

---

## CHAPTER TWO

\*\*\*\*\*

### SCHOOL DAYS IN BOISE

#### WHITTIER SCHOOL

**I**n the fall of 1935 I started the second grade in Boise. My teacher was Mrs. Wickersham whom, I hope, taught me to spell her name correctly. I went to Whittier school, which was located on about



**Figure 2-1** From left to right, Dan, Phil and me on the front porch at 17<sup>th</sup> & Irene.

12th and Fort streets. I suppose I was a little bit of a teacher's pet at that time. I got along fine with her and even thought she was nice, though stern. Kids in general didn't seem to like her too well because she wouldn't take a lot of guff. I

remember her passing out candy to those who did well in reading. I suppose that was my main motivation for doing my best but, of course, there was no TV in those days. I don't even remember having a radio in our house at that particular time. So, quite naturally, we read books. Our class reading activity, as I remember it, took place in a semi-circle of chairs in the front of the room on a regular basis. Mrs. Wickersham would make us sound out unfamiliar words and read long enough to satisfy her evaluation of our ability. At times she seemed gruff and stern, at least to us, but also she displayed a rather kind and thoughtful nature as well. I suspect she was just a conscientious and dedicated teacher. One thing that made quite an impression on me was getting a tremendous candy cane from Mrs. Wickersham at Christmas time. It seemed like it was 3 feet long but maybe a foot would be more accurate. I thought that was about the greatest gift she could give me. Notice how my memories always seem to be associated with food of some kind.

#### A LIFELONG NEMESIS

It was in the second grade at Whittier school where I first remember being taken advantage of by a school bully. I was bigger or at least taller as I remember, but he was tough and knew it. Unfortunately, I thought so too and only knew I was scared. He would threaten to whip me after school but somehow I managed to sneak by him or run faster or do whatever was required to get away. Looking back I would have to say that I was a rather insecure child, at best, and if described in the vernacular, as Dan did so aptly, it would be more like "you big chicken" or maybe "big baby", if he felt good. This might have been the point in my life where I first became aware of a definite lack of courage or self-confidence on my part. I simply wasn't very macho or manly; however you might care to phrase it. In fact,

Dan used his favorite term, “big baby”, on a rather frequent basis and so, I suppose, I was. There was nothing in my life at that time to refute it. I was tall and skinny and his reminding me didn't help a whole lot. He, of course, used to whip me on a rather regular basis also. Phil, on the other hand, often took my side and gave me the protection I needed. That's when Dan's frustration would result in the big baby designation. I offer my own analysis of this particular characteristic of mine, at this point, because it seemed to plague me much of my life in various forms.

#### SOME RAMIFICATIONS OF MY TIMIDITY

My timidity manifested itself as fear of the imaginary or unknown, as well as a general insecurity. Thus it had a serious effect on my ability to interact with others or even perform in accordance with my God given abilities. Yes, in short, I was easily intimidated and lacked courage. I was always known as a quiet or timid little boy. Dan, on the other hand, was very outgoing, had no trouble with interpersonal relations and was liked by almost everyone. How I envied him. Now, in retrospect, I can see where my performance in the presence of others was often at a level less than my native ability because of such fear, intimidation, nervousness, lack of courage or whatever you might care to call it. Imagination was more the issue than the reality of the situation. I might well have been as competent as those I was comparing myself to and likewise equal to the situation in which I was in. However, I frequently found myself subdued and unable to express myself effectively when in the presence of those in authority, of recognized prominence, position or intelligence. Later, I would beat myself up when I would under perform in those circumstances. I recognized my nervousness or lack of confidence was the culprit but didn't know how to deal with it. I can now see where I did rather dumb things from time to time to attract attention and did so successfully in far too many cases, which unfortunately, was to my embarrassment.

The picture of (Figure 2-1) was probably taken about 1941 when I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade or some 5 years later than the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade incident I spoke of but it does illustrate the tall, skinny image I mentioned. You can see the self-confidence oozing out in Dan on the left. Phil, (center),

exhibited a rather calm competent image as well, at least in my mind, but not as aggressive and outgoing as Dan, while my confidence (if there was any) was hiding somewhere in that tall skinny frame. Not having a photo of my second grade era I decided to include this one to demonstrate my point. It has taken a lifetime for me to really appreciate the importance of the virtues of courage and self-confidence. It is these characteristics, I believe, which allow a person to perform up to and even above their real ability. They probably contribute more to temporal success than native ability does.

I am confident that Dan's success in the insurance business resulted, to a large extent, from these particular strengths; although he also had the necessary administrative and managing abilities along with the required intelligence.

#### DEALING WITH MY TIMIDITY

In my own defense, I do believe my awareness of not being macho, so to speak, drove me to getting involved in more macho pursuits, such as football, smoke chasing, working in the oil field, etc. In my own way I tried to attack the problem as, I understood it, by doing things which demanded the qualities I felt I was weak in. Geophysics and the oil field, of course, were also related to my interest in math and science as well as my love for the out of doors. In hindsight, I found them fun, interesting and rewarding in my life and wouldn't change a single thing. However, I mention all this because, all through life, I seemed to find myself in fearful situations and would tough it out rather than admit I was scared. Even so, such nervousness often resulted in poorer performance than that which I was capable of.

On the other hand such involvement, along with maturity, has probably helped me a great deal in

**It is these characteristics, I believe, which allow a person to perform up to and even above their real ability and probably contribute as much or more to temporal success than does the latter.**

overcoming or at least minimizing later effects of this particular weakness. By better understanding myself, I can now appreciate more fully the

difficulty others often experience in life for the same or similar reasons. It has taught me to look beyond the obvious or the apparent when trying to analyze and understand another person's actions. Finally, at the ripe old age of 80 I understand that I, as well as a host of others, seem to hogtie their native abilities through such fear and its resultant intimidation. Such inhibitions take much of the joy out of life

by reducing potential accomplishment. Now, let's move on and get back to Whittier School.

### **BACK TO WHITTIER SCHOOL**

The last I knew Whittier was still used as an administration building of some kind. At one time it was completely closed down as a school but was used to teach crafts of various kinds. I don't know whether the school system sponsored the craft activity or not. I remember mom going there to make several plaques and statuettes of different kinds of wildlife, etc. She seemed to enjoy it a lot and I guess was quite good at painting them, which was the major talent required. We had many such objects around the house for years after that. Later in life, she tried her hand at painting scenery and still life. It seems to me, she displayed a reasonable talent in those areas as well.

### **FRANKLIN STREET RESIDENCE**

I continued on at Whittier school in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade even though we moved to another house on Franklin Street, sandwiched between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, I believe. My teacher was Mrs. Noble. She was much less stern than was Mrs. Wickersham and was liked better by the kids. Her room was across the hall from my second grade class. I remember music class where we sang songs and played little percussion instruments such as the triangle, the tambourine, etc. I still remember parts of a couple of the songs such as one about Columbus and his discovery of the new world. The nemesis of my second grade, i.e. the bully, doesn't come to mind during that year. Either he had moved on or he decided plaguing me wasn't fun any longer. It's interesting to note that I have less memories of Mrs. Noble's class than that of Mrs. Wickersham's. It's not clear why because Mrs. Noble's classroom demeanor was somewhat friendlier than that of the latter.

### **TED'S ARRIVAL & SLEEPING FACILITIES**

Ted was born on Franklin Street in 1937, but just barely, if I have his age correct. That brought the family to a total of eleven souls counting mom and dad. I don't remember feeling particularly crowded but I do remember sleeping in a large back bedroom with Phil, Dan and I all in the same bed. Actually, there were some other beds in there as well, at least one but maybe more. The room probably wasn't

designed as a bedroom but it would take mom or one of the older girls to clear that up. The next story has to do with this situation.

### **DAN'S SALES ABILITIES EMERGE**

One incident, which took place in that room, remains clear in my memory. It occurred one Saturday morning about wake up time. I guess all of us were in various stages of coming to. All at once we were greeted with a loud yell from Dan. It didn't start off softly and build up. No siree, like a clap of thunder we were bombarded with his salesmanship. You see, it seems he was selling newspapers in his sleep. He, I and Phil, of course, were all in the same bed when the storm broke. Suddenly, we hear Dan yelling at the top of his voice, "Boise Capital Newspaper, Boise Capital Newspaper, paper mister, paper mister, it's only a nickel." That was like an alarm and everyone, including the girls on the other side of this rather big room, were awakened instantly. We all had a good laugh and, of course, teased Dan unmercifully. However, I have often suspected, knowing Dan as I do, that his act that morning was all a show and the real laugh was on us. I feel sure the master of finesse had taken all of us in.

**Soon we began a barter business in which we would trade a loaf of bread for a certain number of sweet rolls or whatever else they had to offer.**

### **BARTERING FOR SWEETS**

We had various playmates around the area, two of whom lived just across the alley in back of us. Their dad was a baker and brought home all kinds of sweet rolls, cakes, etc. We didn't ever get such stuff and, in fact, mom even made our bread. At times, when I was in their house they would share a little sweet roll or maybe a doughnut and I thought they tasted the best of almost anything in the world. They liked our homemade bread a lot better than the bakery bread they had to eat and we would share it with them. Soon we began a barter business in which we would trade a loaf of bread for a certain number of sweet rolls or whatever else they had to offer. It seemed to work quite well for a while; until mom put a stop to it, that is. Whether it was the disappearance of the bread or the fact we were getting too many sweets, I don't know but stop it she did. Boy we thought she had a low level of tolerance.

### **MACHINE GUNS**

Yet another fond memory is Phil's machine gun, which was constructed so as to shoot 36 rubber

inner tube missiles without reloading. Phil and Dan used to have some kind of a club, I believe, and would have rubber gun wars with other kids. I was kind of on the fringes, being only in the third grade, but I do remember them galloping around shooting their guns and if they caught a prisoner he would be subjected to a firing squad with that 36 shot machine gun. It had three barrels with twelve shots each. The executioner would fire each shot by lifting up on a string placed under the bands, as they were loaded on to the barrel. Firing could be rapid or slow at his discretion. Boy was it fun to watch the victims cringe as they anticipated that volley of shots that was about to clobber them.

### COLD WINTERS

I also remember winters being very cold at that time but maybe they were simply exaggerated childhood memories.

Milk, which was delivered, frequently froze before we brought it in. That was before milk was homogenized, of course, and the cream would expand right out of the bottle as the milk froze. The simple cardboard cap used to close the bottle would rest snugly, like a crown, on top of the cream about an inch or two above the bottle. I used to think that was neat as I brought the milk in, at times, before breakfast or leaving for school. During that particular era we had considerable snow on the ground and I remember being bundled



**Figure 2-2 Grandpa selling the Boise Capital News (click art).**

up with a hat and ear muffs as well as mittens, galoshes and a rather heavy coat. We walked a pretty good distance to Whittier school and had to get in and out of that paraphernalia several times daily. What a chore that was for us and the teachers before and after recess.

### SELLING NEWSPAPERS

Franklin Street was our home when I first remember selling newspapers on the street. My assigned corner much of the time was the U. S. Post Office, which was across from the Hotel Boise. Papers were a nickel a copy and I think

my cut may have been about a penny a copy. There was a hamburger stand across from the post office where hamburgers were a nickel apiece. I would frequently buy one while selling papers and if I had a good night I might buy two. I remember saving enough money to buy both Mom and Dad something for Christmas as well as satisfying my own limited desires. That wasn't too bad for a third grader, I guess. Such activity on my part is a testimony of how safe the streets were at that time. Mom simply didn't seem to worry that much even though we would get home at eight or nine at night. Crime and child molesting was almost non-existent then. Phil and Dan also sold papers on different corners, some of the time I was involved, and we would all go home together each night.

I put my best into selling papers. Not that I was particularly ambitious but it meant more hamburgers and other goodies, which rewards were rather infrequent during this period. My enthusiasm must have impressed some people because I was approached one day by a man who wanted to set up a particular radio-add. Remember, there was no TV. Anyway he wanted me to use the same enthusiasm and voice to sell or advertise a product on the radio. I believe it was orange juice. He promised me some tremendous sum of money, like \$5. Boy, was I game for that. The following Saturday I went up to the KIDO radio station to do my bit. He had everything set up to record and gave me the script I was supposed to yell in my newspaper selling voice. I tried several times but never came up with the same result I had on the street, I suppose, because I never heard it on the radio. Even so, I got my \$5 before leaving my only recording session, as a rich young man.

### A WRINGING EXPERIENCE

Mom got her first electric washing machine there on Franklin Street too, I believe. How she ever kept us clean prior to that I'd never know. It was also in that house that I managed to get my hand tied up in the wringer of that new fangled washing machine. Mom was washing in the bathroom located on the second floor, which was the only space for that operation, I guess. It was quite big in terms of today's bathrooms. Of course, the john was located in there as was a bathtub. I went in when mom left; locked the door and took care of my problem. It was then that I got curious and began examining the wringer on this fancy washer. We hadn't had

such a nice one before. Well, it grabbed a hold of my hand and started pulling it into the wringer. My hand was wadded up so it couldn't pull it though and the rollers kept turning while chewing away the flesh. I screamed like a banshee, bringing mom to the door.

I had conveniently locked it to prevent any disturbance of my activities. Of course, she couldn't get in and called for a neighbor who lived on the upstairs floor of the house. He broke the lock, came in and released the wringer. My hand was a mess. I remember being taken to the doctor and then wearing a big bandage for some time. The wringers had damaged some tendons, which later prevented me from straightening out my index finger on my right hand. The scars have persisted throughout my life. Other than that I was no worse for the wear but, I suspect, I'm just one of a few who can in all honesty say, "I really have been run through the wringer in life". Of course, such a remark would bring little sympathy and have questionable value in terms of my getting sympathy from others and particularly Dan.

**AN ELECTRIC STOVE**

I remember mom getting her first "electric" stove while we lived on Franklin Street. It had four burners and an oven but the latter was off to the right side, not underneath as today. It also stood somewhat higher than the burner area. The stove was a marvel to me and I'm sure those responsible for cooking really appreciated its almost instant and controllable level of heat. Man, our family had now arrived in the modern era and had just begun to enjoy some of its marvels with many yet to come.

**STRESSES OF ENEMATIC HEALTH CARE**

I suppose this is the best place to slip in a story, as told by Phil, explaining one of my greatest fears growing up, namely getting sick. As Phil explains, it wasn't the sickness that worried the others or me but the cure, which inevitably

followed, quickly, efficiently but not so silently. Here is story whose title has a double meaning, i.e. Mom, the enemy in a sense, as well as the hydraulic process used in effecting the cure. By the way, that instrument hanging from her pocket is part of that instrument of torture disguised to throw us off guard. I'm referring to the click art included herein, which is meant to depict mom stalking her prey. Actually, there wasn't much stalking involved. Mom would simply call some pitiful soul and say; "Get in here, it's time for your enema". Now, for Phil's somewhat passionate story regarding this stressful era of our lives. There can be little doubt that such passion sprang from personal experience. One can almost feel the psychological as well as physical discomfort that must still be torturing his memory, as he sat down to write this gut-wrenching era of his life.

**PHIL'S STORY**

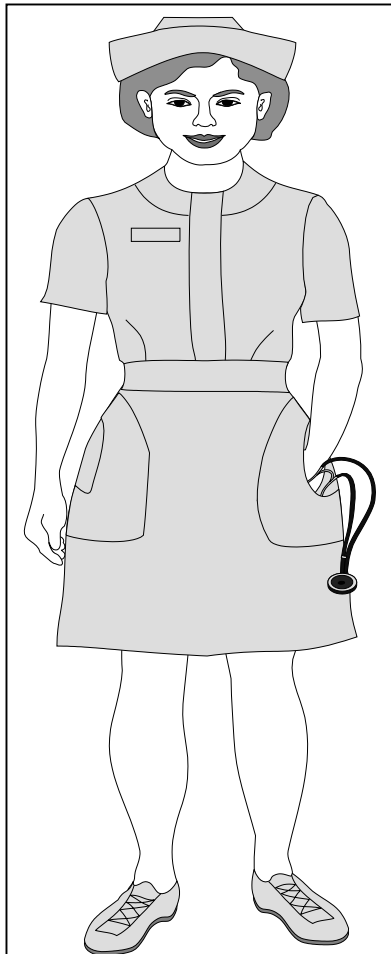
*People today don't really know how health care worries can plague a person. When we were young, health care concerns were real, imminent and threatening in a way that, when I think back, makes me break into a cold sweat. I mean a real threat.*

*How would you like it if at any sign of the least compromise of wellness (hiccups, 0.2 of a degree temperature rise, itty bitty headaches or a sprained ankle) you get up to 3.5 gallons of water pumped into your innards?*

*Mom believed in enemas..."It'll clean you out." She didn't just believe, she worshipped at the shrine of that red rubber water bag. It was always hanging there*

*on the inside of the bathroom door to remind the Obe-nine, "One sign of weakness, kid and your mine." As a result, we didn't have the usual big family squabbles over bathroom rights as some families did. None of us wanted to stay in there any longer than necessary.*

*This threat did more to keep Boise schools attendance at record levels in the 1930's, '40's and '50's than any other single factor. The*



**Figure 3-2 Mom stalking her prey prior to administering her enematic treatment.**

thought of an enema meant that we went to school masking sickness for which other kids went into intensive care. On those few occasions when one of us was out due to illness, "ill" meant that the kid was down with bubonic plague, complicated by smallpox, strep throat and pneumonia. Even then we only stayed out maybe one day since we knew that Mom believed, "An enema a day keeps the doctor away." It sure did.

