a sales contest among its driver/salesmen, perhaps 30 in number. The contest probably lasted 6 or 8 weeks. At the end of each week the winner to date would be announced. I don't remember anything from the early part of the contest, but I do remember the later weeks. Dad was in the lead, week by week. When the contest ended, Dad was first and Waldo was second. They both received a week's vacation and a sum of money. The figures of \$100 for Dad and \$50 for Waldo come to mind, but I don't know for sure. Many men were not earning as much as \$100 per month then.

Dad and Waldo evidently were fairly confident of their winning as the end drew near. The week's vacation followed immediately after the end of the contest. Dad and Waldo had made such preparations that, as soon as possible after they got off work that Saturday night, we left to visit our relatives in the Idana, Kansas area.

Our transportation was via Waldo's 1929 Model A Ford Sport Coupe. A Sport Coupe had a canvas top, the back window of which could be raised in its canvas "frame" and fastened to the ceiling over the front seat occupants. The back seat was a "rumble" seat. My dictionary says a "rumble seat" is "A folding seat in the back of the covered part of an automobile." The rumble seat was Twila's and my seat whenever we rode with Dad and Waldo. It's really a very narrow seat, but it was adequate for thin 9 and 11 year olds.

It was about September 23rd that we started out on this trip, and we drove through the night. The rumble seat was seldom a hot place when the car was moving, and it could be a very cold place. There may have been a heater in the front, but there certainly wasn't one in the back! Summer nights can be cool in Colorado. Fall nights can be cold. It was a cold ride that night, our blankets notwithstanding.

There were no interstate highways in 1933. I don't remember our being on any paved road on that trip. When a jackrabbit showed up in the headlights, the driver would honk the horn at it, and usually Twila and I would rise up to look through the rear window and windshield and watch the rabbit.

At one point Waldo was driving and Twila and I were either asleep or nearly so. Suddenly Waldo saw a line across the road ahead, I believe the road dropped off a number of inches. Road work was not well marked. We may have been going close to 60 m.p.h., which was nearly top speed for the Model A. Believing we would be better off at high speed rather than in a condition of rapid deceleration (who ever decelerated a Model A rapidly, the mechanical brakes being what they were?), Waldo gave it full throttle when he saw the drop off. One moment Twila and I were asleep, or nearly so, the next we were in the air, looking at the road in front of the car. I didn't come down perfectly in line with my previous spot, so I hit my right arm on the side of the seat area. It hurt, but no real damage was done. As far as I know Twila was totally unharmed.

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Waldo stopped the car to find out how Twila and I were. (I wonder if he expected to find us in the road rather than in the seat?) When everything appeared to be alright we proceeded eastward.

That was the longest night of my life, up to that point, though a longer one was going to come later that week. We slept briefly, occasionally. As the hours wore on we kept looking for the first indications of the coming daylight. Even when the eastern sky began to lighten, the change seemed to be at a snail's pace.

Our arrival was early enough that we were able to go to the morning worship service at the Hebron Church, the Covenanter Church outside of Idana. Dad and Waldo shaved before going to church. They remarked about the water's being "hard." I couldn't imagine how anyone could call water "hard." When I drank it or washed in it, though it tasted strange to me and had some color that I had not been seeing in Denver water, it flowed as freely as any other water I could remember, so why call it "hard?"

Being as tired as I was, the church service seemed rather long. But to my chagrin, following the worship service there were Sabbath School classes. I was used to S.S. being before the worship service, so I thought we'd be on our way to Aunt Anna's when the worship service was over. Following dinner we did take a nap. When we were awakened to go to the evening service, I thought it was Monday morning and wondered why we were getting ready to go to church in the dark on Monday.

### Ouch!

September 27th was Grandma Black's 83rd birthday. We were going to celebrate it at Aunt Amelda's. When we arrived at her farm, her son, Howard, who is a little younger than I am, kindly arranged for Twila and me to ride one of their draft horses. (It may be that Uncle Robert made those arrangements, but I know positively that Howard helped in the following way.) There was no saddle, and the horse was large. Twila was in front, holding the reins, and I had my arms around Twila. Probably Howard thought we wouldn't enjoy the ride if the horse only walked. He whipped it and got it trotting. We hadn't gone very far when we both fell off to the right. (I always thought that if I'd been on the horse alone I might have stayed on. But Twila fell, and with my arms around her, there was only one way I could go.) While falling I reached out with my right arm to break the fall, and I broke my arm, just above the elbow. I knew at once it was broken and sat on the ground calling, "Help! Help!" Waldo came running, as I expect others did, also. The ride into Clay Center in the Model A seemed like a very long one, going to the doctor's office.

The break was so close to the elbow that the doctor said I'd probably never again have full use of my arm. He used ether to put me out while he set the bone. As we were walking from his office to the car, after I regained consciousness, I vomited on the sidewalk. I was embarrassed, but I couldn't help it.

Doctors today appear ready to provide painkiller pills, at least to insure a better night's sleep. I don't remember having so much as an aspirin, following this injury. The swelling was what seemed to hurt the most. The cast would allow only so much expansion, and my arm was seeking far greater outer limits than the cast would allow.

## Winners!

The night after I broke my arm was the second long night for me within a week's time. I probably slept more than I realized, but it seemed to be a very long night. Crows began calling before daylight and kept it up interminably. I thought I might be able to sleep some more if only they would be quiet.

On our way back to Denver we stopped in the vicinity of Hays at the farm of those who had bought Beauty. Waldo rode Beauty again, and she, though about twenty-five years old, would still make those high-speed, sharp turns. Although someone held onto Beauty's bridle while I was in the saddle on her back, I did have the long-anticipated privilege of seeing her again and of at least sitting in the saddle on her back. Having fallen from a horse only a couple of days earlier I wasn't too disappointed that I wasn't given freedom to ride her without someone standing by.

Twila occupied the rumble seat alone as we returned to Denver. I sat on the lap of whoever wasn't driving. It wasn't a comfortable trip, but I'm sure I was more comfortable than I would have been in the rumble seat.

Although I didn't become very good at it, I learned to write with my left hand. The cast was removed after six weeks. Dad had me go to a chiropractor on a regular basis. Besides his treatments, the doctor had me soak my arm daily in warm water with Epsom salts. Eventually I regained full use and strength in my arm. Nine years later Army doctors couldn't tell it had been broken.

