

Life's Joyous Excursions

by Earl C. Crockett

My Pony

One of the thrilling events of my childhood was the purchase of a riding pony with I was about ten years of age. Father and Mother had given consent if I could earn the necessary money to purchase one and they helped me to find ways. We were living on the farm in Cambridge, Idaho (near Downey). I was given a 50 cents per week allowance for carrying water and wood and feeding the chickens, etc. After saving \$3 I bought a little pig from a neighbor – after the pig was grown, I sold it for \$12 and bought a little boy colt which became my pony. When two years old brother George broke it for riding. I bought a small saddle and bridle and had many pleasant times riding. It was this pony that I led our cow from Cambridge to Preston when we moved in 1916.

My First Auto Ride

While living in Cambridge we gradually became accustomed to seeing a few automobiles. One of the first was a small one-seated model T Ford owned by the family doctor who made house calls throughout much of Marsh Valley. When we saw his car coming we always wondered who in the neighborhood was ill. As cars came down the road horses met or passed usually became frantic and the drivers had great difficulty in quieting them down. Sometimes there would be a runaway and even trip over a buggy or fall from the saddle on a pony.

When I was perhaps 10 years of age, I had my first auto ride. My brother Edwin who worked for the Studebaker company in Preston visited us in Cambridge. He came in a used Studebaker car owned by the company. After giving us all a ride around the village – it was a large two seater, he invited me to ride with him back to Preston where I might stay for a week visiting with Clyde. Pa and Ma gave their consent and we started out on the 35 mile trip. I was extremely excited, waving at almost everyone we passed. The trip actually took us about 3 hours. We had two flat tires which we repaired by the side of the road and at almost every irrigation ditch and several farm houses we stopped to add water to the leaking radiator. Also it was necessary to slow down and sometimes stop to avoid frightening unduly the horses we met or passed. Nevertheless, this auto ride was a thrilling experience which I have always remembered.

Pioneers Day

A 24th of July celebration in Cambridge I'll never forget was in 1914 when I was eleven years old. The community decided to have a pioneer's day parade and Father and Mother agreed to participate. Our wagon was arranged with hoops and canvas, to make an 1847 type covered wagon. Mother sewed herself a bonnet and pioneer dress. Also, something appropriate for Elva. Father wore suspenders and I pretended he had a beard and I wore old overalls and a straw hat with bare feet. Father, Mother, and Elva rode in the wagon driving our team of horses. A cow was tied behind and I followed with a willow whip to keep the cow moving.

As the parade got in the center of town a simulated group of painted Indians on horses suddenly appeared firing guns. A mock battle occurred and finally the "Indians" disappeared. The

day was hot with the sun bright. After the parade I went home to bed with a bad headache and fever. Mother nursed me for three days – perhaps I had sunstroke or shock from the excitement. Nevertheless, it was once of the few times I have had an illness in my life time.

My Baptism

Several years passed and in 1911 a series of important unrelated events transpired, on of which at least, was tremendously important in my life. These were the events (all in 1911 when I was eight years of age):

- a) After much conflict and debate in congress (American troops were stationed along the Mexican border because of a revolution in that country).
- b) King George V was crowned in England
- c) Italy declared war against Turkey
- d) The 300 year anniversary celebration of the King James version of the Holy Bible
- e) The first direct telephone conversation between New York City and Denver, Colorado
- f) Arizona became a state
- g) Mona Lisa, the famous painting was stolen from the Louve art gallery in Paris – later recovered
- h) Mount Aetna in Italy erupted, killing thousands of people
- i) Women with hatchets were jailed for demanding woman suffrage
- j) Aviator Atwood completed a flight by air from St. Louis to New York City in the record time of 11 days 6 hours and 3 minutes
- k) Dr. Cooke was touring the country claiming that he had discovered the North Pole – later disproved
- l) I was eight years of age and had not as yet seen a movie, an automobile, nor an aeroplane. I had never talked over a telephone nor been more than 40 miles away from my place of birth
- m) But, on May 13th the year of my 8th birthday, I was dramatically, in my estimation, baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

For months Mother had been teaching me the meaning of baptism and I believe I had memorized the Articles of Faith. Finally, when the time arrived, which happened to be a Saturday, Father and Mother decided to make an entire day of the event.

I had to comb and brush our team of horses and to polish the harness. We washed the buggy with was beautiful in my sight even though it didn't have a fringe on top. Mother prepared a delicious lunch and the three of us departed in our Sunday best clothes traveling some eight miles away to Marshall's Hot Spring located south of Downey.

Being in a family with ten brothers and sisters it was a great even in itself for me to be singled out by my parents for their entire attention for a whole day. At that time Marshall's Hot Springs was an open-air swimming pool. Upon arrived we put on our swim suits which in those days were extremely modest. After having a swim and sun bath we ate our lunch which included a birthday cake with candles.