Not only did Mom believe in enemas, she believed in a very special kind of pressurized



**Figure 2-4 Dad and Grandpa James, around 1935, with June, I believe, in his arms.**

enema called a "colonic irrigation." This entailed the use of a squeeze bulb about midway along the hose that did the business --- squeeze and it shot the water into you at roughly fire hose pressure. The intestinal "bugs" were thought drowned only when the water shot out your ears. Be assured of one thing, we had the cleanest ears in town.

Delight, perhaps better than any of us, remembers well how embarrassing this treatment could be even when administered to hapless siblings. One time she was with her beau in the parlor, you know, playing records, soft music, when little Teddy's screams from the bathroom broke the spell, "Take it out! Take it

out!" What could one say? Perhaps suggest the kid had a toothache and wanted the tooth out now.

I believe that these treatments involved about 3.5 gallons of water (maybe a bit less for the younger ones). I can tell you this for sure, it was enough to clean our tonsils because there has not been one tonsillectomy in all nine kids.

About the only negative physical effect this form of treatment had on any of us was the way we walked. I recall school principals calling up on those two or three occasions when someone had been absent from school to ask, "Why is it that your children walk funny after they've been ill?" The folks hadn't noticed anything different but what happened was --- well, the constant threat of an enema did make us walk differently. Around home we always walked sideways (kinda like a crab) with our posterior next to the wall. Just basic defense. When you grow up that way, it's bound to influence your stride. Of course we aren't aware but to this day all nine of us, when walking and deep in thought or at times of stress, take a couple of steps forward and then one or two sideways --sort of slaunchwise -- then several steps forward and several slaunchwise again. But when you catch yourself doing sort of a "side-slip hop" downtown, it's embarrassing, so I usually hum some jolly tune and people think I'm just practicing the fox trot.

Say what we will about that kind of health care but here are all nine kids, ages about sixty to seventy five, still humming along as if we were yet faced with the enema threat. It just has to be the enemas -- or, maybe it could be the aerobic benefit of all those years of "side-slip Hops".

I'm glad Phil chose to tell that story. I had forgotten it or maybe suppressed it, a technique many psychologists tell us we use to put our most painful memories out of mind. As Phil mentioned, that cure had a way of motivating one to regain their health on their own. I suspect my will power, which has served me well during my life, flowered at that particular time allowing me to endure considerable discomfort in order to avoid a more painful cure. I have often wondered whether such psychology might not have some healing effects for today's more serious diseases, i.e. you simply threaten a person with a cure more dreaded than the disease itself and the patient denies its existence, thereby eliminating its ability to progress. I suppose, however, that such radical

thinking would never hold up in the medical community, though chemotherapy and certain other treatments seem to be of that nature. That is, the cure may be worse than the disease.

**GRANDPA JAMES & GRANDMA LYDIA**

This seems like an appropriate place to introduce my readers to my grandpa James and grandma Lydia Obenchain. You see, grandpa passed away on May 28, 1937 while we lived on Franklin Street. I remember him wearing a patch over one eye when I last saw him. Though I'm not sure, I somehow associate his death with cancer, which, I believe, damaged his eye in some manner. In any case, he passed away soon after in Boise, Idaho according to our records. In figure 2-4, I have included a copy of the only photo I have of him, which was probably taken in 1935 or so. That should be June in dad's arms and she looks to be in the neighborhood of 3 years old.

Grandma Lydia lived until July 24<sup>th</sup> of 1949 and died in Hailey. The photo of figure 2-5 was taken on the porch at 17<sup>th</sup> and Irene prior to dad's renovation, which means before 1945, I suppose. After grandpa died, grandma came to stay with us for about every year or so from time to time. I don't remember having much to do with her but neither do I remember her being unkind. Having raised some 12 kids of her own, I suspect she was just plain tired of them as well as being in her 60s. She lived to be about 77, having been born on July 30, 1872. It's interesting how ones perception of age changes, as they grow older. The 60s don't seem bad



**Figure 2-6 Our home on 14<sup>th</sup> & Alturas Streets; housing 9 children and 2 adults.**

now as I approach 81. I guess I'll make it a few more years past the age at which she passed away. I have a couple of cute stories regarding

grandma and I, which took place on 11<sup>th</sup> street in about the year 1940. I'll insert those when I get to that point in my life.

**MOVING ON TO 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET**

By the time I entered the fourth grade we had moved to a brick house on 14th and Alturas



**Figure 2-5 Grandma Lydia posing on the front porch rail at 17<sup>th</sup> and Irene.**

streets. While there, I attended Washington school, which was located several blocks away on 15th and Brumback streets, I believe. About a block away was a big (in my mind) stone Methodist church. Hyde Park, a little commercial area, was located just two blocks away on the opposite corner of the block we lived on, i.e. we lived on the SW corner with Hyde Park basically situated around the intersection of the NE corner of that block. Mom did the grocery shopping in what I guess was the Hyde Park Grocery but I'm not sure of the store's actual name. I can remember going to the store for her at times for such things as a soup bone. There was little meat on such a bone but I guess it did flavor the soup. Anyway, mom would supplement the soup with plenty of

bread and I really don't remember going hungry or even walking away from the table with a growling stomach. Of course, with 9 children and 5 of them being boys, one had to fight for his or her share of the food placed on the table. I suspect our manners were virtually non-existent but who knows other than the good Lord and mom. Now, a few incidents I remember at that home that may be worthy of telling.

### SANTA CLAUSE

It was at our house on 14<sup>th</sup> that I finally accepted the fact that there was no Santa Claus. The only Christmas we spent there was rather meager, as usual. I had asked for a new pair of boots with a little leather pocket on the side to hold a pocketknife as well as a knife to go in it. Well, I got my wish but found the boots hidden in a bedroom in a Sears box a couple of weeks ahead of time. When I made it known, my siblings were quick to point out that I was old enough to know the truth (being a 4<sup>th</sup> grader) and my worst fears became a reality. Even though I got the knife as well, I remember being a sad, realizing I couldn't depend on old Saint Nick anymore to come through with more gifts.

The photo of our house (Figure 2-6) was taken in the summer of 1997 after a family reunion. As I remember the house it was somewhat more run down than it appears in the photo, at least after we finished with it, and there was no fence around it. Other than that it looks much the same on the outside. Apparently it has a new roof and paint job, which remarkably improves the appearance. I would guess the inside has been renovated as well, which would make it a new house with only the old frame supporting it.

### REOCCURRING CRIMINAL TENDENCIES

My criminal tendencies sprang up again while we were in that house on fourteenth. A friend of mine who lived next door and I were playing one day outside. Apparently, one of us had a penny or two to spend on candy because we proceeded to the store about two blocks away in Hyde Park with sweets on our minds. The money we had wouldn't do our appetites justice, so we decided to swipe a little candy to go along with what we could buy. I believe my friend was the mastermind, naturally, and we executed the plan which included paying for the little we could. All went well until we met my cousin Jim just a little way from the store. He became suspicious, I guess from the quantity we had or maybe we offered him some or some other

dumb thing. In any case, he ratted on us, telling mom of his suspicions. I didn't much more than get back near home with some of the loot until mom had me by the ear. We went back to the store where I returned all that was left with an apology. I suppose mom paid for the rest because she made me own up to everything. She informed my friend's mother but I'm not sure what his sentence was.

### THE TRELIS INCIDENT

Once, while my aunt and uncle and probably some cousins were over, the evening wore on until mom decided it was my bedtime. It seems my other younger siblings were already in bed. In any case I headed up the stairs, which were dark as pharaoh's tomb. There was no light switch at the bottom of the stairs, in those days, which allowed a hall light to be turned on or off. In fact, there was no light in the stairwell because I had to enter my room in the dark before I could find the switch. That much I



Figure 2-7 Dan's fiendish face as he jumped out that fateful night on 14<sup>th</sup> street.

remember clearly. Well, leave it to Dan when it comes to a quick mind for bedevilment. Before I could get upstairs (admittedly I wasn't very speedy when it came to bedtime), Dan had exited the house, climbed the trellis just outside my window and hid in the dark in my room. He grabbed hold of me as I entered the room and let out some kind of devilish cry which was only exceeded by mine in volume and, of course, in fright. What had a hold of me only my imagination could describe, maybe a bear, a lion, a wild boar or some fiendish creature from that nether world of evil spirits. I'm not sure just



how the situation ended but I believe I took the stairs down about three at a time with an accompanying scream, while Dan rolled on the floor in laughter. There is still some question in my mind whether Dan's rather regular antics, such as this, were contributory to my babyish ways or therapy for them. In any case I survived my years with him without any particular decrease in affection, but gosh, how I would still like to get even. I feel confident that my guardian angel snapped the photo of figure 2-7, which is precisely what I saw in the room.

### OUR HOME ON ELEVENTH STREET

We only lived on 14th street a year before moving to a two-story home on 11th street. Longfellow school was my assigned institution for intellectual increase in that neighborhood. There I entered the fifth grade and continued on through the sixth. I entered junior high (the seventh grade) while we still lived there. I remember our house as being white with maybe some sort of darker trim but definitely not blue as shown in the photo (Fig. 2-8) I took of it in the summer of 1997. I also remember a screened in front porch on which we occasionally slept during hot summer nights. Air conditioning may have caused the demise of such a facility but I remember its value well when temperatures approached the century mark. The big tree in the background was probably there if I recollect rightly but the front yard was devoid of shrubbery to my knowledge.

### MEMORIES FROM 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET

One of my childhood friends, Jim Terry, lived across the street while Uncle Elfred lived just a few houses away on Alturas street, if my memory is correct. I can remember being a patrolman at Longfellow and spending a short time in the boy scouts. We played various types of games under the arc lights in the summer. I also had to make a leaf collection for school, which, I guess, was my introduction to biology or should I say botany. I never cared too much for that branch of science but got by. I guess leaf collections and such weren't in my bag of interests. Even then my primary scholastic interests were math and the sciences including physics, chemistry, geology, etc.

### A BULLY IS A BULLY IS A BULLY

Connie reminded me of my own method of intimidating her and June. I guess Dan wasn't

the only bully around. For victims, however, I copied his outstanding example, i.e. pick someone that hasn't got a chance of getting the best of you. Anyway, as Connie tells it, I would give one of them the count of ten to do something for me and if they weren't at least started when I got to that point I would slug them on the upper arm. At first they resisted but eventually decided it was easier to obey than to take the promised punishment and its associated bruises. She said she laughs about it now but wasn't sure it was funny then. I'm not sure what their problem was. Actually, they had plenty of time because I couldn't count very well



**Figure 2-8 Our Boise home around 1939 to 1941, which was located on 11<sup>th</sup> street.**

anyway. Ah, how marvelous is the courage displayed by a bully.

### THE CASE OF A SPELUNKING FLY

It was there on the screen porch of this house in the summer of 1939 when I learned the dangers of reckless flying. Some of us were playing around, or otherwise carrying on as kids do,

when a common housefly had the nerve to do a little spelunking in my ear. His first attempt landed him well into the outer ear channel

**“Well, leave the fly alone and it will eventually come out. If you keep after him he will just burrow in deeper”.**

and, as I furiously dug with several different instruments, he simply burrowed deeper. To make matters worse, he made his contempt for my efforts known by buzzing in frequent bursts at a rather healthy decibel level. Having no luck in extracting him, I went to mother who simply said, “Well, leave the fly alone and it will eventually come out. If you keep after him he will just burrow in deeper”. One thing I can say for mom, she sure knew her flies. Having great faith in her advice, I exerted even greater will

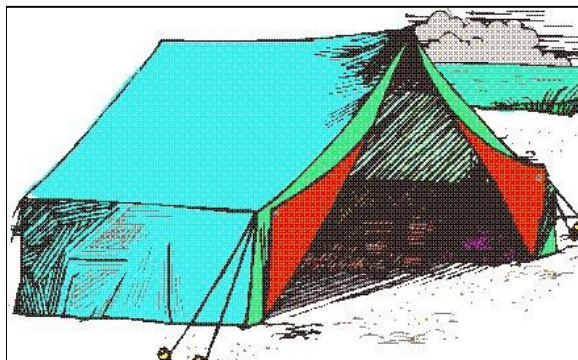
power and let him be, even when his buzzing struggles approached the intolerable. After what seemed an eternity, probably 4-5 hours, out he came and boy was I relieved. Never had the virtues of faith, patience and tolerance been taught more clearly and demonstrated as vividly as that experience of mine with a spelunking fly. Never had I realized something so small could be so irritating and come so close to driving a person insane.

#### BUZZIN WITH MY COUSINS

I believe we lived on 11<sup>th</sup> street when I was allowed to spend a week (two consecutive summers) with Uncle Elfred and Aunt Judith. He worked for the state, as I remember, and operated various types of road machinery. Fred, their third eldest son, was just a year younger than me and, I suppose, was instrumental in getting that permission.

The first summer uncle Elfred was working just out of Idaho City on the south side and had established a summer camp for the family. They lived in a tent with beds, cook stove, etc., which was hardly adequate for their family, let alone an additional boy. I believe it was divided into a living area and a sleeping area but such details were unimportant to me as long as I had food, a place to sleep and someone to play with. Figure (2-9) depicting uncle Elfred's tent is taken from

putting up with such primitive conditions for the summer months, while caring for six or even seven kids when I was around. I'm sure she and Elfred were happy though and she took it as part of life. I can't remember hearing her ever complain and in general family life seemed happy. I guess you might consider such



**Figure 2-9 A depiction of Uncle Elfred & Aunt Judith's tent near Idaho City & Banks.**



**Figure 2-10 Aunts Ada and Clara and part of the family about 1940. L to R; Ada, Carl, June, mom, me with Ted, Madeleine, Clara, Dan, Phil & Delight without Connie & dad.**

existence as not being unusual then and maybe kind of transitional from frontier days to our own. People did what they had to in order to exist because welfare was almost unknown at that time. Besides, I feel sure uncle Elfred, like dad, wouldn't have anything to do with government welfare. They would make it on their own or starve, I believe. The second summer was similar, in a tent that is, but located along the Payette River at Banks. For those of you unfamiliar with Idaho, turn to the map in Figure 3-1 and locate Banks in the lower left hand corner. The surrounding area was a good deal nicer than near Idaho City the previous year and even though the tent was the same, I can remember having more fun. Again we spent the days roaming the hills, sliding down their slopes of dried grasses on pieces of tin or anything else we could find. We weren't allowed to go down to the river unless the whole family went and oh how we looked forward to those outings. That usually meant a picnic as well as an opportunity to splash in the cool waters of the beautiful Payette River. We could run up and down the sandy banks of the stream and make our rather feeble efforts at swimming as best we could. What fun we had.

click art but isn't too far from what it actually looked like. It was maybe twice as big and he had mats of some sort on the floor as I remember. What fun we had. We played among the rock piles left by the dredges some years earlier as they plied for gold or we simply ran around the hills nearby. Poor aunt Judith,

#### LEARNING TO SWIM

I think my stay might have been longer than a week this time because I remember having several outings with the family at Silver Bridge, as it was known, and also across the river just a couple blocks from the tent. We usually had a

picnic and could run along a sandy beach in the latter case, play in the water or simply explore the woods around us in the former case at Silver Bridge. The picnic area near the bridge lay along a big bend in the river. The current at that particular point was rather slow, compared to other places further down-stream, making it an ideal place to learn how to swim. Although I took additional swimming lessons at the Y, I really learned to swim there. The water was about neck deep for me and the bottom was sandy with scattered boulders even though the shore was mostly covered with rocks of varying sizes. I learned to float with the current first and then gradually added the dog paddle and overhand stroke to my growing list of swimming skills. I loved spending that time with my cousins. I don't remember any arguments, although I suspect there were a few. It was a big change from the city and, of course, I didn't have any of the concerns, problems or even work that aunt Judith must have faced on a daily basis. This is about as close to a vacation as I ever got in my early years and, as far as I was concerned, it was as good as any I might have taken later in life.

#### AUNT CLARA AND ADA VISIT OUR FAMILY

This was the house we lived in when Aunt Clara came to visit us from Rockford. I have provided a photo of them and the family in figure 2-10, which seems to include all but dad and Connie. Where they were, I don't know. However, that visit resulted in Carl's name change, which seems unusual and humorous enough to include. I will insert mom's version here, taken from her life's story. In quoting her, I titled it:

#### FRANKIE'S NAME TRANSFORMATION

When Carl was 4 years old he became the culprit of the next incident. He had been named Carl Franklin after my Uncle Carl who was then deceased. Even though Carl was no longer with us, it pleased his sister, my Aunt Clara, as the two had remained single and spent most of their lives together. The older children started to call him Frankie, as they seemed to like that name better than Carl. It wasn't long before everyone called him Frankie. We received a letter from Aunt Clara advising us that she was going to come out and visit us that summer. We looked forward to her visit with great eagerness because she had never been "out west" before. Artie said we had better start calling Carl by his first name or Aunt Clara would be very disappointed. After all he was named after

Uncle Carl. We had about sixty days to get comfortable with his new name. Actually it was working out very well. Aunt Clara arrived on schedule and one day Carl was sitting with her on the front porch swing. June was with them too. Suddenly little Carl looked up and said, "You know my name was Frankie but when we heard you were coming out they all started to call me Carl." June was embarrassed and tried to cover up, but Carl persisted, repeating the story a couple more times until he was certain he was understood. My only comment is; "Don't trust a kid to cover for you. With nine, you



**Figure 2-11 Carl & Ted savoring remnants of cake batter in the summer of 1939.**

should know better mom". It's not safe trying to fool someone with kids involved in the process.