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## 4 Growth

### Communicant Membership

In Reformed churches, the baptized children of communicant members are considered to be members of the church. To become a communicant member, a member permitted to participate fully in the privileges of church membership (especially in Communion, the Lord's Supper), one must publicly profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that profession must be credible, believable. Although no minimum age limit is observed, it was common for children to become communicant members at about 12 years of age. In order for a person to profess faith in a manner that is believable, there must be a certain amount of knowledge of facts. Therefore it is common for classes to be given that provide those facts. And interaction within the classes enables the teacher to assess the students' understanding and commitment to the truths.

When Twila was 13 and I was 11 we were invited to participate in the classes and prepare for admission into the church as communicant members.

In years to come I would hear evangelists say that if one cannot specify the date of his conversion, he is not a Christian. (As God often does in His word, the Bible, here I am using "he" generically. And I may do so at other times in my autobiography. It is so much less cumbersome than always saying, "he or she," "him or her," etc.)

To this date I cannot point to the time of my conversion. I cannot remember a time when I did not believe in God. I don't know when it became clear to me that I was a sinner, unworthy of being in the presence of God who is absolutely Holy, and that my only hope was in being identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, identified with Him in His righteousness, His suffering and death, and in His resurrection. I don't know "when," but I do know "that." I don't know *when* I was born of the Spirit of God, but I am confident *that* I have been born again, born anew. Whenever this took place, it took place by an action of the grace of God. I have no hope of God accepting me into his holy presence based upon my obedience, righteousness, good works or any such thing. At the very best, they are tainted with my sin. Nevertheless I have strong confidence that I am accepted by God, because He sees me as being identified with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the age of eleven, though I had been taught Bible truths from my earliest years, there was so much I did not know or understand. Nevertheless, I did make a public profession of faith, and it was accepted by the church, so I did become a communicant member at the age of eleven.

In 1981 I was talking with a woman in Florida. She was a Roman Catholic, a native of Australia. She told me she had considered the church to be cold. I told her that mine had been an opposite experience. All my life the church had been as an extended family, warm and loving. At times I have thought I missed out, because knowing God had been such a part of my whole conscious life, I had not experienced the sudden, radical change that some others have known, such as that of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. But in recent years I have realized that knowing God as I have known Him,

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has been an unmeasurably wonderful privilege. And it is by God's grace that I have had this experience. By His grace I have known Him, and I have been a part of His people.

### Early Earnings

The first I can remember "earning" something by working outside the home was probably when I was nine or ten years old. The ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS promised fireworks to children for selling subscriptions. The number and type of fireworks depended on how many subscriptions one sold. I don't remember how many I sold or how many fireworks I received, but I had more that year than ever before or since.

From the time I was about twelve onward I earned whatever money I needed for fees at school, for recreation and for most, if not all, of my clothes. I didn't do very well in sales, but I sold magazines, Uca Salve and White Cloverine Salve, men's sox and perhaps other things I've forgotten.

For a few months I had a delivery route for the ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS. The paper was supposed to be at people's doors before they got up in the morning. We paid for every paper, then tried to collect periodically from our customers. Also we were supposed to seek additional customers. This was during the depression of the 1930's and my route was in an area of west Denver where people lived in cheap apartments almost exclusively. Oftentimes renters didn't stay in one place very long. Many times when I tried to collect, I found that my customers had moved. More times when I tried to collect I was told, "We can't pay at this time." After a few months of barely collecting enough to pay for the papers I had delivered, I gave up the "privilege" of delivering them.

Sometimes I earned money by shoveling snow. It was one of the better paying jobs. Probably I would have earned more that way if I had owned a snow shovel.

During that period of my life I probably spent more time mowing, trimming and watering lawns than I did in any other type of away-from-home work. I did this for one woman particularly, Mrs. Brock, a widow who had two houses at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Bannock. She lived in one house and had a furniture business in the house next door. After a time I not only cut, trimmed and watered her lawn, I also ran errands for her. If the errand took me to a store, often she would give me some of the change I returned to her. That was my pay for the lawn work and the errand running. One time I calculated that if she would simply pay me 5 cents per hour for all my work for her, I would receive more than I had been.

Occasionally I would wash Mrs. Brock's Chrysler for her. She always had a fairly new one, for her son in Minneapolis was a Chrysler dealer. Her son-in-law, Dr. L. Wood Swaggart, a dentist, and her daughter also had a Chrysler. Once in awhile I would wash the Swaggarts' car for them. Juanita (Mrs. Swaggart) would pay me 50 cents for that. That was the highest pay for a given period of time that I ever received as a boy.

Occasionally Mrs. Brock would take me with her to her cabin (it was more like a very nice log house) in the mountains just outside of Evergreen. It was a little ways upstream from Brook Forest Inn, a very expensive resort. The cabin didn't have electricity or running water and any heating was done by burning wood. She took me there to help her cut wood on her property. In Denver she had a combination range, a cook stove. Cooking could be done using gas or using coal or wood. Mrs. Brock did a fair amount of baking, and, as far as she was concerned, she could do a better job of

baking using wood. I expect she was pleased to use the wood for cooking in cooler or colder times because of the side benefit of heating the house while cooking.

Mrs. Brock was probably in her sixties at that time, but she could do her share of the work with a two-man saw. We would cut down a dead tree, then cut it into the lengths she desired. She would use some of it for cooking while we were in the mountains, but the main purpose was to prepare wood to take to Denver.

Although I received no pay for the mountain work, I didn't mind. I considered it a privilege just to be in the mountains. I enjoyed just walking about on her acres of land. Very little traffic passed by her place. It was quiet and peaceful. One of those times I was with Mrs. Brock in the mountains, we began a game of Monopoly the first night. Neither of us obtained a monopoly by the time we had landed on and bought up all the property. I tried to purchase or trade for other property so we could both obtain monopolies, but she refused. We didn't finish the game that night but continued the same game the next night, and the night following that. We received all the money from the bank, mainly from passing "Go." We both had plenty of money, and I was willing even to make what I would have considered a bad deal, but she wouldn't agree. We never finished the game.

One time when I was at Mrs. Brock's cabin, Juanita Swaggart was also there with a guest. As I approached the cabin, returning to the kitchen with water from the spring, I heard the woman guest ask Juanita, "Who is this boy?" Her reply was, "Oh, he is a poor boy who works for my mother in Denver." It hurt. What she said was true, but I hadn't been thinking of myself as being poor. Juanita had been generous, in my estimation, but her mother hadn't contributed much to help me overcome my poverty. I hadn't held that against her, and I don't to this day.