Father, who was there a member of the bishopric, talked about the Prophet Joseph who had been murdered merely 12 years before Father was born. He discussed the significance of baptism and then we waded into the pool and I was baptized. We changed our clothes back into

our Sunday best and then drove home arriving about sundown. It was a memorable day which I have always remembered.

My First Ice Cream Cone

When about eight years of age I was in Downey and visited my brother George's law office. He asked me if I would like an ice cream cone. I told him I had never tasted nor even seen one in my life. He immediately took me to the store and got one for each of us. It was a hot summer day and I immediately began eating the delicious ice cream on top of the cone, but had to be urged to bit the cone itself as I felt this was really a dish. I even remember ice cream dripping on one of my shoes but best of all I remember that delicious taste.

The Kittens

On the farm in Cambridge we had various pets including a dog, two or three cats, sometimes rabbits and a flock of pigeons for which I had built a home placed in the barn gable. One of our problems was obtaining too many kittens, because of the productivity of a mother cat we kept for several years. As a rule, however, her kittens could be given away to neighbors and friends or else they disappeared in ways unknown to us children.

As I got older, perhaps about 12 years of age, a large batch of kittens arrived, at least six or seven, which could not be given away. Mother told me the thing to do was to drown them and asked me to perform the act. I was shocked and saddened. Although I had chopped heads off chickens preparatory to their feathers plucked and then cleaned, preparatory to being cooked and eaten. I could not concede of killing little innocent kittens.

Finally, I built up courage, headed water on our coal kitchen stove, poured it into a tub until filled, being sure the water was nice and warm to the touch. I carefully placed the kittens in a sack and held them under the warm soothing water until they were drowned.

My Rifle

When I was twelve years of age Father allowed me to buy a gun and my brother George helped me to select one. I bought a second-hand automatic twenty-two rifle. Actually and automatic rifle is dangerous because it can be shot time after time without refilling and without cocking. I never had an accident with it fortunately.

My principal use of the gun, which was great sport, was to shoot wild Jack Rabbits. In the fields near our farm there were hundreds of these rabbits. They destroyed crops and several times a year the farmers would have rabbit drives – perhaps 50 or 100 men and boys with sticks and clubs driving the rabbits into a net-covered pen and then killing them with clubs.

I soon learned to go across fields and over sagebrush flats with my gun. In perhaps 2 or 3 hours I could shoot a half dozen rabbits with my twenty-two. I would then take them home and feed them to our chickens and pigs.

Beginning School

Because of the distance from school in our new Cambridge home Pa and Ma decided that I should not begin the first grade until I was seven years old. It was necessary to walk back and forth to school – actually one mile. This is not a great distance and thus my parents were perhaps babying their youngest child.

I immediately liked school and well remember my teacher, Mrs. Kate White. She taught in one room the first, second and third grades. At the end of the first year she promoted me to third grade. I thus skipped second grade, but continued to have Mrs. White as my teacher. She must have been an outstanding person – she is one of the very few I remember from grade school.

The principal had a hand bell he rang when it was time to begin school in the morning or after recesses or non-hour. We all lined up according to rooms and marched in and to our seats. We then stood by our seats until our teacher told us to be seated.

Recesses and the noon period were great times for games. We boys played marbles – usually "keeps" or baseball and the girls played jump the rope, hop scotch or sat and talked. Most of us took our lunch in tin pails. Drinking water came from an old fashioned well. There was no indoor plumbing and the backhouse were usually filthy places indeed. We stayed in Cambridge until I was ready to enter 7th grade at which time we were again back in Preston.

The Magpie Accident

When about ten years of age I caught a young magpie and made a cage for it. It had been told that with training a magpie can be taught to speak as parrots can. Consequently, I spent hours with the bird saying such words as hell, goodbye, please, thank-you. But, had no success. It would beg for food in its own clattering way, however.

Once when Clyde and his parents were visiting us, the two of us decided to dig some angle worms for the magpie. I did the shoveling and Clyde grabbed the worms. Accidentally, Clyde reached for a worm as I slammed the shovel down to uncover more dirt. The shovel struck Clyde's thumb almost cutting it off at the knuckle. Today he still carries a scare from that accident. Shortly after Clyde's visit to magpie got out of the cage and escaped.

Trip to Flour Mill

When I was perhaps eight years of age father took me with him on a sleigh wagon bed with runners pulled by two horses to McCarmen for a load of flour. The trip was about 15 miles each way and it was a cold winter day. We took a load of wheat, starting before daylight and returned with the flour long after dark that night. We had caps, overcoats, mittens, and a quilt around us, but the temperature must have been at least zero. Consequently, we got very cold.

Perhaps partly to entertain me Father sang over and over again a little time, the words of which were mostly "And he rode him around on a gum tree canoe." We finally arrived home and Mother had hot soup for us.

