

THE STORY OF GRANT ZORAM CHRISTOPHERSON
SON OF JOSEPH CHRISTOPHERSON AND HANNAH OPHEIM

As I sit down to write this history I consider the fact that I am now 63 years old and for this reason some of it will be absent or parts left out all together.

The first memory I have is of playing in the road between the two homes. The houses were of log and situated on the old coal mine. The mud in the road was excellent to play in after a rain. It would squish up between our toes, "delightful." Meeteetse Wyoming was a very small cow town three and a half miles from the mine. As far as I remember I went to town only once. This was riding in the back of a buggy to a Christmas play or something. My only friend was Henry Woodruff who lived in the house across the road. I remember at one time we got angry with each other and he said, "I'll get an ax and chop your head off." I said, "I'll get a pick and pick you." I'm sure we had some wonderful times together doing the things little boys do like catching snails, snakes etc.

The Woodruff's moved to Salt Lake City (Murray) shortly after that. I remember of them loading their furniture in a wagon and heading down the road. I believe they went by train however. I suppose they left from Cody. I shall always cherish them as the closest family friends we could possibly have.

Somehow I acquired a step mother. She was very good to me. Since she came from Lovell we finally moved there. I was only eleven at the time. We loaded the piano and a few belongings on a wagon and headed for Burlington which was our first stop. It was a great experience for me. My father let me drive the team some of the time. Old Tom and Bill didn't need driving but I didn't know that. My sister Sophie rode Old Jack and drove the two cows, Old Bell and Minco with the braille knobs on her horns. (Minch is Norwegian of my cow) Before we got to Lovell they (the cows) started giving salty milk. Why? I suppose they didn't get enough water on the way. The road was long, hot and dusty. My father would sit on the edge of the wagon box and play the piano to break the monotony, we did finally arrive though. We moved into a painted house. Painted! imagine that. I ran around behind looking for the back house (out house) but there was none. It was then that my stepmother's grand son took me under his wing and showed me the bathroom with the porcelain tub you could lay down in. and the flushing toilet. and paper in rolls. New paper to use. No catalogues at eleven I was growing up fast.

I acquired many friends in Lovell. The larger school was quite different from the old coal mine school where we had only eight pupils. Also, I was introduced into the church by a girl. My first love. I didn't know or care that she was my cousin. I only know she was beautiful, sweet and fair with long blond curls. I didn't know that the boys were laughing because I sat with the girls. It took me several months to find it out. By that time I didn't care.

You see it was great; all the girls made a fuss over me. But you see, all good things must come to an end. Since then I have wished many times that the girls would make a fuss over me again, but it never happened.

At any rate I gained many experiences in the old west ward in Lovell. It was there that I learned my first lesson concerning our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ. There I learned the songs of the Gospel. Also I received the Aaronic Priesthood under the direction of Bishop Carlton. He was truly a great man. I shall never forget his method of directing the activities of a sacrament meeting. He was a fine looking and inspiring man. He would stand up at the pulpit, pull his shoulders back and inspire the boys by his very looks and actions. I learned the functions of a deacon by faithfully performing the duties and assignments of the calling. I also went to Primary in the west ward. It was great. I also went to Mutual. You see I had none of these in Meeteetse. Can you see how wonderful it was to me?

My next love was my fifth grade teacher, Edna Robertson. It was she that gave me a love for music. Of course my father and my uncles were very musical. They were always playing and singing. I learned about the Banjo and even played a duet with my father in church. Getting back to my fifth grade teacher, every morning she would separate the school room into two groups, altos and sopranos. She put me with the alto group and with her pitch pipe she would start us off and we sang many songs two parts. The sopranos would go over their part and then the alto. She would then put them together. I sure loved it.

We had moved into a house below the tracks and there were German beet workers for neighbors. I thought they were odd. They could hardly talk English. I soon got used to them and had a good friend by the name of Alex. Also the first train. It was at night. I heard this terrible noise. Then this awful wailing. The house was shaking, so was I too scared to move. the noise finally quit. Growing more faint in the distance. By then I know what it was. Every day there were 2 freight trains and one passenger going each way. They all were pulled by the huge locomotives. Sometimes the freight had three engines of them and pulled 150 cars. I loved to count the cars. The locomotive was something to see. They went past especially going west. Their great drivers churning away, their billowing smoke and their fire boxes showering sparks. And the train whistles. You can't imagine how mournful they sounded on a dark night or a foggy day. I learned some of their signals. Two long and two short meant they were approaching a crossing. Two short meant we're pulling out. You have never been thrilled like I was over those trains. It was up grade towards Cody. We used to soap the tracks. Here would come the train pulling out of the Lovell Depot. They pulled past our house with not enough momentum to carry them along if it was slick. They would hit the place where we had soaped the tracks for fifty yards and their drivers would

sure spin, clanking up a storm. Of course the engineer would just hit the sand lever which spoiled all our fun. Once we got a string of box cars moving that was on a siding. We nearly killed ourselves trying to set the brakes. It was only creeping but had a great weight pushing. The result, we finally got it stopped before it reached the depot clear down to Kane about 20 miles away. As it was the crossing to our place was blocked for over a month.