#### NAMELESS MEMORIES

We have some really neat pictures, which may have been taken while we lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> street home. At least they were about that vintage. One is of Ted and Carl licking the mixing bowl after mom or one of the girls baked a cake. It is pictured in figure 2-11. Ted, on the left, seems to be thinking, "just keep your distance Carl, half of this is mine". Carl, on the other hand, seems to be contemplating his spoon and appears to be wondering if it's as big as Ted's or maybe he's wondering how this stuff could be so good. In any case I always have enjoyed this picture and chose to include it to give you a little peek into family life about 1939. Another picture that is just as special portrays June with her arm around Carl. I don't know of any particular event surrounding this picture but it's a dandy. See figure 2-12. I suspect it resulted from moms, or maybe one of the older girls', eye for a really cute photo. It probably predates that of Carl and Ted in figure 2-11 and was likely taken in 1937 or 1938. June appears to be quite proud of her younger brother. Let's see, if it was 1937, Carl

would have been 2 years old and June 5. Judging from the picture, I would guess that date is about right. It might even be slightly earlier.

It was on 11<sup>th</sup> street where my sister, Delight became engaged to Oaks Hoover. He and his family attended the Church of Christ, which we also had attended for several years. They were a marvelous family and his parents were close friends of mom and dad. I remember occasionally getting together with them. It was such associations, I feel sure, over a period of time that brought Delight and Oaks together. Mr. Hoover was a particularly kind man and I recall mom describing him as being next to a saint. Oaks Hoover, from my perspective, was similar in his dealings with people. I was somewhat awed by him, I suppose, because of his confidence, kindness and success in life.

I enjoyed going places and doing things with my older brothers and my cousins. As I mentioned, our cousins, Elfred and Judith's children, lived nearby. About that time or maybe a little earlier, Aunt Mab and Guy came back west from Illinois with their sons, Mark and Dewey. They settled in Ketchum where they bought some cabins and rented them out for additional income. From that point on we were involved with them in various family outings. I believe, by that time, Uncle Edgar and Aunt Mabel had moved back to the Ketchum area with, leaving only Elfred and Judith's family with ours living in Boise.

I can remember picnics up the Boise River as well as the Payette River. How I loved to go anywhere in the mountains or even out of town, for that matter. We could wade in the streams or play cowboys and Indians as we ran through the woods. Of course the days were a lot cooler than in Boise and the terrain new, which made such games more pleasant. In addition, the food was always plentiful and good which helped a little as well. On one of those outings I remember learning to chew pine gum, which was nothing more than congealed sap from the tree, usually a big yellow pine. It wasn't too tasty and even with the shortage of cash, necessary for real gum; I wasn't too inclined to make such chewing a habit. I tasted it recently, just to bring back memories, which it did with a bang. Whoeee, I must have been a sap to have chewed that stuff. I guess my brain was congealed too.

**I could hear his hoofs pounding the ground behind me and even feel his breath on my back as he snorted with pleasure in anticipation of goring the others and me who dared intrude in his private domain.**

#### SNIPE HUNTING

I remember making a trip to Ketchum with the family and staying in one of the cabins of Aunt Mab and Uncle Guy's. It was one of the few vacations we ever took as a family. While there,



**Figure 2-12 Can a big sister display any more pride for a younger brother than this?**

we went to Alturas Lake or in its vicinity. Our camp was on the edge of a meadow near a grove of trees where dad and Guy made a tremendous campfire, which they kept going all night. After dinner Uncle Guy got a bunch of us together and explained how a little animal called a snipe lived in the area and came out after dark. They were good to eat and could easily be caught with a gunnysack. Naturally, he just happened to have a few sacks along for the trip. We each took one, proceeded out into the dark meadow beyond the light of the campfire, and with a little coaching tried to mimic the call of a snipe. It was something like bobwhite, bobwhite but, as the hunt progressed, I began to realize it sounded more like "Tom's a fool, Tom's a fool". At least that was the feeling I had by the time the evening was over. Uncle Guy assured us they were out there somewhere but to hasten the process he explained he would

go out further into the meadow and herd them towards us. Well, we proceeded out into the meadow, maybe a couple hundred yards, dutifully calling the snipes, which were strangely absent.

All at once, we heard a terrible snort and the sound of hooves pounding the sod, like that of a bull along with some heavy breathing, which one might expect. Needless to say, we let out a horrendous yell and headed for the fire with the bull hot on our heels. I could hear his hoofs pounding the ground behind me and even feel his breath on the back of my neck as he snorted in pleasure and anticipation. Surely he would gore the other kids and me in addition to all who might dare intrude in his domain. Believe me, in my mind, that was no bull in either of the common definitions. I was scared half out of my wits. Of course, we just barely stayed ahead of those pounding hoofs and made it safely to the fire. About that time, the big old bull, Uncle Guy, broke out laughing and we realized we had been taken in. **Snipe hunting, you bet!**

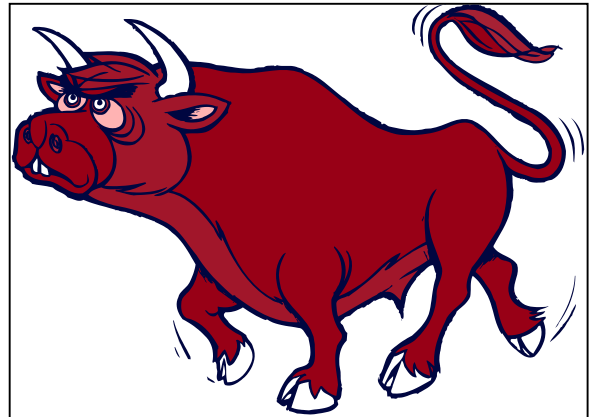
**BACK IN THE NEWSPAPER BUSINESS**

During the time we lived on 11th street, I began substituting for Phil and Dan on their paper routes. Finally, I guess after I entered the 6th grade, I took over a route which was Phil's, I believe, as my own. It was near the house and was very convenient to school and home. We picked up our papers on 8<sup>th</sup> and Alturas, which was 3 blocks or so from home. The route covered the streets of 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14 from roughly Alturas to the foothills. It took something like a couple hours to deliver all the papers. Door-to-door collections took place once a month and were part of the job, taking a Saturday or a few evenings to complete. Later, I was able to get a different route on my own, which was near our old neighborhood in the fifteen hundred block of Franklin. We had moved on to 17th and Irene streets by then and I also had a bicycle. Consequently, I got around to my job etc. easily.

**THE BASEMENT IS ON FIRE**

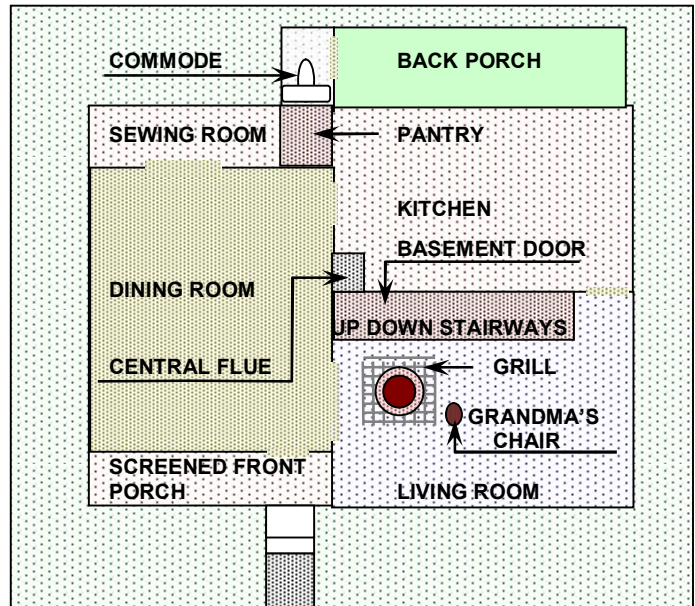
"With smoke throughout the house" might well be the closing words in the title of this particular experience. You see, our house on eleventh street was the first, at least that I'm aware of, which had so called central heat. It was not forced air and there were no ducts to carry the heat throughout the house. Rather, it consisted of a furnace in the basement on top of

which a large heating element was located. Above that was a heavy grill, which opened to



**Figure 2-13 Uncle Guy, as appeared in my frantic mind that night near Alturas Lake.**

the living room above. The grill, as I remember it, covered an opening, which was probably five-foot square. With the furnace really stoked up the heating element would actually turn red, radiating a large amount of heat into the air above. Near the grill, even on cold days, the heat could be stifling whereas in the far end of the adjoining dining room or in the upstairs bedrooms one could probably store ice cubes



**Fig. 2-14 An illustration of the main floor plan, as I remember it, for our home on 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Boise.**

without any danger of them melting. In fact, it was common for us to finish dressing next to the register on cold winter mornings. Thus, it became kind of a gathering place for the thin

blooded on cold winter evenings. So it was the night of the great Obenchain fire debacle.

#### THE SCENARIO

I have provided a drawing in figure 2-14 which illustrates the downstairs layout as pictured in my mind. It will help me set the scene as I try to recreate the situation that winter night. Now, I won't place any money on its accuracy and particularly as it regards the various dimensions but it will suffice to supplement my story. Grandma Lydia's chair, however, is placed rather accurately. You see, like all us old folks, she was always cold. She not only hugged the heating vent to the furnace but also had a shawl around her shoulders. That's where she was on the night the firemen invaded our home.

The house had originally been heated with stoves in the various rooms, among which was a cooking stove in the kitchen. The openings providing access to the chimney in the various rooms had long ago been covered with metal plates and even wall papered over. Only the furnace now vented its smoke to the outside through this flue. Even the kitchen stove had been replaced with a fancy electrical one. Yes sir, this was a modern house with central heat.

Being in the sixth grade, I had been given the job of keeping the furnace stoked with the lump coal kept in a big bin in the basement. Dad had instructed me and I even knew how to bank the fire at night. For the uninitiated, banking a fire is simply placing all the new coal to one side of the fire bed rather than scatter it all over the hot coals. Supplying the fire in this manner only allows the fire to eat into the coal from one side. This slows down the combustion so the fire will provide a lower heat throughout the night rather than greater heat for a shorter period. In the morning, I got up early and stoked it for the day.

#### LIGHTS, ACTION, CAMERA

On this particular day I had completed my chores for the evening including banking the fire. A few people including grandma were sitting around the grill of the heating vent. Others were active elsewhere around the house. All at once there was an explosion of sorts in the basement. The grill jumped up about 3 or 4 inches before settling back while only the ceiling interfered with grandma's trajectory as she leaped up to get out

of the way. I learned right then that she was somewhat more agile than she had let on. She could move if the situation warranted it. The covers on the chimney vents blew out scattering soot in every room. One of the girls was in the kitchen when that particular cover flew through the air just over her head. After running to the basement door and looking down, she screamed, "the basement is on fire". Others looked and saw flames dancing around the floor of the basement. Smoke was streaming into the kitchen through the open door. Someone ran to the phone and called the fire department but no one ventured back near the burning basement. Within minutes the fire engines pulled up in front of the house with sirens screaming. Several firemen came stomping into the house with fire axes in hand as we opened the doors for their help. Others were laying out the hose. Neighbors were gathering to witness the excitement. Carl and Ted, who were about 4 and 2 respectively, hid in the sewing room behind chairs, not being sure of the intentions of the ax-wielding firemen. The rest of us watched as a couple of them ran down the stairs towards the flames. We heard the furnace door close and the flames suddenly disappeared. They came back up and said rather disgustedly, "There's nothing down there but smoke and an open furnace door. The flames you thought you saw were just reflections off the walls. We opened the windows to let the smoke escape. Everything will be okay."

#### THE AFTERMATH

When we explained the chain of events, they concluded there had been a gas buildup in the banked coal, which suddenly ignited with sufficient force to blow the door open and the metal caps out, which

**All at once there was an explosion of sorts in the basement. The grill jumped up about 3 or 4 inches before settling back while only the ceiling interfered with grandma's trajectory as she leaped to get out of the way.**

blocked the chimney vents in the various rooms. Suddenly, I became the center of attention as they began to grill me about how I banked the furnace. There was no doubt I was to blame for this horrendous debacle. Certainly, I did something wrong. Apparently, I should have been sure the fire to the side of the banked coal was burning hotter before leaving it to prevent a gas build up. At the time, I didn't really understand what I did wrong or what I might have done differently to prevent the incident but I did make sure there were flames when I banked the evening fire from then on. I had

enjoyed the excitement but not the ensuing finger pointing. Yes sir, it's no fun when everyone is pointing at you and asking questions for which you have no answer.

Well, Carl and Ted finally came out of their hiding places as the firemen left. There was a miserable mess to clean up too and that didn't gain me any popularity. Soot is really nasty stuff to clean from any surface and this night it was on everything. However, in my favor, the event was voted the most popular neighborhood show of the year, according to my recollection. Never had such a realistic fire been staged without real damage. The neighbors, gathered in our front yard, continued to talk for some time after the fire engines pulled away. In addition, that night's activity continued to crop up from time to time in conversation as the neighborhood relived the incident of the "flaming Obenchain basement".

### JUNIOR HIGH

The seventh grade required my moving into Junior High School where we had individual lockers and moved from room to room for different classes just like the big guys in high school. The school building was new and only in its second year when I entered. What a treat after attending grade schools, built before the turn of the century. What a deal I had fallen into.

We even had a gymnasium and organized sports, which I hadn't experienced in the lower grades. However, at that time there was still no competition between schools. Games were played between classes and teams in the same grade. Actually, in the ninth grade I was able to try out for the junior varsity football team. However, as I remember, I didn't make the team until my sophomore year. Even so, I enjoyed that year and felt I was now more than just a kid.

### CLUMSY WAS MY NAME

I was a clumsy sort of kid, long and gangly, with big feet. My feet were the butt of many jokes, which didn't add to the rather depleted self-esteem I spoke of earlier. In fact as I moved into high school I received the name "Smoe Foot" which was derived from the cartoon Lil Abner. There were, depicted in that comic strip, some little lovable animals called Smoes with rather big broad feet. The guys seemed to think mine resembled them or whatever. In any case, some of them would mimic my running in a clumsy sort of way and pretend they would trip over their own feet. A big laugh would follow, all at my expense. Such was one of the trials I

endured as a rather insecure teenager. Small, yes, but the trial was meaningful to my struggle to try to prove myself as a young man. These types of things added to my need to develop a more macho, independent and successful image, at least in my own mind.

### OUR NEW HOME ON 17<sup>TH</sup> & IRENE

Early in the seventh grade my folks bought the first house we could call our own. It was located on 17th and Irene streets in north Boise. Mom



Figure 2-15 Mom, Carl and Ted on the porch facing the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> & Irene

explains their sale of an apartment house, which they had purchased earlier (located on 9<sup>th</sup> and Eastman, it seems to me) as an investment, was the source of the necessary funds. The house on 17th was an old brick home built about the turn of the century. Actually, mom says it was built in 1884. She also mentions they paid \$2350 for it with an extra \$250 for the lot behind

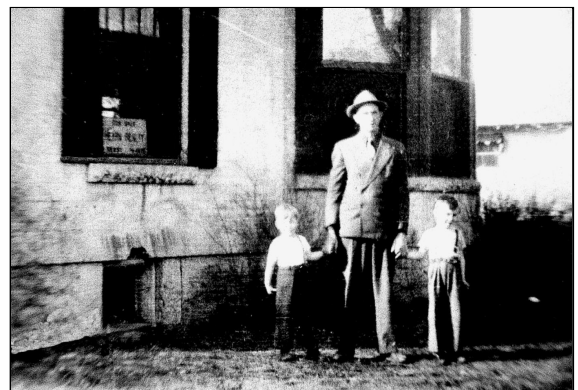


Figure 2-16 Dad, Carl & Ted on the east side of our home on 17<sup>th</sup> & Irene St.

it. The walls were of brick, two layers in thickness, with an air space in between. Talk about sturdy and built to last. By the way, it still stands as of the summer of 1997. The house has been remodeled and is currently lived in. In

fact, Rose told me that it was up for sale again for \$200,000. That's quite a boost, huh? Of course, a good deal of improvement has been made including a swimming pool but \$200,000, wow. At the time when the folks bought it, the house was in a state of real disrepair. To illustrate this, I include a couple pictures here to illustrate the before, i.e. those of figures (2-15) and (2-16). The after comes a little later in both figure 2-27 and figure 2-28. They serve a couple of other purposes as well, i.e. the photography of 1941 as well as Carl and Ted at the tender ages of 6 and 4 respectively.

### OUR DAD, A GREAT MAN

Though dad had little opportunity for a formal education (he went through the eighth grade), he was a great man, kind, selfless, hard working, skilled in carpentry and associated work as well as devoted to his family. As I mentioned earlier, he embodied many of the Christ like attributes so essential to a free society, i.e. integrity, responsibility, love, kindness, etc. I consider those attributes his greatest legacy given to our family and they have been demonstrated throughout the years in all my brothers and sisters. I truly believe such attributes taught to children far outweigh opportunities for education in importance and most certainly any material gifts that can be given to them. They are the source of real happiness.

