

# CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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## MY SCHLUMBERGER CAREER WINDS DOWN

### INTRODUCTION

Late June found the Obenchain family, my branch that is, headed for Denver to close on the house we had decided to purchase. It was located at 8367 West 71<sup>st</sup> Place in Arvada, Colorado, a northwestern suburb of Denver. The closing date was set for June 28, 1980, allowing us to take possession on July first. As mentioned earlier, we had a lot of work to do, including mud jacking the basement floor, painting the complete interior and re-carpeting all rooms but the kitchen, which would receive vinyl flooring. I had taken a month's vacation to accomplish everything and maybe relax a little. The closing went as planned and during the 3 day waiting period I lined up contractors for the carpeting and mud jacking activities. The painting would have to come first but I wanted to move on the mud jacking of the basement floor as quickly as possible so as to have the carpeting in by the time the furniture arrived from Louisiana. I, of course, would do the painting to save some bucks and this meant a week's hard work immediately after closing.

On July first, Esther and I toured the house once again, picking colors for all the various rooms. We would use a little wallpaper in the front hallway and the kitchen to break up the monotony of the off white color throughout the upstairs. By the second day I was hard at work with the painting. By the second week, we had installed new carpet throughout the upstairs and

were ready for the furniture. The mud jacking process took place about the same time. It consisted of pumping a mixture of sand and cement into voids produced by settling during the previous 15 years. The objective was accomplished and I was pleased with the result.

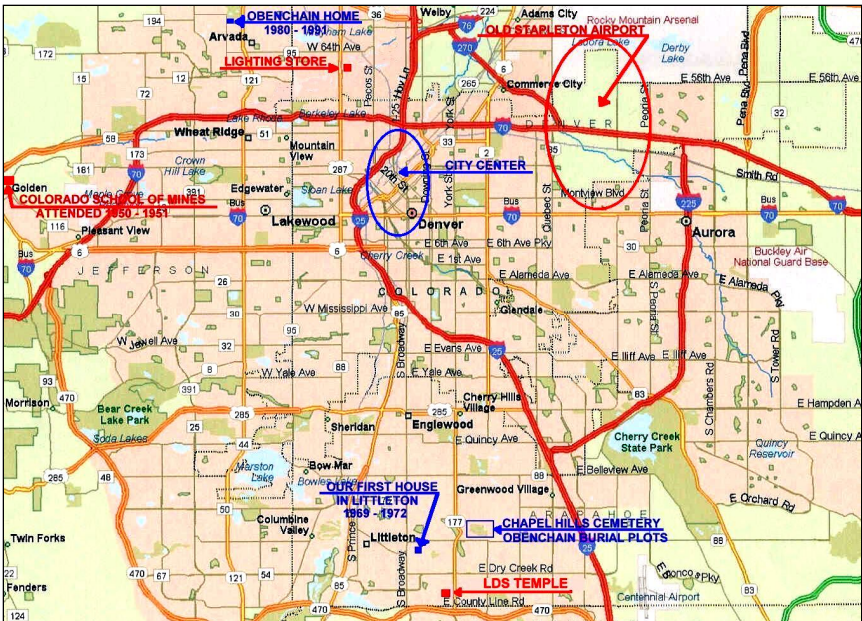


Figure 16-1 A map of the Denver metro area with points of interest to the Thomas Obenchain family identified.

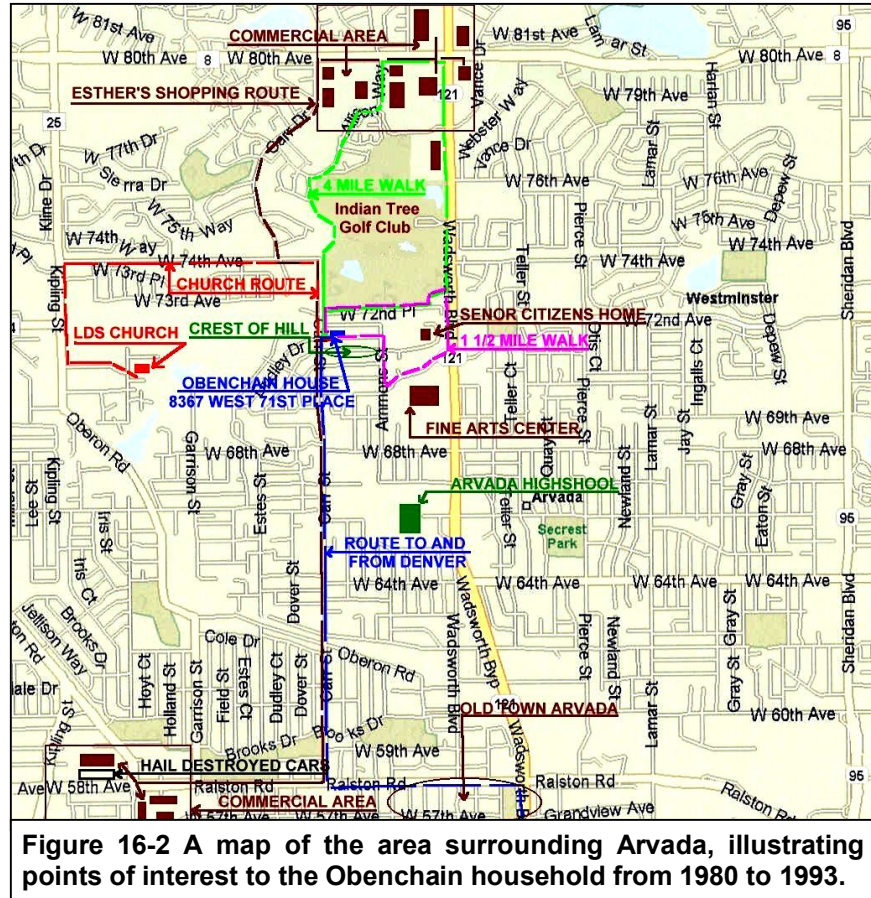
We could now carpet the lower level and finish the painting and furnishing. Tom would have his bedroom down there, which pleased him. It seems to me that everything was complete when the furniture arrived but I can't be sure due, once again, to this not so fabulous memory of mine. In any case, we were settled soon after our belongings arrived.

### MAPS OF DENVER AND ARVADA

It might be of interest to those not familiar with the Denver area, to see a map, which brings into perspective the locations of the Arvada house

with that of Littleton as well as Esther's gravesite and the Colorado School of Mines. I attended the School of Mines in 1950 before and during my early years of marriage as well as just after being discharged from the air force. A map of the Denver metro area is provided in figure 16-1 that identifies locations of interest to our family during the two times we resided there. These include the two home locations, the Chapel Hills Cemetery where Esther is buried, the LDS temple built in the late eighties and the Colorado School of Mines.

Figure 16-2 is a map of the Arvada area, depicting sites of interest to the Obenchain household during our stay from 1980 through about 1993. I'll talk about each of these later, as we get into family life but the map provides an overall perspective of the area we lived in. Of course, I moved to the Atlanta area in May of 1991 but Tom and Julie stayed on for a couple of years or so before finishing school and moving to Colorado Springs.



**Figure 16-2 A map of the area surrounding Arvada, illustrating points of interest to the Obenchain household from 1980 to 1993.**

**A DESCRIPTION OF OUR NEW PROPERTY**

The house was a white brick ranch style house with a full basement, which was finished. The basement den had a fireplace, as did the living room immediately above it. There were also three bedrooms and two baths upstairs, a kitchen with a dining area and a dining room. Downstairs, there were three bedrooms, a bath, the den and a furnace room with both storage and washing facilities. A deck off the living room provided a nice view of the Rocky Mountain front-range and also covered a patio off the basement den. Figure 16-3 presents a front view of the house while figure 16-4 portrays the floor plans of both main and basement levels. The main floor was relatively small but with the finished basement supplementing it, we had plenty of room.

At some point soon after moving in, we bought a few new furnishings including a couple of combination book shelf stereo cabinets, a sofa and a love seat along with new bedroom lamps

for the master bedroom and a nice chandelier for the dining room. With their delivery, we moved our better sofa from New Orleans to the

basement and junked a love seat sofa combination, which had outlived its usefulness. We also had to buy new draperies for both upstairs and downstairs, which required a major



**Figure 16-3 Our "new", 15 year old, ranch style home at 8367 west 71<sup>st</sup> Place in Arvada Colorado.**

effort and expense. As I remember, Esther picked the various colors for all rooms so I wouldn't mess things up and I simply installed

them. When Celeste moved in from Salt Lake the next spring, we added a couple of recliners for the TV area in the den. We now had the TV downstairs and the stereo upstairs so TV viewing wouldn't interfere with those who wanted to read or simply listen to music.

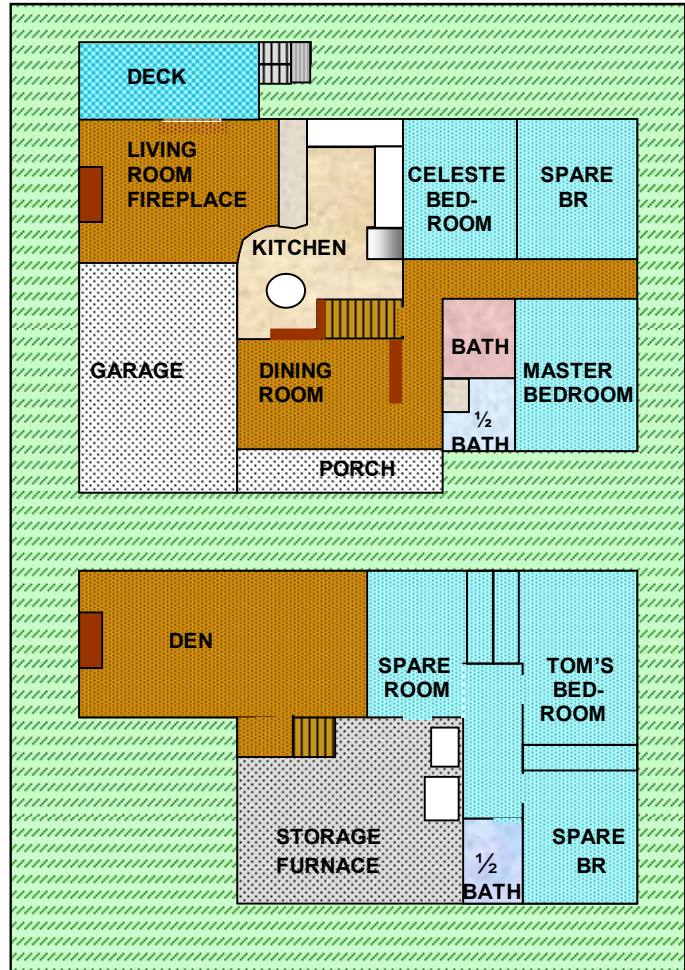
While in the process of buying furniture, drapes, lamps, etc. we found ourselves running all around the northwestern suburbs of Denver. I still remember an exasperated lady, a term I use lightly, giving me a Colorado welcome as I pulled into the traffic going north on Federal Boulevard. I had picked up the lamps and chandelier from a lighting fixture store just north of I-70 as illustrated in figure 16-1. Federal Boulevard was a very busy street, also known as highway 287 in the reference figure. It was at least 4 lanes wide and maybe 6. In any case, soon after merging into the traffic I began to look for an opportunity to move to the extreme left lane knowing I only had a few blocks to go before taking a left on 64<sup>th</sup> street. The street was busy and even though I had my blinker on, no one seemed to want to let me in. I saw a little break up ahead, sped up and moved left into the lane without any disruption, or so I thought. The people in the car I pulled in front of blasted their horn long and loud. Of course, I was already in the lane and could hardly apologize to those who seemed so upset. We had our car windows down, it being a nice day and I continued on to the north. All at once the car behind me pulled up alongside me. The female, hardly a lady, in the driver's seat shook her fist at me and yelled loud enough for all Denver to hear "You imbecile, why don't you go back to the Louisiana swamp you crawled out of?" Well, I smiled and waved, yelling back, "Have a nice day". I did, however, make it a point to get my Colorado plates soon thereafter. At least they would have to accept me now as a Colorado hillbilly.

**DAILY FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

The summer of 1980, only Esther, Tom and I were living in the house. Celeste was working in Salt Lake and Valerie's family was now living in the Provo area while Jared completed college. In spite of two extra bedrooms upstairs, Tom opted to sleep in the basement where he could do his thing without interruption. Tom would begin the ninth grade at Arvada High; having turned 15 in December of 1979. He was almost a year older than others in his grade level.

**ESTHER'S DOMAIN**

As you can see from figure 16-2, the high school was only a few blocks south of us and within easy walking distance. Even so, Esther chauffeured him most of the time, having plenty of time on her hands. Besides her housework, she only had the grocery shopping to do and to



**Figure 16-4 Simplified plan views of main floor and basement areas of our house in Arvada.**

buy what little she and Tom needed in the way of clothes. Having bought my own clothes all my life and maybe being a little picky, I chose to do my own shopping. Her favorite areas for shopping lay to the northeast and to the south-southwest. They are designated as commercial areas in figure 16-2. As I have said before, Esther hated the traffic in the big cities and would never venture to the city center unless I drove. She did seem to find areas, however, which met her various needs and she became quite competent in negotiating the traffic near our various homes. To the northeast were the

bank, a couple of grocery stores, a hairdresser, assorted small businesses and our dentist. The Church was located a couple of miles to the west. The good sized commercial area 3 or 4 miles to the southwest (figure 16-2) contained several good-sized clothing stores, as well as a couple of grocery stores and assorted businesses such as gas stations, restaurants and banks. The doctor's office was just a little south of the high school. Thus, her domain could be defined as a circle whose center became the hub or her home and her routes the various spokes. She seemed content and even happy doing her thing within that area but ventures outside of it had to wait on me or in later years, Celeste and Tom.

### TOM'S GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Tom, I suppose, was an average teen-age boy. He had taken to the guitar while in Louisiana and consequently made friends in Arvada with others, interested in such music, during the fall of 1980. He also became interested in various complicated games and began collecting them. He and his friends could spend hours playing a single game. We reviewed the games he expressed an interest in before buying them for Christmas and/or birthdays and didn't see any real problem with them. However, I had little interest in them even though he tried to stimulate an interest, in me, for some of them. I played a few army games and even got involved once in a rather lengthy game taken from a trilogy. I might have pursued the war games if they weren't so long but the fantasy games of the trilogy simply didn't spark my interest. The witches, ogres and various characters just didn't ring my bell. Tom, however, would spend hours on various games with his friends. I suppose I would have been closer and understood his views a little better, had I played a few of his games with him.

Tom and I did spend considerable time in the summer hiking and camping out, much of it with the family. Sometimes we would take a Saturday and hike around the closer areas of the Front Range. As a family, we would frequently have picnics in these same areas. I'll recount a few of possible interest, as they come to mind a little later on but right now I want to discuss Tom's general activities.

The Church, as some of you may know, has always recommended that fathers spend a little

time each month with each child in, what they refer to as, a personal priesthood interview, or maybe a father's interview. Ideally, this would begin early in their lives and apply to girls as well as boys. It provides personal time when dad takes an interest in their lives to offer encouragement and counsel. The idea is to listen to their concerns and discuss the areas of interest they bring up, as well as counsel them regarding their responsibility to the family, personal conduct and goals in life. It should be tailored to each child, considering their age, activities and concerns regarding life. It's a time to let them know that dad does really love them and is interested in their developing lives. I think dads were given this counsel because mom tends to have closer ties with and an interest in their children. Dad is often away on business trips and can't always attend programs and activities involving the children. Whatever the reason, it is a marvelous program for the children as well as for developing good fathers.

**Whatever the reason, it is a marvelous program for the children as well as developing fathers.**

When I joined the Church in 1962, Valerie and Celeste were almost 9 and 7 respectively. I'm reasonably confident that this interview was recommended to fathers at that time as well as today. However, I was new to the Church and understood very little regarding its programs. Consequently, by the time I became aware of my responsibility in this area the girls were grown. Of course, I talked with them from time to time and listened to their various stories and experiences primarily because I wanted to. I loved them, as any responsible father would but never took time to express it, to my knowledge. I don't remember dad saying he loved me but intuitively knew that he did. I suppose I was following his example. That, of course, is good but vocalizing ones love from time to time is better, especially in today's world of temptation.

By the time we moved to Denver, I had begun to see the merit of such interviews and decided to establish them with Tom. I think we had a reasonably good father-son relationship but I'm not sure I handled the interviews very well. I had some concerns regarding Tom, particularly his motivation in life. I'm afraid such interviews were mostly my counsel with little time spent listening to his concerns. Looking back, I am acutely aware that I lectured more than I listened. Consequently, I suspect Tom dreaded this time with dad more than he looked forward to it as a special event. You see I was still

learning this gospel principle, which makes fatherhood more effective and enjoyable.

I began to realize Tom's interests in life were quite different than mine. I had loved math and science while growing up and found little trouble studying those subjects as needed. I knew my profession or line of work would involve those elements. I either liked them because I was good in them or was good in them because I liked them. Whatever the reason, I found it difficult to understand Tom's indifference or lack of interest and enthusiasm in such subjects. I'm quite sure it showed and he must have known, as we talked about school. Finally, after every child in the family is raised, I have come to understand that a parent needs to help a child do their best in worthwhile areas of life, which are of interest to them and not to pursue disciplines the parent finds personally appealing.

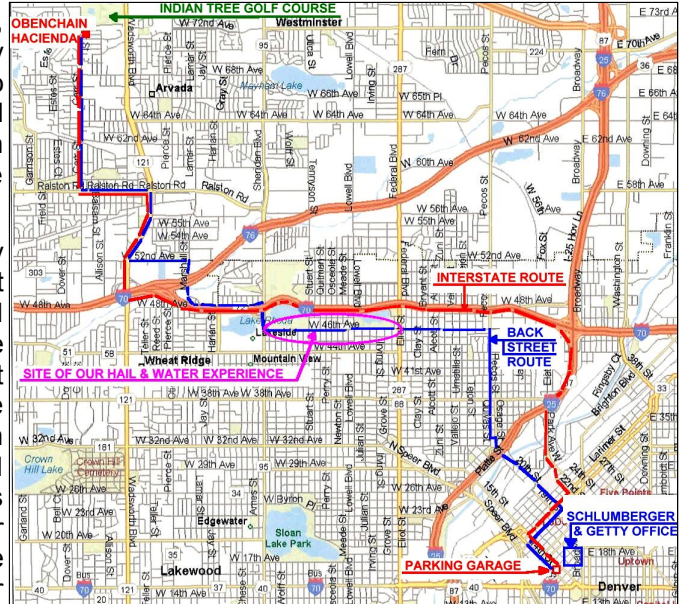
Tom learned to drive when he was sixteen if my memory serves me right. We held pretty tight reins on him. It wasn't until Celeste, who had now returned to Denver, bought an Oldsmobile that we took ownership of the little Chevette. It hardly accepted Tom's rather large frame but he seemed to manage it well going to and from seminary and a few places in the Arvada area. I always wondered how he managed to get his size 15 shoe from the throttle to the brake or even how he could place one foot on the brake and the other on the clutch considering their proximity to one another. He was the epitome of an oversized guy in an undersized vehicle.

He was a responsible driver and never got a speeding ticket that I know of, though I think I have heard of some close brushes. One took place on 74<sup>th</sup> avenue one morning, as he was coming back from seminary, which was held in the church building. It seems he was headed home along 74<sup>th</sup>. Apparently, he had gotten out of the parking lot ahead of a neighboring girl named Linda Morehead. She drove a much bigger car with much more horsepower. She could easily out run him in his little Chevette but he had held her at bay until they came to a clear stretch on 74<sup>th</sup>. She passed him without any trouble and about a couple of blocks later, she was pulled over by a local gendarme. Tom quickly slowed and eased by her as the cop wrote out the ticket. He said she blamed him for it because of his racing challenge. Needless to say, the ticket didn't set well with her father. That was one time when Tom didn't cuss the little Chevette's lack of power because that lack

had been a virtue and saved him a ticket as well as a lecture from his dad.