### New Friends

When we moved from 444 Bannock to 202 Broadway, Dad bought a bed from Mrs. Brock. Almost certainly he had known of her furniture business because of having had the bread route for that area. He made many friends via his bread routes. At one point in time he transferred from a city route to a country one, north of Denver. Among friends he developed on that route, was the Charlie Marshall family. They had a quarter section of land southeast of Eastlake. Although I think I wasn't eager to meet new people, Dad wanted me to meet them. The Marshalls had two children. Sholly (Charlene) was a little older than I, and Johnny was a little younger.

Dad often took us with him when he would visit people Sunday afternoons. He worked six days a week, leaving about 6:30 in the morning and getting home, usually late, in the evening. Apart from a few national holidays each year, the only time he had for visiting was Sunday afternoons. Children weren't permitted as visitors in hospitals. When Dad would visit people in hospitals, Twila and I would wait in the car while he visited.

It was probably a Sunday afternoon that he took us to Marshalls' the first time. I was probably about thirteen at the time. The only thing I remember about that visit was that they had many turkeys and they invited me to come back and spend a day or days at a time instead of just a few hours.

Over the next several years I spent some of my happiest days with Johnny and his family. He had a large pony, part Indian and part Arabian, named Jimmy. They always

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had at least one other horse that could be ridden. Silver was an older, but sufficiently lively, riding horse. Bell was actually a draft horse, but she was a reasonable substitute if Silver wasn't available. They had just one saddle, a boy's sized one, which was usually used on Jimmy and never on Bell.

In addition to riding horseback every time I stayed with Marshalls, we always spent time in other outdoor activities. For some time Johnny had a homemade "go-cart" powered by a washing machine gasoline engine. Sometimes one of us would ride on Jimmy and the other would drive along on the go-cart. (Jimmy put up with a lot of things! He even tolerated our shooting a .22 rifle from his back.) A few times we swam in the small lake that was on their land. We even rode Jimmy into the lake and jumped from his back into the water.

Years later, when I was home on leave and Johnny was away from home, in the Army, Mrs. Marshall told me something which I had not had the slightest awareness of during my many visits with them. I'll give a little background before I say what she told me.

Nearly every time I arrived at Marshalls,' Johnny would have a new activity in which he had become involved. One time it was high jumping. Another time it was pitching a baseball. Another it was throwing spear or lance-like weeds or reeds while galloping on horseback. I always enjoyed each activity, but often I was disappointed when I arrived and found we weren't going to do what we had done in my previous visit.

What Mrs. Marshall told me in 1944 was that Johnny purposely prepared something different for each of my visits. He wanted something in which he could do better than I did and do it consistently. But, she said, each time when I came, though he could do the thing better when I arrived, before my visit was over I would be doing the thing better than he did. I had not had the slightest idea that that had been the case. Even now, as I think about it, it seems to me he always had the edge on me in all those activities. But whatever may be the objective fact, this was how Johnny perceived the matter, and it helps me understand why there was a different special activity each time.

Dad took me to Marshalls' the first times. After I got a bicycle, I usually rode it to their place, and while there. Sometimes one of us would ride Jimmy and the other my bicycle going to Eastlake for a bottle of pop, or wherever we might be going. One wet spring day we decided to take a shortcut across a field that had no vegetation upon it. Mud so jammed between the tires and fenders of my bike that the wheels wouldn't turn. It was a heavy bike to begin with. I regretted our attempt to shorten our travel!

After I got my first car, I would drive it to Marshalls.' There was much play in the steering mechanism. The roads around the Marshalls' were dirt roads and were hilly. Going down the hills we would pick up speed. Often at the bottom of the hill the road would be narrower as it crossed a bridge or culvert. Taking into account all the play in the steering mechanism, Johnny would say, "How do you manage those narrow places? Do you just close your eyes?"

During Christmas vacation one year I had a special privilege at Marshalls.' They had 2,250 head of sheep that needed to be moved several miles. We got up early that cold, overcast morning on which we were to move them. Mr. Marshall, another man, Johnny and I, plus a dog, were the herders. We used Jimmy and Silver, also. We took turns riding the horses and going on foot. I was not well dressed for the conditions. I was cold all day long!



Perhaps the plans for herding the sheep included our accomplishing the task earlier than we did. We had nothing to eat or drink during the drive. I, like the rest, almost yelled myself hoarse, trying to get the sheep to go where we wanted them to go. Most of the drive was along roadways. Sheep fell into ditches and had to be lifted out. They broke through fences and got into fields we didn't want them in. Highway patrolmen stopped the traffic to enable us to get the sheep across Federal Boulevard, a major north-south highway in that area. I think we had a goat along to lead the sheep, but whether or not we had a goat, we had a very difficult time getting the sheep to even begin to cross either of the two hard-surfaced roads (one of them was Federal Boulevard). Probably they had never before been on asphalt or concrete.

When the drive was finished, someone, probably Mrs. Marshall, picked up the men by automobile. Johnny and I rode the horses home, a distance of about six miles. It was a cold ride! Since there was no saddle on Silver, Johnny said it was a bit of an advantage riding her, for supposedly it was a little warmer. We traded mounts a time or two. It was dark by the time we got home. It had started snowing lightly as we were returning, and the darkness didn't seem to be much of a problem, though it probably added to our feeling of coldness. I'm not sure whether or not I ate any supper. I had a terrible headache by that time.

Earlier I said that the foregoing was "a great privilege." I say again, it was a great privilege. It was tiring, a bitterly cold day, I wasn't adequately dressed, and I ended the day exhausted and hurting, but it was a great experience! As the saying goes, "I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

### **Earlier Self-Transportation**

Many of the things I learned to do, I learned alone or with the help of friends. Riding a bicycle was one of the latter. Billy Smith was a fat, good-hearted friend. He and his brothers owned a number of bikes. He helped me learn to ride without being held up, but I could not come to a stop properly. I would slow down to as slow a speed as possible as close to the curb as possible, then I would fall over onto the grass on the parking.

At least from the time I learned to ride a bike, if not from an earlier time, I wanted a bike of my own. It seemed I would never have one. Iver-Johnson (I'm not sure of the spelling) bikes were considered to be very good ones in the thirties. I can remember Dad taking me somewhere, in answer to an ad in THE DENVER POST, to look at a used one. I rode it briefly, and it was a delight to ride! The asking price was \$18. I don't remember anything else about that, except that we didn't get it.

Often I transported myself a little more rapidly, as compared to walking, via roller skates. For awhile, when I was a student at Byers Junior High School, I would go to Waldo and Mary's place each afternoon after school and help Mary with her housework. I believe it was after Delbert was born, but it might have been after both Delbert and Ralph had been born, I do remember that there was a lot of washing to do. There was never a definite promise made, giving a specific figure per hour, but the implications were that they would help me buy a bicycle, in exchange for my help. Neither a bike nor anything else ever came from those efforts.