One winter while in high school Clyde and I rented a large truck and drove to Minkcreek, spending the day wading in snow to our waists on a mountain side cutting down Christmas trees to sell. Wet and cold and hungry we returned to Preston with a large load of trees. During the next several days we went from house to house selling the trees and toward the last we virtually gave some of the trees away. It was a great experience and a though we didn't make a lot of money, it was an illustration of various attempts to finance?? our next as we?? began going to

de?? dating girls, buying Christmas presents, and obtaining some money.

During the summer of 1921, after graduating from high school, Clyde and I obtained approval from our parents to buy a car and become agents for the Utah Woolen Mills, selling nyoolen?? Goods in Montana. The car we purchased was a used Model T Ford, 1917 model. It was a two seater and we saved the back of the front seat pla??ing it on l??inger so that it could be loca??cted so that it could be covered?? At night making a bed for Clyde and me to seleep on as we traveled from town to town. The car was hard to start as it needed to be cranked by hand. Also it was very tiring to drive up slopes as low gear was obtained?? by keeping one's foot ob??tarut by keeping ou?? We one to Salt Lake City obtaining suitcases ??? with sh?? by from the Utah?? Only Mills?? Excited. Most?? on ??? to house selling and ??? ??? Day staffed back to secton?? is drove up Sardine Canyon, a connection rod burned out in the car and we were towed back to Brigham City for repairs. We had other car troubles from time to time over?? Summer.

Eventaully we got to montana and began our selling activities. Senatines?? we went togetheer knocking on doors and sometimes we worked sparately but either way we had ppor success. The work?? , 1921 was a time of commic?? Excissing and many people were out of work. Also we discovered needs? People late to talk to pale??meke who ring door bells. We intended to pay expenses by using the money we collected as deposits from our sales, but after a few weeks in Butte Montana we were desperate and I wired my father for funds which he promptly sent.

The summer experience in?? a? one I'll never forget. It made me determined I would never again resort to this kind of selling to make a living.

Preston City Park

Today Preston has a beautiful City park. There are tall beautiful trees, flower beds, shrubs and grass. It covers nearly a city block. I am especially proud of this park because it helped to start it.

When I was a child and until nearly through high school the park area was just barren land perhaps where informal baseball and other games were played and where animals sometimes grazed.

About 1920 while my Uncle George was Mayor, the city council decided to make the city square into a park. I and two or three of my boy friends were employed by the city to assist in plowing, raking ?emoning? Rocks, planting trees and shrubs, laying pipes, etc. We worked most of the summer and today when visiting Preston I see the results. I look at each beautiful tree some pines now 50 feet tall and proudly tell my children or grandchildren that I built? To want?? That?

I have many fond remembrances of Oneida Stake Academy (now Preston High school). I attended it four years, graduating in 1921, second highest in the class. The Academy was attend by President Harold B. Lee and Apostle Ezra T. Benson both of whom graduated about the time I entered as a freshman, but I will remember watching them play on the basketball team. Elder Benson was the star athlete one year when the team won state championships.

One of my favorite faculty members was Harrison R. Merrill, teacher of English and Literature, who later became a Professor at Brigham Young University and published several books. I was editor of the school year book called the Quiver my junior year and Mr. Merrill was my consultant and supervisor.

It was a customary practice for the Principal - first Joseph Giddes and then Thomas Romney - to meet each morning before the first classes with the faculty in a prayer meeting in his office. One morning some of the senior students including myself. I'm sorry to say, locked the faculty in their prayer meeting by tying the doors and then the entire student body played hooky. It was perhaps two hours before the faculty were freed. Principal Romney tried and tried to discover who the leaders were in the terrible offenses of that day, but to no avail - this in spite of the fact that his own son was one of the main leaders.

While seniors, Clyde and I were evicted (sp?) from the Hokkmak Club which had been organized two years earlier, object was to promote debating public speaking and the study of literature. During the year we carefully studied and practiced the rules of parliamentary law. This information helped me years later when conducting departmental and graduate faculty meetings at the University of Colorado and general faculty meetings at BYU.

Family Reunions

While a teenager in Preston, several Alvin Crockett (my grandfather) family reunions were held in Logan. Perhaps 200 or more would be in attendance. We would meet in a public park for day-long visiting, meetings, programs and eating. In bad weather we met in a chapel. Many of my uncles, aunts and cousins were always in attendance, also my father and mother and brothers and sister living in the area. Of course, grandfather and grandmother Crockett were absent. They had died before I was born. One year Clyde and I rode our bicycles down and back and we got rather tired and dusty as the road had not yet been paved between Preston and Logan. These reunions helped to make me proud of my relatives - many of them outstanding people.

My First Long Pants

In reading my Mother's diary I note that in 1918, when 15 years of age, I received my first long pants suit. My parents made quite an event of the decision allowing me to have long pants for this represented a real step toward adulthood with the right of dating girls. We shopped at several stores and finally decided upon a dark green with patch pockets. The cost was \$12. I was very proud indeed, but within about a year I had very much outgrown the suit.