**CELESTE RETURNS TO DENVER**

Celeste had been living in Salt Lake since her graduation from BYU in 1977, as I remember. She had bought a little Chevette for transportation, which her uncle helped her pick out after I provided the down payment. Though her income was small, she managed to exist with a friend in a shared apartment. Salaries were poor in Salt Lake and I knew she could do



**Figure 16-5 A map of the Arvada – Denver area portraying our two main routes to the city center.**

better in Denver. Besides, she could live with us and take some of the space we rattled around in. That winter, I talked to her and she decided to make the switch, coming home around early April. She took the bedroom so labeled in the illustration of figure 4 and stayed with us until she was transferred to Colorado Springs after Esther's death.

Soon after Celeste returned, she found a job in down town Denver with Getty Oil Co. After having worked for them for several months, maybe a year, Texaco bought them out and she found herself a Texaco employee. She didn't like the Texaco environment and began job hunting soon after the merge. She got a job with Schlumberger in the computing center, as I remember but it didn't last either. They downsized and she found herself beating the streets once again looking for employment. At that point she found a job with MCI that seemed to fit

her perfectly. She liked the people and her work. She was eventually transferred to Colorado Springs, around 1990 or so and then to Atlanta in about 1996. Anyhow, while in Denver, she and I used to travel to and from work together for the company and to save parking fees. I have a couple of stories, which relate to those travels and may tickle your funny bone. To help my limited grammar, I have provided figure 16-5 as a crutch.

#### WORK TRIP EXPERIENCES WITH CELESTE

In the early years after her return to Denver, she and I traveled separately to and from work. Why, I can't remember. Maybe it was because of my travels but later we traveled for several years back and forth to the city center where we split up and went to our various jobs. We frequently met for lunch, as well and had a great father daughter relationship. We began traveling the freeway because it was easiest in terms of a well-defined path. However, it could become quite a challenge after a little snowstorm due to wrecks and general congestion. She found a back way to down town, as did I, for such occasions before our trips together. Later, we decided they were better anyhow because of the lower stress level and after combining our trips, we settled on essentially the route designated in blue on the map of figure 16-5. The red line designates the freeway route.

Let me begin with a harrowing experience during a hailstorm. We had traveled to work in her Oldsmobile coupe and had parked in the garage indicated in the city center. A real thunderstorm reared its ugly head during the afternoon, giving rise to massive amounts of hail around the city. Tornados were spotted east of town and there were massive amounts of hail damage around the whole metro area. The storm cut a northwest to southeast swath across the city, including Arvada. The roof of our house was one among many that had to be replaced and we had significant damage to both the Chevette and our Oldsmobile but I'll say more about that later. As five o'clock approached Celeste called and I agreed to get the car and pick her up. I did so and we headed for home along the blue route. Soon the rain turned to hail and began coming down in torrents. One could hardly see and we just crept along up Pecos Street just west of Interstate 25. We were worried about

**I was nervous, to say the least but Celeste was fit to be tied. It was a day she will always remember.**

hail damage to her car but soon that became of no consequence. As we turned on to 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Pecos, the storm got worse. It was by far the worst hailstorm I have ever experienced before or since or ever hope to. Soon the street was completely full of hail and water and by the time we had traveled through the area outlined in magenta the mixture of hail and water became slurry like in consistency. I became concerned that the car's engine would drown out and we would be mired somewhere on 46<sup>th</sup> for the duration. I turned south a little east of Sheridan, feeling that the lakes just to the north resulted from a general low in the topography. I was trying to find higher ground where the combined water and hail would be shallower, expecting the engine to die any minute. We traveled slightly up hill into a wall of oncoming hail and water, which seemed even worse. After a block, I turned around and went back to 46<sup>th</sup> and again headed west. I was nervous, to say the least but Celeste was fit to be tied. It was a day she will always remember. Somehow we made it on to Sheridan Boulevard where things got better. It was still coming down hard when we arrived home but the latter part of the trip was a breeze compared to our experience along 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Another interesting, though not exciting, experience occurred at the corner of Sheridan and west 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue. On the map, this point is where the blue route makes a sharp bend to the west just north of I-70 and parallels the interstate for a ways. A storm had dropped several inches of snow during the night and slick spots developed at every corner where any significant number of cars had come to a stop. I was well aware of such situations and was moving slowly to the east along 48<sup>th</sup>. I approached the stop sign at Sheridan very carefully and was almost fully stopped when we came to the corner of the two streets. I pressed the brake pedal a little harder to come to a full stop and the car suddenly slid sideways, hitting the curb before coming to rest. We couldn't have been moving more than 5 miles an hour. I didn't think too much of the incident and turned right to get to 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue south of I-70. Before I got to 46<sup>th</sup>, I knew I had a flat but why, I couldn't surmise. I pulled over, got out and found the right front tire completely flat. It didn't take long to figure out that the impact of that slight collision between tire and curb had unseated the seal of the tire to

the rim and let the air rush out. Well, I had to change tires in the snow dressed in my suit, which wasn't exactly a pleasant experience. Years of experience and a determination to stay clean prevailed, however and soon the spare was on and we were headed for town.

Another experience with Celeste occurred in our parking garage in down town Denver. She and I had parked the car on the third or maybe fourth level, as usual I believe and had just gotten out to begin our separate walks to our offices. We heard a lady over near the stairway scream and ran over to see what was wrong. She shouted, "A man grabbed my purse and just ran down those stairs". Though dressed in a suit and wearing a topcoat, I immediately headed down the stairs after him. I saw him about two levels down and yelled at him to drop the purse as I took the stairs two at a time in pursuit. He was rather a small Hispanic guy, probably in his teens. I guess I was gaining on him and my size must have intimidated him because he threw the purse at me, as I closed in. By the time I picked it up, he was out the door into the street. I took the purse back up to the lady and asked her if everything was intact. She answered in the affirmative, thanked me and we left. Later that day a cop called me to verify the attempted robbery, I suppose, as well as gain any information I had. Later, the lady called and thanked me. She was very appreciative. That was the end of the incident, as I had no further contact with either.

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### OLD DAD'S SITUATION

You may remember from chapter fifteen that I was diagnosed with high blood pressure while in Louisiana but did little about it. Soon after my arrival in Denver in 1980, the doctor we had selected as our family physician made the same diagnosis and put me on a hypertension pill of some sort. I began exercising more and trying to eat a little less to improve my general health. I made walking a daily routine in my life, eventually establishing the green route in figure 16-2 as my preferred path each day. It was a full four miles, which I walked pretty much on a regular basis, even in the winter. In the colder weather I had to wear a facemask or shield my face and ears with a scarf and ear muffs, as well as wear a hat. That wind out of the north could suck all the heat out of a person through exposed areas in temperatures of zero or

slightly above. Ears and nose could be snapped off like a firm carrot if one didn't protect them. My old baldhead was beginning to look funny enough without removing those particular protrusions. Over time I found myself walking the distance in about an hour and that required a good pace. In fact to cut it down any more, a person would have to jog the distance. In the spring and fall, the walk was a delight, while summer time brought out the perspiration. Even so, I enjoyed it.

In 1982 I was diagnosed as a diabetic. The doctor placed me on oral medication for about a year before moving to insulin, which I still use for blood sugar control. The diagnosis came about through an eye exam, believe it or not. I had worn bifocals for several years, though correction for distance was minimal. I had gone to my eye doctor complaining about glasses he had fitted for me just a few weeks earlier. At first they seemed OK but on a trip to Dallas I had trouble reading the road signs from my rental car with my glasses on. I had pulled them off to find my way to the hotel. My eye doctor picked up on that remark and said, "Have you been checked for diabetes lately"? Of course, I answered no and he suggested I go and be tested right away. In doing so, he was right and I had to learn to control my blood sugar. That's been about 22 years ago and I guess I've done pretty well, not having experienced any major organ damage. Anyhow, after being put on insulin, I found I couldn't walk the four miles without going into a sugar low. Sometimes, I would just barely make it home and had to settle for the 1½-mile walk illustrated in magenta in figure 16-2. Now, I suspect that some of the problems I experienced in Louisiana resulted from diabetes. I probably became diabetic in the late seventies but don't really know for sure.

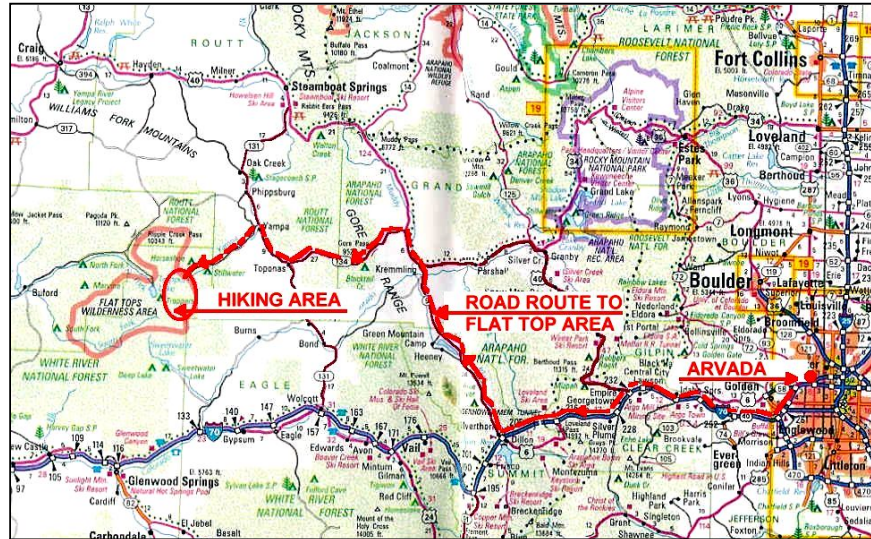
It seemed like I always had one or more household projects. We glassed in the deck to make it usable for more months of the year. I had that work done but laid the carpet and painted myself. In fact, in about that same time frame, I painted all of the wood parts of the exterior. The trim had been black around the eaves, windows and doors with the soffit and gables an off white. I changed the trim to dark green but repainted the off-white areas the same as the previous color. Of course, the deck trim was also changed to green. The house sat on a

hillside with the rear looking down hill. This provided a walkout basement, which made the down stairs very livable but the rear of the house was now two stories. When I painted the gable over the deck I was really perched up in the air and found the job difficult to perform. As a result, the next time the trim needed painting, around 1987, I had the soffit, gables and trim covered with aluminum siding in the same colors. I knew the time was coming when I wouldn't want to be up on a ladder like that again. Reaching out with a paintbrush from the top of a 30-foot ladder wasn't my idea of meaningful exercise. I was planning ahead and such plans didn't include falling 30 feet.

**CHURCH ACTIVITIES**

We were in the Arvada First Ward of the Church but were moved to two other wards during our time in Arvada. We didn't move but the ward boundaries did. Even so, essentially the same people were in the ward and new comers were quickly integrated while friendships with those

a high priest's group leader's assistant as well as a high priest group leader and a Sunday School President. I also served in stake



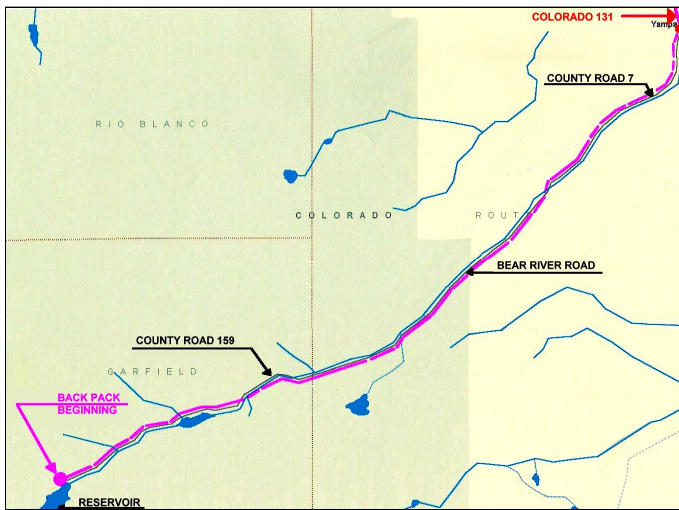
**Figure 16-6 A map illustrating our route to the Flat Top Wilderness Area west of Denver in the Colorado Rockies.**

positions as a counselor to the stake Sunday School President and as a director of the genealogical extraction program. Thus, It was a time of broadening of my Church experience.

**A YOUTH BACKPACK TRIP**

The summer after we arrived in Denver, i.e. 1981, the priests in the ward, 16 and 17 year olds, had a four-day back packing trip into the "Flat Tops Wilderness Area". Tom was among them and I was invited along with the priests' leader and his assistant. It promised to be a rather difficult hike for one of middle age or going on old age but I accepted because I loved the mountains and was anxious to spend some time with Tom.

We got an early start one morning, probably a Tuesday and headed up over Loveland Pass west of Denver. Our route to the wilderness area is illustrated in figure 16-6. Going to the Flat Tops, we actually by-passed Loveland Pass, taking the Eisenhower Tunnel to save time. Jim Morehead, the leader, wanted to get to our camping spot at a lake before nightfall. On our return we took the pass just to see some rather remarkable country from the top. As you can see from the map, we took a right at Dillon just west of the Continental Divide and headed north on Colorado 9 to Kremmling. There we intersected US 40 and traveled northwest 6 miles before taking a left at



**Figure 16-7 An expanded map of our route from Yampa, Colorado to our jumping off point.**

going to other wards were maintained. Each became a positive experience.

Esther served in several different positions in the ward in both primary and relief society. I remember serving as a gospel doctrine teacher,

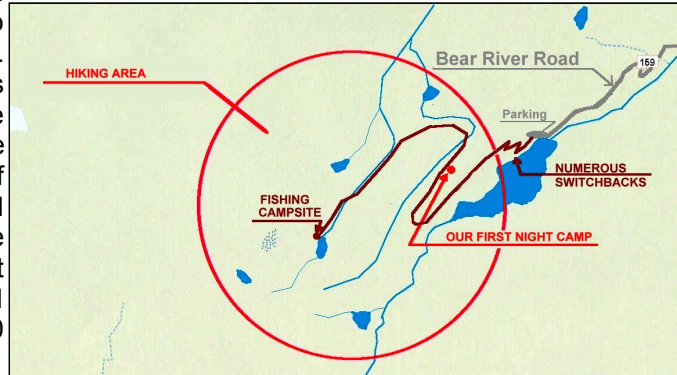


Colorado 134 and heading due west to Tonopas. There we intersected Colorado 131 and traveled north to Yampa a distance of 9 miles. And turned southwest up the Yampa River on a good dirt road about 20 miles to the Flat Top Wilderness Area boundary. At this point the road became much narrower, rougher and winding as we climbed up into the mountains. Figure 16-7 illustrates our route to the end of the road from Yampa in more detail. Unfortunately, it doesn't portray the ruggedness of the country and consequently the true nature of the road after entering the wilderness. We arrived at our parking area and the beginning of our hike around noon where we ate lunch and prepared for the hike. It was 10 miles into the lake where we would camp on a trail that went up and down like a Roller coaster. As I remember, the parking area was at roughly 7000 to 7500 feet.

The trail we were to follow climbed from that point to the top of a ridge in the neighborhood of 10,500 to 11,000 feet before dropping into a valley where it bottomed out at 8500 feet at a nice stream. At that point, after crossing a stream, the trail proceeded around the end of a ridge to intersect a somewhat larger branch of the same creek, I suppose, and we then followed it up stream, . . . This latter stream ultimately proved to come from the lake where we would be camping. See figure 16-8 for an illustration of the trail route.

Tom and I had purchased very nice backpacks but we forgot to ask for the rocket assist kits. The packs were 50+ pounds including bedroll, pup tent, slicker and food as pictured in figures 16-9 and 16-10. We raised them to our backs and headed out, following those who had already started up the trail. I knew I would be out of shape and have trouble keeping up in the Colorado Rockies after living in New Orleans for almost 6 years. I had lived at sea level and now found myself at 8 to 11 thousand feet above, which meant I would have to suck considerably more air into my lungs to oxygenate the same amount of blood, as in New Orleans. Secondly, with a grade like I now saw ahead, it looked like my ticker would have to pump plenty of blood. To make matters worse, I hadn't been on a good hike for several years much less carried a fifty-pound backpack along and in hind-sight; I didn't yet know I was a diabetic. I'm confident that condition didn't improve my stamina for the events, which I will now try to relate as accurately as possible.

Tom and I had scarcely made a hundred yards when I found myself sucking air like a fish out of water. My knees were weak and I had to stop. Tom wasn't doing too well either, though somewhat better than I. After puffing a few minutes, we continued on up the trail. The climb was definitely steep and would make a well-



**Figure 16-8 An expanded map of the area which encompassed our 10 mile hike to our camp.**

conditioned man stop for air at regular intervals but my distance between stops was ridiculous at 50 to 100 feet. You see I had already used up any stamina that took me the first hundred yards and now measured my progress in feet. Was I embarrassed or was I embarrassed? Soon, all



**Figure 16-9 Tom with his back-pack prior to our Flat Top Wilderness Area trip.**

those that started out behind us passed us by with a questioning grin. They were now almost out of sight, which clearly signaled we would never keep up. Tom probably could have done

better but was nice enough to stay with me. Maybe he was worried dad would get lost or have a heart attack, who knows. I didn't ask him. It was all I could do to take the next step forward. Gone was that confident grin you see in figure 16-10 now replaced with a questioning and beleaguered look of, "Why am I here"?

Jim Morehead realized we were in trouble after about an hour had passed and sent a young man back to check on us. We were about half way up the first ridge when he found us. He said something like, "Do you think you can make it"? I told him we were OK, just out of shape and would come along as fast as we could. I realized we would never make the 10 miles to the lake by dark and told him, if so; we would camp along the way and come to the lake in the morning. He turned and headed back up the trail to join the others at a pace comparable to a 4-point buck, putting our snail pace to shame. I suddenly felt my age, which was the only real excuse my poor tortured mind could now seem to conjure up, it now being 53. Soon he, the young buck I appropriately described, disappeared from sight with Tom and me continuing our snail's pace up the ridge.

I suppose we had been some 4 hours in route when we reached the top, a distance of maybe three miles. Boy, were we relieved! What a view and coupled with our arrival at the top gave both of us a new lease on life. To the south were a series of flat topped peaks, which obviously gave rise to the name of the wilderness. From the view, we knew it would be

down hill for a ways at least, which thought gave solace to our minds and distracted them from our aching muscles. After having a little treat and resting for a while, we took off

down the trail. It was now late afternoon. My legs were still more like rubber than steel and I found the going rather tough. However, it was now just my legs rather than both legs and lungs. I told Tom that we would find a good camping spot and spend the night along the trail. The whole countryside was beautiful and it was only a matter of finding a nice spring near a flat spot where we could spread our sleeping bags. I suppose we were about two thirds of the way to the valley bottom when we found a nice spot that would do, as illustrated in figure 16-8. It was now about six thirty and we needed to have supper before it got dark. We setup our tents near a few trees and a spring along the hillside.

**How they, my competition I mean, envied my ability as well as my energy and strength. Ah yes, I was indeed a man among men.**

It wasn't exactly flat but at least we wouldn't roll down the hill. Come to think of it, that would have saved us a little effort in the morning,



**Figure 16-10 "Old Dad" demonstrating how I could carry a backpack with ease.**

maybe but we were too tired to think clearly. We had all the necessities for a camp without a fire but I made a small one anyhow after dark for atmosphere and comfort. We said goodnight about nine and drifted off to dreamland. My little dream had no hills or at least I didn't notice them because I was young and virile. It was a nice dream with all the girls admiring my strength and energy. I stood head and shoulders above any competition I seemed to have. How they, my competition that is, envied my ability as well as my energy and strength. Ah yes indeed, I was really a man among men.

Suddenly, I awoke with a start. The sun had just peeked over the distant hillside and was shining directly in my eyes. The grass around our tents was covered with frost and I now had to face cold reality. Slowly I pulled myself out of the sleeping bag, put on my boots and jacket, and walked over to wake Tom. My body ached and I now felt muscles I never knew I had. Each one ached, carefully identifying its location within my tortured frame. Yes, this was the real me; and a far cry from the Achilles vision in the beautiful dreamland I had just left. Oh well, except for the soreness, I was quite familiar with this latter

individual and had learned to cope with his reality as well as illusions these last 53 years. I would accept the day and life would go on, even if not according to my plan.