Yes dad, though a man of limited material means, had his ducks in a row, so to speak, when it came the priorities of life. He was a man to be looked up to. One who thought of others before himself, one who not only believed the golden rule but practiced it, as well. Truly he was a man of worth. He, along with mother, joined an independent bible study group in later years wherein he became one of their leaders, a minister of sorts. I still have an old bible of his and a few notes he made for one of his talks.

### DAD WAS A JACK OF ALL TRADES

Remodeling the house was no problem for Dad, he being an accomplished carpenter as well as a jack-of-all-trades. He shingled the roof, made shutters and trellises for the outside, built some

lawn furniture and painted the same. Additionally, he rewired the house, running the wire from basement or crawl space under the house to the desired area above between the bricks composing the walls. He drilled holes through the brick to mount some attractive side lighting in the living and dining rooms. He built

cupboards in the kitchen with a complete breakfast nook to seat the family, now 11 in number. He also built a corner cupboard and a buffet or cabinet along the side of the dining room for dishes, etc. Additionally he installed hardwood floors and finished the same in all rooms but the kitchens and baths, which had linoleum also installed by him. An extra kitchen was added upstairs with the intent to eventually rent out the upstairs when the kids moved on, I believe. He installed the

cabinets, kitchen sink and plumbing in this room as well. He could do it all.

A new furnace was installed complete with stoker. I still remember having to load the stoker nightly in the cold weather and remove the clinkers it left in the stoking process. We had a coal bin nearby which

was filled each fall with 10 to 12 tons of crushed or stoking coal for the winter. Carl and Ted took over the job when I left for college or maybe became old enough to pass it on. They almost started a fire once by leaving hot clinkers too near a wall in the basement. Mom describes that incident with some clarity in her "Past Tents". As I read about that incident, I realized being a firebug was apparently in the Obenchain genes but those not involved will have to decide on that.



Figure 2-17 Dad, hard at work on the old homestead on 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

**That's quite a boost, huh? Of course, a good deal of improvement has been made including a swimming pool but \$200,000, wow.**



Although I digressed there for a moment, I'm still not done with Dad's home improvement efforts. The yard was also landscaped. The house sat on a half lot with a full sized vacant lot directly behind it. Mom and dad had purchased the lot as well for extra space and access to the alley. The front half of the lot as well as the yard directly around the house was pleasantly landscaped. The back half of the lot was used for a garden, which was primarily put in and maintained by, none other than Dad. A rock garden was included in the front of the extra lot while an attractive cover with a kind of artificial well appearance topped off a real well near the side of the house. That well supplied the water over the years I lived there. Although there were occasional problems, I don't remember any one of special significance occurring. The folks had drilled it for the sake of pure water. There was some question in their minds about the purity and Chlorine effect of city water.

As I remember, the house was a sorry looking cream-colored brick with brown shutters when we moved in to it (figures 2-15 and 2-16). Dad painted it white and added the blue shutters, which really made it attractive, I thought. We have a picture of him in the process of that job which, with the previous pictures of mom and dad, each with Carl and Ted, kind of illustrates the condition of the house before he went to work. Figure 2-17 is included so my grandchildren can see their great grandfather in action, applying his skills to make us a comfortable home.

### THE ARTIE OBENCHAIN FAMILY

I suppose my story wouldn't be complete without a picture of the whole family (figure 2-18), taken around the same time as those before pictures in figures 2-15 & 16. Although it may not be obvious, we were all on the front porch of our new abode, which is more visible in the photo of mom with Carl & Ted. Although identities might better be left off, they are provided with the picture for those with a curiosity for the odd and interesting. Notice, I didn't say interested. That's because most of us seemed bored out of our skulls. To my knowledge, this is the only picture of the complete family taken prior to dad's death. It wasn't too long after this that Phil left for the service followed by Dan in 1944. Then Madeleine moved to Portland around 1945. I remember going to Portland for her wedding in 1947 and I suppose we were all together there but I'm not aware of an

associated picture. Anyhow, the family pretty well scattered after the Second World War and it was difficult to get everyone together at one time. Though I've seen several similar pictures over the years, either our dad or yours truly seems to always be missing. While dad was yet alive, I was in college and the air force. Esther and I came home once, the summer of 1953 but I am unaware of any group picture being taken at that time and I doubt that all of us were there.

### A FAMILY OVERVIEW

This seems like an appropriate place to express my feelings about my siblings, at least all the good ones (feelings, that is). Actually, I don't have any bad ones nor have I really had any over the years. Not that everything was always peaches and cream. We, of course, had the



**Figure 2-18 The Artie Obenchain family. Front Row; L to R; Dan on the railing, Ted, June, Carl; Back Row; L to R; Phil, Dad, Tom, mom, Connie, Madeleine and Delight.**

usual sibling arguments but, considering there were nine of us, I think we got along rather well. Additionally, life has made me realize our family was rather choice. I wouldn't say it was perfect but I feel very fortunate to have been raised by parents who were committed to one another as well as to raising their family. I am grateful for having siblings of character and ambition and whom I thoroughly enjoy visiting with on a regular basis at reunions and such. I admire each and every one of them for the way they have handled life including the successes they have achieved. Philosophically and politically, I believe, we all have similar views. Although we all, or at least many of us, seem to differ somewhat in our theological views, there seems to be no intolerance for those differing beliefs. I must admit, we seem to avoid any religious discussion because, I suppose, we all have established views and aren't interested in looking any further at this stage of our lives. It's

interesting to me that we have such a variety of beliefs considering our common roots. They seem to vary from little or no interest in religion through rather devout Protestantism to myself as a committed member of the LDS Church. However, as I said, this seems to have no effect on our respect for one another or our relationships.

Now, let me express my feelings to some degree for each of my individual siblings, which will allow my posterity to gain some understanding of why I feel I was a member of a choice rather than just an average family. As I do so, you may want to identify them in family photo of figure 2-18 but I have also included individual pictures taken from the rather poor assortment I had available. Most of the photos are of the graduation variety or soon thereafter. All give you a snapshot of them at an early age in their lives. I'll begin with Madeleine, and move down the chronological ladder.

### MADELEINE

Madeleine is in the last row, second from the right. She appears in figure 2-19 as well but, as



**Figure 2-19 Madeleine, my eldest sibling in a photo taken sometime after high school.**

I mentioned, at an age somewhat older than 18, maybe about the time she was married or a few years later. She was seven plus years older

than me, being born March 15, 1921, if my dates are correct. Of course, I looked up to Madeleine all my growing up years in life and still think the world of her. The age difference was such that we were in separate worlds, so to speak. Even so, I remember her as being helpful in things like schoolwork, bandaging my boobos, etc. In fact, she was more like a second mother. I remember her as being “second in command”, because dad was often working out of town and

**I remember her as being “second in command”, so to speak, because dad was often working out of town.**

she helped mom keep the rest of the kids in line. She seemed to excel in everything she did and set a good example for the rest of us scholastically. I remember her playing the piano at home and in church. I assume she was quite gifted in that area but, I must admit, I really don't know how proficient she was. I only know I always thought of her as being very good. She also was rather independent as demonstrated by her move to Portland in the middle forties. I don't know that she ever shared with me the reason for the move but I assume it was because she felt she had no future or at least was not progressing in Boise, a town of about 26,000 at that time. As indicated earlier, she married Jim Rath there in 1947, according to my records. I don't believe anyone could ask for a finer older sister. In my book she was first class in every way and an outstanding example for younger siblings.

Madeleine and Jim were blessed with four fine children, i.e. Pamela, Connie, Becky and Tom. She was an outstanding mother and the lives of her children bear testimony of that fact. Even today with her space age hips she is apparently full of vim and vigor and hasn't let that detail slow her down, as I understand the situation. Truly, I admire the values she demonstrates as well as the example her life has been to me. All of her children, to my knowledge, still live in the Seattle area with their families along with our beloved “second in command”.

### DELIGHT

Delight was the second eldest and is on the far right in the last row of the picture. I have also added figure 2-20, a photo of her at about 18, I would guess. Although she was a different personality from Madeleine, many of the qualities mentioned for Madeleine fit her as well.

Delight skipped a grade, I remember, without a hiccup. She was bright, indeed, and I learned that fact rather early. She gave me a first rate lesson, as I recall, one time while we were playing Chinese checkers. I can't forget that incident because I became really chapped by the whipping I took from her time after time. I can't place the location of that particular lesson, maybe because I've tried to forget it. It may have been on eleventh-street when I was in the sixth grade or so. That's probably the case because she married Oaks Hoover when we lived there and was seldom around after that. I don't believe I ever won a game the whole evening. Oh well, I couldn't have been whipped by a nicer person.

I was always impressed by Delight's unruffled and logical approach to various situations and/or



**Figure 2-20 Delight, the second child of the family at around 18 years of age.**

problems. I don't believe I have ever seen her blow her top, so to speak. I remember well our being at hers and Oaks' home in Caldwell at family outings of one sort or another. Regardless of the problem that might occur with the kids, etc. she always handled it in a kind, logical, forthright way that provided a fair solution and seemed to

**She was bright, indeed, and I learned that fact rather early. She gave me a first rate lesson I recall one time while we were playing Chinese checkers.**

satisfy all involved. She never seemed to get ruffled, so it seems. When it comes to parenting, I doubt there could be a better example.

As a younger child I kind of remember her as a second mother, like Madeleine, or maybe I should say third because she was about 6 years older than me as well. Thus, we didn't do a lot together. As an adult, I could hardly have greater respect for the way she conducts her life including her relationships with friends and family. I thoroughly enjoy visiting with her as opportunity permits. I feel I have gotten to know her better as an adult because of the various reunions and in each case my appreciation for such a sister seems to grow a little more. It's a pleasure to be able to say, "That's my sister."

Delight and Oaks had a wonderful family of seven children, they being Susan, Pat, Peter, Jan, Scott, Julia and Paul. I believe all live in the Boise valley now with the exception of Paul whom, I think, still resides in southern California.

Sometime after Oaks death, Delight married Gene Chester, another great guy. I believe he had been a schoolteacher and principal in Ontario, Oregon. They seemed to get along very well and her children appeared to accept him in every way. In my opinion, that speaks well of him. He seemed easy going to me and I thoroughly enjoyed my few visits with him. Our acquaintance was only casual being founded in the visits I had with him at reunions and a few other trips to Boise.

#### PHIL

Phil is in the back row, extreme left, next to dad. He is also pictured in figure 2-21 upon his discharge from the service in 1945. Only four years separated Phil and me. Consequently it seems, I was involved with him more as a younger brother than I was with Delight or Madeleine. He was a bit of an idol to me. It seemed as though he knew everything and I thoroughly enjoyed running off somewhere with Phil and Dan. Of course, I was the little brother and, more than anything else, I suppose, was tolerated as I tagged along. Many times, I remember, Phil would come to my rescue when Dan was whipping me for some real or imagined infraction. He didn't seem to get a kick out of punishing me like Dan did. As we moved into our teenage years,

the three of us as well as our cousins often played sand lot football. Of course, Phil was always better than me and knew a lot more. I guess that's why I looked up to him so much. In many cases, of course, he was off with the older cousins and probably Dan doing things, which I wasn't privileged to be a part of. I, instead, was playing the games of younger kids with my cousins, Dean and Fred.

Four years of age made a big difference when he attended high school. I remember hearing

**His letters to the family always contained pictures (drawings) depicting one or more of the situations he found himself in.**

his stories of various activities therein and thinking how neat it would be when I was that old. As I remember, Phil was a good student but interested primarily in art, history and associated courses. I guess I was the first to be attracted to the sciences and engineering. I was always impressed by his ability to draw and particularly so after he went into the armed forces in the



**Figure 2-21 Phil during his WWII days while serving in the army.**

early forties. His letters to the family always contained pictures (drawings) depicting one or more of the situations he found himself in. They were much like those of Ernie Pyle of WWII

fame. They might show him trying to soothe his aching feet after a long hike or relishing the opportunity to drop his rifle and back pack or whatever, which always made them interesting.

Phil served in an antiaircraft battery during the Second World War. He had been part of an army program (ASTP, I believe) and was receiving special schooling just prior to the Normandy invasion. At that point, according to my recollection, he was pulled out, transferred to an AA unit and sent to England. After D Day, his unit went into France some distance behind the front, I guess, and helped provide protection from air raids. He became well acquainted with a French family and corresponded with them for some time after the war. In fact, he returned more than once in later years, I believe, to renew his acquaintance with them.

Phil, of course, completed some college (two years comes to mind) after being discharged and then went into commercial artwork. He worked for a company called Cline Advertising for most of his adult life and was quite successful becoming, I think, president of that firm. He retired after it merged with another firm and became Williamson, Rinehart and Cline according to mom. Phil was also very active in the community in various ways. After retirement he worked for the College of Idaho for a few years and now writes a column in the "Idaho Senior News". And now, here's a late flash. Phil is now a published author having written a novel called "Ride the Night Wind". It is historical fiction, as he calls it, regarding a large (6' 9") man of Indian, Negro and white blood. Apparently, it is based on certain facts as well as stories regarding him, which have surfaced. He has filled in the missing links with an imaginative and interesting story. In my biased opinion, it should become a best seller.

He married Rose Kafer in 1949. They have two wonderful children, Sigrid and Phil who also reside in Boise.

I have always admired Phil's commitment to the Boise community, serving in various ways and being actively involved in the political process throughout the years. Of course, I identify well with his conservative leanings, although he, much more than I, has made an effort to contribute to those political ideals he believes in.

#### DAN

Dan is sitting on the rail directly in front of Phil in the family photograph of figure 2-18. The photo

of figure 2-22 must have been taken at his high school graduation. He did graduate, you know. My, doesn't he look sweet and innocent in that photo? However, you should keep in mind that looks can be deceiving. I suppose one might wonder what my remarks regarding Dan will be considering my previous references to his role as a nemesis in my life. I would be less than honest if I didn't talk about that a little. However, I looked up to Dan much like I did to Phil, maybe not for his wisdom but for his outgoing personality and courage.

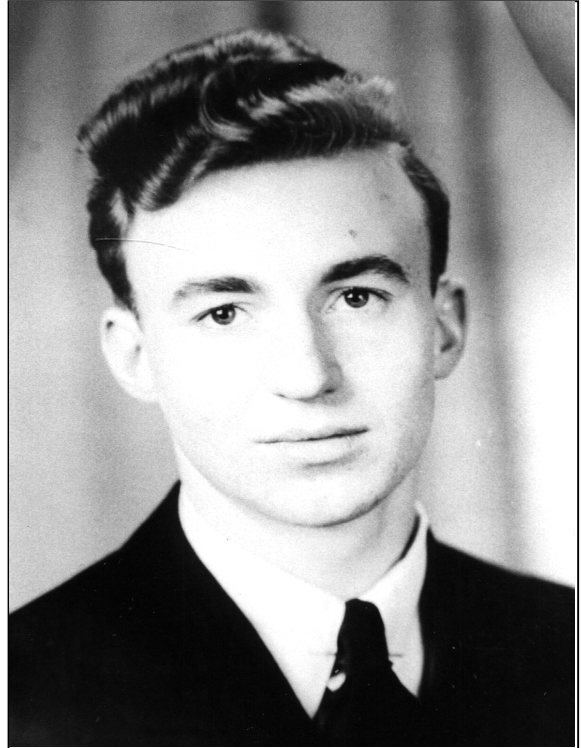
Personality wise, Dan was almost my opposite. He was outgoing and confident, I was timid and rather insecure. How I wished I could be like him. The frequent whippings I took at his hands as well as the taunts of being a big baby, etc. were probably deserved, to a degree at least. I wouldn't let Dan off the hook completely but I suspect I had some of it coming. I do believe his example did a lot to spur me into trying to be a little more macho and overcome some of my more obvious weaknesses. As a result, the adversity I suffered at his hand was really a blessing in disguise. Somewhat hesitatingly, I give him credit for stimulating my desire to overcome the same and say with all sincerity, "thanks Dan for your example in this respect".

Dan was a bit of a hell raiser throughout his teenage years. I wouldn't give him credit for being a good student. Rather, he was more of a comedian, always having the class in an uproar with consequent notes from teachers to mom. I think mom spent half her time in those years interceding for Dan at school. No, Dan couldn't be accused of being a bookworm or a model student. Of course, he might have been, had he been interested. He was bright enough but preferred to use his entertainment skills.

Dan joined the navy in 1944 and served in the Pacific. Upon his return in 1946, I believe, he did enter BJC on the GI Bill. His heart wasn't in school, however. He left after one year and went to work in insurance in the adjuster's office, it seems to me. I still remember Dan complaining after school one day because he had received a C on a term paper in English. It seems he had copied an old paper of Madeleine's and submitted it rather than bothering to do his own research. She had gotten an A some 3 years earlier on the same paper. It was the same teacher, in fact, as well as the same material. How could she be so inconsistent? She probably recognized his

pilfering in spite of his having retyped it and was really very generous in dealing out a C.

Dan spent a short time in California working for an insurance firm but didn't like the experience, I guess. I suspect he really wanted to be on his own. In any case he returned to Idaho and



**Figure 2-22 Dan at about 18 years of age in what appears to be his graduation picture.**

became a partner in a firm in Twin Falls. His natural ability with people, including salesmanship and a strong work ethic made him a success. Though college may well benefit most people, he certainly proved it wasn't essential to monetary success. He eventually became sole owner of the firm and upon retiring sold the same to his son Tim.