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A friend of a friend, or a relative of a friend, was an employee of Montgomery Wards at South Broadway and Virginia. Through them I was able to buy a new bicycle at a discount with hard earned, carefully saved money when I was about 14. I paid about \$25. It was equipped with a headlight, battery powered, and a luggage carrier over the rear wheel. Before I sold it, before leaving for army service in 1942, I rode it untold thousands of miles. The only expenses I can remember, apart from accessories and handle grips to replace those that were stolen, were for tires and tubes. I don't have the slightest idea how many of them I replaced.

The bike provided my transportation to and from all kinds of activities and under all the weather conditions Denver offered. Our church had a number of young people's activities, sometimes at the church building, sometimes in members' homes, sometimes at public recreational facilities.

Our young people's group had an ice skating party one night at the main lake in City Park. The temperature was either zero or ten below. I had bolted a wooden tomato box to the luggage carrier on my bike and had painted it red, like the bike. That night I carried Twila's and my skates to and from City Park in that box. One of the things I liked to do on skates was "shoot the duck." To do this, one lifts one foot as he goes down to a squatting position on the other leg while holding one's arms horizontally, straight ahead. Not always would I get down and back up again without losing my balance when going down or getting up or while in the squatting position. When I would lose my balance, I would reach down to the ice with my hands to keep from falling over. On my hands I had cheap brown, cotton work gloves, and they became quite wet!

Twila rode the streetcar to and from the party. Because it had to stop occasionally for traffic lights or for passengers I was able to keep up with it on my bike as we were going home. Commonly boys turned the handle bars of their bikes so that, instead of the ends being lower than the gooseneck and pointing back, as they commonly do on racing bikes, the ends were higher than the gooseneck and pointing forward and upward. That's the way I had mine. Unless one had his handle grips well glued, they might easily be stolen when parked in the racks at school. On this particular night my handle bars had no rubber grips.

As we were going west on Colfax Avenue, headed toward Broadway, Twila's streetcar stopped for a traffic light, and I stopped even with the front of it. As soon as the light turned green I pressed down on one pedal with all my weight and might, because I wanted to keep up with Twila. In order to press down with more than one's weight one has to pull up on the handle bars. As I pulled up hard, my wet gloves slipped up and forward and off the handle bars. One moment everything was under control, the next the bicycle and I and the skates were sliding along not far from the streetcar's iron wheels.

The only thing that was really hurt was my pride. I may have been bruised a little, and the handle bars may have needed some adjusting, but I picked up the skates and continued on to Broadway. At Broadway Twila had to transfer to another streetcar. There was a small building to shelter passengers while they waited, and I think it had a little heat in it. I was very glad to wait there with Twila. I'm not sure my fingers were frostbitten by that time, but they were by the time I got home. For weeks afterward my fingers reminded me of that particular night.

No one but the Lord knows how many times I fell with that bike. Falls occurred because I didn't cross the streetcar tracks just right, or because of turning on a layer of

gravel on a hard surface. Snow and ice were plentiful on Denver streets a number of months each year. One time I was riding south on the two hundred block of Acoma, just riding normally, not doing anything fancy, when I came onto a thin sheet of clear ice. My bike simply slid out from under me. Bruises and abrasions were the worst of my injuries in all of these falls.

Because I was “riding normally” at the time of that one fall, doesn’t mean I never rode “abnormally.” At one time or another I probably tried everything boys tried on bikes in those days, making jumps, riding down steep slopes, riding backwards sitting on the handlebars and pumping backwards, “Look, Ma, no hands,” etc. If any falls came about while doing those things, they have been erased from my memory.

### **The Secretary’s Office**

Probably my having a bike enabled me to get the best job I had while in school prior to WW II. Some Rotary Club businessmen sponsored poor high school boys who had a certain minimum grade-point average. For perhaps the last two years I was in high school, I received a small amount of money each month (the figure of \$6 per month comes to mind). One day a request came to West High School for a “Rotary boy” to work temporarily as a messenger and a “do whatever needs to be done” type of person for the Secretary’s Office in the Administration Building of the Denver Public Schools at 414 14<sup>th</sup> Street. I was asked if I would take the job, and I did.

Years before, Charlie Berens had had that job while he was in high school and college. He had since graduated from Denver University but was still working in that office. It was he who instructed me as to my responsibilities. Primarily I was a messenger, but I probably spent more time doing other things than I did going to and fro. I had my own desk in a room with about 5 other desks. As invoices came to the office, one of their first stops was on my desk where I would stamp on them certain information, including the day’s date. Sometimes I would total columns of figures on an adding machine. Sometimes I would go to the basement and go through school records from early in the century seeking confirmation of the ages of older people seeking Social Security benefits.

As a messenger, most of my trips were to and from banks for the credit union. Sometimes I would carry more than \$2,000 in cash, plus unknown quantities of checks. (At that time Charlie Berens was receiving \$133.33 per month doing a rather demanding, responsible job. He was married and had two daughters. His wife did not work outside their home. They were buying a very nice brick house in south Denver, in a good neighborhood. About every two years he would trade his four-year old car for a good two-year old one. Currently he was driving a Pontiac, a step above a Ford, Chevy or Plymouth. They were on a tight budget, but their budget included some of Denver University’s football games. I’m relating this to point out that \$2,000 was a rather large amount of money for a 15 or 16 year old boy to be carrying to the bank.)

When there were papers to be signed by members of the school board, I would take them to the board members for their signatures. A Mr. Knight was president of the board at that time. He was owner of a large baking company which was located in the Five-Points area of Denver. One woman board member lived in North Denver. All the board members were pleasant people with whom to deal.

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As I recall, I was first simply taking another boy's place while he was unable to work for some reason. I think it was early in 1940 that I had the temporary job. Early that summer I was asked, if I would like to have the job full time for the summer. During the school year I was paid \$25 per month. The full time job would pay \$50 per month for 44 hours per week (8 hours Monday through Friday and 4 hours on Saturday). With 4 1/3 weeks per month, that comes out to about 26 cents per hour. I took the job and continued in it until I left for the army in 1942. The people in the office, and the Secretary and the Treasurer, were all very good people for whom and with whom to work!

It was probably while I was working for the school district that I bought my first automobile. Waldo and Dad had begun teaching Twila and me to drive when I was eleven years old. They had a 1933 Ford V-8 four-door sedan. I was so small I had to look at the road under the top of the steering wheel.