Well, Tom moved a little slowly also and I suspect, was experiencing the same reality as me. We managed to get a little breakfast from our backpacks, which included hot chocolate. Before long, we had packed our things, shouldered our packs and were headed down the ridge. After about a half hour the soreness wore off and we quit complaining, moving rather quickly along the trail. Of course, there was no one to compare us with, so "quick" was really a matter of perception.

Compared to the previous day, we were indeed speedy. Before long we had crossed the stream along the valley

**Our pace slowed but not like the previous day. Maybe that suffering had done us some good.**

floor and headed around a rather broad ridge. Having never been there before, neither of us knew exactly what lay ahead or how far we had to go. Around nine, we came across another stream, which we ultimately found, came from the lake of our destination. At first, we followed it upstream traversing the grade of its drop as it flowed down the valley. There were some steep pitches but they were short and we could coast at the top, so we continued to move along at a nice pace. We continued along its southeast side for quite a while, maybe an hour, before crossing it. At that point the trail began to climb rather steeply away from the creek proper. Our pace slowed but not like the previous day. Maybe that suffering had done us some good. Just before lunch we arrived at the lake perched high in a little pocket and nestled in some pine trees. We were given a hardy welcome, as though we had come back from the dead. I suppose no one had expected to see us at the lake considering the pace we had shown the first day. We unloaded and prepared our tents before stopping for lunch. What a relief to be there I thought and then the reality of the return trip hit me. Oh me, Oh my, in a couple of days I would have to re-try. Could I make it back o'er the valleys and hills or would nature prevail when I had gotten my fill? I'd give it a try, I thought with resolve 'cause the bed awaiting me, all my problems would solve. Was this reality or was I just hallucinating again? Well, I wouldn't find out for 24 hours and might just as well enjoy myself for now.

We spent the rest of the day fishing and generally having a good time. A nice stream

flowed into the lake and proved to be good fishing. I caught a couple but was nowhere near as successful as Jim and his assistant. Even so, it was peaceful as well as beautiful and I was now enjoying the fruits of my effort, spelled with a capital E. That evening we ate together but ate our own food. Later, we sang some songs, told stories and generally enjoyed ourselves before we retired to our individual tents for a welcome rest. Today had been a much better day than yesterday and we looked forward to a new adventure awaiting us in the morning.

The plan had been to hike one day, fish for two days and return the fourth day to Denver. That meant three nights of camping.

The next morning Tom and I talked about the outgoing trip. I knew I couldn't keep up with the herd and elected to get a head start. I suggested we make it back to our previous campsite that day and finish the trip on the fourth day. That way, they wouldn't have to wait on us and also, the hike would be more pleasant for me. He agreed. I explained my plans to Jim and around noon Tom and I took off. A friend of Tom's decided to join us. I don't know but I suspect that he had found the trip inbound a little taxing as well. Well, we made it back to our old camp with time to spare and continued up to the top of the ridge. We would make a dry camp and have a downhill run to the cars the next morning. This we did, arriving a little before the herd of priests came thundering in. I think they were surprised to see us there already and I know they were pleased. By noon we were on our way back to Denver. We stopped in Yampa for gas and a cold soda before hitting the road for Kremmling, Dillon and Denver. As I mentioned earlier, we went over Loveland Pass on the return. It's a slower but a more beautiful drive because of the fantastic view. The grade is steep and winding but safe enough if one doesn't get in a hurry. We arrived home weary but happy. It had been a wonderful experience, at least to look back on.

## **FAMILY OUTINGS AND VACATIONS**

We spent almost ten years in Arvada before Esther passed away. During that time we experienced many good times, which still bring many fond memories. We camped along the Front Range, went to reunions and visited relatives, as well as church gatherings and family barbecues. These varied events, though not unusual, provide several opportunities for

me to demonstrate my story telling ability or more probably, the lack thereof.

### ACQUIRING A CAMPING TRAILER

As I have said before, Esther was a good camper but only for a few days at a time. After a couple of nights in a tent, she wanted a motel with a shower and a real bed. She liked camp food but I believe, preferred eating at a table with napkins and the like. Well, I wasn't against that but the atmosphere of camping out with its brisk mornings and leisurely afternoons coupled with enjoyable activities really tickled my fancy. I had learned to compromise by camping a couple of nights and then going to a motel somewhere nearby before returning to the campsite for another stint. This had worked fairly well over the years but I wanted something better, where I didn't have to break camp so often. We agreed that we should get some sort of camping trailer. The 16-foot variety was too small and the bigger 20 to 24-foot trailers were too rich for my blood.

Well, it so happened that Jared and Valerie lived in the Provo area while he, our son-in-law, was attending school at BYU. That spring, he mentioned that a friend's father had a pop-up type camping trailer he wanted to sell, which expanded from about 16 to 24 feet when set up. I had him inquire as to the price, age and equipment involved to see if it would be worth my making the trip to Provo. He did and soon I was on my way, traveling by myself because Tom was still in school. I liked what I saw and after solving the few legal hassles required to allow me to move it out of Utah, I headed back to Denver. Soon it was parked in our driveway at home and I was showing it off to family and friends. Figure 16-11 verifies that statement. It may be a rather poor photo of the trailer but my lovely countenance should more than compensate for the photography.

Of course, I had to set it up and give Esther, Tom and maybe even Celeste the opportunity to go through it. Whether Celeste had arrived in Denver by then, I'm not sure. The floor plan, when the trailer is set up, is portrayed in figure 16-12. It may not be exactly to scale but it does give you an idea of the space we had. At night, the table could be made into another bed providing sleeping room for 7 adults, theoretically. When Obenchains are

involved, however, it slept comfortably, about five adults with maybe a couple of kids. It had a propane stove and a heater for chili mornings with two tanks. It also had 12-volt electric lights,



Figure 16-11 "Yours-Truly" explaining the finer features of my newly acquired camp trailer to family and interested friends.

which ran off the car battery or an RV hookup. We only used those in emergencies or at an occasional trailer park for fear of depleting the car battery. I carried a couple of gas lanterns,

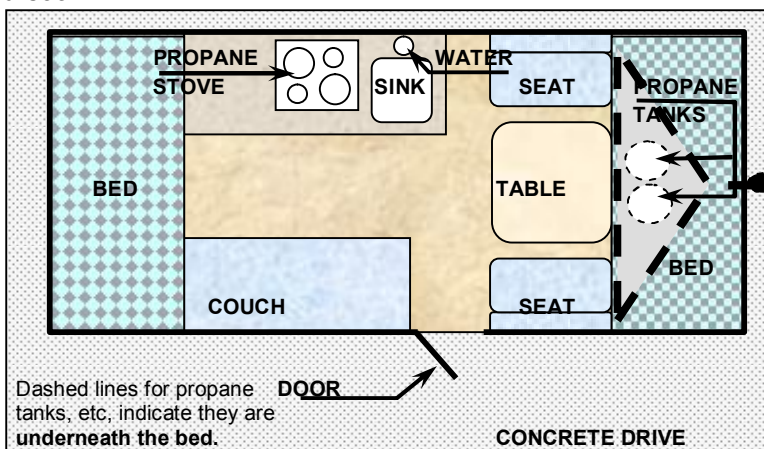


Figure 16-12 A floor plan of our pop-up camping trailer when expanded at the campsite for daytime occupancy.

which provided good light and a little enjoyable heat. It even had a propane refrigerator, which was nice to have for meat and fresh vegetables. Esther seemed pleased and I felt I had made a good compromise between a tent and the 16-foot trailer she had wanted. Actually, this trailer

was longer when unfolded and became more like 24 feet. Even I had to admit that the idea of sleeping on a bed rather than the ground would be an improvement. We were now set to start our camping in style with equipment that seemed to meet everyone's fancy.

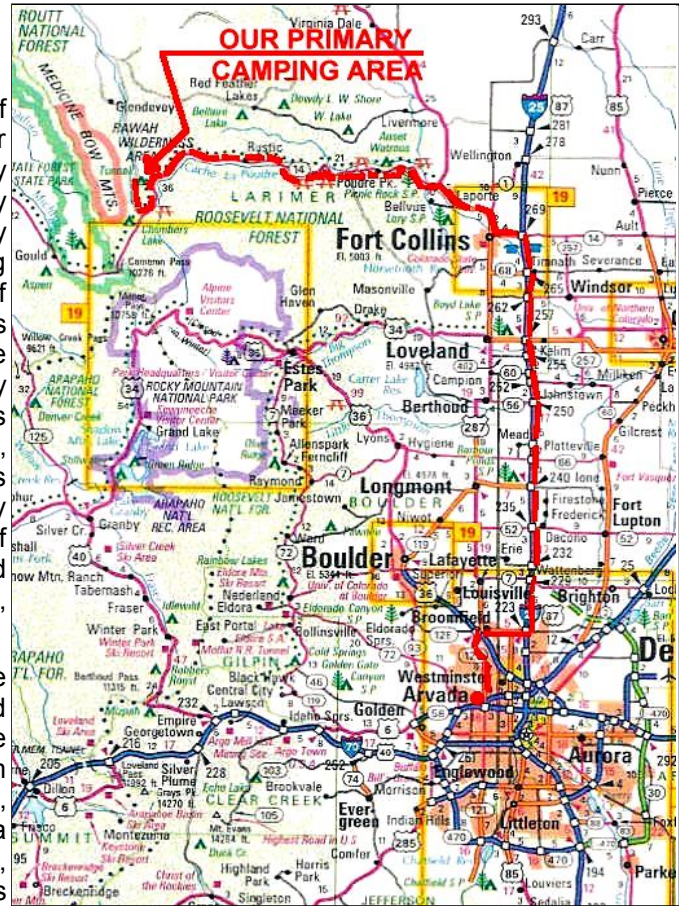
**CAMPING ON THE POUDRE**

The Cache La Poudre River area became one of our favorite haunts for short vacations during our stay in Arvada. The river's name is obviously French and was derived, according to my understanding, limited as it may be, from early French trappers in the area. Somewhere along its stretches they apparently cached supplies of gunpowder. Though we made numerous trips up the Poudre during our years in Denver, we never found them. The fact that we actually camped in Skyline campground, which was situated on the headwaters of the Laramie River, may have had something to do with it. The pass between the Poudre and the Laramie was hardly discernable but can be identified in the map of figure 16-13. As a result of this proximity and the majority of our trip being along the Poudre, we always spoke of camping on the Poudre.

On our early trips up the Poudre, I pulled the trailer with a small Ford sedan that we had purchased in Louisiana. In fact, that's the vehicle I brought it back to Denver with from Utah. Later, I bought a diesel Oldsmobile 88, which had a little more power but primarily a more comfortable ride. Our budding musician, Tom, is shown in figure 16-14 strumming his trusty guitar with the Ford in the background while figure 16-15 displays the trailer set up in camp with Celeste's Chevette nearby. These two photos were probably taken on one of our first trips in 1981 or may be 1982. If you look closely at the map, you will notice our route taking a sharp right turn to the north just before stopping at our designated camp. In that short distance, we traveled over a pass from the Poudre to the Laramie River drainages though the topography was relatively gentle compared with that one encounters along the Poudre. You may also notice that the camp is on the southern edge of the Rawah Wilderness Area. To the south, lay the Rocky Mountain National Park with its towering peaks providing beautiful views in all directions. Of course, such scenery is typical of

so many areas in the Colorado Rockies. The mountains are truly majestic.

I did little fishing during those days, preferring to spend the days with the family in a variety of



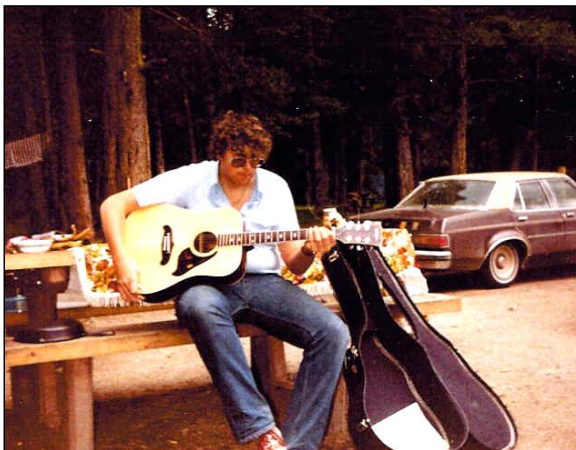
**Figure 16-13 A map illustrating our Skyline Campground location and our route from Denver.**

**You may also notice that the camp is on the southern edge of the Rawah Wilderness Area. To the south, lay the Rocky Mountain National Park with its towering peaks, providing beautiful views in all directions.**

different ways. I suppose part of the reason was Tom's lack of interest in fishing. He loved the outdoors but didn't care to even eat fish, let alone try to catch the little critters. Both Valerie and Celeste were more disposed towards going fishing and they certainly loved fresh trout fried over a campfire. In earlier days such was common fare along with pan-fried potatoes. Now, however, we substituted meat from the store, even reverting to fried Spam when the fresh varieties were gone. Tom did, however, like to hike along the trails and I suppose, to simply enjoy the beauty of the great outdoors. That was one of the few interests common to both of us it seems and did provide a

means of connecting our rather different personalities. I think I mentioned earlier that Tom loved history and geography but cared little for math and the sciences while those latter subjects were my greatest delight in school. This common interest in simply enjoying the beauty of God's creations that lay around us probably provided the strongest link in our father-son relationship. The previous backpack trip to the Flat Top Wilderness mentioned earlier and one yet to be described seem to symbolize this link rooted in a common appreciation for the works of Mother Nature.

Esther and I loved a lazy morning when camping. The cool mornings made sleeping a little late a welcome opportunity. I would be the first one up to begin breakfast. I always started a fire before the sun's rays could find their way to our campsite located in the shadow of a ridge to the east. It would take the chill off and give the kids a place to gather while Esther and I fixed breakfast in the trailer. Additionally, I



**Figure 16-14 Tom plinking on his guitar in camp on the headwaters of the Laramie.**

would place a kettle of water on the grill covering the fire pit so as to have dishwater ready afterwards. With the kids out from underfoot I would take the bed apart, made from the trailer table and return it to its intended function of providing a place to eat. Eating inside was preferable that time of day with the morning temperatures hovering around 40 degrees. Typically, we enjoyed pancakes with eggs and maybe a little bacon along with hot chocolate to warm our innards. After breakfast, Celeste and Esther usually cleaned up. The dishes were carried outside where there was more room to wash and dry them. Of course, the water was plenty hot by then. Tom and I might gather a

little firewood for the evening fire while breakfast cleanup was pursued.

Around ten, chores would be complete and we'd discuss any activities anticipated for the day.



**Figure 16-15 One of our early camp sites with the trailer & Celeste's Chevette prominently displayed. Note the campfire.**

We might take a picnic and set out to see some sights, such as Cameron Pass, or anything within reasonable driving distance. We might also choose to take a little hike into the edge of the Rawah from a couple of different vantage points. Often we simply chose to stay around camp reading, sewing (Esther that is), whittling (Tom & Tom), plinking on the guitar (Tom only) or maybe just loafing. We hardly ever set a challenging agenda because this was vacation time. We meant to enjoy it in each of our



**Figure 16-16 Papa Tom reflecting on the verities of our mortal existence.**

individual ways. No one could accuse us of being an exciting family, living on the edge or wondering what tomorrow may bring. Rather, we chose a relaxed approach and usually

returned from vacation rested and ready to get back into the routine. In our opinion stress was for workday life and not a vacation companion.

Figures 16-14 through 16-20 are photos of these activities or maybe lack thereof. They do, however, corroborate this relaxed style of life, which I spoke of. In them you see everything from postponing the inevitable, i.e. doing dishes, through contemplating the eternities and enjoying nature but the closest thing to activity is Tom strumming his guitar. Now things weren't



**Figure 16-17 Celeste and I trying to get the courage to clean up the table & dishes.**

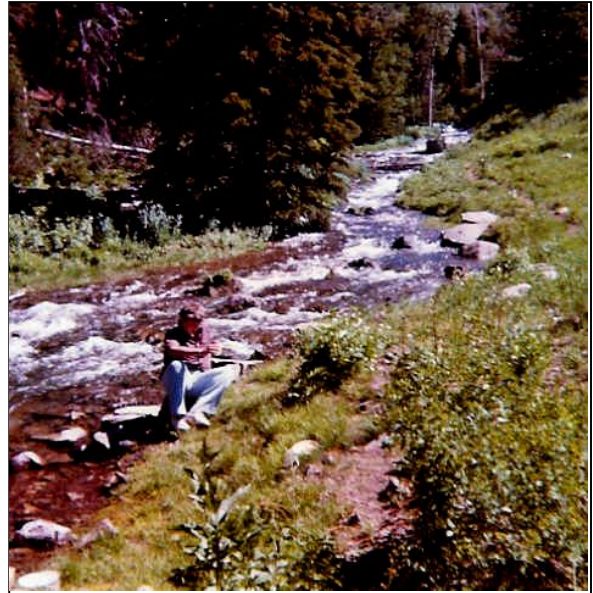
always this way. One time Valerie and her kids, Jared and Joseph, were visiting us and we took them to the Skyline Campground. It was ideal



**Figure 16-18 Esther & I enjoying our hot chocolate while watching the kids.**

for kids their ages because the stream wasn't dangerous and there were plenty of places to run and play around camp. Jared was old enough to want to try his hand at fishing but we

had no luck. Within a reasonable radius of camp, the only attractive fishing holes seemed to be in areas where brush lined the bank. That's definitely not the place to teach a kid to



**Figure 16-19 Tom enjoying the rippling waters of the Laramie on a summer day.**

cast. We caught several pieces of brush but nothing else. Fortunately, he tired of this activity rather quickly, as did I and we came back to camp. There, Valerie and Celeste kept the kids entertained with short walks along forest trails or



**Figure 16-20 Esther emerging from the trailer to answer some request of Jared's.**

by watching them play in the stream. I think Tom showed them how to skip rocks but they were primarily interested in seeing who could make the biggest splash with a rock.

Joseph found a stump, which he loved to sit on. I may have put him up there first just to see if he liked it. From that point on he wanted to sit on his stump but Valerie wouldn't allow it unless some adult was close by. It was probably four



**Figure 16-21 Jared helping Joseph up on his favorite perch at our Skyline Camp.**

feet high and he would take a nasty fall if he lost his balance. Figure 16-21 captured big brother helping him negotiate the climb to his favorite perch. I doubt that there has been that much cooperation between the two since, i.e. a typical sibling rivalry still seems to exist and they have considerably different personalities.

Joseph also found a little house he particularly liked and was constantly begging to visit. Celeste gave in too often but she did play it safe,



**Figure 16-22 A view of our trailer displaying the fold out bed a little better.**

not knowing whether his story of "I gotta go potty" was really true or not. According to her, Joseph liked to sit there and talk about his little

house with little attention to the purpose of his visit. He wondered why we couldn't stay in it while we camped. His requests grew tiresome



**Figure 16-23 It is obvious that I'm in an ornery mood, probably going home.**

as time wore on and Celeste soon grew tired of the stench that permeated the general area. She became wiser as camp wore on and less easy to convince his request was legitimate.

In the evening, we would sit around the campfire and tell stories to keep the boys entertained. One evening, the sky was overcast and it began to grow dark a little earlier than usual. If one looked to the west, he could see a break in the clouds but the sun's rays shined above them



**Figure 16-24 Esther expressing her feelings regarding our decision to return home.**

and our camp wasn't getting the benefit of its last rays. As the sun dropped further behind the ridge, all at once the rays passed under the clouds and reflected a red light down into camp. It was sudden and before anyone could make a



remark, Joseph said, "Who turned on the lights"? That's a remark I suppose I will always remember. It was as though a light switch had been thrown and coming from a three year old the comment was really choice.