I was getting very difficult for my father. It was during the depression and he was getting quite old for hard work. Nevertheless, he use to stack sugar during the campaign and he worked at the brick and tile. I believe he sheared sheep one or two springs and in the fall he and I would cut clover on the ditch banks. This was some of the best clover seed you could buy because there were no weed seed in it. I do know that things were very difficult for him but we always had plenty to eat and a house to live in. I sure don't know what more you could ask for in those days.

My experiences in Lovell have been very crucial in forming a background on which to build my life. Some of them were good and some were not. I associated with those out of the Church as well as those within. The Priesthood was a great boon to me even though I was only an ordained teacher when I moved to Meeteetse. I had completed the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades in Lovell during the three years I was there. It seems a lot longer because I learned to skate. And many other things like scouting. Oh, how I loved to skate. Every night after school until about nine o'clock, the pond was well lighted and we played tag and other games. We loved to skate with a partner. Usually with a girl. It was great. (I now weigh 220. I wonder how well I would do.) (Say, I'll bet I'd be cute, especially if I was figure skating or jumping over barrels.)

My brother Joe had a coal mine in Meeteetse and I went to live with him and Coral who later became my sister-in-law. No, she already was. Hey, what's going on here? Oh, well you'll find out later.

I started my freshman year in the Meeteetse High School. By the way, it was the third year that Meeteetse had a high school. I delivered coal in the old Ford truck after school and Saturday and Sunday and helped in the mine at other times for \$15 per month, and board. This kept me in spending money and some of the necessities also. I consider this very valuable to me because I learned to work at an early age and depended on no one for my support. I could have use some more supervision but didn't get it and soon I was running wild. In my Junior year I became impossible. Staying out every night until I could hardly do my work. I lost out in school, quitting before the end of the year. I'd sure like to go back now.

I lost my faith and almost by belief in God but now I know that he was watching over me because even though I started smoking and, yes, drinking, I kept my virtue and have never taken the Lord's name in vain. Now, as I ponder the situation, what a glorious blessing to be protected by our Father in Heaven during those years. I could have strayed and become rotten morally. I may not have ever overcome it. What a narrow escape. The Lord will not let us be tempted beyond our ability to withstand.

We use to love to dance. Sometimes we would dance till morning. Good clean dances. No drinking or smoking in the hall. In fact, very little outside. The ladies didn't smoke. How about that? Those were the times when you danced with the girl. And the music, melodies we all loved. Sometimes we would sing with the orchestra while we were dancing. And the rhythm. Boy and girl stepping in unison to every conceivable time. As you led the girl through the steps whether it was a waltz, a fox trot, a rag, or whatever, most girls could follow and not miss a step. Others couldn't, but that was okay, because they were all fun to visit with.

We would take our girl to the dance and only dance with them four or five times. The first, the one just before supper (sandwiches and coffee at midnight) and always the last. Even if someone else had asked her, we always cut in for the last dance. How would you like to dance with nearly every girl in the hall? Some of them you would like to dance with twice or more. It is an easy way to fall for a girl. They are all different. All feel different in your arms. And to talk to. Many are interesting and fun.

We loved the box social. The girls brought lunches for two and the boys bid on the beautiful boxes not knowing which girl prepared it. There were some really fancy boxes and some had better lunches. We got to eat the lunch at midnight with the girl who prepared it. Talk about fun. You didn't know who it would be. After lunch we would fly to dancing until daylight. And the last dance of course was a waltz cheek to cheek with your sweetheart. Well, that could be better than smooching in the car. I mean in the truck. You see I use to deliver coal before the dance and then drive the coal truck home. Very often Olive would ride in with me and I would drop her off at her nieces or at the hall and then pick up my girlfriend. Olive seemed like a sister to me. Actually she was Coral's sister. She was my brother's sister-in-law. I was so wrapped up in other girls, especially Zuma, that I hardly knew Olive existed. She used to ride with me often going and coming from school and to dances. I suppose she felt the same about me. You don't pay much attention to your sister. However, just to be unconventional, I suppose, I reached over and touched my nose to hers. With a coquettish little, she turned those big blue eyes sideways at me and said, "Tingy." That was my undoing. I haven't thought straight since.