The road between Denver and Morrison at that time had a number of 90-degree turns. The highway department had improved those turns considerably by widening the inside of the turns and making the widened turns rather steeply banked so they could be taken at a higher speed than formerly. One day Dad and Waldo allowed Twila to drive between Denver and Morrison, including those beautiful turns. Usually they gave us rather even driving times, but for some reason I wasn't going to get to drive over that area on our way back. Somehow I let them know my dissatisfaction. Not a word of reprimand was said to me, but I didn't get to drive at all for a long time. I was much more careful about expressions of dissatisfaction from that time onward.

## 5

### Desires Met

#### On a Farm Again

"The boy has been taken out of the country, but the country hasn't been taken out of the boy," applied to me. When I was 15 I asked Dad, "Whom should I contact to see if they could use a young, inexperienced hand on their farm this summer?" (the summer of '39). He suggested I contact his sister, my Aunt Margaret Young, of Billings, Oklahoma. I did, and she and her husband, Calvin, agreed to my coming.

As soon as I could arrange it after school was out early in June, I boarded a bus for Billings. After an overnight trip, I arrived in the town, population of about 600. The Youngs lived something less than a mile north of town. Having informed them in writing that I expected to arrive at a certain time on that date, I thought they would pick me up in town. I ended up walking, carrying my lone but heavy suitcase, in a temperature and humidity I wasn't accustomed to in Denver.

Uncle Calvin was an interesting person! Although he was earning his living by farming, and perhaps some income from buildings he owned in town, he was also a licensed chiropractor and an ordained Presbyterian minister. He had ridden the Chisholm Trail, driving cattle to market (I'm not positive it was the Chisholm Trail, it may have been another) and had broken horses to ride. He said the reason he had carried a six-shooter in those days was to shoot his horse if his horse had stumbled and was running off, with his foot caught in the stirrup so that he was being dragged.

Uncle Calvin was famous in that area for the large teams he used to drive. I have seen pictures of him with a team of about 20 horses. He told me, when I questioned him about the task of harnessing such a large team, that he used very simple, bare necessity harnesses. In 1939 he had about 7 horses and one mule. Occasionally he would ride one horse, Zack, and he used the mule to help him with his very limited garden work.

Uncle Calvin was 70 that summer. When the Cherokee Strip opened (was that in 1901?) he and a cousin, a McFarland, I believe, participated in the land rush. As I understand it, they had been able to look the area over beforehand and had decided which quarter section each wanted. On the day of the rush they each had two riding horses. They would ride one 'till it tired, then they would ride the other. They made good time that way and were able to lay claim to the particular quarter sections they had chosen.

#### Wheat Harvest

The summer of '39 was a wet one in that part of Oklahoma, so the wheat harvest was later than usual, and I arrived in the middle of the harvest. At first I drove a tractor pulling a combine which cut a 12-foot swath. Later I operated the combine. I can still see Uncle Calvin driving the tractor and turning and yelling instructions to me (the machines were terribly noisy), and, from his appearance and sound of his voice, I thought he was angry with me. I finally realized that was just the way he looked and sounded in those circumstances, and that he wasn't really angry with me.

It was my responsibility to bring the cows in for milking after the day's field work was completed. We got up at about sunrise, and we finished the field work about

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sundown. The cows often were about a mile from the house, at the far northwest corner of their property. Over the years the Youngs had added two quarter sections to the original one, so they owned 3/4th of a section. I had asked if I could ride Zack to get the cows, but Uncle Calvin thought Zack was too wild for me to handle. Oftentimes I would mount a steer or cow so I wouldn't have to walk all that way (I wanted to ride an animal anyway). Oftentimes I would get tossed off. Even if I didn't get tossed off, my riding those animals was not an efficient way to bring them in. The one I was riding was as likely as not to stop and graze, so I'd have to get off to get the herd moving again.

### Zack and I

When I had opportunity, like on a Sunday afternoon, I would pick wild clover and take it to the pasture where Zack and the other horses were. They were all quite skittish. If I made any sudden move near them, they would be gone in a moment. I ought not to have done it without permission, but, after awhile, occasionally I would take some oats and feed them to Zack. Gradually he became less afraid of me and would come galloping to me when I would go to the pasture and whistle for him.

Late one Saturday night, a night near the full moon, I put the very old saddle and bridle on Zack and rode him to where my cousin, Glenn Blackwood, was doing some night plowing. Zack wouldn't go in a straight line at a gallop, even in that wide open field, but I felt that otherwise I had good control over him. Sunday afternoon, when it was time for me to bring the cows in for milking, I saddled Zack and rode him to Uncle Calvin. When he saw me riding as I was, he agreed to allow me to ride Zack as needed for the rest of the summer. Uncle Calvin was a tall 70, and I was a short 15, so he shortened the stirrup straps so I could rest my feet properly in the stirrups.

Zack never had been ridden bareback. Whether it was out of laziness or because I was feeling a bit venturesome, I don't know, but one day I decided I would not put the saddle on Zack to go after the cows. He didn't seem to like it. He bucked a little when we were out in the pasture, so I decided I wouldn't ride him bareback again. I didn't want to lose the privilege of riding him.

On one occasion Uncle Calvin, Aunt Margaret and their daughter, Velda Zimmerman and her family were going to be away briefly. The Zimmermans' farm was several miles south of the Youngs.' I agreed to do the chores at the Zimmermans' after completing them at the Youngs.' To get there I was to ride Zack. I don't know if he had ever been off the farm after he was first brought to it a number of years earlier. When we got to the highway that runs east and west just north of Billings, Zack refused to set foot on the concrete. When I got off and led him, he did cross it, reluctantly. When I came to a bridge he refused to set foot on it, so I led him across it, also. I don't remember how many bridges we had to cross, but the story was the same at each of them. It was nearly dark by the time we reached our destination. Before we got there, and daylight had been fading, we came to a barbed wire gate that interrupted the hedgerow on the left side of the road where I had been riding. When we came to the gap in the hedgerow, Zack almost left me in midair as he shied to the right side of the road. If I remember correctly, that also happened more than once, but the first occurrence remains with me more vividly.

### Different Foods

Uncle Calvin permitted me to have the use of his single-shot 410-gage shotgun. All I had to do was buy the shells for it. At that time both jackrabbits and cottontail rabbits were very numerous in the plains states. When on a tractor in the fields, I expect one could have counted as many as 50 rabbits in sight at any one time. I have seen them remain immobile within inches of the tractor's wheels when I was plowing, but the story changed considerably when I went out on foot with the shotgun in hand.