Figure 16-22 provides another view of Esther and me lounging around camp while figure 16-23 emphasizes the fact that I wasn't always happy. I'm not sure just what was going on but one must surmise that I didn't like it, whatever it was. Maybe I was getting ready to break camp and head for home for a dose of reality or maybe I was just in a grumpy mood. Figure 16-24, on the other hand, illustrates Esther in a jolly mood. I would guess the reason for such carrying on would be the news that I had agreed



**Figure 16-25 Esther in a happy mood after her first night sleeping on the ground.**

to go home. She could now get a shower, have a real kitchen and a real bed. You see, Esther liked camping in small doses as I have mentioned earlier. The one drawback of the trailer in her mind was that it had no shower or potty. For me, that was hardly a problem. There were plenty of trees to hide behind and I could go on enjoying nature as long as I could feel no bugs crawling on me but Esther was a little more particular. Unlike Joseph, she didn't think the outhouses were particularly cute nor was she enthralled by the odor, which always

embraced them. Additionally, after two days without a shower, she became hard to live with. Sponge baths might extend that time a couple of days but then I kept hearing, "Tom, let's go get a motel". Skyline Campground was rather far removed from such facilities and consequently our visits there were usually less than a week,



**Figure 16-26 Esther getting an early start up the trail leading into the Rawah.**

which made their frequency bearable. Now, one more short blurb regarding hikes in the Rawah and I'll drop the subject.

Sometime before Tom went on his mission Esther and Celeste decided to lose a little weight. I think it was associated with my being



**Figure 16-27 Taking a short break to tie boots, as Tom waits in the background.**

diagnosed as a diabetic around 1982. They would diet along with me so I wouldn't be tempted to stray from the doctor's orders. In addition to exercise around home and a more stringent diet, we thought we might go on a few

backpack trips. We would start out easy, just camping in tents in a campground with a nice daily hike with our packs. We would then build up to an overnight jaunt to some nice area with full backpacks. The chosen site would be only a few miles away. I want you to understand, this wasn't my idea. I believe Celeste came up with it and Esther climbed on board. It was associated with the diet and recognition of our poor physical condition as well as a burst of enthusiasm that seems to accompany such ventures. I warned them that backpack trips weren't easy and that there would be no outhouses along such trails, let alone flush toilets or other desirable accommodations. That didn't seem to deter them. After all, we had already invested in backpacks as part of our emergency supplies, which made the experiment a rather inexpensive gamble.

Figures 16-25 through 16-29 are photos documenting our first hike into the Rawah. We had camped in tents at Skyline with its limited facilities rather than pulling the trailer. We began our conditioning by sleeping on the ground, of all things, with just an air mattress and bag between old Mother Earth and our backsides. Esther endured that ordeal rather well and awoke ready to take a short hike into the Rawah and back to get a feel for this activity she and Celeste had decided to be a part of. Keep in mind that Esther was now 53 or so years old and had never been backpacking in her life. We ate a hearty breakfast from our limited fare of backpack foods and Esther was all smiles, as we prepared for our first hike. Figure 16-25 attests to her upbeat mood.

We headed up the trail into the Rawah with only one small pack and, of course, I was elected to carry it. Esther was full of energy at first and got a head start as portrayed in figure 16-26. We hadn't gone too far when we had our first major problem, i.e. Esther's boots came untied a second time. We stopped momentarily to rectify the situation. Since I was an old mountain man, I used some of my knot tying skills to assure her it wouldn't happen again, as one can see by the photo of figure 16-27. Such activities earned me the title of Knot head, proving my frequent use of it is really an endearing term, not derogatory unless, of course, I'm in heavy traffic. Then, it marks the onset of road rage.

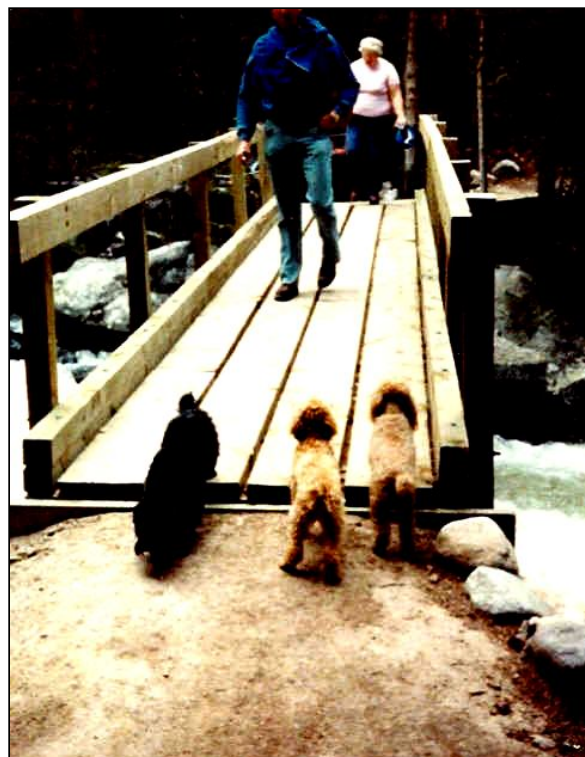
We moved along the well-marked trail for a while before hearing rumbling thunder in the distance. To the south we could see some dark clouds

rearing their ugly heads over the ridge and threatening our beautiful day. Being quite knowledgeable on weather in the mountains, I



**Figure 16-28 Taking a breather along the Rawah before moving on up the trail.**

wet my finger, held it in the air and assured everyone that the clouds would move east and thus pass to the south of us. We had no worry.



**Figure 16-29 Crossing a fork of the upper Laramie River along the Rawah Trail.**

After all, my finger cooled quickly on the west side offering definite proof that the wind was blowing west to east. We continued to move along at a rather leisurely pace as Celeste and

Esther noted that the clouds seemed to be getting closer and the thunder louder. Confident of my prediction, I dismissed their concern and with a shrug reaffirmed my previous prediction. After all, who were they to question a man who had spent many years in the mountains as well as the oil fields of the west? I suppose we made another half mile or so when a stiff breeze came up from the south and we felt the first few rain drops. "Hmmm", said the old and wise one in a thoughtful tone, as he stroked the two-day stubble covering his face. "It doth appear that the wind has changed directions, which methinks, affords some chance of error in my otherwise infallible prediction. I think we'd better cut this hike short and head for cover", said I, as the obvious became apparent even to me. We headed back down the trail, hoping to make the tent before the rain really cut loose. We had just crossed a bridge about a mile from camp, as shown in the photo of figure 16-29, when the deluge hit. The photo was obviously taken on the way up the trail because no one seems in a hurry. Even our three trusty guard dogs wait patiently for us to catch up with them and Celeste. We took them along to scare off any marauding bears or mountain lions that might happen along.

We arrived back at camp rather soaked but fortunately, the shower didn't last too long even though it was heavy for several minutes. After changing into some dry clothes, we spent the rest of the day in camp and talked about our next attempt at a day's hike. I had seen a trailhead leaving Colorado 14 up near Cameron Pass sometime earlier. I thought it might be a good place for our second effort. All agreed that it would be as good as any. We would give it a whirl in the morning.

Morning came and we arose once more full of vim and vigor. After packing a nice lunch we headed back south to Colorado 14 and then west towards Cameron Pass. Figure 16-30 illustrates our view as we turned towards the pass on CO 14. Note that the day was somewhat dreary looking. Even so, we didn't get rained out this day but other factors did enter in. Relatively near the pass on the eastern side, we came to the trailhead leading into the Medicine Bow Mountains of the Rawah Wilderness Area. We unloaded, checked everyone's shoes to be sure the shoelaces were secure and I grabbed the small pack containing the lunch before heading out on the trail. In just a short distance, the trail dropped down into a

gully containing a rather nice stream. After crossing the stream, we began a rather easy ascent along the side of a ridge. The trail was rather wide and appeared to have been



**Figure 16-30 A view of a flat topped peak overlooking Cameron Pass to our west.**

traversed by all terrain vehicles at one time, though they were now prohibited. The sun broke through the clouds and the morning became rather warm as we plodded along the trail. Soon, Esther was lagging behind and complaining of the heat. I knew she was tiring and wouldn't be able to go much further. However, the country ahead looked promising in terms of scenery. I told her to rest in a shady spot with Celeste, as Tom and I explored ahead. We were gone for a half hour or so before



**Figure 16-31 A view of the country we chose to make our second hike attempt.**

returning to see how Esther felt. She seemed OK but was ready to call it a day and we headed back for the car. Everything went well until we crossed the creek and headed up the last hill to the trailhead. She tired quickly and soon needed help to negotiate the hill. At least one of

her legs began to hurt and it became apparent that she was suffering from both pain and exhaustion. I stayed with her and helped her in some particularly steep spots. The last couple of hundred yards were indeed slow but she gritted her teeth and finally made it to the car. With sigh of exhaustion, she sank into the front seat. I think we all knew at that point that our backpacking days, as a family, were over. At the least, it would take some extended conditioning around our Denver neighborhood before she could attempt anymore mountain hikes. That was the summer of 1982 and about a year later she showed the first symptoms of so called Parkinson's+ disease, a close resemblance to Lou Gehrig's (sp) disease, which ultimately caused her death in April of 1990. Little did we know, at the time she was diagnosed, what was ahead, let alone that day on the trail into the Rawah Wilderness.

The next day, as we headed back to Denver, we stopped at a roadside inn along the Poudre River to get a drink and visit their comfort station. That's a politically correct name for "the John" as anyone traveling the Interstate knows.

We didn't even have to go inside to ask directions to the johns because a sign directing the traveler to them was apparent as soon as we exited the car. The sign itself wasn't unusual but coupled with another warning sign it was humorous indeed, at least to our warped mentalities. Celeste took a picture of the combination, which is displayed in figure 16-32. For those with limited eyesight, like mine, the upper one reads, "Restrooms" while the one directly below it tells us "Not Responsible for any Accidents". We were still chuckling when we entered the store to get our drinks and continued from time to time all the way back to Denver. We didn't say anything to the lady behind the counter but she must have wondered what was going on. Of course, I suspect she had seen numerous tourists over the years that appeared to have mental problems of one sort or the other and probably paid us a "no never mind".

### CAMPING ON THE COLORADO RIVER

As much as we liked the Poudre River country, it became tiresome after a few years and we, or maybe I should say I, began to look for other



Figure 16-32 A warning sign coupled with directions to the restrooms.

possibilities. I didn't want to stay in the resort areas because, even in the summer, they are overrun with tourists. There was some pretty

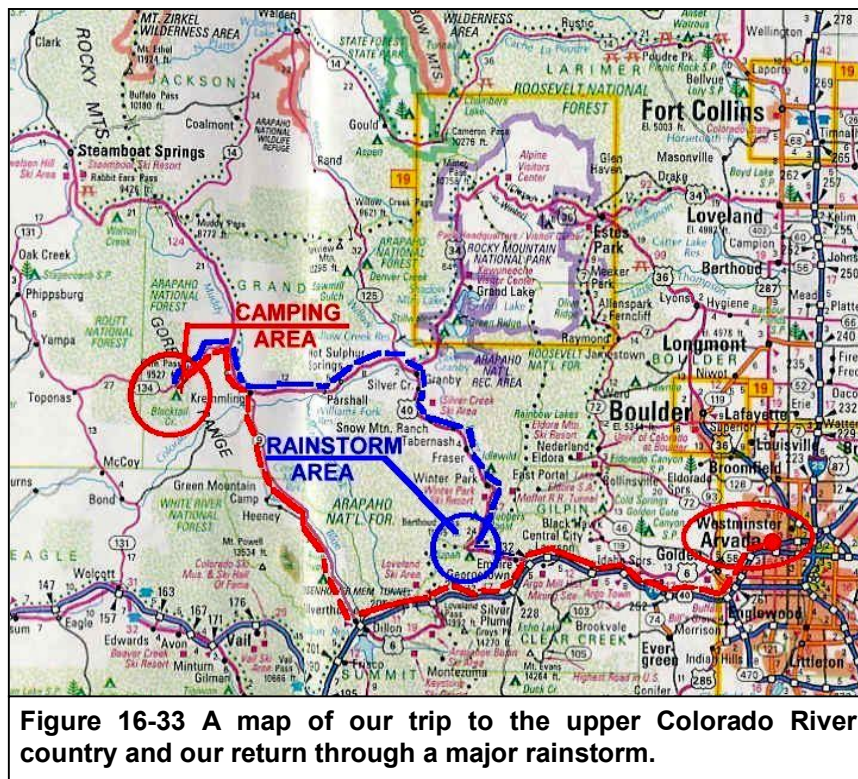


Figure 16-33 A map of our trip to the upper Colorado River country and our return through a major rainstorm.

country down on the Gunnison River but that was a pretty good jaunt. I remembered the country we went through to get to the Flat Top Wilderness that second summer we were in

Arvada and elected to try my luck over there. The map of figure 16-33 outlines our trip to that particular area. Notice, it lays to the southwest of the Poudre River area that we enjoyed. As the map indicates, we traveled over Loveland Pass, actually through the tunnel, to Dillon and then down the Blue River to Kremmling where we intersected the Colorado River. Just north of Kremmling we took a left on CO 134 to the campground as designated. The campground was pleasant enough but there wasn't any nice stream nearby and we soon tired of it. I had hoped for at least a little creek where I might try my luck at fishing or at least meander along its banks and enjoy the peace and solitude of the mountains. Such wasn't to be and in a couple of days we headed back to Denver and an unanticipated thrill that still lay ahead of us.

Esther rode with Celeste who had driven her Oldsmobile coupe. Why, I don't remember other than it gave her a sense of independence and allowed her more room than she would have had in the back seat of our car. Besides, we had three poodles that had to come along and they needed her back seat to snooze in. We took a different route home, just for variety and stayed on US 40 from Kremmling to Granby. We would come back into I-70 at Empire rather than Dillon. We stopped for lunch at Granby and fueled our cars before heading over Berthoud Pass, which was 11,350 feet high. As we headed south, we saw some dark clouds gathering over the peaks but didn't think too much of it because thunderstorms occur almost every afternoon along the Front Range. As we passed Fraser, I knew we would get into a good rain but still wasn't concerned. By the time we passed Winter Park there was a good steady rain and just before our ascent over Berthoud, the heavens opened up and we had a real gully washer on our hands. I was traveling rather slowly, for visibility reasons, with Celeste just behind me. As the road begins its major climb, there's a sharp switchback, which blocks the view ahead. All seemed well until we rounded the switchback. Almost immediately we found ourselves in a swarm of boulders strewn across the road, which varied in size from pebbles to a foot or more in diameter. I couldn't turn around with the trailer, at least in any reasonable time and didn't dare stop. To stop meant becoming a stationary target for the next boulder coming off the mountain. I elected to keep moving, feeling that I might clear the area without either of our cars being hit. I wound my way through the field

of boulders with Celeste on my tail. I suppose we went somewhat over a quarter of a mile to the next switchback with rocks still coming down the mountain. Fortunately, it seemed the worst of it was over and none came close to the cars. As we cleared the next switchback ascending to the next level up the mountain the number of rocks decreased markedly and I knew we were out of the danger zone. Even so, it only takes one rock to inflict a lot of damage and I held my breath as we made our way up to the summit. Can you imagine what could happen if a boulder, even a foot in diameter, hit your car on its trip down the hill? Thank goodness the good Lord was with us that day because we made the summit without any problem. There I stopped and went back to Celeste's car to see how they were. Other than almost suffering from heart failure, neither Esther nor Celeste had any problem. We talked a while and then headed on to Arvada, arriving without incident. About that same time frame but on another day a boulder, somewhat larger in size, hit a tour bus and killed a couple of people as well as injuring several others. After reading that, I couldn't help but thank the Lord for his protection that day, as we experienced that shower of boulders.

#### **FAMILY REUNIONS WHILE IN DENVER**

We have had many memorable family reunions since their inception around 1967, assuming my memory isn't playing tricks on me. They began in a campground just above Ketchum, or at least that's the first one we attended. Everyone camped in whatever facilities they had from tents to camp trailers. Some stayed in motels at Ketchum. We all got our own meals with some combining their resources. It took place in late June in the middle of a late June snowstorm. I remember a miserable camp, sleeping in a tent with two girls of roughly 13 and 11 and a baby of about 2 ½. In spite of the weather, the get together was enjoyed by most and became a bi-annual tradition, which I think has been a godsend. Without them, I would hardly know my own nephews and nieces let alone the children of cousins. It has been a wonderful time to renew acquaintances and share stories.

One great improvement, which was spurred by that first reunion, I believe, was the idea of renting a camp of some sort, like that for girl or boy scouts. They provide decent facilities for those without campers and also prepare the meals, a real plus. That has allowed us to spend more time exchanging stories, in some

cases lies, and makes the time together more fruitful. People who have been in charge over the years have varied the locations from just above Ketchum to the Cascade area, Lowman, Alturas Lake and finally McCall in an effort to find the most suitable facilities and provide some variety. I can't say that I have been dissatisfied with any but probably enjoyed the time at McCall in 2003 the most. I suppose that's because my age was catching up with me and I found those facilities most comfortable. Lugging suitcases up the stairs was the only real challenge. Even so, I have had experiences associated with all of the places, which bring fond memories to mind and I wouldn't trade any one of them for all the material benefits I can name. Staying close, as family, is one of the great blessings of life and today, it is more difficult with our busy lives.

Someone in our immediate family (Artie and Violet's), probably Phil, suggested that we of this group have a so-called mini-reunion in conjunction with the more widespread regular reunion. It was started in the early 90s; I would say and has now become a tradition as well. Sometimes it appears to rival the primary reunion in size because of the dramatic increase of Artie and Violet's posterity. Its timing is a blessing for me because of my location these last several years. Lethia and I find them every bit as rewarding as the James and Lydia reunion because of the extra time we have with the immediate family. Some of those that can't show for one make it to the other and our overall renewal of familial relationships increases. I believe the setting found at Grand Jean is the best to date for this event and look forward to its continuance regardless of location. When one travels as far as we do, it's nice to get a good dose of family spirit to take back. Though it may be temporary, I think about various members from time to time, which should, I suppose, spur me to greater effort to maintain more frequent contact. Of course, it doesn't because only a miracle or maybe some major event could induce me to write a letter. No excuses though, it's just in the genes.

Much of my posterity has found it difficult to attend either reunion because of time and

distance. Consequently, I will relate a few choice memories I have of both events and include a selection of pictures to help acquaint them with cousins, aunts and uncles. Who knows, such information may stimulate some to a greater effort to attend on their own. I believe I'll begin with another map defining the locations of both events over the years.

As mentioned, the original family reunion (termed the James and Lydia or J & L reunion) began in a campground just above Ketchum,



Figure 16-34 A map of the various areas in Idaho where family reunions have been held over the years.

Idaho in the mid to late sixties. After suffering through a June snowstorm, better facilities were sought and the reunion date was moved to July to lessen the odds of such an event. Additional reunions may have been held in that campground, I don't know but someone got the idea of having food and sleeping quarters provided to improve the visiting and relaxation time. The effort resulted in renting a camp, either girl scouts or 4-H I believe, located near

the campground of the original reunion. It's possible that other facilities were used around Ketchum but this old fuzzy brain can't recall them at this time. Also, I missed several in the early years because of work and distance. Eventually, the idea of location variation came into play to better suit everyone involved. This led to one reunion at Lowman and later the use of a camp near Donnelly, which had access to the Cascade Reservoir for boating enthusiasts. Several reunions have been held there but it eventually fell into disfavor because of lake pollution. During that same time period, the reunion was held at a camp on a little lake near Alturas Lake in an effort to provide variation and a desire to have some of them near the old homestead area of James and Lydia. It was a beautiful location but very hilly, which became a sore point with the old folks, now us'ns or maybe we'uns but not then. I really liked that camp including food and facilities. Later, it seemed we alternated between Donnelly and the 4-H camp above Ketchum. Finally, in 2003 a camp in McCall, Idaho was used, which was nice and afforded the group the tourist facilities of McCall as well as the lake. In 2007 a nice camp near Cascade was obtained. All the sites named with the exception of the 2007 reunion are shown in figure 16-34. Where we will end up next remains to be seen being dependent upon the individuals chairing the effort.