I became opposed to the Church and lost my faith. Still, there was one incident which makes me wonder. I shall never forget it.

There were still outhouses all over town and behind a boot-leg joint there was one. Inside there as a Bible being used for, you can imagine what. It shocked me terribly bad and I took it and destroyed it. I didn't know what to do so I burned it. I decided that if they had to do without paper, it would be very fitting.

In the summer I would work on the ranches putting up hay. I learned about horses and learned to love them. We worked twelve teams in the hay field. I started on the rake, then the mower. I drove stacker team and stacked hay. But what I liked best was the buck-rake, pushing hay out of the field and putting it on the stacker head. I used to wrangle the horses in the early morning and feed them grain. We were always through at five thirty, unharnessed, and in to supper at six. Then half the night goofing around. I remember one good grey team. We watered at Iron Creek and rode a horse in to dinner. One of my horses would let you ride him but the other one was a bucking horse they used in the rodeo. I watered my team and somehow sprung up on the wrong horse. He was so surprised that he didn't do anything for a few seconds. Then he unwound and it was me that was surprised. I grabbed for the hame, but there was no hame. I grabbed for his mane or a strap, but there was nothing. Not even a neck. In fact, there wasn't even a horse. It was just as well because if I would have stayed a couple of jumps, it would have been worse. I never told the fellows that I had made a mistake, but let them think I was just smarting off. Boy, I'll tell you, I sure was a great guy. Not afraid to pile into the middle of old slim with nothing on but a harness.

Obituary
of
Grant Zoram Christopherson
by
Gracia Christopherson

Grant Zoram Christopherson was born May 20, 1910 to Joseph Christopherson and Hannah Emelia Opeim. In Meeteetse, Wyoming.

When he was 5 years old his mother passed away. At age 11 his father and he moved to Lovell, Wyoming. 3 Years later they moved back to Meeteetse. In ~~1922~~ 1928 his father died when he was 17 years old. Dad than completed high school at Meeteetse High.

From the time he was 14 years of age he supported himself. Working in the Black Diamond Coal Mine., which he and his older brother Joe owned.

In 1930 dad married Olive Pearl Robinson. The marriage was bought in Park County. Not realizing that their favorite Bishop, Bishop Carlson was living in Big Horn County they asked him to marry them. But due to legalities it was next to impossible. Being the conniver dad was they managed to get Bishop Carlson to marry them in Garland, Wyoing. which was on the Park County line. The young couple stood between two lilac bushes in Park County, and the Bishop stood across the line in Big Horn County, making it all legal.

The first 7 years of their married life mom and dad lived with Joe and his wife Coral. Mom wanted her own home, so Joes son Orvin helped mom build a small house because dad was ill. Note: for those whose minds are a little cloudy. Joe was dads brother and Coral was moms sister. This automatically makes the children of each family double cousins boy were the teachers at school confused. They didn't know which kid belonged to what family. In fact mom would sign excuse notes for Joes Kids as much as her own. Incidentally, dad had 10 children and Joe had 16.

In 1940 dad and his family moved to the L.K. Ranch where their first son was born. In 1958 he sold the ranch and moved to Thermopolis Wyoming where he sold insurance. 8 years later he and his family moved to Lander, Wyoming. At first he worked for Sav-Way Gas, but later became an employer for V.I Oil as a propane truck driver.

Grant as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He held many positions in the church, he was Sunday School Superintendent, in the Branch Presidency in the Bishoprick and a High Priest /Group Leader. He belonged to the Ward Chior at various times and mom and dad had been Stake Missionaries.

His hobbies were listening to fine music and dancing with his lovely wife, which he enjoyed very much. His greatest joy was working with people from the ages of 4 to 104 making them happy and showing them the right way to live.

He was preceded in death by his parents, 2 sisters, and 2 brothers. He is survived by his wife Olive and 10 children. Kay Loran of Cody, Elsie Brimhall of Cowley, Lorna Dobson of Cody, Ivan of Cheyenne, Jacob of Lander, Vernon of Plattsburg New York, Jason of Springville, Utah, Donald of Colorado Springs, Colorado, Ken of Rapid City South Dakota, Kim of Cheyenne.

He had 35 grand-children and 5 great grand-children. 2 sisters: Ella Mae Srggley of Burlington, Hahna Emelie Neal of Glen Dale, Arizona, 1 brother Joseph Christopherson of Burlington Wyoming. It can be said that our dad trully fulfilled his patriarchal blessing