One rainy day, when we couldn't work in the field, with gun in hand I walked for a long time without coming within range of a rabbit. Giving up for that day I returned to the farm buildings area. Then, within the farmyard, I saw a cottontail (cottontail rabbits were considered to be good eating, whereas jackrabbits were not). Having been totally frustrated in my hunting up to that time, I took careful aim and pulled the trigger. He never knew what hit him! When I dressed him for cooking, I found I had created a difficult job for myself. Virtually every bone in his little body was broken, maybe more than once. It was a tedious task!

After I had finished the cleanup, and before I took the gun into the house, I saw another cottontail within range. This time I aimed very carefully for its head, only. This one also died instantly. When I cleaned it, I found only one or two of the pellets in its body, so the dressing job was much simpler. (By the way, I had never before killed or dressed any game.) Aunt Margaret cooked the two rabbits for us. I don't remember having any other meat at their table all summer.

What did we eat? The only thing I remember for sure was clabber. You don't know what clabber is? The dictionary says it is curdled milk. I thought it was sour milk. Actually it is just the more solid part of sour milk. Perhaps my memory isn't totally accurate here, but it seemed to me we had clabber three times a day, seven days a week. We could add some things to it, such as raisins, which helped! I went to Oklahoma as a skinny 15 year old. I returned to Denver a skinnier 15 year old.

Two of my mother's sisters lived in or near Billings. Aunt Beth was married to Velda Zimmerman's brother-in-law, so she was also a Zimmerman. Aunt Edith was married to George Bellmon and had four sons. Her oldest son, Henry, was two years older than I was. He was one of three boys that I knew in my youth, who I thought was a perfect human being. I know now there is no such human being this side of the grave, but that was the way I thought then. During WW II Henry was awarded the Silver Star medal as a Marine captain in the Pacific. I think it was in 1962 that Henry was elected as Governor of the State of Oklahoma, Oklahoma's first Republican governor. At that time a governor of Oklahoma could not serve two terms in a row. Next he served two terms as a U.S. senator for Oklahoma. Following that he was again elected governor.

All four of Aunt Edith's boys were great fellows, in my estimation. Sheldon, who now goes by the name George, whom I thought was also 15 that year, was so good looking that Aunt Beth confided in me that she was worried about him. She thought he was too good looking for his own good.

When I had meals at Aunt Edith's I was well fed! And I really enjoyed the fun times with her sons. They had a "car" they had put together from about three other vehicles. It had a frame, an engine, a seat, four wheels and all the things necessary to control it, but that was all. Unlike most full-bodied cars of those days, it wouldn't turn

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over when one cramped the steering wheel fully right or left when driving fairly fast on the salt flats.

Another activity I enjoyed with them, and didn't enjoy with them, was swimming in the muddy-water ponds. I enjoyed swimming, and the temperatures were always more comfortable for swimming than I was used to in Colorado, but I didn't enjoy the practice they evidently took for granted, swimming without the benefit of swim suits. True, there were no girls or women around, but it was a practice I didn't cotton to.

All my relatives attended the Methodist Church in Billings. Only the necessary chores were done on Sundays, no field work. The day of rest was welcomed! I believe it was the end of the first week I was there that I had a terrific headache. When Uncle Calvin learned of it, he gave me a chiropractic treatment. I hadn't realized it 'till then, but virtually every muscle in my body was sore. My body wasn't used to farm work at the beginning of the summer. Not too long after the treatment the headache was gone.

In Colorado, when the sun went down the temperature followed quickly. In Oklahoma the humidity was much higher, and I found the heat unbearable long after sundown. The combination of heat and humidity bred thunderstorms and tornadoes. One of the nights when the lightning flashes were so frequent that for a time there wasn't a moment of total darkness, the roof was blown off of a barn not too far from us. We don't know that there was a tornado that did it, but that was a possibility.

One day when I was plowing, I saw a "mild" tornado approaching from the south. Uncle Calvin was plowing in another field about a quarter of a mile away. I kept watching him and the tornado, not knowing what I should do. He kept plowing, so I kept plowing. I decided that, if the tornado was about to reach me, I would shut off the tractor and lie down under it. It was a heavy McCormick-Deering, and I doubted that the tornado would move it. The tornado dissipated before it reached us, all we received was a relatively mild dusting.

Although I loved the farm work there were three things about it I didn't like, the heat, the dust and the insects.

One afternoon, when the temperature was reported to be 113 degrees in the shade, when I picked up the grease gun to grease the tractor and plow (which we did each morning and afternoon), the grease gun was too hot to handle. Also the steel seat was too hot to sit upon, and the steering wheel was too hot to hold. Grease, sit and steer I did, however.

The tractor exhaust stack was a short, vertical one. Sometimes on one side of the field I would be going into the wind in such a way that the hot exhaust would blow directly into my face. Usually, in that circumstance, I would sit on the tractor's right fender, and I would rest my right foot on the power take-off wheel, then the exhaust gases would blow by to my left.

One day as I was plowing, driving directly into a south wind, I sat on the fender until I came to the corner where I was to turn to the east. As I stood up to move to the seat, my right foot slipped. The power take-off turned backwards as I put some weight on it. The steel lugs (perhaps five or six inches long) of the right main wheel threatened to pull me down under the wheel. My foot was caught between the lugs and the power take-off wheel. As each lug went by it would pull my foot down, and all the time I was trying to pull my foot up. Finally I managed to force my foot up and free of the "trap."



This tractor had the clutch on the right, but my foot hurt so badly that I used my left foot on the clutch to stop the tractor. My high-top leather shoe was torn somewhat, and so was my ankle, though not seriously. I don't know if anyone took note of the unusual plowing pattern. I had gone past the corner a fair distance before I got the tractor stopped. I didn't tell anyone about the narrow escape. I felt it was a foolish error on my part to get myself into the predicament.

Earlier I made mention of insects. One time I counted over 100 chigger and mosquito bites below the knee on my right leg. Salt water was the Youngs' medication for those bites.

Although dust was a daily fact of life, bathing was not. Perhaps two or three weeks after I arrived I took my first "bath." About 10 o'clock one night I went out to the pond, one into which the cows waded to drink, and had my first "bath." The water was rather muddy, but perhaps it was less so than I. If I remember correctly, there was no running water in the house, but they did have a bathtub. I did have a bath or two in it that summer.

We had agreed that I would receive a dollar a day and room and board for my work. Just before I left to return to Denver, Uncle Calvin calculated what he owed me for my summer's work. The figure he came up with just about paid for my bus fare to and from Oklahoma. When I heard the figure I was devastated. I had expected that I was to be paid for each day I worked. Uncle Calvin had intended to pay me only for each day I worked in the field, harvesting or plowing. Early in the summer there were rainy days in which we didn't harvest, and I spent my time mending fences or whatever else was assigned to me. I hadn't expected anything for the chores on Sundays, such as bringing in the cows, but I thought the other weekday work had counted. Though I was reluctant to allow my feelings to be known, I did make known my dissatisfaction sufficiently that Uncle Calvin made a small adjustment to the figures.