Now, let me relate a bit about the reunions of our immediate family, i.e. Artie and Violet's or A & V, for future discussion before getting into specifics. These began in about 1993, I believe. The idea was to have more time for lies and exaggerations within our own group without detracting from the main reunion. By placing it immediately after the J & L reunion, it would eliminate extra trips for such unfortunates as yours truly. This I have really appreciated because we thoroughly enjoy them and two trips the same year from Georgia would be difficult. The A & V reunion simply doubles my motivation to make the roughly 2500-mile trip every two years. The first reunion was held at Bogus Basin, I think primarily because of the number of bogus individuals that would attend but the resort operator was never enlightened. I know this to be true because I didn't have to pay in advance. The site was acceptable but most people thought we could do better. The problem lay in the fact that we had considerably less people involved and couldn't afford a camp such

as the J & L reunion could. The next year we tried a resort just outside of Fairfield, which was okay as well but not great. It might have been



**Figure 16-35 Dad's generation of siblings & spouses present at the 1981 reunion. Front row – Mabel, Violet, Ethlyn. Back row – Edgar, Elma, Martha & Marvin.**

great for golfers but those of us who distain such as a waste of time found our options limited. You can interpret the last part of that remark as "those of us who can shoot a round of 72 as long as it contains only 9 holes. Anyhow, our next shot was Grande Jean, which I think Phil found. It's a beautiful area, cabins are suitable and food can be self prepared or obtained in the resort's restaurant. The majority of our families seem to be satisfied with it because we have



**Figure 16-36 Violet & family at the 1980 reunion. Front row–Madeleine, Delight, mom, June & Connie. Back row–Carl, Phil, Tom, Ted & Dan.**

returned every 2 years for a total of three times except for one visit to Redfish Lake in the Stanley area. All this assumes that my starting date is right. Though there are some things we

would probably change if possible, such as having a covered area in which to meet and exchange stories, overall the accommodations are satisfactory and they meet the needs of our so-called mini-reunion. All of this goes to prove that life's most choice moments really don't need to include golf, at least from my point of view.

**MEMORABLE REUNION MOMENTS**

I thought I would mention a few things occurring at past reunions, which stand out in my mind



**Figure 16-37 Mom & children with spouses. Row 1 Carl, Ginnie & Mab behind Carl. Row 2 Gene, Delight, mom, Connie, Yale. Row 3 Rose, Jean, June, Mary, Esther. Row 4 Phil, Ted, Larry, Dan, Tom.**

and include photos where possible. I'm sure I will miss some events, which are memorable to



**Figure 16-38 Left to right – Maia Lisa, Carl, mom, Ginnie and David in summer of 1981.**

others but I suppose, only they can write such stories and leave their documentation up to the other individuals storing those memories. I have enough trouble defending my own.

One reunion I remember quite vividly was that of 1981. It was held at Donnelly and Valerie & Jared attended with us. Numerous photos were taken, some of which I'll include, to stimulate memories of those who were there and to help provide a greater appreciation of ancestors in the minds of those who were yet to arrive in mortality. Like many sections contained herein, this one may be more like a photo gallery or album than an account of my experiences.

Getting on with this 1981 reunion, I'll begin with figure 16-35, a photo of my father's siblings and



**Figure 16-39 Dan and Mary with Hal Phobes & Cathy as well as their two sons.**

some spouses. Mabel is Edgar's wife and is not to be confused with his sister Mabel. Violet is my mother who lived just over 93 years and Ethlyn is my father's sister. Edgar was the



**Figure 16-40 June and Larry with mom and Molly during the reunion of 1981.**

second child of the family with my father being the first or eldest. Edgar lived over 100 years, 102+ if my information is correct. Elma is dad's sister while Marvin is his youngest brother and is



still living at the ripe old age of 89, as of this writing. Martha, sitting to Marvin's right is his beloved wife. All have now passed away with the exception of Marvin.

Next in figure 16-36 is a nice photo of mom with all of her children, which was taken that same year, 1981 I believe. Although the girls' hair



**Figure 16-41 Phil & Rose with mom & family. Left to right – Phil, Rose, mom, Karen, Phil Jr. and Sigrid.**

arrangements seem to vary quite a little, notice the consistency of those of the boys'. We either have similar tastes, little imagination or no control, it would seem. However, I'll let you draw your own conclusions.

Next come some photos of the families of siblings who were present at the reunion. For some reason, I don't have copies of all of my siblings' families. Some of the kids weren't there



**Figure 16-42 Ted & Jean with mom and family. Left to Right – Ted, Monica, Teddy, mom, Kristen and Jean.**

but others may have escaped the camera lens. In any case, figures 16-38 through 16-43 depict those present of Carl's, Dan's, June's, Phil's,

Ted's and mine respectively. Names are listed in the captions in so far as I can accurately identify them. Sometimes I have trouble identifying my own so don't get up tight if I happen to flub on



**Figure 16-43 Row 1 left to right – Jared Sr., Esther, mom & Celeste with Joseph. Row, – Valerie, yours truly, Jared & Tom Jr.**

one of my sibling's offspring. Mom would have been 87 going on 88 in the photo. It's hard to believe that Madeleine and Delight are now approaching that milestone with the rest of us trailing close behind. If it weren't for Uncle



**Figure 16-44 Yours Truly and the Jared's pet raccoon that took a liking to me.**

Marvin, we would be the older generation rather than just an old generation.

Next comes Dan's family or maybe I should say daughter and part of her family. It seems his three sons were off doing their own thing that summer. A photo of June's family is provided in figure 16-40 or at least a part of it. Their other two daughters, Jennifer and Julie as well as their

son, Brian must have been working, schooling or maybe involved in other ways. We have been somewhat more successful drawing the grown children with the mini-reunions instituted in 1993, as mentioned earlier. Even so, with the families spread out and dealing with all the problems and activities relative to life, we still fail to see many. Though understandable, it's a shame because such contact represents the only workable method I know of maintaining some knowledge and memory of each other.

Figure 16-41 is a photo of mom with Phil, Rose and family. Karen, the wife of son Phil is also in



**Figure 16-45 Uncle Edgar and Aunt Mabel sharing a quiet moment together.**

the picture, sitting between mom and Sigrid. Their two children, both beautiful girls, were yet



**Figure 16-46 A group of Obenchains enjoying the lake during the reunion.**

to arrive in mortality and have been a real joy to their grandparents.

Ted's family seems to be intact in figure 16-42. That's probably because they were still young enough for him to assemble them for the trip

from San Diego. At that time, Ted and family had the longest trip to make since my move back to Denver. Now, however, I have once again gained that status by moving to Georgia.

Well, it's now time to present my little flock, which has now turned into a rather large herd with Tom's, young Jared's and Joseph's kids,



**Figure 16-47 A typical family member scene and their socializing at the reunion.**

along with Johnnie, Jared and Val's youngest. Figure 16-43 has all the existing family at that time corralled with mom for this particular event.



**Figure 16-48 Scott & Connie, Phil & Karen with Pete & son socializing a bit.**

I believe the 1981 reunion is the only one Jared senior was ever able to get to. By the way, in the caption I forgot to mention the raccoon Jared Jr. is holding. Jared Sr. had gotten the coon from someone in Provo and thought it was the best little pet around. It was cute and smart but he also caused a good deal of trouble with his lack of bathroom manners and his food foraging abilities. Somehow Jared convinced me that I

needed to hold him and took a picture of the two of us, which appears in figure 16-44. Not being too sure I wanted to be seen with the little critter, I disguised myself with the cap and dark glasses but decided to include it anyway. Even so, I feel the need to emphasize the fact that the smile on my face isn't one of satisfaction but gracious toleration for the wishes of my son-in-law. I was concerned that a warm feeling for the little devil might engulf me at any minute. I had experienced such a warm feeling, you'll remember, during our move to New Orleans when Pepper "urined" for my attention while sitting on my shoulders in the car.

This seems to be an appropriate point to describe another incident with the little fella on our way back to Provo after the reunion. We had stopped at Glenns Ferry to visit Esther's family. Julia had fixed dinner for all of us, which



**Figure 16-49 Madeleine and Delight spending a few quiet moments with Willis Obenshain from Oregon.**

she served smorgasbord style. We all loaded our plates and were sitting in the living room while eating. Esther's brother, John, was sitting in a chair at one end of the room. Besides some other items, he had a big piece of ham on his plate, which he was about to cut up. The coon must have realized that particular piece was easy pickings because he sauntered over in front of John, watched for a couple of moments for the right moment and then grabbed that ham right off John's plate. He scooted over behind some furniture with it while John fumed and fussed. I believe if he had had a gun, that coon's life would have been ended right then. He was not pleased to say the least. Jared apologized and tried to get the ham away from the ornery little critter but the damage had been

done, both to John's plate and to his relationship with Jared. John was the quiet type but his expression of dissatisfaction was spread all over his face. We quickly ate, thanked Julia for dinner and hurried on our way.

Figure 16-45 is a favorite picture of mine. I thought the world of Edgar and Mabel. We had



**Figure 16-50 Another typical scene at the reunion composed of unidentifiable people.**

spent many an hour at their various homes over the years, including sleeping under a weeping willow tree when we moved to Boise. He would have been going on 88 at this time, having been



**Figure 16-51 Grandpa James and Lydia's home near Bellvue in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with their posterity surrounding it during a 1990 era reunion.**

born a little before mother. They faithfully attended most reunions and it was a pleasure to hear him talk of his experiences as a younger man. Phil Sr. recorded a number of his stories while talking to him. Those that interested me the most were his freighting days hauling ore and supplies around Galena summit. He had some interesting moments and thrills.

The next few photos simply demonstrate the good times we had together at this and other reunions. Figure 16-46 represents a typical scene at the dock on the lake during Saturday afternoon. There were usually one or two ski boats out in the lake that came in to the dock from time to time to provide skiing opportunities for all who cared to demonstrate their talent. Figure 16-47 illustrates a typical social situation at the reunion wherein groups gather together to talk, tell stories, maybe exaggerate and even lie a little to produce a laugh in which Dan excels and generally have a good time. Such gatherings might take place anywhere from RVs to the mess hall or simply in the open as it was in that case. From left to right in the figure are, I believe, Mary, Sue, Madeleine, Carl, June, unknown, Phil and Delight. The unknown, I recognize but can't put a name to her face right now. Figure 16-48 pictures siblings, spouses and cousins enjoying each other's company. Figure 16-49 is a photo of Madeleine and Delight enjoying some sort of article together with Willis Obenshain from Oregon. Willis has been a faithful attendee over the years. He ties into our Obenchain line way back in Virginia about 1800. Figure 16-50 is simply another typical scene at any reunion of folks of various ages sitting, standing and conversing about anything and everything they can think of. This group may well contain a mixture of offspring from various siblings in dad's family. I can't really identify anyone, although I believe the guy straddling the bench might be Ted or me or someone who stands like us. In any case, he's an Obenchain of some sort.

At one reunion near Ketchum, Uncle Marvin guided us to a house his parents lived in for some time near Bellvue or south of Hailey and Ketchum. I believe the area was called Poverty Flats, which provides a built in description of their financial circumstances at the time, I suppose. It was interesting to see the old homestead and certainly gave me a greater appreciation for the situation my dad and his siblings grew up in and just how fortunate my generation is, without even mentioning that of our children. Though times were hard in the thirties, I was too young to know and our parents did all the worrying. We had a roof over our heads and something to eat every day, so what was there to complain about?

I ran across two more photos of mother and dad's generation, which I am going to include for the record more than anything else. They were

taken at the reunion of 1973. I don't believe Esther and I were in attendance because I don't remember the building in the background and



**Figure 16-52 Left to Right – Marvin and Martha, Guy, Alfred and Edgar in 1973.**

mom apparently sent the photos to us. Figure 16-52 pictures 4 of dad's brothers who were still living along with Marvin's wife, Martha. Figure 16-53 pictures the same brothers with their



**Figure 16-53 Left to right – Alfred & Judith, Elva I believe with Martha to her right, Hazel with Mabel just behind, Pearl with Edgar just behind & Gene or George(?) Flowers. Guy's hat is over above his head.**

spouses as well as mom with Pearl and Gene Flowers. I guess that's right. I believe Pearl married Gene rather than George but I can't keep that straight. Well, I'll drop the reunion subject but maybe return later.

**A 1980 VACATION**

Even though there was no family reunion in 1980, we decided to go to Boise, visit family and spend a little time at Payette Lakes. We hadn't made it to as many reunions as we would have liked while in New Orleans and were anxious to visit with everyone. We spent several days in Boise, staying with mom in her trailer, I believe. Such visits were always enjoyable because they included family gatherings at one or more homes of my brothers and sisters as well as an opportunity to spend some time with mother. I wasn't sure just how many more years she had

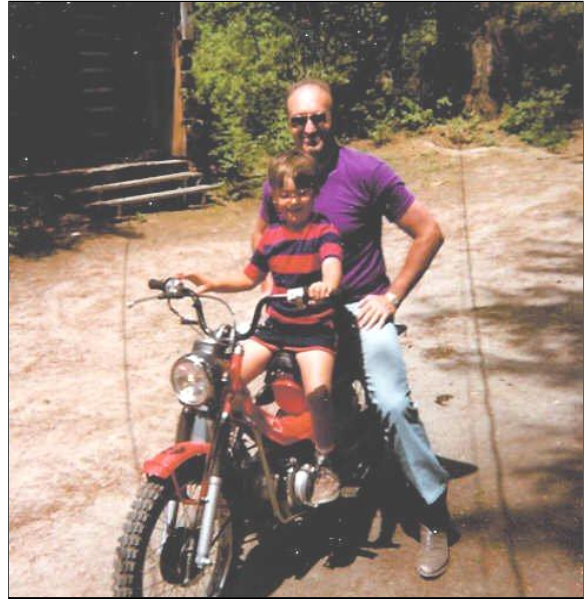


**Figure 16-54 Little Joseph heading for the cabin at McCall, the summer of 1980.**

left on this earth and felt a need to visit as often as possible. She was now approaching 87.

I suppose I felt a little guilty, having always lived rather far away and only being able to visit with her occasionally. Boise was growing and she enjoyed showing us the new areas, including commercial development and residential areas. She loved to go to Marie Calendars to eat and enjoy a piece of their pie with a cup of coffee. Esther and I enjoyed it as well and I was certainly up to a piece of pie most anytime. The gatherings took place at the homes of Phil, Delight and Connie's, at least and maybe others. Since we typically visited in the summer, they were usually outdoor events with typical summer foods as well as typical Obenchain chatter. They were always enjoyable and never resulted in conflict of any kind or even hurt feelings to my knowledge. One thing I can say for my family is that we get along well together. Whatever differences or faults we may have are always left

at home , resulting in good times with laughter and enthusiastic chatter. The same goes for the



**Figure 16-55 Jared & I getting ready for a ride near the Dick's cabin in McCall.**

reunions previously mentioned and contribute in large part to their success, in my opinion.

**A WEEK AT MCCALL**

During our time in Boise, we asked Connie and Yale for guidance in finding a reasonable and



**Figure 16-56 Mother & Esther enjoying the afternoon sun at McCall in 1980.**

satisfactory cabin on the lake at McCall. We intended to check out the one we had stayed at

in 1978 but I believe it had been replaced by more posh facilities, something we didn't need. During our discussion, Connie generously offered to check and find out if the Dick cabin was available. If so, we could use it for free. She did and it was. Needless to say, we accepted, were given a key and soon were on our way. I'm a little vague regarding the details of the trip but Celeste's photo collection has jogged my memory regarding some of the ensuing events. It appears that Valerie and the boys were on this trip, as well as mother. Back in the dark recesses of my mind I vaguely remember having to adjust sleeping facilities at the cabin to accommodate us all. Figure 16-54 is a photo of little Joseph heading for the cabin steps. I suspect he was intent on finding food or his mother's arms, both a comfort at that age

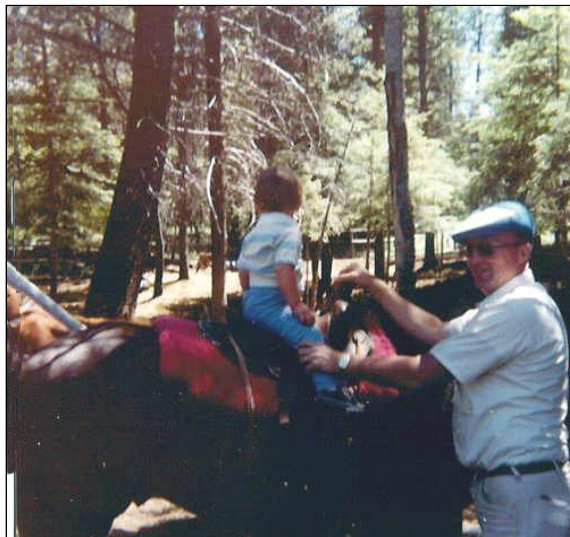
Figure 16-55, grandpa and Jared sitting on a small motorcycle, validates one activity of the trip. Looking for things to do, Tom and I decided



**Figure 16-57 Valerie, mom, boys & I on the cabin deck with the lake as a backdrop.**

to rent two motorcycles for a day just to ride around the McCall area. Of course, young Jared had to have a ride, which resulted in the photo. Had he been older, he would have had enough sense to stay clear of grandpa while he straddled that two-wheel contraption. I wasn't that good with it, primarily because it was too small for me to ride comfortably. I almost spilled once by getting the bars tangled up with my long legs. I remember having to sit way back on the seat in order to have sufficient legroom and properly operate the handlebars on tight turns.

Even then, I was a novice at best. Anyhow, we didn't kill ourselves or even get hurt and we did have a good time. However, I suspect many of



**Figure 16-58 Joseph proving his mettle as a cowhand at McCall in summer of 1980.**

the McCall residents wondered just who those two guys were learning to ride on their streets without even using training wheels.

Figure 16-56 is a photo of mom and Esther enjoying the afternoon near the lake, while figure 16-57 is one of mom, Valerie and I with the



**Figure 16-59 A solemn moment; after burying Cuddles near North Beach McCall.**

boys. Since Celeste was the photographer, she didn't seem to show up in any of the photos but

she was definitely there deciding just what was worthy of commemorating by photo. As I have mentioned a couple of times before, this autobiography would be almost photo-less without her picture contribution and, what's more, many events would be missing. Simply thumbing through her photo albums have brought many activities to mind that would otherwise be lost or at least of questionable date. The reader might well be echoing in his or her mind, "And for the better in most cases".

As with our previous visit to McCall a couple of years before, Tom and I decided to rent a couple of horses for the day and repeat that ride we had taken. I won't bore you with the details or with the photos demonstrating our talents as cowboys but will insert one photo of Joseph in figure 16-58. Considering his 6' 9" frame now, it's hard to believe he was ever that small. However, I must admit, after observing these photos, it gives some satisfaction to see him, Jared and Johnnie now as responsible adults with their own families. Jared Sr. and Valerie can count them as their great successes in this life, overshadowing all the trials and problems associated with their parenting. Now they, Jared and Joseph, get to experience similar situations as they raise their families and become familiar with that great art, i.e. parenting, which at best falls into the category of "on the job training".

The final picture of this particular vacation, i.e. figure 16-59, reveals the burial spot of Cuddles on a hillside near North Beach. She died of a heart attack at the cabin one morning. She and Pepper were outside with me one morning near a little garage when she suddenly had the attack. I picked her up to try to calm her but she died rather quickly in my arms at the ripe old age of about 12. We had gotten her as a puppy in the summer of 1968 while living in Rock Springs, Wyoming. She began having these types of attacks while we still lived in New Orleans and the vet had given us medication for her heart. Having known her heart was bad, it came as no surprise but there were still plenty of tears. She had been a delightful pet, spoiled to the hilt by everyone in the house and we grieved quite a little at her parting. The kids were determined to bury her in such a way that wild animals couldn't dig up her body. We traveled north of North Beach until we found a likely looking hillside for her grave. I dug a rather deep hole and placed numerous rocks in the way as we covered her up. One rather large rock was placed on top as a final protection and grave marker. After the

picture was taken, i.e. figure 16-59, we headed back to the cabin. It now seems appropriate to



**Figure 16-60 Cuddles enjoying the sun on the beach at McCall, summer of 1978.**

add another photo here, i.e. figure 16-60, which displays her snoozing on the beach during happier times at McCall in 1978.