Dan was married in 1947 to Shirley Orchard. They had 4 children, Cathy, Tom, Tim and Terry, a very nice family. I believe the boys all live in southern Idaho while Cathy and Hal reside in the Denver area. Unfortunately, Shirley and Dan separated while living in Twin Falls and after a couple years he was remarried to Mary. After all these years, they (Dan and Mary) are still together and seem as happy as any couple I know. They both like to golf and appear to be quite happy, being involved with friends and the community in Twin Falls.

### CONNIE

Well, by passing yours truly, we now come to Connie, a most delightful sister, who was two years younger than me. She is between Madeleine and me, as well as to the front and left of mom in figure 2-18. A photo of her at about 18 (high school graduation, I suppose) is provided in figure 2-23. Connie and I were quite close, being separated by only two years. Consequently, we played together a lot as young children and have really stayed quite close throughout the years. I think we got along rather well in spite of her accusations regarding my bullying tactics of her and June. I blame Dan for any tendency I had in that area because of his fine example. I don't deny them but I do remember them in a somewhat softer light than she portrays. I can't believe I would impersonate my elder brother. I can hear him now, saying, "At least I didn't pick on girls". All I can say in answer to that is; "If you are going to be a bully, you might as well make it easy".

Connie was an excellent student, as I remember. She was also very kind and



**Figure 2-23 Connie, a most delightful sister who is both kind and beautiful.**

thoughtful as well as very pretty. Of course, it seemed to me, all my sisters were good looking.

Connie seemed to keep a rather low profile during her school years, kind of like yours truly. Neither of us could be described as being as much fun or as exciting as Dan. Who could overshadow him? Connie played the violin and was one of the participants in the church orchestra on 18<sup>th</sup> and Eastman streets with the rest of us. I remember her as taking somewhat more interest in playing her instrument, the violin, than we older boys did in playing ours. Consequently, she was a better musician or, at least developed the talent the good Lord blessed her with. I think she was rather a model daughter, not giving mom any real cause to worry nor stirring up arguments in the household on a regular basis. In general, she was just easy to get along with.

**I think she was rather a model daughter, not giving mom any real cause to worry and not stirring up arguments in the household on a regular basis.**

Connie married Yale Dick in 1951. I had married Esther a little less than a year earlier. They had a wonderful family together consisting of Shannon, Steve and David. If my information is correct,

Shannon and Steve live in the Boise valley area and David has now relocated in Spokane, Washington. I saw David the summer of 2001 and I understood the move occurred because he wanted out of Houston, Texas.

After raising her family, Connie went back to college and prepared for specialized teaching, in reading I believe. Anyhow, she taught for some years in special education classes before retiring around the ripe old age of 65. I also remember her telling me she sang in a choral group but I have forgotten the particulars. She seemed to have talent in any area related to music.

### JUNE

June is in the front row of the family photo between Carl and Ted. She doesn't look too happy with the situation. Knowing her, she probably has some project in mind, which she wants to get on with. She is pictured in the photo of figure 2-24 at about the age of 18 in a high school graduation picture, I believe. June was four years my junior and consequently we weren't as close as were Connie and I. I always remember June as being very determined as well as confident and self-reliant. As you can see, she has a contagious smile as well as a personality, which complements it. She had a mind of her own as expressed in a couple of stories I included elsewhere in this monumental work. June was cute, to say the least, and very

outgoing. She obviously made friends easily as evidenced by her being elected to the ROTC as well as, I believe, home coming queen. Though I was gone during those years, I have learned to respect her establishment of personal goals and standards as well as her abiding by the same.

I believe June attended BJC but I don't know that she graduated from a four-year institution.



**Figure 2-24 June and her vivacious nature that won her popularity in high school.**

It was there, I believe, where she met Larry Keithly, her future husband. They were married in 1955 soon after he completed dental school. They have always seemed to have an ideal marriage, being very close and having raised a wonderful family of 3 girls and a boy, namely, Jennifer, Julie, Mollie and Bryan. I believe most of their children are now located in the Seattle area but I could be mistaken. June and Larry continue to live in their original home in Boise on Crestline Drive. It's a lovely site overlooking the city. It's hard for me to imagine being in one home for your entire married life. Of course, I'm somewhat jealous because of my constant moving around. Even so, I suppose I made a better geophysical engineer than I would have dentist even though both involve the drilling business. Of course, mine was on a somewhat larger scale but both require a sharp bit.

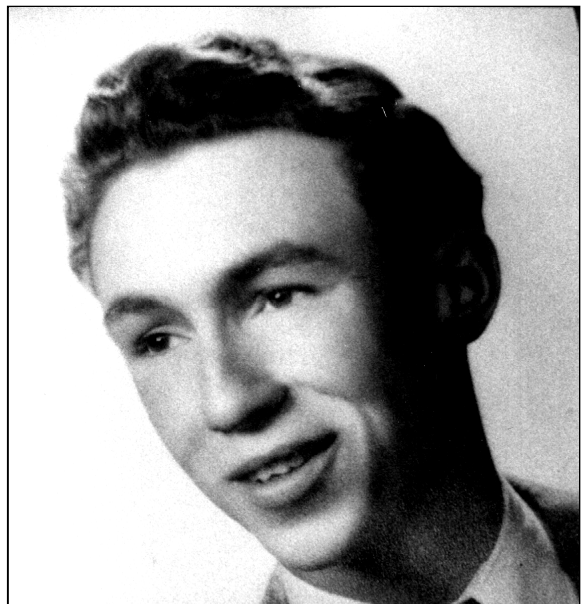
**CARL**

In the picture of figure 2-18, Carl, the next to the youngest, stands on the left of June. His

individual photo is shown in figure 2-25. In personality, he was probably more like me but it would seem somewhat more talented and maybe a little nicer. Carl was extremely bright and very conscientious. Everything he tackled was done well. About the worst thing I can come up with about Carl was his back talk to mom one day and the resulting whipping received, as described in the "Razor Strap Incident" a little later in this chapter. Everyone liked Carl. He was quite simply "a nice guy". I doubt seriously that he ever made an enemy throughout his life and probably brought any pending confrontation to a peaceful end.

Carl spent a good deal of time in the woods as a youth, much like I did but in different programs. He loved the outdoors and was an avid hunter and fisherman throughout his life. It was this love for the outdoors generally and Idaho in particular that caused him to settle in Idaho Falls, I would guess. With his education, he might well have ended up somewhere else with his nuclear work. This love of Idaho also must have prompted his request to have his ashes scattered somewhere over the mountains of the Sun Valley area. I don't suppose he was too particular, as long as it was in the mountains.

As mom tells it, he was asked to play in the Boise Junior college orchestra while still in junior



**Figure 2-25 More evidence that baldness with Obenchains doesn't begin at birth.**

high school. Why he didn't stay more involved in music in later years, I don't know. Probably he was too busily engaged in work and other

things related to family. Ginnie could shed some light on that, I am sure.

Carl received his doctorate in Chemical Engineering from the University of Michigan in 1964 as well as three earlier masters' degrees according to mom. I believe one of those degrees was in nuclear physics. In any case he is listed as a nuclear physicist in "Notable Americans in the Bicentennial Era" if mom has her facts right.

Carl married Virginia Koski in 1961 and apparently taught at Michigan for a couple of years while working on his doctorate. They had two wonderful children, i.e. David and Maia Lisa.

Carl passed away from a heart attack in the fall of 1998 while Ginnie and he were visiting with David in Nebraska. I had just visited with the two of them a week earlier in Washington DC. How grateful I was for that time. We were able to visit the Smithsonian and see a little of the surrounding area. We also took a daylong trip north of Washington visiting various historical sites. He seemed in good health and was his usual jolly self during our complete visit, although I doubt that he would have complained anyway. I was shocked to hear of his death, as was everyone else. What a fine man and outstanding brother he was, not to mention a loving father and husband. I have never heard of anyone that didn't like him. Carl was a great one in my view.

**I have nothing but the greatest respect for his commitment and dedication to that worthy goal as well as his work ethic.**

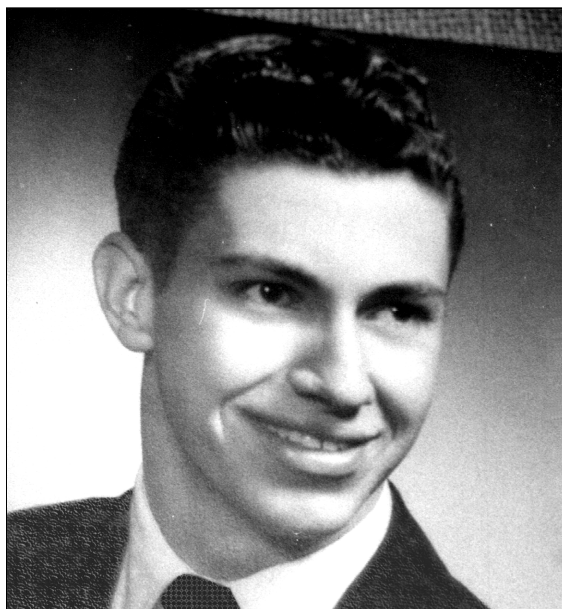
### TED

Last but certainly not least among my siblings, comes Ted, who stands on the right of June in that family line up of figure 2-18. He looks serious enough in the picture to make you wonder if he isn't thinking about some neurosurgical problem even then. However, if you take a look at figure 2-26 you can see he also has a winning smile to go along with his brain and even had hair, at that time. Wow, who'd of thunk it?

Ted was a scholar all his life as far as I know. I'm not sure just when he decided to become a doctor but it was relatively early in life. He has always been a committed individual to the best of my knowledge. He and Carl both worked in various capacities throughout their school years and Ted, I know, helped finance his medical school by committing to two years with Uncle Sam's navy after completing that particular

phase of his education. I would never question Ted's work ethic or commitment to his discipline. Although, I was never privy to his grades, I suspect he was an outstanding student throughout his school years. I know, from some contact with him while in medical school, that he studied all the time. He visited Esther and I one time in Rock Springs, Wyoming and had some kind of a model of the human head or maybe brain with him. If he wasn't eating, drinking or directly engaged in conversation, he was studying that model. Yes siree, he was committed. One might even say he was determined to get **a-head** start.

Ted also worked in the great out of doors while in high school but in college, it's my impression, he stayed more with work associated with medicine. I couldn't reiterate all his schools of choice but I know he graduated from the University of Utah Medical School. I believe he spent some time at the University of Minnesota afterwards specializing in neurosurgery, I would guess, and then more of the same at UCLA. Somewhere in there he completed his internship in New York City and filled his obligation to the U.S. Navy. Where, I'm not sure but I should be



**Figure 2-26 Ted at the magical age of 18 when becoming a neurologist was still a distant dream, or so I assume.**

close. My goodness, what do you expect, I have trouble keeping up with my own past let alone his. Hey all you chilluns, give me a break, after



all, I'll be turning 81 pretty soon and still in the learning mode. If I haven't figured anything else out, I know learning continues on.

Needless to say Ted worked hard to achieve his goal in life, namely that of being a successful neurosurgeon, which he has filled admirably to the best of my understanding. I have nothing but the greatest respect for his commitment and dedication to that worthy goal as well as his work ethic. Not many people are willing to sacrifice to that extent.

Ted married Jean Martinovitch in 1968. I think he and she met while he was at the University of Minnesota. They raised a family of two girls and a son, namely Kristin, Monica and Ted. Though they later separated, Ted continued his practice in San Diego area. Jean still resides there as far as I know but Ted is now retired and calls Portland home, I think. Their children are scattered around the country in various places. I know Kristen with her husband and family call Billings, Montana their home. As with most of my siblings, I'm lucky to see Ted every two to four years, usually at the mini-reunion.

## BACK TO OUR HOME

### THE FINISHED PRODUCT

The house faced the corner of 17th and Irene streets with a cement porch and wrought iron railings. The cement was painted a maroon color and the railings black. It seems the porch was painted about every summer because of traffic but maybe not quite so frequently. I do know that I was often given that job. I have included the finished product here in two scenes to better illustrate the almost magical change dad wrought on that old landmark of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They appear in figure 2-27 and figure 2-28. It was the house I remember most vividly, the house I spent my teenage years in and called home for some 10 years of my life. Consequently it was the one in which many assorted memories were generated as I moved in and out during summers and college.

I almost forgot to add that Dad, with some assistance I'm sure, managed to wallpaper most of the rooms throughout the house as well. I suspect mom may have helped and maybe the older girls. They would have to answer for that. I only remember cleaning that paper during spring housecleaning with pink colored dough, which had the texture and body of clay. After a few swipes across the dirty paper, it quickly took on streaks the color of clay as well, though it

was nothing one would use in an artistic venture of modeling. There was nothing aesthetic about it but modern art might alter ones impression.

### A LITTLE CLARIFICATION

At this point maybe I should clarify the whole remodeling effort a little. I'm not sure just how much we, as kids, were involved and particularly



**Figure 2-27 The homestead after a miraculous transformation wrought by dad's hard work.**

my older brothers and sisters. However, I'm confident my father did the bulk of the work along with his maintaining a living for us. We each probably fussed and fumed as we went about our assigned tasks unless, of course, they were especially interesting. An example of the



**Figure 2-28 A winter scene of the Artie Obenchain home on 17<sup>th</sup> and Irene Streets.**

latter for me was helping dad shingle the roof. That seemed important to me and I was happy to be involved. I doubt that I was a great deal of

help but I do remember being up on top of that two-story house and trying to follow orders. I suspect he got rid of me as quickly as possible so as to minimize his concern over my safety as well as maximize his own productivity. At that age I was still on the clumsy side and might well have tripped, slipped or simply stepped off into space without a chute.

### OTHER STORIES AND MEMORIES

We must have moved to 17<sup>th</sup> and Irene in the fall of 1940. Although I don't remember the exact year, Uncle Guy and Aunt Mab moved their family to Boise around the same time but maybe a little earlier. Mark and Dewey, their two sons, were our double cousins, i.e. Mab was mom's sister and Guy was dad's brother. They also attended the Church of Christ on 18<sup>th</sup> and Eastman with us after their arrival. I believe that's the right location. Streets and addresses get kind of fuzzy in this old bean of mine. Anyway we had some good times together. Mark, however was 3 years older than I and Dewey, if I'm correct, was 3 or 4 years younger. Thus, my associations were more with Fred and Dean, Elfred and Judith's sons. One particular

**"We could make heads appear to be without bodies if we covered several people up with the blocks", he ventured.**

on the next page and like-wise, me. However, someone had to take the picture and another head or two could easily be hidden among the blocks and logs. We must have gone out somewhere along the Boise River, apparently on our bikes. If I had known I was going to write this little history, I would have taken better notes and been able to tell you exactly where it was and everyone involved. In any case, someone got the idea of making a stunt picture and naturally it had to be gruesome. I would suspect it might have been Dan's idea with others embellishing it just a little more. Dan's imagination, of course, never ceased activity or even slowed down when it came to pranks. He

was probably the one who noticed a pile of blocks nearby that had been cut for firewood. The group had an ax along for wood

for our yet to be built bonfire, and the stage was set in Dan's fertile mind. "We could make heads appear to be without bodies if we covered several people up with the blocks", he ventured. Soon, several volunteers lay among the blocks with only their heads exposed and the scene was ready for the camera.

The results are in the photo of figure 2-29 and, though I can only pick the remains of three victims out, there may well have been more. I can only make out what I believe is Dewey or maybe me to the right, Bob's head and hand in the center (kind of hard to make out) and Dan about to be delivered a fatal blow. I distinctly remember lying, half buried, somewhere among that pile of blocks. The bikes are in the background. I have got to admit, however, that Mark, the ax man, doesn't really look that mean and Dan doesn't appear that disturbed at his impending fate. However, you must remember, the movies weren't that good in those days, either. So what would you expect from a bunch of amateurs? It seems they did quite well just setting this up and getting a recognizable photo.

I spent some seven years in the house on 17<sup>th</sup> Street while growing up, which took me through Junior College in 1948. The next two years I went to Oregon State College in Corvallis, Oregon and only returned for the summers. Even then I used the house more like a motel because I spent the summer in the woods and only came home occasionally on weekends and a few days before returning to school. So, before I leave that particular part of my life I will recount a few additional experiences that just now wandered in



**Figure 2-29 Just a fun loving group of kids photographing a scene titled "The Axe Man".**

humorous incident, which I'll describe along with an associated picture, seems worthy of relating.

### THE GUILLOTINE

One summer, probably 1942 or early in World War 2, we went on a kind of picnic. I can't remember for sure just who was involved but we headed out with sack lunches and a need for a good time. I'm not sure Phil or Jim was along because neither appears in the photo displayed

from the cobwebs of my aging mind. Some may be interesting and some not so interesting but all will provide the reader with certain facets of my life as well as that of the family I grew up in.