Although I was small when I went to Oklahoma, I was smaller, at least weight-wise, when I got home. (In Denver, Byers Junior High had seventh through ninth grades. When I graduated from the ninth grade, there was one girl who was shorter than I. All the other girls and all the boys were taller. When I entered the tenth grade at West High School, I was four feet ten and a half inches tall. I tried to enter the Junior R.O.T.C., but I was told that they would have accepted me, even though applicants were supposed to be at least five feet tall, if only I showed some *promise* of growing.)

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## 6 Flying at Last!

Until June 1940 all my "flying" experience was in my mind. From the time I could first read, onward, I read everything about aviation I could lay my hands on. I made and flew MANY paper airplanes and some stick balsa rubber band powered airplanes and a couple of models. Hundreds of times I flew in my dreams (usually without any flying machine). Any time I had the opportunity I would watch any airplane fly.

One Sunday afternoon as we were returning from the north, probably from Brighton, we passed by Ray Wilson's airport. It was on the east side of Colorado Boulevard, just north of Smith Road. Twila said to me, "Let's learn to fly." The next morning I rode my bicycle about 15 miles (I think that was the round-trip mileage) from our home in west Denver to Ray Wilson's. I paid \$1.67 for a ten minute flying lesson. The airplane was a 50 h.p. Piper J-3 Cub. It had no brakes or tail wheel. Its tailskid, digging into the soft, sandy soil, provided some braking power. To do a run-up without moving forward, one would swing the tail to the right or left using full rudder with a blast of power and with the stick fully back. If everything worked just right, the tailskid would dig into the soil and help hold you in place for the run-up.

Every week for the next ten weeks I went to Ray Wilson's for a twenty minute flying lesson, paying \$3.30 per lesson. (All of these lessons were in J-3's having a 65 h.p. engine, a tail wheel and brakes.) Twenty minutes wasn't really enough, but it was all I could afford. One time an instructor told me that he would let me fly solo except for the fact that, at that time, one had to have at least eight hours of dual instruction before being permitted to fly solo. Almost all of my 3 1/2 hours of instruction that summer was spent making takeoffs and landings. With only twenty minutes per session, there wasn't adequate time to go to and from the practice area and accomplish anything in the practice area.

My goal was to become an airline pilot. By the end of the summer it was evident to me that, at that rate, it was going to take me a LONG time to reach that goal.

Airlines were obtaining many of their new pilots from the ex-military ranks. The army was accepting young men, ages 20 to 26, who had completed two years of college and passed various tests, into pilot training. If one completed his training, he was commissioned and was required to serve a certain period of time (three years, if I remember correctly). Following fulfilling his service requirement, one could leave active service and enter the reserves. Airlines were pleased to hire many of these. I decided I would save what I could so as to obtain the required two years of college and try to become an airline pilot that way.

Twila also had skipped two half years of school, so she was scheduled to graduate from high school in the middle of the 1938-39 school year. However she decided to go to summer school so she could graduate in June 1938, which she did. Later she expressed regret that she had done so. She found that there were job-seeking disadvantages for a sixteen year old.

I was scheduled to graduate in the middle of the 1940-41 school year. Partially because of Twila's experience and partially because I didn't want to go to summer school,

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I took a lighter load my last year of high school and worked each afternoon for the Secretary's Office of the Denver Public Schools. When I graduated, I was awarded a half-tuition scholarship to Denver University. In September 1941 I began university studies in D.U.'s School of Commerce which held classes in various locations in downtown Denver. As I worked in the Secretary's Office I developed an interest in accounting. I decided I would prepare to become a C.P.A. so as to have something to fall back upon if I didn't make it as a pilot.

## A New Interest!

Judson Hall (some of us called him "Judy"), a good friend in high school, served as a "lab assistant" in the physics laboratory. In the lab I had seen an attractive girl, and I had asked Judy to introduce me to her. May 3, 1941 as I was about 30 yards out from the school's front door on my way to work, I heard my name called. As I turned and saw it was Judy standing at the front door with the girl, I asked, "What do you want?" To this day she hasn't allowed me to forget those words.

Judy introduced me to Carmen Crook (Jennie Carmen, her Texas relatives always called her). I asked her if she would go horseback riding with me, together with Judy and his girlfriend, Friday night, May 5th. She agreed, and we had a very enjoyable ride in the foothills of the Rockies under a full moon. Each month thereafter in 1941, even including December, we went for a horseback ride, as close as possible to the night of the full moon as our schedules would permit.

Our contacts were not limited to horseback rides, however! We enjoyed a number of school year-end activities together. She was a junior, but we had a number of friends in common. We enjoyed being together!

June 6th I graduated from high school. After the ceremonies, Carmen and I, Judy and Doris, and Bob Arledge and his date, all went to Lakeside, an amusement park. If there was any ride we didn't go on, it must have been the merry-go-round or other tame rides. The Derby was the roller coaster, and we rode it at least three times in a row. Bob was the only one I remember who displayed evidences of motion sickness. Although I went to work the next morning, I was not in the best shape for working. It had been an exhausting night, but I had enjoyed it very much!

Carmen would go with me to some of my church's youth activities, and I went with her to some of her church's youth activities. Hers was First Avenue Presbyterian Church at First and Acoma.

Carmen was very good for me! I had so little self-confidence, but she made me feel I must have some worth. It was evident to me that she really enjoyed my company.

From May 5, 1941 to June 6, 1942 we spent many, many hours together. Often I would call her from the Secretary's Office after everyone else was gone for the day, and we would talk at length. That same evening I might go to her place and spend further hours with her. I don't know how she managed to get as good grades as she did her senior year. She was quite active in extra-curricular school activities. She enjoyed school. That was one thing I couldn't relate to without some mental gymnastics.

Somehow I managed to get passing grades in college, though my heart wasn't really in my school work. I enjoyed my work at the Secretary's Office, and I really enjoyed my time with Carmen! In addition to horseback rides and church young people's activities we went to movies, ice-skated, roller-skated, went swimming, hiking and hunting, drove many miles over the plains and in the foothills and mountains, and talked.

The words, "Will you marry me," or their equivalent, were never expressed. After a time, however, we were talking about when we would marry. There was never the

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question as to whether or not we *should* marry; the question was simply that of *when* we should marry.