#### **CHRISTMAS TRIPS DURING THE EARLY 80S**

During the early eighties while Jared was still in school at BYU, we usually traveled to Utah to



**Figure 16-61 Jared Jr. trying out his new skates on Christmas day 1980 in Price.**

spend Christmas with their family. Esther loved her grandchildren and did everything in her power to spoil them. In my opinion, she spent far too much on them for Christmas toys and our

car resembled Santa's sleigh when we headed that way. In later years she kept the U. S. Postal service from yearly deficits as she mailed her Christmas gifts in early December. She was pretty sly when making her purchases, never asking my opinion or, for that matter, even giving me a clue about what she had in mind. If she did, she knew I would set a limit on the number of gifts as well as their dollar value, something she didn't want to consider. Of course, when they were being wrapped I would fuss a little but she would say something like, "Oh Tom, quit being an old scrooge". After all was said and done, she had learned that I wouldn't make her return them.

Valerie seems to be afflicted with the same disease as Esther, i.e. going overboard on gifts. Somehow, they seem to equate this excess of



**Figure 16-62 Jared & Joseph learning the art of defining who got what in advance.**

giving with love for whoever the lucky recipient is. On the other hand, I believe such giving can create unrealistic expectations, a lack of appreciation and even an attitude of disregard in the recipient. They demonstrate this in the way they care for things, making them prone to damage or loss. Single, well thought out gifts are appreciated more, in my opinion, and are better cared for because they aren't competing with a pile of others. Even more damaging to the development of a sense of responsibility in a child is automatic replacement of a lost or damaged gift when they don't take care of it. Such action prevents the child from experiencing

the consequence of their actions, which is essential to the development of responsible adults. Of course, Esther would probably tell me, "Tom, you just say that to cut our spending. Admit it, you are a little on the tightwad side". Well, I won't deny that accusation but I learned it through responsibility forced on me while I was growing up and it has served me well in my adult years. For that virtue, I won't apologize. I believe teaching our children the virtues of life, such as responsibility, integrity, kindness, a work ethic and others, is a better gift than a pile of toys and will be better appreciated in later years. Consequently, it is a wiser expression of love than is mere giving of gifts one buys at a store. How's that for justifying a tightwad image?

Wow, I wonder what got me on that tirade. I guess it was some deep-seated resentment that finally came to the surface. Maybe it was resentment of Esther's spending for gifts, which I endured during those years or, more likely, resentment of the fact that they, my grandchildren, got more goodies than I did.



**Figure 16-63 Celeste enjoying a little Christmas hug with Joseph under the tree.**

Whatever the reason, it has surfaced and I now pronounce myself cured of that psychological trauma and promise not to bring it up again.

#### VISITING PRICE IN 1980

Well, let me get on with a couple of our Christmas trips. I believe it was 1980, the first Christmas after we arrived back in Denver, that we visited Valerie in Price. Jared had taken a year or so off from school to replenish their



funds, which would allow him to finish. At the time we visited, they lived in a nice little house in Price. I remember it having a full basement but that's about the only details of the house that come to mind. Fortunately, I have several photos taken, once again, from Celeste's albums, which will help me describe the visit.

We had traveled due west out of Denver on I-70 through the Eisenhower Tunnel and over Vail Pass. The interstate through Glenwood Canyon wasn't finished yet but what really impressed us was the lack of snow at Vail and other ski areas. The hillsides were virtually barren and the ski resorts experienced big financial losses that year. I believe it was that experience that prompted them to invest in snow making equipment. Business during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays apparently make or break them financially for the year. Of course, their financial situation was really heart wrenching for me, a non-skier, who couldn't care less whether the resorts existed or not. Anyhow, the trip was easy with the clear weather and nice dry roads. We sailed over the mountains and across the Utah desert with nothing worse than a case of bumitis or tired behinds.

Celeste, who was still living in Salt Lake, came down to Price to spend the holidays with us. We, of course, took advantage of such occasions to bring our scattered family together as often as possible. Such gatherings seemed to always lead to a wonderful time, similar to the more encompassing family reunions and kind of rejuvenate us for the next separation.

Figure 16-61 serves two purposes. First, it provides the only outside picture of their house in Price and second it illustrates young Jared in a rather unsteady situation on his new skates. I suppose this was his first experience on them because a companion picture, not shown, shows him sitting, somewhat surprised, on the sidewalk. The well-kept lawn behind Jared gives credence to the statement that their home was in Price, not exactly a desert oasis. Such natural greenery dominates the landscape throughout the town and surrounding area. It seems to validate the source of the name, which I imagine, came from the fact that people had to pay a price for living there, that price being the absence of any natural scenic beauty.

Let's go inside the home now with figure 16-62. If one didn't look out the window, things were okay. One could imagine whatever landscape they wanted to exist beyond the walls and day-

to-day living inside was typical of any American subdivision. Here we have a couple of curious little boys with imaginations in high gear trying to



**Figure 16-64 Esther looking on while Tom opens a gift with obvious pleasure.**

determine just what they might be getting the next day. Looking at the two today, i.e. 2004, it's hard to imagine they were ever that small or,



**Figure 16-65 Tom and I busily engaged in some crazy game while Jared Sr. looks on.**

for that matter, that cute. I guess the good Lord starts us all out kind of cute, letting our parents get so attached to us that they won't drop us off in the desert in later teen-age years. This is beneficial for society because of the reduced cost of parental incarceration for such

understandable acts and leaves the jails for those who have no valid reason for their crimes.

Figure 16-63 validates Celeste's presence in Price and her natural love for little ones. She hasn't changed in that respect, still living for the



**Figure 16-66 A view from our garage in the early morning of Christmas Eve.**

opportunity to hug some unsuspecting little girl or boy, be they nephews and nieces, grand



**Figure 16-67 A view of Celeste's car and the neighborhood after breakfast.**

nephews and nieces or simply those of close friends. If a little one needs a hug, Celeste is there to provide it.

Figure 16-64 validates the presence of Esther and Tom during those particular holidays. According to Celeste's caption in her album, Tom's big smile comes from gazing on an Atari game, which he had been wanting, with obvious anticipation. As you can see, Esther received



**Figure 16-68 Snow master testing for water content & weight of nature's blanket.**

her pleasure from observing his pleasure, a characteristic, which seemed to surface with all her children and grandchildren.

Figure 16-65 validates my presence along with that of Jared Sr. The caption in Celeste's album describes our efforts, in a game called "Turn the Terrible Tank. That's one I don't remember, which may help explain the pleasure apparent on Jared Sr.'s face. You see, I am probably



**Figure 16-69 Tom making his way back from taking care of the cats and fishes.**

losing and that would make Jared's day, as well as explain my lack of recall. I try to forget unpleasant memories while he loves to see them in the making, as long as they are mine.

During the ensuing years leading up to the present, I delight in taking every opportunity to place a burr under Jared's saddle, as would he under mine. Much of the pleasure we obtain in life comes from seeing the other one squirm a little. We don't wish any serious ills on each other but we do love to come out on top when exchanging vocal barbs. Thus, our mental acuity must be at its peak during each other's presence, which has been a major benefit to my aging mind. You see, I just don't want to lose.

**SNOWBOUND IN DENVER**

The winter of either 1982 or 1983 Denver received a beautiful Christmas Eve snowstorm that dumped around two feet of snow in the



**Figure 16-70 "Yours Truly" beginning the arduous task of clearing the driveway.**

Arvada area. It seems that when a low-pressure system parks over southeast Colorado, it pumps



**Figure 16-71 A photo from the southeast with Esther waving in the background.**

moist air up from the Gulf of Mexico, which brings either heavy rain or snow to Denver. If it

parks a little further north the precipitation may hit Cheyenne or Casper Wyoming as it did in the spring of 1974. Such precipitation is somewhat



**Figure 16-72 A view of our home from the southwest on Christmas Eve 1982.**

localized, covering a circular area of maybe 100 miles. Once you get outside that area, from none to small amounts of snow seem to be the



**Figure 16-73 After all was said and done, I present the evidence of the completed job.**

rule. That was the case in Casper you may remember and was now repeated in Denver, with the major difference being the time of year.

We had gone to bed the night before with the weather prediction of snow but expected only a few inches. We awoke on Christmas Eve morning to an active snowstorm, which eventually laid down a blanket of 24 to 30 inches. I'm not sure who came to first, Celeste or me. Tom and Esther were both late sleepers, so I doubt that they woke the household. In any case, the snow alarm went off throughout the house and we were all looking out the windows

in minutes. Tom was thrilled, as were Celeste and Esther. After all, Celeste had the next few days off while Tom envisioned a good time with friends and Esther was thrilled with thoughts of a beautiful white Christmas. What could be nicer this time of year when one can enjoy the comforts of a nice cozy house?

Soon we were dressed and I went to the garage to get a better view of the situation. I must admit that I too had been taken with the beauty of the falling snow until I opened the garage door, as shown in figure 16-66. It was still rather dark and Celeste popped this picture before daylight had really set in. Within minutes, it seems memories of the Casper storm with its work and associated muscle soreness flooded my brain. Somehow that memory diluted any temporary joy I might have had in the storm, as reality of the work ahead set in.

I figured a good breakfast was in order, considering the situation. It would provide the necessary time for me to adjust my mental and emotional state before getting into the task. Tom would help, of course. He had been too young to be involved in the Casper storm but was now seventeen or eighteen. What a shock to his teenage senses when I suggested he help me. Even so, he understood that I meant business because the thought of shoveling all day had definitely stiffened my resolve. Yes, he would help. During breakfast we talked of the job ahead and the need for someone to visit the house across the street to feed the cat and some fish, I believe. The elderly couple living there was gone for the holidays and we had agreed to help them out.

With breakfast complete, I went out in the garage again to survey and test the job while Tom crossed the street to feed the livestock. Figure 16-67 provides a view of the neighborhood with Celeste's car in the foreground. Figure 16-68 portrays my effort to check the reality of what lay before my eyes. Down deep, I hoped it was a hallucination of some sort and would suddenly evaporate with a wisk of the broom. Well, it didn't suddenly evaporate but I did establish that the snow was wet and heavy. It would definitely require shoveling rather than sweeping like one can do with a more typical winter snow in Denver.

Figure 16-69 portrays Tom struggling through the snow as he makes his way home from feeding the livestock. A couple of the drifts he came through just about swallowed him up and

we were beginning to wonder if he would ever make it. I didn't want to lose him, at least not before the walks were shoveled nor did I want to go out there with a snow shovel and try to free him. I might end up in the same predicament, so we hoped for the best. Soon he came through the garage door somewhat winded but no worse for the wear. He could rest until the snow let up, maybe even eat a little lunch and then we would begin shoveling.

Figure 16-70 portrays old dad beginning the job of clearing the driveway, which was two cars wide. Though it's not too apparent in the photo, I soon had snow piled up head deep along the right side of the drive. As in Casper, it was heavy and couldn't be thrown very far. Unless I was next to the edge of the drive, I had to walk each shovel full over to the edge and then heave it up with all my strength to land it on top of the bank. Of course, sometimes I would miss and have to clean up after myself. The work went slow with Tom and I alternating with the shovel. The deepest part was near the house, having drifted in around Celeste's car and the front bushes next to the porch. Once we made our way through the big drift blocking the drive, Celeste went out into the street to get a couple of pictures, which appear in figures 16-71 and 16-72. It was late afternoon, as I remember, when two tired hombres struggled into the house and pronounced the job complete. The next day Celeste went out with her trusty camera and took the photo of figure 16-73 as evidence that we had indeed completed the work. Later, we had occasion to go west, probably to Valerie's, and found little or no snow 50 miles north of Denver and on through Wyoming.

### **A MISSION CALL FOR TOM**

I have discussed Tom's general attitude and activities while in highschool in Arvada earlier in this chapter. However, I will elaborate a little more here because I want to describe events leading up to his mission call, which occurred in June of 1984, I believe.

I think Tom's highschool years were difficult for him. He didn't seem motivated scholastically and performed well below his potential, in my opinion. I suspect he suffered somewhat from a rather poor self image. He was big for his age but didn't capitalize on that attribute in school sports or church activities. It didn't seem he was well accepted by the youth of the Church and consequently found friends outside of it. I don't consider that necessarily bad. In fact, it might

well be healthy if balanced with friends active in the gospel. In his case, however, I think it led to his association with some kids who seemed unmotivated in life, though not particularly bad or wild. They all seemed to have a ho hum attitude towards life. Had he included some youth who had more worthy goals, I would have felt better.

I was frankly worried about Tom's apparent lack of scholastic motivation and his seemingly declining interest in church. He didn't get into any real serious problems to my knowledge and wasn't the rebellious sort but just seemed to



**Figure 16-74 Cakes Valerie and Celeste had prepared for Tom's farewell social.**

float with the current of life with little interest in setting a productive course. We had talks, as I indicated earlier but I never felt I was really reaching him. As I also mentioned earlier, I was probably lecturing him more than listening and my advice seemed to go in one ear and out the other. Also, Esther and I wanted him to serve a



**Figure 16-75 Tom at his missionary farewell with his new missionary haircut.**

mission and I frequently mentioned that in our little discussions. I remember explaining to him the benefits of such service both spiritually and temporally but always emphasized that it would have to be his decision, not ours. He never argued but never seemed enthused over the

idea either. It was more of that ho hum attitude towards life. Probably, that wasn't so unusual among parents and youth of the day but it worried me and made me wonder whether he would ever become a responsible adult.

About the time he hit a scholastic low point in his senior year in school, we were fortunate to have a home teacher who took an interest in Tom. He seemed to have an impact on Tom's attitude towards life in general as well as the gospel and a mission. Additionally, two missionaries were assigned to the ward who took an interest in Tom. They spent time with him at church and



**Figure 16-76 Valerie, about the time of Tom's mission, with a Georgia background.**

frequently dropped by the house to visit with us but primarily him, it seemed. When they were finally transferred, one of them asked Tom if he could drive him to his new assignment in Grand Junction. He even contacted Tom after returning home to California from his mission. It was during those days that I noticed a change in Tom. Suddenly, he was talking about a mission and began taking some initiative in that direction. By spring of 1984 he talked to the bishop and sent in his papers to apply for the same. In a month or so, his call came and he

was notified that he would be serving in the Munchen, Germany mission. The Sunday before his departure, the ward had him speak along with other members of the family and we had an open house to celebrate the event.

Valerie was excited over Tom's call, as were all of us. She made a trip to Denver from Georgia primarily for his open house. She brought a bunch of slides with a slide projector and



**Figure 16-77 Celeste, about the time of Tom's mission farewell, taken at the ward.**

proceeded to take over arrangement of the house with Celeste's help. Esther and I certainly didn't care and in fact, appreciated it. As with all of her projects, she did a great job. The slides she brought with her were from a collection she and



**Figure 16-78 Esther and I greeting Tom during his stop at Stapleton in Denver.**

Jared had taken in Germany during his tour of duty with the army. They were all from the Bavaria or Munich Mission area where he would serve. I had a collection of German music on the old style records, which she also used. During the farewell, she had constantly changing slides projected onto a screen in the corner with German music playing in the background.

She and Celeste also acquired a couple of cakes decorated to commemorate the event.

They are shown in figure 16-74. If you look closely, you can read "Besten Wunschns Tom" on the closest cake, which I assume means best wishes in German. The furthest cake simply has Munich printed inside an outline of Bavaria, which was the name of the mission he would be going to. Tom appears in figure 16-75 with his missionary haircut and one of three suits he took with him. He also had to take two pairs of shoes



**Figure 16-79 Esther enjoying a little conversation with Tom at Stapleton.**

as well as numerous other items one would need for daily living. It's fortunate that he was able to wear one pair because he was only allowed two suit cases and each pair of shoes was big enough to fill the same. That's one area he has managed to surpass me in, i.e. shoe



**Figure 16-80 Tom expressing surprise with old dad smiling in the background.**

size, and, as you can imagine, that's no small feat or is it, "they's no small feet". Whatever, the proper grammer, he left with a good understanding, due partially to his inherited genes with the rest of it due to his mother's excellent cooking.

Figure 16-76, a photo of Valerie, was taken the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1985 according to the note on the back. Obviously, it wasn't taken in Denver that time of year and the background looks more like

Georgia than Colorado anyhow. I included it here because it's the closest thing I have of her in the time frame of his mission. I will use a similar situation for Celeste's picture, shown in figure 16-77, for the same reason. This photo was taken right after a successful and rather prolonged effort on the "Weight Watcher's" diet, which she and Esther had started a couple of years before. Celeste had treated herself to a new hairdo to celebrate her success. Their effort began right after I was diagnosed as a diabetic, probably the fall of 1982. I had to eat a similar diet and we all kind of supported one another. From the photo, you can see Celeste is rather pleased with herself.

The day after the farewell, I believe, we headed to Provo to drop Tom off at the MTC or Mission Training Center. He would spend 8 weeks there rather than the more usual 4 because he had to learn German. As I understand it, the new missionaries for a given nation, train as a group and have to begin using their new language almost immediately. Needless to say they experience a good deal of frustration while trying to express themselves in the new language but it speeds up the learning process and though not fluent, they are at a level where they can get along at the end of the 8 weeks. Missionary and parents enter a lecture room when they arrive at the center where all the pertinent particulars of the mission training are explained. Then the, soon to become missionary, is ushered out leaving mom in tears as she parts with her baby. Parents aren't allowed to visit the missionary during the training period in which they are weaned from their parents care. Parents are also discouraged from visiting their missionary sons and daughters in their area of service because it tends to disrupt their work and focus.

We had taken several photos of Tom at the MTC but I have no idea of where they might be. Consequently, the last photos I will show of him are three taken at the Stapleton Airport when his flight passed through some eight weeks after we left him in Provo. He was able to call us and arrange a short meeting as he changed flights on his trip to Germany. These photos are displayed in figures 16-78, 16-79 and 16-80. Then, I have a final one of him taken in Regensburg, Germany in November of 1985, which I particularly like. It appears, of course, in figure 16-81. We returned from Stapleton to begin a long wait for Tom to return. Initially, it was set for 18 months but he extended it, when asked by the Church, to 24 months. We were

pleased that he had made this decision and as we expected, he came back a changed young man. All my worries in the preceding 3 or 4



**Figure 16-81 Tom in his mission apartment in Regensburg, Germany.**

years had been for naught, for which I still thank the Lord. All's well that ends well, so I'm told.

### **ROY AND ELEVIEVE JENKINS' VISIT**

Roy and Elevieve Jenkins were good friends of the family while we lived in Mandeville, Louisiana. Roy had a regular job as a crew member on a boat, which plied the Intercoastal Canal moving barges all along the gulf coast. He was also an excellent mechanic and added to his income by overhauling automatic transmissions at a local garage in Covington. Roy and Elevieve were just good people and we spent many an interesting hour with them at their house during our stay in Louisiana.

In the summer of 1984, I believe, they took a trip around the western US, which included a brief stay at our house. Besides the usual visiting that takes place with such a reunion, we showed them the Denver area including a couple of picnics and a visit to the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs as well as a trip to the top of Pikes Peak. Being flatlanders from Louisiana, I

was sure a view from the top of a 14,000+ peak would be a memorable experience for them. Two young girls had accompanied them. One was a niece of theirs and the other a close friend of the niece. They were 15, as I remember and were full of enthusiasm about everything we did. They thought the mountains were beautiful and couldn't wait to take a ride in through them because they were so majestic and seemed to exceed even their vivid imaginations. It was fun to simply listen to their chatter about the sights.