### A WARM BUTT EMBARRASSING SEAT

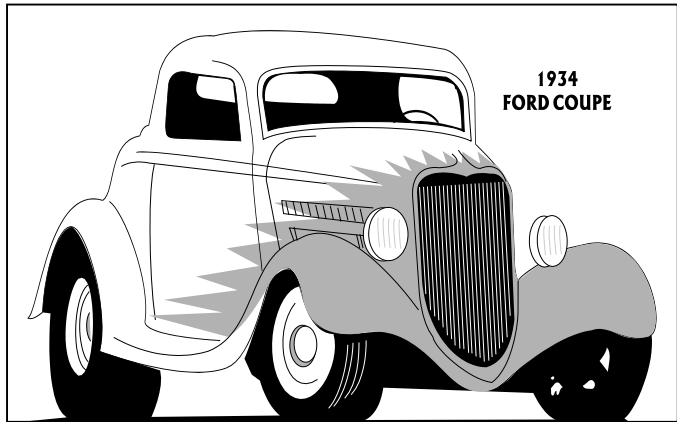
No, that's not a misspelling of the conjunction but in the title. Its significance will become obvious as the story unfolds. In introduction, let me say that I may have mentioned our home on 17<sup>th</sup> street had two bathrooms, a rarity in those days. One was upstairs near three bedrooms while the other was just off the kitchen on the lower floor. However, being more convenient the downstairs bathroom took the brunt of the activity by family members and so it did this particular winter evening.

One evening, I had left my answer to Mother Nature's call a little too long and headed for the bathroom on the run. You see; I had things timed right down to the millisecond. I was confident I could make it if all my movements were synchronized in time and space, which allowed me to minimize the time required for the job. The bathroom door was closed but then, it always was being adjacent to the kitchen. As I streaked across the kitchen, I was already in the process of undoing my pants and by the time I had opened the door and whirled around, they were down. Now, it was dark in the bathroom but I knew exactly where the stool was. My instincts guided me as I took one step backwards, slammed the door and touched down with unmatched precision. Perfect, I had judged all the distances just perfect. However, instead of landing on a cold seat, I realized my bare behind was on some ones bare lap. Then much to my horror, I heard grandma Lydia say,

"Tom, would you please leave? I was here first." Well, I blasted off without even a pre-departure check. My ascent was somewhat faster than was my mooning touchdown because I didn't worry about pulling my pants up until I was back in the kitchen. Fortunately, everyone else was in the living room and I regained my composure while fastening my pants. They hadn't seen my stupid mistake but what about grandma? She will surely tell everyone. I slipped into the living room, grabbed a book and headed upstairs. I didn't want to be around when she came out.

**There was a tap on his shoulder. He looked up to see his commanding officer looking down and watching the procedure, which had never been awarded space in operating manuals.**

Besides, I could settle in the upstairs bathroom until things died down, except, maybe, for Dan. He wouldn't let me live this incident down. Well, grandma came out and either kept our little secret or those she told realized my embarrassment and had mercy on me because it wasn't even mentioned, to my recollection. This meant, of course, that Dan certainly wasn't in on the secret. He would have had a hay day



**FIGURE 2-30 An imaginative impression of the old Hudson after Dan's high tech modification in completing his reoccurring missions over Boise.**

re-enacting the scene, as he imagined it, all the time gloating over my discomfort. At least that was what I had conjured up in my mind. Naturally, Dan would never own up to such conduct due, naturally, to his political persona.

### TWENTY FIVE MISSIONS OVER BOISE

Now, let's move on to another story provided by Phil. His recollection is much clearer than mine and though I remember the incident I don't remember the details that he does. Of course, his is somewhat exaggerated, but then again, Dan

deserves every bit of any malicious reputation he acquires and maybe a little more. However, I have taken the liberty to insert a piece of click

art, though not a Hudson-Terraplane, which was unavailable, somehow seems appropriate in depicting Dan's mental state at the time. Now, on with an illustration of this mighty machine in figure 2-30 and the story, which apparently motivated Phil in the selection of the above title.

*"Once upon a time, when he was about fifteen years old, Dan received his driver's license. In those days this was an advent akin to a twenty-one year old being commissioned to fly a B-29.*

*This was recognition of teenage dreams...his steady hand at the controls of a machine of vast horsepower.*

*Yes, 'Cool Hand' Obenchain had a way of converting his dream to reality. When several blocks from home, Dan would stop the car -- up with the hood -- loosen manifold bolts with wrench -- drop a spike in between the engine block and the manifold -- engine thus freed of the burden of a muffler system.*

*Bar-room! Bar-room! VAR-ROO-OOMBA! All the glory of the internal combustion engine bursts forth in a heroic expression of freedom -- a volume of sound not heard since Krakatoa burst its bonds on that fateful day in August of 1833. A symphony of fire and power is expelled with a roar that is music to teen ears. No alphabet in the world possesses phonetic combinations that can adequately describe the numbing decibel level of that world-ending sound of Armageddon. Neighborhood cats climbed the highest tree... dogs slunk down alleys and under porches. Mothers grabbed young children to safety.*

*The roar of horsepower was heard throughout the city and all went well for a number of missions from which the 1939 Hudson Terraplane returned without a scratch. Then, came that fateful day. When returning from a mission, Dan was following Harrison Boulevard to guide him back to home base when his unorthodox flying procedures were brought to the attention of higher command.*

*Dad didn't use the car and waste gas for trips downtown (but his kids drove all over Boise on any pretext). Oh, sure -- if he went out on the bench or to Meridian, he would take the car. He had walked all his life. The car was for "trips". When Dad walked to or from town, he usually went by way of Harrison Boulevard. And he did that day.*

*Well, Dan didn't look down as he flew along Harrison after that tough mission. He had his eyes on the approach pattern as any good pilot would. But to quiet the engine, he had to stop and remove the spike from between the engine block and the manifold. Ah, yes -- such a simple operation. Hood up, he leaned over the engine compartment -- hot now from its time over enemy territory. Intent on not burning his fingers, he bent over the fender to pull the spike.*

*There was a tap on his shoulder. He looked up to see his commanding officer looking down and watching the procedure, which had never been awarded space in operating manuals. Dad had been walking up Harrison Boulevard when Dan's B-29 roared low over him on the approach to home base. The senior command did not agree with the numerous innovative operational procedures of 'hot pilots' and made no attempt to understand them.*

*So, a truly colorful flying career was lost by the Air Corps that day. Could that be why Dan later joined the Navy?"*

### STILL MORE STORIES & MEMORIES

Well, Dan may not have impressed Dad but he did me. I was somewhat in awe of his courage to take chances and fly in the face of all odds. He was macho, he was my role model, but little did he know of my desire to be like him and more often than not my attempts to impress him were failures, which were greeted with contempt rather than the appreciation I was after. Of course, such is typical of older siblings. They have little patience for the younger set.

Many of my most vivid memories related to my growing up are of events that took place while we lived on 17th and Irene streets. As I mentioned, it was there that I entered both high school and college. It was our home during World War II and I saw both of my older brothers enter the service and return home while we lived in that same residence.

### WW II BLACKOUTS

I remember well the blackouts that were practiced from time to time during the war. Blinds had to be pulled or all lights turned off when the sirens wailed. No light could escape the confines of the house to alert possible enemy bombers. Volunteer wardens walked the neighborhoods keeping people honest by knocking on the door when they noticed light of any kind escaping from the house. There was a certain fear that Japan might launch some kind of attack from the west coast. Looking back, it would have been a little absurd to even think Japan couldn't find more promising targets than the little town of Boise with about 26,000 people. We did, however, have an air base, Gowen Field, which I suppose might have drawn some interest but Boise would have been way down the priority

**By the time the time the second woof sounded, I answered with a yell, through the paper at that head on the porch and I was out of there.**

list. The only real danger posed by the Japanese was their launching of balloons carrying explosives. They were carried by the westerly winds and would land indiscriminately in the northwest states. Such were hardly a reason for blackouts but I enjoyed the thrill the whole process gave my active imagination.

#### MIND WANDERING

I was living there when I married Esther on December 29th, 1950 during a break from graduate school at Colorado School of Mines. I still considered it home after dropping out of graduate school (lack of funds) and joining the USAF in May of 1951. In fact Esther stayed in the little apartment that Dad had built until I finished basic training and was transferred to Keesler Field at Biloxi, Mississippi. Yes it was a home of many memories most of which were warm and good. Let me continue my recollections of this era of my life with other incidents occurring in and around Boise, which occurred mostly in my earlier years in that home. Not that they are particularly interesting but they help define me. By that I mean, if you take time to read said stories, they will help you understand why I'm as goofy as I am. After all, if I remember correctly, a questionable premise at my age, such understanding is the very purpose of your reading this bodacious essay, questionable as such an effort may be.

#### OF ST. BERNARDS, MUMBLE PEG & ODD JOBS

During the seventh grade, my first year there (probably more towards spring), I took over Dan's morning paper route along Harrison Boulevard and neighboring streets. Actually, I substituted for him from time to time before that. I remember well, because he failed to tell me about a St. Bernard living at a particular house on Harrison Boulevard. I was instructed to be sure to place the paper through the mail slot in the front door. Well, I was whistling merrily as I walked along the street and was almost trotting up the sidewalk to the porch of that house. All at once the head of the biggest dog I had ever seen poked around a piece of stone masonry and uttered a loud **GRRRROUGH, WOOF-WOOF**. By the time the second woof sounded, I answered with a yell, threw the paper at that head on the porch and I was out of there. I'm not sure whether Dan got a complaint for my

failing to place the paper through the mail slot or not but I was intent on saving my life. When I related the incident, Dan had his usual laugh and told me the St. Bernard was just a big friendly pup. Later, I found that to be true though I wasn't convinced right away. Observing him with neighborhood kids during the day provided the clinching information. He was a pussycat, allowing them to maul him as they pleased and even jump on for a ride.

As mentioned, at first I just helped but, later Dan went on to bigger and better things, and I assumed the responsibility for the route. I guess I considered it a step upwards from the evening routes I had delivered in earlier years. I don't remember just how long I had that particular job, probably about a year. Anyway, the following summer, which preceded the eighth grade, I had a good deal of time on my hands after delivering the papers and taking care of the few chores given me. We, my cousins, friends and I, might spend part of our day playing mumble peg in the shade, tossing a football or maybe just talking. Other times we would go to a nearby park on about 25<sup>th</sup> and Irene and get involved with summer programs there. If we got desperate for money, I, along with others, would take day laborer's jobs picking cherries near Emmett, thinning beets, picking berries, etc. or any other opportunity available on the local farms.

#### SEEKING SUMMER RELIEF

Summers were quite hot in Boise with the temperatures generally in the 90's. Occasionally a real heat wave would come along and temperatures would rise above 100. In such cases you would hear of stunts being pulled like cooking an egg on the sidewalk or something else to publicize a situation everyone already knew about. The upstairs of our 17<sup>th</sup> street home would get hot, to say the least. It wasn't unusual to find us seeking relief in any way possible. Sleeping in the back yard in such weather was one way to gain the desired comfort, at least at night. Daytime was another matter. There were no swimming pools close by and those that were available cost money, which was short indeed. We would do almost anything to cool off, from playing in the lawn sprinkler to finding some ditch or canal to soak in. Of course the irrigation ditches nearby were shallow and quite narrow

**..... Thus, even with such water exerting only a pressure of 1/4<sup>th</sup> pound per square inch, I was being held against the piling by a force of some 70 to 100 pounds. That may have been my first lesson in the practical application of engineering.**

and didn't allow any real swimming, so we looked for better places. Unfortunately, they weren't close by.

#### THE RIDENBAUGH CANAL

If we could scrape together enough money we would usually try to go to the Natatorium (Nat for short), a public swimming pool, which was about a 3-mile ride one way on our bicycles. The cost was 10 or 15 cents for a kid but adding a cold drink or two might set you back a quarter. I was only an average swimmer at that time and never really became much of a diver. I would marvel



**Figure 2-31** Our dog Skippy, a marvelous canine, ready to meet the public on his evening stroll through the neighborhood.

at the courage and skill of some of the big guys at the Nat who would dive from the top of a big assemblage of rocks designed for that purpose into some 16 feet of water. Usually, neither I nor any of my cohorts were able to scrape together enough money and so we would ride another 2 miles further, to South Boise, where we could swim in the Ridenbaugh canal. It was maybe 20 to 25 feet wide and something like 7 or 8 feet deep in the center, as I remember. I suppose it was a little dangerous but we were all able to swim well enough to keep out of trouble, or so I thought until an unusual occurrence surfaced.

#### AN ENGINEERING LESSON

That particular time I remember going through some cement pilings supporting a pipe, which

crossed the canal. The current seemed swifter there as it went by the pilings. I thought it might be neat to stop at the piling and just let the water cool me off while I rested. Boy was I surprised when I tried to let go of the piling to swim on down the canal. The force of the water was such that I could hardly find the strength to push off from the upstream side of the piling and I was beginning to wonder whether I was going to have to yell for help. If you consider that my body probably presented an area of some two or three square feet to the flowing water and thus even with such water exerting only a pressure of 1/4<sup>th</sup> pound per square inch, I was being held by a force of some 70 to 100 pounds. That may have been my first lesson in the practical application of engineering. I quickly learned the total force applied to a body is controlled by both the force per square inch and the area on which it is applied.

After swimming most of the afternoon we then had to make the 5-mile ride back to the north end of Boise. Any benefit we might have received from the swim was long lost by the time we pedaled our way back to the house. But, what the heck, we had a good time and cooled off for a short time.

#### A DOG NAMED SKIPPY

In later years on 17<sup>th</sup> street we managed to pick up a dog, which we named Skippy. He was mostly black with a little white on his forehead, as I remember, and also on his paws. The picture I have used to depict him in figure 2-31 has too much white in it but the general appearance and air or mien about him is suitable. The hat and the glasses seem appropriate in that he certainly must have deemed himself as an intellectual. Actually, he was a Heinz 57 variety and offered no particular redeeming quality other than friendship but such a handicap was a "no never mind" to him. He went about life as though he was as good as anyone else, including humans. I don't remember just how we came by him but I do remember some incidents regarding this so called dumb animal, which seem worth relating. I think you'll agree that he was pretty bright.

#### DOGGONE GOOD COMMUNICATION

Soon after his arrival, Skippy learned his way around both house and neighborhood. He would let you know when he wanted out and soon developed his own unique way of notifying us when he wanted in. In figure 2-15, there is a

window just to the right of Carl which looked in on the dining room and beyond through an arch to the living room. He used that effectively to communicate his desire to come in. When returning from a neighborhood foraging effort, he would typically jump up on the outside sill and tap on the window with his paw. Usually someone was in one of the two rooms and would notice his presence. When they would acknowledge it, he would take note, jump down to the porch level and knock on the screen door. It was never latched and would bang against the frame as he rapped on it. Usually he was then let in. However, if the person involved ignored him for some reason, he would go back to the window, attract their attention again, and repeat the process until he had gained entrance. He was persistent, to say the least. This character trait of his brought rewards in various ways.

#### SKIPPY LOVED CAMPING

Skippy loved to go camping and knew intuitively when someone was about to so embark. Usually dad was involved. As soon as he figured out camping of some kind or at least a trip to the hills was in store, out he would go and wait for a chance to get in the car. Usually on dad's first loading trip, Skippy would jump in the car and take his place in the back seat, waiting for him to leave. He might lie there for a couple of hours before his patience was rewarded but he had little else to do and was seldom forced to exit. He loved to roam the hills while dad and anyone else involved were fishing. He had the best of two worlds, guaranteed meals and a chance to chase a groundhog into his burro or corner a squirrel. He also got to sleep alongside one or more of his masters and even crawl under the covers, if the night was too chilly for his liking. Yep, he had all the comforts of life. He hardly fit the image portrayed by the term "dumb animals". No, he wasn't dumb.

#### FORAGING FOR FOOD

One weekend when I was home for Christmas vacation from Corvallis (Oregon State), Carl alerted me to a foraging tactic of Skippy's. We never fed Skippy dog food in those days. I don't know that anyone fed his dog in that manner. He subsisted by begging table scraps and leftovers. One Saturday as I came down for breakfast Carl was about to let Skippy out; and said, "**watch this.**" As he opened the door, Skippy headed for the house next door which had three families living in it at that time and there were three separate back doors we could

see from our back porch. Skippy went to the first and rapped very methodically. A lady answered and said, "**Well, hello Skippy. Are you hungry? Just a minute.**" She soon returned with some scraps of some kind, which Skippy gobbled down. I doubt he said thanks before moving on to the next door because he wasted no time. Once again he rapped in a dedicated manner. Another lady answered and a similar scene followed. After finishing that course, he moved to the last of the three entrances and repeated his request. Once again he was successful and promptly left, around the corner to find yet another benevolent soul or maybe just a shade tree under which he could take a well deserved summer nap. I concluded that Skippy might never make it in the wilds but most certainly he was safe as long as there were doors on which to rap with kindly people to answer. Yes, he had the social graces necessary to survive in the city, if not in the wilds and had certainly learned to adapt to sidewalks, houses and friendly people of his environment.

#### SUCH IN-JUNE-IETY

June was a rather vivacious little girl with a determined way about her as I mentioned earlier. She could take care of herself and certainly stood up for that which she believed was important. The kitchen area of our house on 17<sup>th</sup> had a dining nook big enough to seat the whole family of 11 souls. Two sides had built in seats (benches), which dad had constructed and which ran the length and width of the table. Chairs completed the seating on the other two sides. The younger kids usually sat on the benches next to the walls. There were outlets built into the wall for toasters, etc.