June 24, 1944 was the date we decided upon for our marriage. Why that particular date? I don't remember. However, it appeared to us that by that time I could have my two years of college and about a year as an aviation cadet, and we could marry immediately after I received my wings and commission. (At that time an aviation cadet could not be married.)

In 1940, after I decided I would save my money, go to college for two years, etc., I decided I needed a car. For \$55 I bought a 1930 Model A Ford Sport Coupe. It got good mileage, was easy to work on with a minimum of tools, and it was fun to have. It had a rumble seat, which is not the best place to ride in during Denver winters. I'm not sure why I sold it and bought the '32 Plymouth sedan, but I think part of it was that the sedan was better for double dating. Dad had come across the Plymouth that had just had a new paint job and was for sale for \$125. That was the car I had when I met Carmen.

The winter of 1941-42 was a very cold one in Denver! My Plymouth didn't have a heater. (That was true of my Model A, also.) That didn't seem to limit our activities, though it made them exceedingly uncomfortable at times. One very cold night Carmen and I were sitting in the car at Municipal Airport (later called Stapleton Airport), wanting to observe any airline activity there might have been. (At least I wanted to see it, and Carmen was desirous of being with me. She had to have been, to put up with the cold as she did.) When we started to return to west Denver, we had difficulty seeing what was outside, for the glass, all the way around, was covered with ice, ice on the inside. I scraped enough away that I had a narrow, horizontal slit through which to look at what was ahead of us. There was virtually no traffic as we drove west on 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The streets were covered with ice and snow, so I didn't drive very fast. Evidently I couldn't see very far in front of us, for suddenly to the right I saw a stop sign, which was at Colorado Boulevard. I hit the brakes, the wheels locked, and we continued straight ahead, almost, it seemed, as if we had no brakes whatsoever. By the time we reached the middle of the intersection, it was evident there was no longer any reason to be using the brakes, so I released them, and we continued on 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue as if we had every right to be there. In God's providence there were no other cars going through that intersection on Colorado Boulevard at that time. Most sensible people were in their warm homes.

Oftentimes, in better weather conditions, Carmen and I would be driving and see a road that neither of us had been on, and we would turn onto it just to find out where it led.

More than once we ran out of gas, honestly. The fuel gage didn't work. Money being as tight as it was, the thought never occurred to me to have it fixed. I had a dipstick that I used when I tried to find out how much fuel was in the tank. I doubt if I ever filled the tank. I expect I usually put in about a dollar's worth at a time (that may have been about five gallons). Carmen's mother didn't believe us when we got Carmen home later than expected, and we told her we had run out of gas. (She did believe us later, when she owned the car, and she ran out of gas with it.)

One of the times we ran out of gas, we were on the road where we had been on our first date, our first horseback ride. We turned the car around, pushing it by hand, back and forth, then got in and coasted as far as we could toward Morrison. When we could coast no farther, we left the car and walked to Morrison. The only gasoline

## A New Interest!

available was in a self-service pump. We put in whatever coins were necessary and pumped (by hand) all we could get into the container we had. That left the remainder visible in the glass in the upper part of the pump. Anyone who might happen along could easily have some free fuel. We hurried back to the car (probably less than a mile away), put the gas in, and returned to Morrison. We were pleased to see that no one else had come in the meantime, and we pumped the rest of "our" fuel into the Plymouth's tank.

The Plymouth had a little four-cylinder engine. For some reason one plug would foul rather easily. When one cylinder isn't doing its work, you have less than three-quarters of your power, for the three cylinders have to use some of their power to drag the fourth one along. Particularly in the thinner air of Denver and its surrounding areas a four-cylinder engine of that vintage, running on three cylinders, was a sick engine! It got so that I readily recognized the symptoms of the fouled plug and knew which plug it was. After a time it was only a minor inconvenience for me to remove, clean and replace the plug, in the dark, without so much as a flashlight. Oh, the advantages of youth!

Immediately after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941 I wanted to enlist in the army. I had no desire to kill or be killed, to hurt or be hurt, but I believed that it was necessary for someone (really a multitude of "someones") to put a stop to the aggression of the Axis powers, and I didn't believe it would be right to leave that up to others entirely. However, none of my friends seemed to feel as strongly about this as I did, so I merely continued at Denver University and the Secretary's Office for a time.

Even before Pearl Harbor I would sometimes be in what was to me a boring class, daydreaming. Instead of being in class I would be in a Spitfire, rising to prevent Nazi bombers from dropping their lethal loads. One evening in January 1942 on the front page of the DENVER POST was a very small article that caught my attention. It stated that the requirements for entering aviation cadet training had been changed. The age limit had been lowered to eighteen, and only high school graduation was required. Instead of going to my classes at the university the next day I went to the army recruiting office.

## **Country Boy**



## Conclusion

The last paragraphs express things that are repeated on the first page of FFY (“Four Full Years”), the portion of my autobiography that covers the years the U.S. participated in World War II. “Country Boy” (CB), covers the first eighteen years of my life, whereas FFY covers only a little more than four years. In its present form, FFY occupies over eighty pages, more than twice as many as does CB. Presently I consider the apparent imbalance actually to be an appropriate balance. In my case, the intensity and life-changing events in WW II merit fuller recording than do those of the preceding eighteen years.

Although the daily-living changes in those eighteen years were not as great as those that had taken place in my parents’ lifetime, my grandchildren and following generations might be surprised about some of them.

The only remembrance, and that is a rather vague one, of our Idana farm home, had to do with our outhouse. (I was two when we left Idana.) Also at Hays we had no indoor plumbing. (We may have had a hand water pump in the kitchen.) Kerosene lamps and lanterns provided our night lighting indoors and outside. While we lived at Hays, a party-line telephone was installed. It was inconceivable to me that Dad was actually in Hays when I talked with him via telephone. A pot-bellied stove in the semi-basement, as well as the coal or wood-heated cooking range, provided heat.

In Denver we soon got used to electricity and indoor plumbing. My first recollection of hearing something on a radio was in the home of one of the members of our church.

My first sight of an airliner was at Denver’s Municipal Airport (which later was named Stapleton Airport) in about 1931. It was a mud-splattered Ford Tri-motor that was arriving from Kansas City. It was far behind schedule. It’s cruising speed was about 90 mph, and it had been bucking a headwind all the way. The airport was a large grass field located out in the country east of Denver.

My first view of television also was in the home of a church member in Denver, the David McFarland home. This was sometime in 1946 or fairly soon thereafter.

Yes, there were a lot of changes between 1923 and 1946!

Glenn T. Black