The main event during their stay was the visit to the Garden of the Gods and Pikes Peak. We dedicated one full day to the trip, knowing the two stops would be time consuming. Leaving Arvada early one morning, we headed south along Carr Street. Pikes Peak stood out in the distance, highlighted by a few remnants of snow on its slopes. I pointed out the peak to them and they, the girls particularly, oohed and aahed

one located in the front range and overlooks the western edge of the great plains stretching to

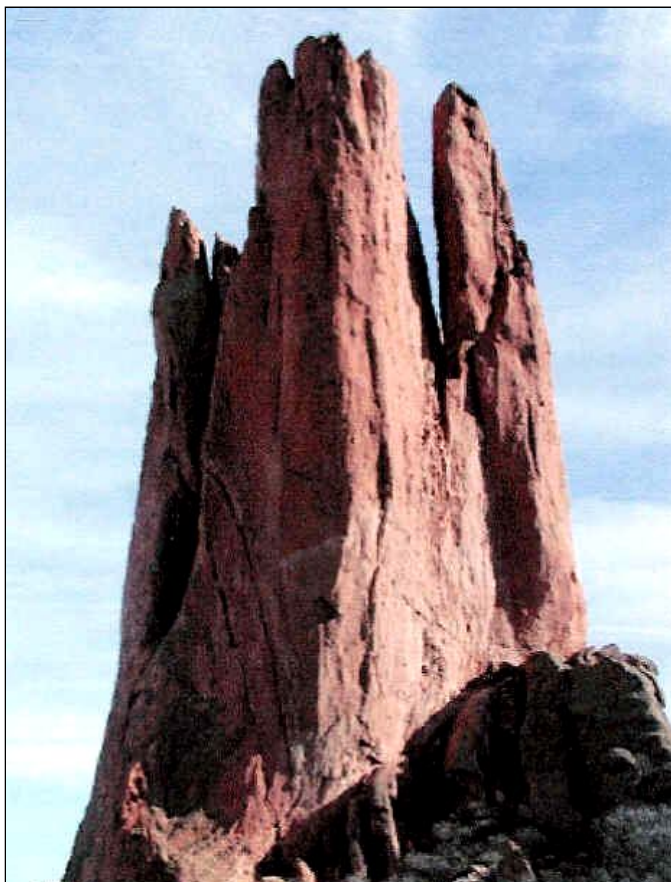


**Figure 16-82 Pikes Peak as seen from the northeast near Garden of the Gods at Colorado Springs.**

the east. Figure 16-82 will give the reader some idea of what we were looking at even though it was taken nearer Colorado Springs somewhat later in the year.

We arrived at the Garden of the Gods on the west side of Colorado Springs a couple of hours after leaving home. Though we didn't spend a lot of time there, we did enter the park from the north and leave from the south after stopping at the visitors' center. Figure 16-83 provides a nice view of the North Tower, a remnant of ancient Fountain sandstone. This particular formation provides all the beautiful sights in the park, being tilted almost vertically to form escarpments of various sizes and shades of reddish brown throughout the park.

After a picnic lunch in the park, we exited on the south and headed up US 24 to the road leading up to Pikes Peak proper. Anyone who has traveled US 24 to the west out of Colorado Springs realizes it's a good highway for the Rocky Mountains, having its share of twists and turns as it negotiates the Front Range. One of the girls, the niece I believe, became very nervous, as we headed up the canyon. She had never been out of Louisiana and was used to flat roads with trees and swamps along side. As Elevieve tried to assure her all was okay, her friend boldly stated that these roads didn't scare her, in fact she really enjoyed them. At Cascade we headed south and began to climb up the ridge leading to Pikes Peak. Figure 16-84 will provide the reader with an idea of the view. Though the terrain is similar, the road we were traveling on actually lays behind the ridge connecting to the peak. If you look closely, you can see the buildings, which house the gift shop



**Figure 16-83 North Tower, Fountain Sandstone remnant at the Garden of the Gods' north gate.**

about its magnificence and the thought of driving to the top of it. To my knowledge, of the many 14,000+ peaks in Colorado, Pikes is the only



and other facilities on top of Pikes Peak. Of course, everyone was impressed by the beauty of the scenery and even their niece perked up a little and joined in the conversation. Roy and Eleveie kept commenting on the various views they were experiencing, as we ascended the main ridge. We were still on blacktop and the fun was yet to come. Little did they know of the thrills that lay ahead and just how severely the girls' young hearts were to be tested.

Soon the road turned to gravel but maintained the same width. The last several miles, maybe ten or so, are essentially in open country with the last third of that above timberline. A little later we came to steeper terrain and the road began to climb via a series of switchbacks. At this point, I realized no one was talking except me. Our confident little chatterbox, the niece's friend, had suddenly quit talking. When questioned by Roy, she said, quite simply, I didn't know it would be so steep and scary. At that time there was no guard rail and one can look out and see the road they have just traversed right below them. Lack of such rails doesn't add to the flatlander's confidence, I'm sure. I believe even Roy and Eleveie were somewhat taken back by the steepness of the climb. Even so, the road is a good road, wide enough for two cars to pass without difficulty. Figure 16-85 will provide a typical view for the reader, though many switchbacks and a couple of thousand feet of elevation to gain still lie ahead.

Soon we were on top of the peak. Esther, Tom and I had been there once before and we realized that one could become light headed at 14,110 feet. It's best to move slowly to conserve oxygen and even take a couple of aspirins to thin the blood. Several of us experienced dizziness as we made our way into the gift shop. While Eleveie, Esther and the girls looked around, Roy and I went outside to get a better view of the great plains and Colorado Springs laying below. Roy was fascinated with the view as he moved gingerly along the edge of the peak. We kind of circled the peak, looking in all directions before going back in. I suppose we spent about an hour before everyone decided they had had their fill and proceeded back to the car. Our car, at that time was a relatively new Oldsmobile 88, which sat 6 rather comfortably. Roy and I sat in front with one of the girls, while Esther, Eleveie and their niece, I believe, sat in back. As we headed down the hill, I kept the transmission in low and moved rather slowly to

save the nerves of our Cajun friends. Esther appreciated that too and I really had no desire to try to keep up with the pace they set in the spring races up the peak. All was quiet until we



**Figure 16-84 Pikes Peak from a meadow northeast of the main ridge leading to the peak.**

finally got off the switchbacks and arrived on the blacktop once again. At that point a heavy sigh of relief came from the back seat and conversation returned to normal. When I asked the girls if they would like to go up again, a resounding NO echoed through the car and ricocheted off the surrounding hills. They were glad they had experienced the trip but were just



**Figure 16-85 A view of the road below as we climbed above tree line to Pikes Peak.**

as glad to have it over with. Now their apprehension was gone but they could still talk about it with their friends back in Louisiana. We stopped and ate on the way back to Denver

while talking about the day's experiences. The next day Roy and Elevieve left with the girls for Salt Lake to visit areas in Utah before heading back to Cajun country and its humidity and flat topography.

### A SPRING TRIP TO REMEMBER

The spring after Roy and Ellavie's visit, Esther and I decided to take an extended trip south to visit friends in Louisiana and later, Valerie, Jared and their boys. We would take our time and see a few sights as well. I believe Tom was on his mission and Celeste preferred to use her vacation in other ways. Although I don't remember the exact timing of the trip, it must



**Figure 16-86 A typical scene in the woods around Mandeville, Louisiana about mid-April.**

have been in late April and early May because the flowering plants in Louisiana, particularly azaleas, were in full bloom, painting the countryside with a variety of colors and differing shades. We were reminded of one of our favorite activities, while living there, i.e. a spring drive to enjoy the natural floral beauty of that area. It certainly rivals fall trips I made in later years in Georgia to experience the fall colors.

As the trees go through their preparations for winter, the various varieties burst with color in a last ditch effort to attract attention before losing their leaves. Likewise, the flowering shrubs make a grand entrance for the summer season by putting on their beautiful attire around the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. I have included figure 16-86 to give the reader an idea of the beautiful azaleas, common throughout the south-central and southeastern U.S. I suppose they were my favorite shrub because of their rich colors and profuse growth

seemingly throughout all the wooded areas of Louisiana. That's one of my favorite memories of that state, which memories now don't seem to be as profuse as are the azaleas.

We arrived in Covington without incident, having come down through Amarillo and Dallas, Texas to Shreveport and finally Covington Louisiana. Roy and Elevieve had offered to put us up and, in fact, were instrumental in our decision to make the trip. We looked forward to seeing the friends we had made while living there.

Roy and Elevieve lived north of Covington along Louisiana 25 near a little town called Folsum. Their home sets back in the woods about a hundred yards from the highway and is completely shielded from the traffic noise. The clearing in which their house is situated provides room for a nice lawn and garden as well as the house and a separate utility building. It provides a comfortable, though modest, life style.

Louisiana boasts some of the best seafood in the world without question. Though it may be fancier in the more expensive five star restaurants of New Orleans, it is about as delicious in many of the out of the way "mom and pop" cafes scattered throughout the smaller towns of the area. Roy took us to such a place just across the Pearl River in Mississippi. It was near Picayune, which lays just west of I-59, an interstate connecting New Orleans with Birmingham, Alabama. I suppose the cafe was 30 miles from their house. We could tell it was a favorite with the locals as we were greeted by a rather well filled parking lot. I forget the name of the place but it was an "all you can eat style" buffet boasting a variety of seafood from crab through oysters, shrimp and fish to crayfish. My only regret lay in the fact that I could no longer eat like I did some ten to fifteen years earlier. Needless to say, we came away stuffed because of our somewhat weakened willpower. You see, I can enter such a place, resolute in my determination to control my intake but somewhere between entry and exit my will succumbs to the beckoning of the various choices in front of me. Fortunately, I don't face such situations on a regular basis.

We arrived home, Roy and Elevieve's that is and visited a little, took a little Alka-Seltzer and retired for the evening. The next morning, a Sunday, we attended church at our old ward building and renewed acquaintances with the many friends we had made during our stay in the area. That was rather special to us and kind

of capped the visit's purpose. I don't remember anything else about that last day other than a little ride to enjoy the azaleas and other colors of the spring season.

Monday morning we got an early start for the Atlanta area where we would visit Valerie, Jared and family. It was about a 500-mile trip and we arrived that evening. We made so many trips to Georgia during the 1980s and they moved so many times, it is difficult to remember just where they lived at any given point in time. I believe it was in an apartment building in Smyrna, which is just to the northwest of Atlanta. Although I can't say exactly where the location is now, I believe it would have been in the southern fringes of the city. I say that because I vaguely remember getting off the I-285 exit a few miles south of its junction with I-75, heading due west and then south to the building. By our next trip, they had moved up to a little house in Cumming, Georgia. In any case, we finally made it and spent several days with them.

I feel sure we were treated to some scenic rides in northern Georgia because Jared loved the state and was quick to point out its assets. I feel sure he could have gotten a job with the chamber of commerce, had he so chosen. I doubt that they had any employee that could present such a positive image of Georgia. His only mistake with me was the contrast he drew with the west; the latter being dry, arid and ugly while Georgia was pleasant and green. Georgia is beautiful in the spring and fall due to the flowers and colored leaves but the west has a panoramic view one can't find in the south. The very trees he loved to brag about were the culprits, blocking one's view on virtually all of the hills of any size. Thus, in my mind we were talking about two different kinds of beauty, the immediate vicinity in one case and a beautiful vista in the other. Of course, the more he praised Georgia, the more I praised the west. For every virtue of Georgia he could raise, I could find at least two for Colorado and the west. Such discussions were more of a game than an argument and did little good other than pass the time. To this day, I will praise the virtues of the west if he dares to bring up the subject, even though I enjoy living in northeast Georgia and will secretly admit that it has much going for it. Now, should he start praising the west, which has less than a fat chance, I would probably begin defending Georgia. You see, I enjoy exchanging barbs with him. It keeps me on my toes and probably helps forestall

Alzheimer's disease. Even if it isn't beneficial to my health, it is a lot of fun and manages to keep a spirited conversation going.

One Saturday while we were there, Jared and Valerie suggested a picnic in northern Georgia. We headed up I-75 towards Chattanooga early that day. We would spend some time visiting the Chickamauga Military Park just south of the Tennessee line. Grandpa John Zemmer fought in that battle after undergoing the siege of Chattanooga the winter before. Valerie had dug up his military papers including remarks that he had marched in the Washington D.C. victory parade after the Civil War. His participation in the battle of Chickamauga was at Snodgrass Hill. I will insert a brief description of that part of the battle from a historical source, as follows:

*The most stubborn phase of the battle was still to be fought. Thomas collected the remnants of the army's right wing on Snodgrass Hill where he was assisted by the timely arrival of Granger and Steedman with the Reserve Corps, small but resolute, and he held against the triumphant Confederates until he could withdraw under cover of darkness.*

*Longstreet hammered at Snodgrass Hill through the remainder of the afternoon. While he made occasional inroads to the crest, he was unable to break the stalwart defense, which earned for Thomas the title of the "Rock of Chickamauga."*

Grandpa Zemmer (Zimmer) was part of that stalwart defense that saved the day for the northern troops. He fought in succeeding battles until he was wounded in the battle of Kennesaw Mountain. He returned home to Illinois for recovery and later marched in the victory parade, as mentioned. The time at Chickamauga was interesting to say the least.

From Chickamauga we went on into Chattanooga, only a few miles to the north. There we saw the real Chattanooga Choo-Choo, which is on display for tourists. I guess it's a late 18<sup>th</sup> century version of engine and cars but certainly after the Civil War. How grandpa Zemmer would have loved for it to choo-choo him home during the siege. The visit was enjoyable and gave us a chance to grab some munchies for the trip home. Our picnic lunch had long since disappeared somewhere during the battle of Chickamauga.

On our way back to Atlanta, Jared suggested that we stop and see Fort Mountain, which was

just 20 miles or so east of I-75 at Dalton. We arrived there probably about 5:00 PM and spent just enough time to walk the rather limited ruins. You probably know that northern Georgia lies on the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains, and provides some real scenic landscapes, that is, if you can find a good sized hill. I emphasize the word hill as opposed to mountain to condition those who were raised in the west with real mountains. Such a hill must have a prominent cleared area to provide the view. Fort Mountain, somewhat of a misnomer, lays to the northwest of Gainesville on a hill near the little town of Chatsworth and contains such a view. Fort Mountain is an old fortified area apparently used centuries ago, for a last ditch stand by some group of people. I believe the visitor's center has a descriptive pamphlet, which provides possible explanations for the fortifications but no one seems to know the real reason for sure. A couple of these descriptions follow for your edification.

"Fort Mountain State Park is located on Fort Mountain, just southwest of the Cohutta Wilderness. The park derives its name from an ancient stone wall, measuring some 855 feet in length, which stands on the highest point of the mountain. Remains of circular depressions made of various size stones and measuring



**Figure 16-87 A remnant of the old stone wall found on the crest of Fort Mountain.**

about ten feet across occur within the wall at about 30 foot intervals. The wall ranges in height from 2 to 6 feet, although it was undoubtedly higher in the past. I suspect the circular depressions are the sites of ancient

guard towers or fortified battle positions to protect the defenders, whoever they were.

Archeologists and historians have been unable to solve the puzzle of who built the wall or why or when they built it. There are many theories. A favorite explanation is that the wall was built by the Woodland Indians around 500 a. d. The east-west orientation of its end points would result in alignment at sunrise and sunset at the solar equinox in both spring and fall.

The dramatic setting of the wall, offering expansive vistas to the east and west, could have added to its religious significance. Ceremonial centers similar to this one were built by the Woodland Indians at Old Stone Fort, Tennessee, and Rock Eagle Mound in Putnam County, Georgia. The woodland Indians occupied the Southeast from several centuries b. c. to about 900 a. d.

A less probable but more romantic theory attributes the wall to a legendary Welsh prince named Medoc. He supposedly sailed into Mobile, Alabama, 500 years ago and then worked his way northward toward the Fort Mountain vicinity. Nothing else is known about Prince Medoc, except that his name is vaguely linked to several petroglyphs found in other parts of the Southeast". I have added figure 16-87, which is a photo of a portion of the wall.

We left Fort Mountain after six, I would guess and returned to Smyrna, bushed and ready for bed. It had been a tiring but enjoyable day, one that I still remember quite vividly. That was the extent of our side trips while in Smyrna, to the best of my knowledge. We didn't see the Kennesaw Mountain battlefield until a later trip, maybe after Esther had passed away. I've been there once more since moving to the Atlanta area to help renew my knowledge of John Zemper's last battle of the war. I'm not sure of the length of our stay that year but soon we left, headed up through Tennessee and Kentucky to St. Louis and then westward to Denver.

Well, I suppose it's proper to close this chapter with a few words about my employment, which was still paying the Obenchain bills.

### **SCHLUMBERGER ACTIVITIES**

I had been transferred to Denver in the capacity of the Division Training Manager. As I indicated in chapter 15, I was well suited for the position and had no qualms about getting involved. Business was booming in the Rockies with many

young engineers to train. Since my leaving some 5 ½ years before, two districts had been added, namely Evanston, Wyoming and Dickinson, North Dakota. As I remember, Havre, Montana had been shut down with Cutbank handling any business that might crop up in that area. In any case, I had no trouble keeping busy between engineer tests at the division level and visiting the districts to try to help them with their various training problems. I did quite a little flying to such places as Salt Lake, Bismarck, North Dakota and Great Falls. There I would rent a car to drive to the nearest location. The job was satisfying to a degree but such involvement 100% of the time really wasn't my cup of tea. Even so, I did my best to carry out my duties and help young engineers progress to the General Engineer level.

I suppose my lack of enthusiasm was partially linked to the professional setback I had suffered in New Orleans. I still harbored the stigma attached to any demotion and in my own mind, felt somewhat less accepted by division personnel than I was previously as the Division Engineer. Admittedly, this was more a fabrication of my mind than it was a reality. None-the-less, it seemed to further intensify my already rather introverted nature. I wasn't unfriendly but I would have to classify myself as somewhat less than social. I mention this here because it seemed to be the beginning of a downward spiral in my ability to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. Instead, I buried myself in work and in various Church related activities.

**WESTERN REGION TRAINING MANAGER**

Even with my rather depressed psychological state, my work must have been reasonably good. About a year after returning to the Rocky Mountain Division, I was offered the job of Western Region Training Manager, a step upward in that particular field of endeavor. The Region office was a block or so away and the change wouldn't require a household move, which was a plus for both the company and me. I lost the benefit of a company car but received a sufficient raise to more than compensate for that. My new duties would include revising the overall regional training program and managing it on a regional basis. The learning center manager would report to me and I would report

to the Region Technical Manager, Bill Waller, whom I knew well from previous associations. Of course, I accepted and the move helped soothe my rather shattered ego to some degree. Even so, the satisfaction and glow in my life, derived from a satisfying engineering profession, never returned during the remainder of my career. I bore no negative feelings towards the company but when retirement came, I was ready.

My new office contained a computer station, which allowed me to access the Region mainframe computer. Desktops were still in their infancy with much less power than a large computer. I received a password, giving me access to the mainframe and underwent a short training program for my own proficiency. In a short time I was able to carry out the rather simple tasks I needed to on that station. Though

**I understood the concepts clearly enough but boy was I slow. There would be a final test and all I could think of was, "How in the world will I ever get done"?**

I had some knowledge of the computers in the trucks and offshore units, this was my first real opportunity to interact with such a device on a daily basis and really

became my starting point in the computer world.

**RESERVOIR ENGINEERING SCHOOL**

Unless an engineer happens to be a petroleum engineer by education, Schlumberger engineers know little about the dynamics of a petroleum reservoir. Historically, Schlumberger has been primarily involved with petroleum exploration and has consequently hired field engineers without such background. By the 1980s, however, the need for our engineers to have at least a conversational understanding of the discipline became apparent. My previous boss in New Orleans, Robert DeFleurier, became a driving force behind that particular idea and convinced Headquarters in Houston that we should include a portion of such knowledge in our training program. This prompted them to encourage the various regions to begin sending a certain number of engineers to weeklong seminars offered by the industry. I was among those sent from the Western Region.