One morning June had been making toast, I guess, and decided the toaster cord was in the way or something. At any rate she tried to unplug it without any luck and thus, turned to in-June-iety to accomplish the job. The only handy tool was a table knife and with determination she inserted it behind the plug and began to pry. Within seconds she made contact with not just one terminal but both in the plug. Needless to say fire flew, June screamed and the family came running. June was fine except for a pounding heart and the only damage was to the knife, which we kept for some years. It had two indentations melted into its blade, which grimly reminded all who saw it of the higher power she had contacted unintentionally that morning. Though unintentional, she had received a

definite manifestation of that power, somewhat like being struck by lightning.

Another incident, which brought a big laugh to the family involved a malapropism and occurred one night at supper. We were all talking and/or eating quite intently while listening to music on the radio. The Star Spangled Banner came on but no one gave heed except June. She jumped to her feet and stood on the bench very erectly with her hand over her heart. We all laughed and then someone said, "What on earth are you doing?" Very seriously she said, "I'm political". Well, of course, she meant patriotic but I suppose her choice of terms fit just about as well, although today it might not be considered politically correct. Who knows?

I have included figure 2-32, a picture of June and Connie, which vintage is unknown to me. It



**Figure 2-32 June and Connie on a warm sunny day while we lived on 17<sup>th</sup> and Irene.**

must have been taken soon after we moved to 17<sup>th</sup> street and provides an image of the girl behind the knife as well as the politician. Her political interest may be what motivated her to later work in the state house as an adult.

## A RAZOR STRAP INCIDENT

Carl or Ted may remember this incident better than I, since they had a personal interest in it. It was only one of several such incidents occurring

**He caught Carl once on the sofa with a blow to the fanny and then, like a catapult, lifted him off the library table with a second one.**

in our household while we were growing up. Dad wasn't a strict disciplinarian nor was he prone to threats. However, when he made a decision, he usually carried it

out quickly, methodically and efficiently. This included administering the razor strap across one of the boy's fannies when their smart remarks or other acts became a little too much for him to bear.

Such was the case for Carl and Ted one day on 17<sup>th</sup> street. I believe dad had been out of town on a job and the two younger boys had proven quite a hassle for mom during his absence. Apparently their back talk to mom continued after he returned, which proved to be their undoing. We older ones had suffered through his acts of discipline before and knew it was time to shut up when he walked in. I doubt that either Carl or Ted had yet felt the sting of remorse, which always accompanied the administering of the strap. Thus, they rather unwisely continued on with their risky remarks. No, they still had that particular experience to adsorb before they could be counted worthy of joining the ranks of us older boys. An explanation on our part would hardly describe the preliminary fear, which accompanied the application.

### DAD'S MULTI PURPOSE RAZOR STRAP

You see, dad shaved with a straight edge razor and used a strap to maintain its edge. When he was home, I used to watch him, almost in a state of awe, fine tune his razor for his morning shave. Boy, could he handle that strap. It was composed of two pieces of leather held together by a metal clasp. One had a somewhat coarser surface than the other and I suppose, provided a little more grinding action when needed to hone the razor's edge. The other was real smooth and obviously polished that edge to an almost laser like thinness for the desired smooth shave. He could make it sing as he ran the razor over it with a combination of humming and popping. Yes, I really liked to watch him prepare to shave but that's as far as it went. I had learned years earlier that the razor strap had a second, more sinister purpose, which occurred with its application to the fanny. That application, in turn, was a result of one's conduct, mouth or



otherwise that was somehow contrary to some of dad's instruction.

#### DAD DEMONSTRATES HIS AGILITY

This particular day was Carl and Ted's day of revelation regarding that secondary sinister purpose. Ah yes, the strap began to hum and pop to a somewhat marshaling tune as dad began his disciplinary preparations. Both Carl and Ted felt the imminent threat in the air. Ted, I believe, cowered in the corner while Carl tried to find safety in the front room. The tune no longer resembled the

cheerful beat we remembered as dad prepared for a shave. No, the song was more like an approaching

thunderstorm from which one knew lightening would inevitably strike. The damage to one's psyche was infinitely worse, as one waited for the storm, than were the few blows that were sure to follow. I believe dad understood that principle but never mentioned it.

Dad made short work of Ted. He hadn't moved from his place of refuge and the spanking was administered quickly and efficiently. The loud popping sound, accompanying the swats to the fanny, resulted primarily from the straps hitting one another and had little to do with the force of the blow. Ted was in tears but not so much from pain, I believe, as from the realization it was over. His punishment was complete and he now became an observer. I stood, almost in a trance, thanking my lucky stars that I was a bystander and not an unfortunate participant. Memories of past infractions of my own flashed through my mind as dad prepared for his next effort with Carl.

With a little crying mixed in, the psychological pressure began to mount for Carl. He realized the storm clouds were about to head his way and his mind must surely have been racing to determine just where a place of security might lie. Seeing none, he headed into the living room as dad moved in his direction. He even demonstrated some athletic prowess in circling the sofa with dad right behind him administering the blows that had to fall. Realizing that dad wasn't losing any ground, Carl made a discretionary decision. If only he could put the sofa and table between himself and dad, surely the long arm of the law couldn't reach him. On his next pass by the fireplace, Carl took a hard

left and headed up over the back of the couch, across the library table and down to the floor with safety just a few steps away through the kitchen to the back door. Dad, having rounded up livestock as a young man, reacted quickly and simply reversed himself back around the end of the sofa and table. He caught Carl once on the sofa with a blow to the fanny and then, like a catapult, lifted him off the library table with a second one. In my mind's eye I can still visualize the almost perfect form Carl displayed as he left the table and landed near the arch

leading to the dining room. I feel sure Carl set a record for kids his age in the long jump that day. Unfortunately it was never measured and

**So, in fond memory of our wonderful mother, let me reiterate those stories, which many, if not all, have heard countless times and yet, which always bring a warm laugh, not in derision but out of love for one who has blessed our lives in countless ways.**

can only be validated by those who watched the spectacle. Apparently that last swat satisfied dad because he let Carl go on into the kitchen to lick his wounds. That was the last time I saw dad in action with his razor strap because, I suppose, he ran out of kids.

#### OUR MOTHER, A GREAT LADY

Our mother was, indeed, a great lady. Though she raised her family in an era of economic depression and had little of a material sense in her early married life, I never remember her complaining. She was optimistic and was always looking for better things. She encouraged her children to do their best and I suppose all have done that to a greater or less degree. Mother believed in getting an education and encouraged each of us in that area. She was independent in her thinking and committed to that which she believed in.

I suppose nothing would demonstrate that better than her effort to find the church of her choice. She tried several over the years and ultimately decided none fit her needs. As I mentioned earlier, she and dad then became part of a bible study group, which met in different homes and derived their own brand of the gospel. Though all her children seem to have established somewhat differing views of religion, I feel confident that all respect mom's own effort in that area. Such independent thinking and action extended into other areas of her life such as medical decisions, learning to drive and even swimming. To help the reader better understand this independent thinking, whether it was logical or illogical, let me describe some of her efforts

and comments in learning to drive after reaching her mid-sixties.

### SOME OF MOM'S MOTORING MEMORIES

Family life in the Artie Obenchain household would hardly be complete without our mother's exploits in the world of the automobile, for indeed they were both remarkable and in a sense heroic. Who but our mother would continue an onward plunge to accomplish her goal of becoming a licensed driver in spite of many setbacks and the ongoing mirth which accompanied her various debacles? Whatever she lacked in the way of mechanical skills she made up for in sheer grit and determination. So, in fond memory of our wonderful mother, let me reiterate those stories, which many, if not all, have heard countless times and yet, which always bring a warm laugh, not in derision but out of love for one who has blessed our lives in countless ways. Several members of the family were involved to varying degrees in teaching our mother to drive. I feel sure there are other stories out there still waiting to be told. These, however, are the only ones I have been treated to in family get-togethers over the years. I'll begin with one of my own experiences.

#### WELL, YOU TOLD ME TO, DIDN'T YOU?

I was at home but can't remember under what circumstances, maybe prior to joining the USAF in 1951 or maybe after I got out. I believe the latter must have been the case because dad had passed away in 1953. In any case, I took her out for a learning experience, which quickly became my own. We were on the Hill Road approaching, I believe, 26<sup>th</sup> street. I may have that wrong but whatever the street, the turn was somewhat more than a right angle turn. I asked her, well in advance, to slow down to make the turn and warned her of its sharpness. She continued along at what appeared to be about the same speed and I figured she had decided to continue along Hill Road instead. Well, you guessed it, she hadn't and she did. That is she hadn't changed her mind and she did attempt a turn on to 26<sup>th</sup>. As we wheeled around the corner at what felt like 50 miles an hour, we headed for the ditch along-side the road and an open field beyond. I grabbed the steering wheel and turned it more sharply such that the car skidded sideways into the ditch and after a few bumps and grinds, came to a stop. I said,

**"Grandma, you're hitting the cars." Mom turned to her and replied, "Honey, don't you know, that's what bumpers are for".**

**"Mom, why did you turn, I thought you had changed your mind."** Quickly she retorted, **"Well, you told me to, didn't you?"** So, I said, **"But mom, I warned you of the curve and said to go real slow around it."** She answered, **"I did. I took my foot off the gas and I thought it was supposed to slow down enough"**. It was then that I realized she didn't understand the need to brake, let alone the purpose of that particular foot pedal. In her mind, she had followed my instructions to a "T" even though she had no idea why they were necessary. We were both a little shook up and after sitting there for a few minutes, I said, "Let's go home". I realized then I hadn't been very

effective with that particular teaching moment. No sir, mom was sure she had followed my directions to a T and in her mind she wasn't responsible for the terror that followed. Obviously, I had failed to communicate things in a proper manner.

#### VALERIE'S INITIATION

One time when we were visiting mom, Valerie had gone to town with her. They found a rather short place in which to parallel-park and as mom backed into it she hit the car in back rather hard, moving it a little. Then she pulled forward and repeated the action by hitting the one in front. When she tapped the one in back a second time Valerie couldn't contain her-self and said, **"Grandma, you're hitting the cars."** Mom turned to her and replied, **"Honey, don't you know, that's what bumpers are for"**.

#### CARL'S MEMORABLE MOMENT

Carl was with mom once when she was pulling into the C. C. Anderson's Food Mart parking lot, as I understand it. She managed to take down one of the poles, which marked the entry gate. To my knowledge, Carl wasn't one to seek the limelight, especially under such circumstances. As the story goes, Carl was so embarrassed that he simply hid behind the front seat so no one would see him. His natural tendency to stay out of the limelight most certainly came to the fore that particular day. I guess he really didn't want to be recognized as part of the family at that particular moment. Is that right, Carl?

#### YA GOTTA COME CLEAN, MOM

Another time we learned of an accident at a service station in which she was involved by reading about it in the paper. I'm not sure who

discovered it but it quickly became family knowledge. Apparently she had pulled in to gas up and managed to knock over one of the station's pumps. How a fire was prevented, I'll never know. Somehow mom struck a deal with the station manager to keep it quiet and she would pay for the repair but, I would guess, she overlooked the reporter. Anyhow, there it was in the paper the next day. Boy was she chagrined when the family found out. Whether it was failure to hide the deception or embarrassment that chapped her the most, I will never know.

#### THOSE RIDICULOUS WHITE POSTS

After mom had mastered the art of driving to an acceptable degree, she began to venture into more demanding territory as well as further from home. One day after returning from a shopping trip, she came home complaining about some stupid white posts that were in the center of the intersections throughout the down town area. She asked quite innocently, "Why would they place such posts in the center of the intersections? It makes it next to impossible to turn left, particularly with all the traffic." When she described them as little white posts, we realized they were the city's solution to reducing congestion during the rush hour by placing said posts in the main intersections. On each post were letters stating, "**No left turn**". Needless to say, she was surprised to find out their purpose, not having bothered to read them, but seemed unruffled at her error. She simply added, "Well, I'm glad to find that out".

#### DEFENSIVE DRIVING

One last driving story involved a neighbor who knew our family quite well. He remarked that mom's driving didn't really bother him because, when he spotted her coming down the street, he simply pulled over until she went by. "Such precaution", he mentioned, "has paid off handsomely over the years, so I just give her a wide birth. Mrs. Obenchain can have the whole street as far as I'm concerned".

One nice thing about mom was that we could tell these stories in front of her and she would laugh along with everyone else. She could see the humor in her little fiascos as well as in those of anyone else. Any genes I might have inherited relative to sportsmanship must surely have come from her. If such things bothered her, she never let on.

## MOTHER'S CLASS REUNION PHOTO

#### AS DESCRIBED BY PHIL

Mother went back home to Rockford, Illinois with her sister, Madeleine to attend a fiftieth class reunion. She returned with a photo record that received national publicity. Before she left, her grandson, Steve Dick, offered to loan her his camera. It was small and compact and thus easy to carry along.

When mother went to Connie's house to pick up the camera, Steve began to instruct her on its use. Mom listened for a minute and then said, "Oh --- it's easy. I know how. Just get the image in the lens and 'click', you have it." Yup.

So off went grandma O. Being with her sister, they saw any number of old friends, familiar places from their youth and reminisced about those halcyon days of yore.

And mother took pictures. Ah, yes --- the entire roll. But when she got home and the photos were developed, well, practically every shot was a picture of mother's nose from below. She had held the camera at her waist (like the old box

**"Such precaution", he mentioned, "has paid off handsomely over the years, so I just give her a wide birth. Mrs. Obenchain can have the whole street as far as I'm concerned".**

camera), and looked into the lens --- and 'clicked'. The levity of the nose shots served to assuage the sting of failure to bring home photos of old

classmates. Mother had such a great capacity to laugh at herself and, needless to say, that photo reunion tour provided ample resources for sometime after that to exercise that particular attribute of hers.

It even brought her national fame. After her reunion trip, mom went to see Madeleine and her family, then living in the Los Angeles area. Madeleine arranged for them to visit the Art Linkletter TV show. Everyone entering was invited to write a brief account of life's "most embarrassing moment" --- which mother did. Of course, her moment was one featured that day. Art interviewed our mother on national TV showing a close up of the "nose" shots. Ah, yes, the nose Knows, and "All is ephemeral --- fame..."

I remember that incident as well but couldn't have told it near as well as Phil. Everyone, including mom, had a good laugh over it. She always had as much fun over her little blunders as did anyone else. Yes, she could laugh at her-self. What a wonderful trait to have, one

that seems missing in much of society today as most of us seek recognition among our peers.

## FORFEITURE OF SUPER BOWL XLIII

AS RELATED BY PHIL

This particular story is another one of Phil's contributions. I seem to have no recollection of it (maybe my empathy for any victim of Dan's has kicked in) and must take Phil's word for it. Of course, that's quite reasonable considering the perpetrator and victims involved. Dan is at his best in the art of pulling a prank on those unfortunate enough to be conveniently placed for his act, as well as utilizing his native skill of misleading innocent victims. I must admit at this stage of my life, it also contributes some measure of satisfaction to me (misery loves company, you know) because I now realize Dan didn't single me out necessarily. I was simply a convenient target and reacted in the manner he expected so as to tickle his funny bone. Dan certainly didn't demonstrate partiality when exercising his skills. Now, here's the story.

*Sports annals have neglected one of the great stories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps that is because it all happened in a small western community during WWII when sports were not the "headliners" that they have come to be.*

*The North End Wildcats of the greater Boise Football League were on a roll. This was because of the play of "Sharpshooter" Carl Obenchain (the passer) and "Sticky Fingers" Ted Obenchain (the receiver) --- a deadly passing combination if there ever was one. But, at the height of their blossoming careers (they were about eight and six years old) fate intervened. Older brother, Dan, came home one day with candy --- ah CANDY. Even though it meant breaking some rigid training rules, the two younger boys could not turn their backs on this sudden and inexplicable generosity. It was a new kind of candy, he said --- fancy --- in a tin box --- chocolate.*

**"Want some candy?"** Oh boy --- and how. They took and they relished every bite. **"Want another piece?"** **"Sure"** --- and grubby hands shot out to accept the offering. **"Good, isn't it?"** **"Yeah man. Good. What kind is it?"** **"Ex-Lax chocolates. Want some more?"**

*Dan had no trouble getting rid of a good part of the cute little box of EX-Lax. (For those young people who might not be familiar with that "candy", the name Ex-Lax stood for EXtreme*

*LAXity of control of the lower bowel.) Well, as it turns out, it was extreme laxity in the execution of plays in the North Seventeenth Street football championship, Super Bowl XVIII.*

*What happened was -- well, ya see the way Carl tells it, about an hour after they ate the "candy" Ted goes out for a pass --- and he goes --- and he goes --- and he goes --- Carl says the first thing he knows, Ted is further away than he can pass --- and then he says Ted turns up the alley a' goin' like he's never seen him run before --- 'course, Carl says he just thought someone hit Ted because he was holding the seat of his pants.*

*So-o, Carl says they played a couple more plays without Ted, figuring he'd be right back. With half of the highly touted passing combo gone, they had to run the ball. Then about the time he said "Hike", he got this real urgent kind of pang down low in his lower intestine --- well, it was an end run so "Off" I went right up the same alley where Ted had gone. Dick Kaiser was yellin',*



Figure 2-34 Carl established new meaning for the term "end run" during their Super Bowl XLIII.