Those of us in the Western Region along with many others in the industry attended a five-day seminar in Denver. At the age of 56, I was probably the oldest engineer in attendance. We had to purchase a \$250 Hewlett Packard engineering calculator, which now sells for around 25 bucks. Although I was familiar with most of the trigonometric and algebraic functions

involved, I had not used the device before. It seemed the younger guys in the class could calculate the answer to a given problem in half the time I could. We were constantly given such problems, after each phase of the seminar, to test our understanding of the subject. In most cases the lecturer would receive the desired answer from some calculator-oriented student before I had even figured out how to engineer the calculator. I understood the concepts clearly enough but boy was I slow. There would be a final test and all I could think of was, "How in the world will I ever get done"?

Well, Friday afternoon came with me still in the novice category as far as engineering calculators were concerned and it was test time. We had ten reservoir engineering problems to solve in something like two hours. Being somewhat experienced at taking tests, I whistled through the easier ones to be sure they were

**I was sweating like a pig at the slaughter house as the two hour deadline approached. I was just finishing up and I might say, with little confidence, when the dreaded "Time's up" signal was given.**

done, at least. Unfortunately, some problems were dependent upon the answers obtained in previous problems. If I couldn't solve the earlier one, my knowledge of a later one did me no good. Well, I struggled for the whole two hours and couldn't help but notice that some of the young guys were finishing up in about an hour to an hour and a half. I was sweating like a pig at the slaughter house as the two hour deadline approached. I was just finishing up and I might say, with little confidence, when the dreaded "Time's up" signal was given. I handed my paper in close to last and marched out wondering whether I had passed or not. We would get the results back in a few days by mail.

A few days later, I received the ominous letter with the results I hadn't looked forward to. I set it aside for a while being too pessimistic to open it. Knowing that I didn't have to show the grade to my boss and realizing postponement wouldn't help, I gingerly slit the envelope with my knife. Curiosity was eating at me as I unfolded the paper. Man, what a delight! I had not only passed but had received a grade in the high eighties, as I remember. That last clause is a disclaimer, of course, which allows me to relate whatever grade I want. Anyhow it was reasonable and after comparing notes with

others that had attended, I found I was better off than the majority. What a relief, I had survived the generation gap, which included, of course, my lack of experience and speed with said calculator. That infernal and complex engineering calculator, with all its dysfunctional steps of operation for exercising mathematical functions, had been effectively neutralized.

### DESIGNING A HYPOTHETICAL RESERVOIR

Robert didn't stop with the seminars. He convinced management to include some training for the new engineers. I found myself in disagreement with the idea because there are plenty of technical concepts for the young engineer to adsorb without reservoir engineering. He must learn the basics of tool theory for about 5 or 6 tools as well as the interpretation concepts involved with each and in addition, master their operation in the learning center test well. All of this is to be accomplished in eight weeks, which is no easy chore. However, Robert's convincing personality overcame the objections of many and the decision was made to follow his concept. A hypothetical trapping mechanism with an appropriate reservoir would be designed for the learning centers, which would summarize the knowledge expected of the engineer when he completed training. The Western Region was given the project and because of my background and present position, I was elected to accomplish it. Bill Waller, my boss, had little experience in this area. He had the parameters, which had been set by Houston, probably by Robert DeFleurier. We discussed the concept at some length after which he told me to take the ball and run with it. He would check with me from time to time on the progress I was making and inform the powers that be.

Geologic and thus reservoir conditions vary widely throughout the United States. As described in chapter five, various trapping mechanisms exist as well. Porosities in the Texas and Louisiana gulf coasts run above 30% while in the Rocky Mountain area, porosities above 20% are considered excellent and gas is produced in porosities down to 4%. Likewise, many oil fields produce from carbonates, i.e. limestone and dolomite and are often drilled with salt muds, while sandstone reservoirs are likely to be drilled with fresh mud. Fortunately, the principles involved in the reservoir engineering exercises we wished to demonstrate are basically the same regardless of trapping

mechanisms, drilling methods and mud or geologic properties. Consequently, I decided to build my model from fresh mud logs obtained from the Rocky Mountain area. They would be more readily available and also represent the more typical logging suites of the various areas of the country. I decided to include the Dual Induction – Spherically Focused log or DIL/SFL, the Sonic Gamma Ray Caliper or BHC/GR/CAL, the Sidewall Neutron Gamma Ray Caliper Log or SNP/GR/CAL and the Compensated Density Gamma Ray Caliper Log or FDC/GR/CAL. Drill stem and production testing information from hypothetical pressure buildup curves would also be included so the student could calculate formation permeability, the extent of formation damage and the original shut in or formation pressure. I could produce the hypothetical buildup curves to match the reservoir parameters I chose but producing well logs for the services named in each well with their differing depths was another matter.

After drawing a hypothetical structural contour map of an anticline with a single normal fault through one end, I went to Bill and explained the logging problem. I had several suitable real logging suites from which I could manufacture hypothetical logs for each well but I needed a method of transforming each log type on each well into a realistic looking but hypothetical recording of that particular service. Bill set up a meeting with the Computer Center manager to whom I once again explained the problem. He said he could produce a realistic looking log from my pieced together product with the computer. They could hand digitize the logs in two-foot intervals for each measurement, combine the appropriate curves for each service, i.e. SNP/GR/CAL or FDC/GR/CAL and produce a real looking film. Thus, I could have the suite of logs I wanted for each well, tailored to the structure and sandstone thickness of the reservoir. It would be time consuming for both the people digitizing the logs and me but once done, we would have films for each service on each well. From these we could make prints for each engineer to work from. That was exactly what I wanted and I went back to my office to begin my work on the project.

The first step was to get my hypothetical trap and reservoir approved. That meant drawing a finalized structural contour map with associated cross-sections. I would then have to make an isopach (sand thickness) map of the reservoir, a porosity and permeability map displaying these

parameter variations throughout the trap. With the mapping complete I would then select appropriate shut in reservoir pressures. In a few days, these were completed and I passed them by Bill for his approval. If interested, go to chapter five to review various types of maps. You will find examples of structural contour maps, cross-sections and isopach maps but not porosity or permeability maps. These would look much like the isopach map but the contour lines would be defined as % porosity or as permeability in millidarcies. I don't intend to draw the structure or isopach maps of the actual project but I will include porosity and permeability maps superimposed on an isopach map with well positions for clarification. Figure

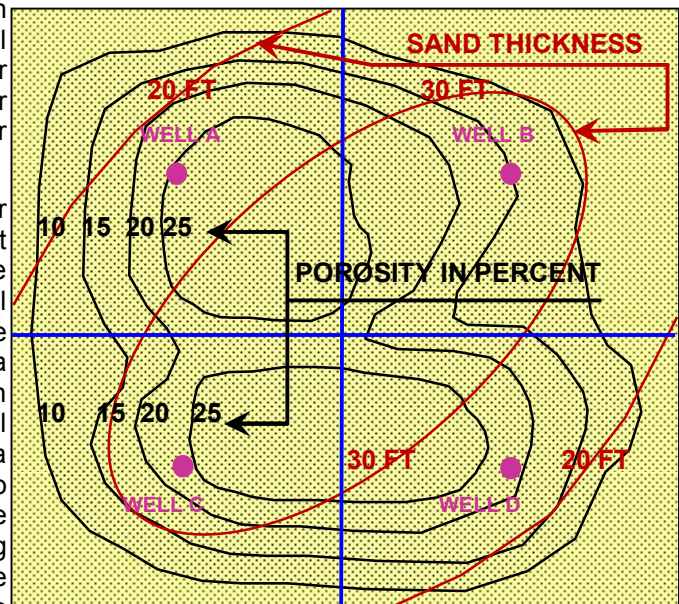


Figure 16-88 A simple illustration of a porosity map(black) superimposed on an isopach map(red).

16-88 illustrates a porosity map and figure 16-89 a permeability map.

From the maps of figures 16-88 and 16-89, note that well A has a sand thickness of about 24 feet with an average porosity of 25% and a permeability of 46 Md., well B a thickness of over 30 feet but a porosity of 15% with a permeability of 29 Md., well C a thickness of over 30 feet with a porosity of about 23% and a permeability of 50 Md., while well D has a thickness of 25 feet, a porosity of about 22% and a permeability of 37 Md. These well properties I have just listed in addition to their structural positions constitute the answers or information sought after by the various tests that are run. The new engineer would be expected

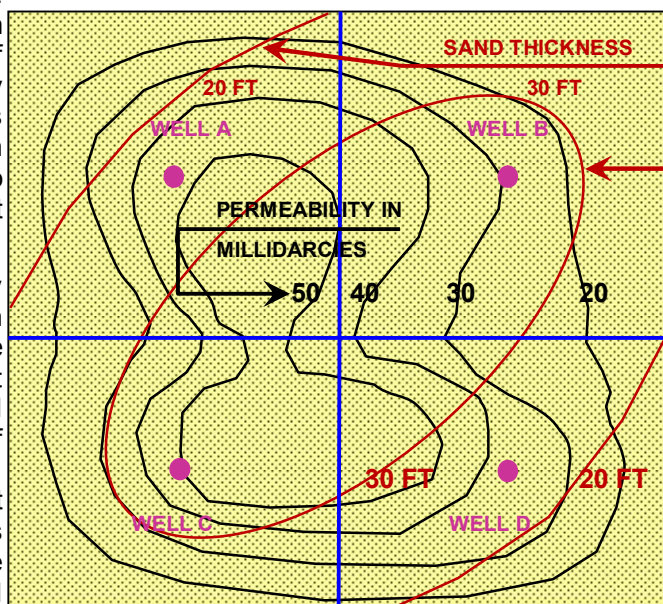
to draw such maps or a reasonable facsimile thereof from the data he is furnished. My challenge then became a matter of working backwards to establish the data that would fit the maps I had drawn. Of course, the maps I have drawn are not those of the actual project. This feeble old brain may have that data stored somewhere but my ability to recall it has disappeared long ago. However, the maps do illustrate the problem I was faced with and what I used to explain my approach, in accomplishing the project, to my boss. If ever there was an example of one picture or diagram being worth a thousand words, this was it. It didn't take too long to get my message across.

Bill Waller seemed happy with my efforts to that point and gave me a green light to proceed. What else could he do but demonstrate faith in such efforts considering his limited knowledge of the subject? Mainly, he was interested in my progress. He could then keep his superiors posted, which included interested parties in Houston. Now the real work would begin; i.e. to produce realistic logs and pressure tests to fit the answers I had established for the project.

I decided to start by deriving all the necessary data for one well, which in turn would establish the procedures necessary for the remaining nine wells. Being realistic in nature, I knew that unanticipated problems would arise and need solutions in addition to the obvious need of streamlining procedures for the remaining work. I began by developing the logging suite for that one well. Because the zone of interest was around a thousand feet, I decided to limit the actual recordings to that interval. This would minimize the necessary digitizing for the computer processing and still provide the information the young engineer needed to distinguish the pay zone from other reservoirs in the interval. It would also provide a sufficient log interval for the eventual correlation exercise of the ten wells, which would establish the structure. That is, the depth of equivalent points in each well would provide the control for the structural contour map. The individual logs would also establish the reservoir thickness in each well in addition to the average porosity, thus providing the control points for those maps.

Figure 16-90 is kind of a summary of these ideas. The resistivity curves of wells 1, 2, 3 and 4 are provided for illustration and aren't meant to fit the conditions shown by the maps of figures 16-88 and 16-89. The SP curve is provided for

well 1 only but would be similar in the other wells if shown. The lines between logs connect equivalent points of deposition in the sedimentary cycle or points of correlation in each well. Two water bearing sands are shown in light yellow in wells 1 & 2 while the hydrocarbon bearing sand in all wells is designated by a brownish color. Notice the sedimentary section in wells 1 & 2 between 9300 and 9400 appears to be missing in wells 3 & 4. This missing section may be explained by a normal fault cutting through the latter two wells. Notice also that both the thickness and depth of the hydrocarbon sand in wells 1 & 2 varies as well as in wells 3 & 4. We can display this variation in thickness and depth with isopach and structural contour maps. The



**Figure 16-89** An illustration of a permeability map (black) superimposed on an isopach map (red).

variation in thickness is designated by contour lines, which connect points of equal thickness of a specified zone or reservoir, as shown in figures 16-88 and 16-89. The variation in depth of a given surface, such as the top or bottom of a sandstone body, is mapped by designating its elevation relative to some fixed datum, such as sea level. The elevations of the surface of interest in each well are then placed on a map at the location of each well. Contours or lines of equal elevation are then drawn. The resulting map illustrates the shape of that surface much as a topographical map illustrates the elevation variation of the ground's surface. Figure 5-13 on page 189 provides an example, if interested.

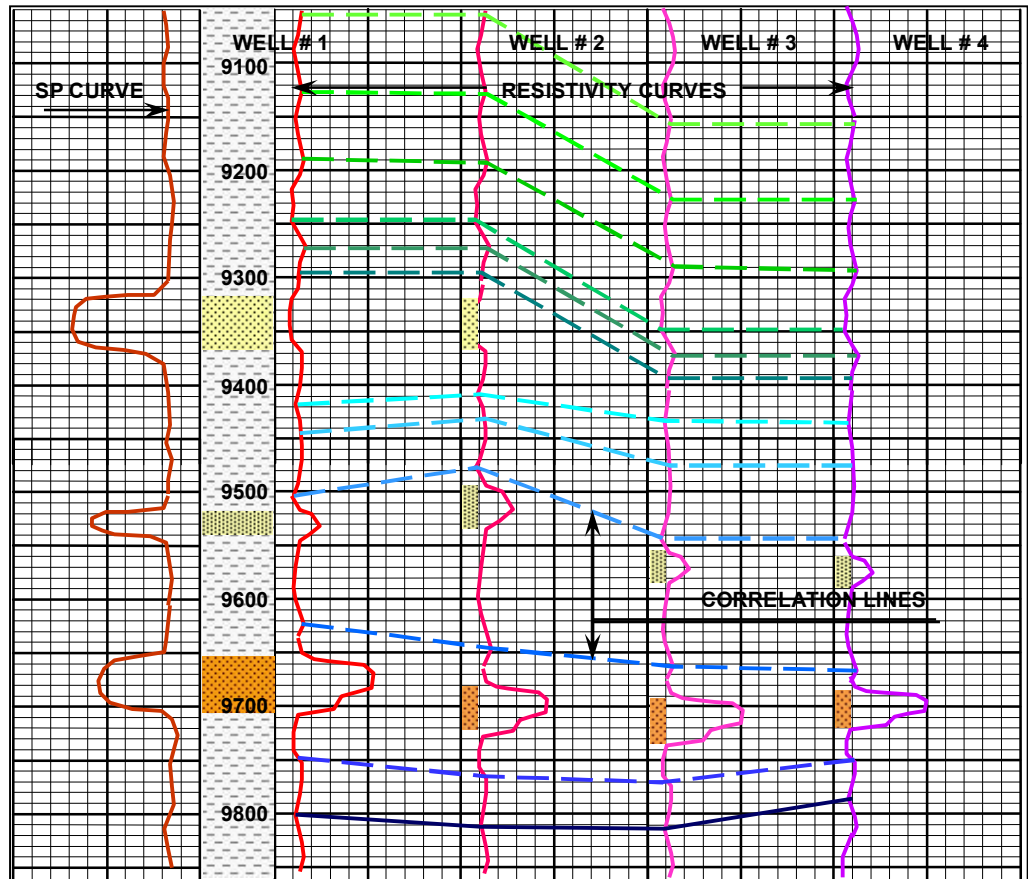


Average permeability of a reservoir is established through drill stem or production testing. See chapter 5, page 226 for a review. The pressure buildup curve thus obtained can be used to determine the permeability. It is similar to that obtained with the formation tester and illustrated on page 347 of chapter 7. Once obtained in each well and plotted on a map base in a manner similar to the elevations just discussed, they can be contoured, as well and produce a map similar to that of figure 16-89. I provided such a hypothetical buildup curve for each well in addition to the logs. Once the logs were interpreted and the reservoir identified, the new engineer would be given the pressure data from which he could calculate the permeability.

Well, the idea worked and I reviewed my first set of hypothetical logs and the associated DST or drill stem test data with Bill Waller. Soon after that, I was invited to explain the project to division managers at one of their regular meetings with the Region Manager. Everyone seemed satisfied and I went back to grind out similar data for the remaining 9 wells. By early 1985 I had the project completed and ready for a trial run in our next training class at the Denver Training Center. The project was used for the new class with positive results in the reservoir engineering area. We were successful in teaching the engineers the desired concepts but unfortunately the time required detracted from the training in other areas, as I had predicted. Upon graduation, the new engineers were weak in the basic areas necessary to run

satisfactory logs in the field. Such skills are paramount for our field engineers at that point in their careers, whereas reservoir engineering knowledge can wait until logging proficiency is established. Thus, we had to back off on such training and re-emphasize basic logging techniques again. There were many dissenters to Robert DeFleurier's rather radical ideas, not so much in their ultimate value but in his insistence for teaching such concepts prior to a new engineer's development into a competent field engineer. Knowledge of reservoir engineering would be desirable once an engineer had proved his self competence in running and interpreting the services we, Schlumberger, offered the industry but not before.

The price of oil was dropping during this whole activity and soon after that came a big drop in



**Figure 16-90 A set of resistivity logs from 4 wells illustrating point to point correlation with fault identification and structure definition.**

drilling activity in the United States. Needless to say our business was impacted and the company began to tighten its belt. Positions were eliminated and jobs combined to increase

efficiency. Changes in my job weren't far behind. I knew that would be the case, having been through similar slowdowns before and wasn't surprised at all when they came.

In the fall of 1985, I was moved out to the training center to manage it, thus eliminating the training center manager, per se. We ran one small class through the training center that fall with little emphasis on reservoir engineering. By the end of the year, the oil business was in a downward spiral with oil prices continuing to fall to new lows. It was evident that this problem wouldn't be short lived. There was a consolidation of offices. For example, the Western Region Office was combined with the Mid Continent Region and offices were moved to Oklahoma City. It appeared the Denver Training Center would be shut down completely as further consolidation took place. I, along with numerous other old timers, was given the option of retiring early with a bonus of one year's salary. If I stayed on, I might be able to move some place and continue in another position but the future looked rather gloomy for the oil business. However, I was in the right location, that is Denver, for retirement and after due consideration, I accepted.

My retirement took place at the end of June 1986, almost 31 years to the day from the time I went to work. It had been a great ride, bumpy in places but none-the-less satisfying. Schlumberger was and still is, I feel sure, a great company to work for. We worked hard but the closest I ever came to being bored was in the position of training manager near the end. Considering all things, I would do the whole thing over again if I were a young engineer looking for an interesting job. I have no regrets, even with my demotion in 1979. I feel I was treated fairly and given an opportunity to work at jobs I was qualified for. My retirement has proven to be a satisfying time of life due to new interests that I have developed and the reliability of my pension and profit sharing funds. I have often thought just how fortunate I am for such financial stability when I hear of the loss of similar funds by others due to everything from poor management to financial corruption. I was indeed fortunate to work for a company run by managers with sound ethics. We worked hard but were paid proportionately, retired secure, enjoyed the various people we worked with. Most were ethical if not moral. Some were more mouth than substance but it took knowledge and hard work to advance. In my own case, my

progress followed a well-known management maxim, namely that in any organization people rise to the level of their incompetence. I had and the ride was wonderful except, of course, for the inevitable crash at the end. In my behalf, I can say that I accepted all challenges presented to me, struggled with some and shined with others. I have asked myself whether I would have been wise to turn down the promotion to Off Shore Technical Manager and played it safe as a division engineer. There I was recognized as one of the best. I don't think so because the time I spent therein as well as the frustration with my lack of real success has helped me understand myself better and taught me somewhat in accepting the bitter as well as the sweet. Both are part of the school of life and who can say which is the most valuable to our preparation for the eternities to come. I loved the technical challenge presented by our little portion of the oil business and can sincerely say; "I was never bored". The whole experience has now become a fond memory and is securely embedded in my psyche for future reference.

The Christmas before, Tom had extended his mission call by six months and was due to come home in July 1986. We had made plans, before I knew of my retirement, to go to Germany and pick him up as well as tour the area a little. I could see no need to change them and consequently, that little part of my life will be dealt with in the next chapter. I have elected to title it as; "My Retirement Years in Denver". That may not be very original but it certainly is descriptive of the years that followed in Denver.