**"Hey, that's my football."** "I just kept going." Ted and he spent most of the afternoon on the john and all the kids were out back yelling, **"Y'gotta forfeit the game,"** and **"Quitters, quitters."**

*What they didn't know was Carl and Ted couldn't quit --- all afternoon they couldn't quit.*

*It was sometime before big brother, Dan, revealed to them just what kind of candy Ex-Lax was.*

## BACK TO GRANDPA

Obviously, there is no rhyme and very little reason to the order of my memories and their associated stories. As you have probably figured out by now, I write spontaneously and make little effort to place events in any kind of chronological order. It's hard enough to extract useful data from a 80-year old brain fighting off rigor mortis, let alone assembling the same in a logical manner. That's particularly true when one is reaching back roughly 65 years for those stories. So let's get on with it.

### POTEET DAIRY

Just after entering the eighth grade I answered a help-wanted add in the paper and managed to get a job at Poteet Dairy in south Boise near where we would swim. I would take the bus out there, about five miles I suppose, after school and on Saturdays. I washed milk bottles mostly on a machine with three rotating brushes. As you stuck bottles on two of them to wash the inside, the third brush simultaneously cleaned the outside of both bottles. What a marvelous contraption, I thought. Those were the days when milk still came in bottles and people either returned the used ones to the store or left them on the porch to be picked up by the milkman. Most were fairly clean but a significant number needed special attention to get the old sour milk out, which meant a hand job with a single brush. I wouldn't describe that particular job as the greatest I have ever had, but it did seem to beat paper routes, at least in my mind. Also, it seemed to place me in the world of grown-ups, which seemed important to one of my age.

On Saturdays I would help with the pasteurizing and bottling process as well, moving 10-gallon cans of milk into the pasteurizing room for processing and the bottled milk back into the cooler to wait for delivery. Though heavier work, I liked that part of the job considerably better than washing bottles and dealing with sour milk. Even so, it was quite a ways from home and I had to travel by bus for quite a while each way. I only stayed with that job through the spring and the summer between my eighth and ninth school years after turning 14. I then began to look for a better job, which included closeness.

### C. C. ANDERSON'S FOOD MART

That fall I was able to get on at C. C. Anderson's Food Mart stocking shelves and sacking groceries. I liked that job better and continued to work there in the winters through high school

except for a small stint with a produce company unloading freight cars. The store was closer to home and, as I remember, paid about the same per hour. I did about everything from stocking shelves through sacking groceries and unloading freight. In the latter case we would place the freight of all kinds on the floor inside the freight area of the store and then move and stack it in the proper place later. One day we had just begun to move it and were working furiously to get it done. Typically, we would place a carton of goods on our shoulder, steady it with one hand and walk quickly to the storage area. That was much easier than holding it in front of you and trying to walk. I was doing fine until I picked up a case of grape juice, swung it up on my shoulder and, much to my surprise, it didn't stop. It flew over my shoulder like the Babe's hard hit balls flew out of Yankee stadium or where ever he played. Well, to my chagrin, it landed ker-plunk on the cement floor with grape juice streaming out the corners and seams of the cardboard carton. There wasn't a single bottle left intact. I'm not sure which was worse, cleaning up the grape juice (about 12 quarts) or listening to my boss fuss. Needless to say, I slowed down a little and put slightly less enthusiasm into my efforts. I had learned that care, as well as speed, was important.

### FREIGHT CAR EXPERIENCES

My job unloading freight cars occurred in my senior year at Boise High. I could make a little better money than the grocery store paid but, of course, the work was somewhat harder. We unloaded crates of oranges, grapefruit, etc. as well as bananas by the bunch. After an eight or nine hour day I would come home dog-tired. As you know, a crate of oranges isn't particularly heavy, maybe 60 lbs or so, in those days, but if you keep after it for eight hours it will make a man out of you. The crates were placed on dollies and wheeled into the warehouse to be stored. The bananas, on the other hand, had to be carried in and hung in a special cooler to ripen. They were a little lighter but awkward and heavy enough to make me grunt as I struggled to hang them up. I remember having concerns about a tarantula appearing out of one of those bunches and maybe crawling down the back of my neck, or even worse, taking a bite out of me. Who knows how big a bite that would be? I certainly didn't and my imagination amplified the scene. I had seen pictures of those hairy things and wanted no part of them. Anyway, as I was hanging them up, I often wondered how far I

could throw one, a bunch of bananas that is, should such a hairy monster appear. They appeared in pictures to be as ugly as any of their cousins of similar genetic origin. Fortunately for me no such occasion materialized while I was there. Is that a symptom of arachnophobia or just a normal fear of spiders?

### A YEAR ON THE STUDENT COUNCIL

In the spring of my junior year in high school, I was elected to the student council as treasurer, I believe. I'm not sure why. I don't remember running for the office and certainly I had no political aspirations. In figure 2-35 you can see me in action during a meeting standing in back of the president and vice president. You can see we were an active group, some just sitting in a daze and others, like me, simply twiddling their thumbs. It probably wouldn't surprise you if I said I don't remember any important legislation



**Figure 2-35** A photo of Boise High student council at work during the 1945-46 school year.

being passed. In fact, I don't remember accomplishing anything important. It seems that's much like many of our governing bodies today, passing mostly items to our detriment.

Probably that same year and maybe because of my office, I vaguely remember being chosen to spend a day at the capitol with some 50 or so other students acting in the role of a state representative. I was completely awed by the whole process. That is, sitting in the legislative chambers and going through the motions of voting for imaginary bills. The parliamentary procedures we had to follow during those times completely subdued any confidence I had and convinced me that I would never be a politician.

### SELF CONFIDENCE AND FOOTBALL

I did get involved in sports while attending Boise High. I must admit I was never very good, although I did make second-string varsity in football my senior year. I'm not sure just how much my self-confidence problem hurt my performance but I don't doubt it impacted it to some degree. I don't say that in defense of my record. I just don't know what might have been had I really wanted to excel and demonstrated the self-confidence that others did. I'm amazed at times by the accomplishments of people who have no particular talent but they accomplish a lot through sheer determination powered by self-confidence. I have seen it in the business world, in church and in various other situations. I wouldn't take anything away from such people. In fact, I have come to realize such a characteristic is extremely valuable in one's life and is something we should try to help our children develop. In later years as I have overcome my fear or lack of confidence to some degree, I have seen a difference in my own accomplishments. I now feel quite comfortable in situations, which used to be terrifying to me with a resultant improvement in performance. I truly believe fear, nervousness, lack of confidence or whatever word you want to use to describe it, is a person's worst enemy as he or she tries to learn or exercise their talents.

Well, back to football. As you can see my thoughts frequently wander and I find myself drifting away from the subject at hand. Ah yes, football. Where was I? I decided to include a rather unimpressive picture (figure 2-36) of me posed in an offensive stance of those days. It's the only proof I have of being involved in the game. The expression on my face was about as close to tough as I got and "mean", really wasn't in my vocabulary. I suppose I was, once again, rather average in my ability. Although I only made the second team once in two years of varsity ball, it was on the state champion football team for the so-called class-A schools or the highest class at that time. Boise High dominated the league for several years in that era. There were no double A, triple A or quad A schools in those days. That came later when it was felt that the term class B or lower was demeaning and somehow damaged a kid's psyche or self image. That seems rather silly to me in spite of my own struggles. I don't believe in running anyone down and particularly a kid. However, we all have to face our weaknesses in life as well as recognize our strengths and

simply placing a nicer label on our performance changes nothing. We all have to realize there are others with more God given talents than ourselves and the real measurement of an individual, at least in my opinion, is what one does with those talents he or she has been given by that great Dispenser of the same.

Now let me get back to football and one of life's more embarrassing moments. What might have been a moment of glory ended as a fiasco, which brought undesirable recognition, to say the least. Yes, my big chance arrived but I muffed it. Was it the glare of the overhead lights? Not likely, but it placed me in a spotlight I didn't need. I'll let you decide whether the title I have chosen is appropriate or not.

#### THAT'S USING YOUR HEAD, TOM

I believe it was my senior year at Boise High when this particular incident occurred in a game with Caldwell. We were undefeated for a couple of years and were well ahead in this particular game. They had a real good running back and I had been in enough to experience some satisfaction in shutting him down. Defense was my strength in football, if I had one. The game was under the lights, which once again was unusual. Most were played in the daylight on a Saturday afternoon.

Late in the game I was sent in again and a pass play was called. In those days substitution was limited and no one played just offense or defense. We played both as long as we were in. I wasn't known for my speed or ability to get in the clear and consequently never received many passes. For some unknown reason I did get in the clear on that particular play and was looking back to see what was going on. I can remember being bothered by the lights, which I wasn't used to and I didn't see the ball coming. Although such difficulty was hardly an excuse for what followed, it did ameliorate my feelings to an extent in later years as I considered how I bungled my big chance that night. Bang, the football hit me smack in the head (almost between the eyes) and what might have been a moment of glory turned into an abysmal fiasco. The ball dropped to the ground harmlessly as depicted in figure 2-37. Had I caught it, I would have been well in the clear and could have easily scored a touchdown. Needless to say, as I trotted back to the huddle I was greeted with, "That's using your head, Tom". It wouldn't have been so bad if that was the end if it but the game

was in Caldwell and we had a bus ride back to Boise wherein I was ribbed unmercifully.

This little incident is one of those classified top secrets I promised to reveal in the preface to this



**Figure 2-36 My budding career as a football player always seemed to be on rocky terrain.**

work. I don't believe I ever shared that with any of my brothers and sisters at the time, or even later in life. I'm only telling it now because it



**Figure 2-37 The football greeted me with a smack in the head, almost between the eyes and then fell harmlessly to the ground.**

was, indeed, a comical situation and has finally become accepted as such, even in my own poor

tortured mind. At the time, however, it was an embarrassing moment indeed, one, which I have managed to keep under wraps these many years. I just hope confession is, as they say, good for the soul. If not, I may well be admitting something that would be better off filed away with various top-secret documents in government vaults and/or filing cabinets located deep within old mother earth in some remote location of North America.

## SOME POST WAR EXPERIENCES

### HAVE A HEART PHIL

In the 1946 to 48 era, the war was over and all older guys, siblings and cousins were home. One day, as I remember, Uncle Elfred and Aunt Judith and family were over for dinner. After eating and cleaning up, we spent the evening playing games. Phil, Dan and I along with probably Jim and Bob (in any case five of us) were playing hearts. Those familiar with the game know that the low score wins, that each heart taken during a hand was worth a point and that the queen of spades, affectionately referred to as "the old lady", was worth 13 points. Obviously, one didn't want to capture the latter and it was better to have the queen in your playing hand where you could control her destination than to be the unsuspecting recipient from one of the others.

Now if one was fortunate enough to have enough power in his hand to take the queen and all thirteen hearts, he could execute a real coup de grace. That is, he received no points and all other players received 26. If the game was close, that hand could well determine the winner. Of course, such a stroke required one to play his hand wisely, eliminating losing cards quickly before a heart could fall while maintaining an innocent appearance. The latter was necessary to keep the other players off guard until you were ready to execute. Once they were on to you, all other players teamed together to prevent the coup while the skill and power necessary to accomplish the feat multiplied with the play of each card.

This particular day the game was close and, with five players, running the deck or executing that coup de grace was not only difficult but required a stroke of luck. Lady luck was on my side, it seemed. I received a powerful hand with only two losers. With five players, a kitty was

involved, i.e. the two extra cards over and above those dealt to the players were placed at the edge of the table and would go with the first heart trick. I was really nervous but managed to slip my losers through without detection. I declared my intentions when the first heart fell by taking that trick. The kitty further consolidated my power with a couple of key cards. Immediately, the other four mobilized their forces in a combined effort to try to neutralize my obvious power. Of course, all being older than I, they began to bombard me psychologically in an unmerciful manner to rattle my play. I struggled along, sweating profusely, until I had a lay down and there was no question of my success. I let out a yell, having never hoped to accomplish such a feat with my older brothers and cousins, and slammed my cards on the table pronouncing my success. Phil very calmly said, "What do you mean you run them, I took a heart" and pulled one out of his pile. I was flabbergasted. I knew I had counted correctly and had watched all tricks to be sure

**Now if one was fortunate enough to have enough power in his hand to take the queen and all thirteen hearts, he could execute a real coup de grace.**

no one else had gotten a heart. I knew he couldn't have taken one and pointed out the same. He said, "You can't argue with this", holding the card in front of

my face. Suspecting he had swiped one of my hearts, I counted my cards and sure enough the number was right. What could I say? The others, of course, supported Phil and I had to take a twenty-five count. I was heart-broken. Here I thought I had accomplished the almost unbelievable, in my mind, by pulling such a coup on my older brothers and my party balloon had been burst by Phil's announcement. Well, I was quiet and cautious the rest of the game and became lost in my own thoughts because the 25 points had put me well behind all the others.

We finished and went about other things. After my cousins had left, I guess Phil became a little repentant. Anyway, he came to me and said, "You really did run those cards you know. I swiped a heart from your pile while you were intent on making a play. I even put a different card back in your pile so you wouldn't catch on." I don't remember thanking him but I believe I yelled something like, "Yes, I knew I was right!" His disclosure brightened the rest of my evening and I went to bed happy in the knowledge of my success. My joy of victory at the moment of the coup de grace was forever gone but I reveled in the fact I really had beaten the big guys.



### **DAD, ME AND CRIBBAGE**

Cribbage is another card game, which is a lot of fun. Two or four people normally play. The games are short and several can be played in an evening. I learned to play in the Veterans hospital when I cut my foot with an ax as described in chapter three. I was released and spent a few days at home before returning to the forest service. I was telling dad about the game and he said he knew it well and enjoyed playing. Anyhow, I purchased a game, board, pegs and cards and we played off and on whenever I was around town. He and I were rather evenly matched and the luck of the draw seemed to dictate the winner. At times, one or the other of us would be dealt a fabulous hand, which made it next to impossible for the unfortunate one to close the gap. We might talk about that hand for the next couple of weeks. In general, though, the games were close and weren't decided until the last card was played. What a great time we had. Those times constitute some of the fond memories a boy has of doing something special with his dad. Cribbage as well as hunting and fishing fall in that category for me.

### **HUNTING, FISHING WITH DAD**

I loved to go camping with dad. Any excuse would do as far as I was concerned. He, of course, had to worry about the lesser things of life like working and paying bills. If dad found time in his busy schedule, I could certainly rearrange mine to go along. We often went up along the middle fork or south fork of the Boise River to fish and I remember going to several different areas to hunt deer. We went into Bear Valley at least twice to hunt elk.

Dad was always the successful one. He fished and hunted circles around me. Although I liked to be out in the mountains, I was too impatient to do much good. When we were fishing, I would usually move along ahead of him, catching one every once in a while. He would follow patiently behind me, fishing the same holes, and catch at least two to my one. You would think I would learn but, it seemed, there was always a better fishing hole just ahead of mine and I couldn't wait to get there. When it came to hunting, much the same occurred. Typically he would walk up one side of a draw and I the other so that one of us could get a shot if we spooked a deer. I always tended to get way ahead and wondered why he walked so slowly. I could get to the top in half the time he took but, of course, he was the one who got the shots and the deer.

I suspect, in looking back, that the deer heard me coming a long time before they were within range of my sight or gun. Thus, I managed few shots and few deer.

On one elk-hunting trip to Bear Valley, uncle Elfred went along with us. I managed to secure quarters above the garage at Elk Creek Ranger Station for us through the good will of Joe Ladle, the ranger. Being near the end of September, the nights were cold and the loft of the garage was a Godsend. We managed to get one big bull elk. I was with Elfred when we spotted it. He was ambling up the ridge, bellowing like he had lost his favorite cow. I remember being terribly excited and could hardly take aim. I did shoot along with uncle Elfred and we got him. Of course, he was the one who placed the fatal shot, in the heart no less. I believe I only got one of the several bullets I fired into him and that was near the spine, which had little effect. However, Elfred being the kind and thoughtful person he was, gave me half credit for the kill and we split the elk. That bull dressed out at about 500 pounds. What a magnificent animal he was and what a spectacular rack of antlers he had. What a load to get out. We cut him into eight pieces after cleaning and skinning him. The hind legs, not quarters, were the heaviest. We had to pack them down across a draw and then up a ridge to the car, a distance of maybe a mile. What a job. My legs turned to rubber. I was really bushed when we finished but made a final trip to get the antlers. We left the head but I wanted those antlers in the worst way. Needless to say, I was elated with that trip.

### **THE CAPITAL BOULEVARD BRIDGE**

One of my fond memories of Boise was the bridge across the Boise River on Capital Boulevard. Like the capitol building on one end or the UP depot on the other, it is one of those landmarks that have become a permanent fixture in my 80-year old brain. Even though I left Boise on a permanent basis in 1950, the family outings we had in Julia Davis Park as well as the many trips across the bridge to Boise Junior College seem to have burned its image into my subconscious. It's kind of a symbol of home, I suppose. Not that Boise has ever been my home during my adult years but that city still seems to be at the roots of my existence. So, the many times I have crossed the Boise River Bridge as a young man have made it symbolic of that era of my life. I felt it had a place in my story but, alas, I had no picture to share.

Then, a couple of years ago I received a Christmas card from June and Larry with an artist's rendition of that bridge on the front. It revitalized those memories but more importantly, the card provided the needed photo. Now I could include it in this most exciting as well as prestigious work. After all, I must have walked across that bridge a thousand times and looked over the edge at least a hundred. It's indeed a symbol of my youth with an importance in my life resulting from the many experiences nearby. I suppose the majority of those occurred during my years at BJC. Here, it appears in winter dress much as it appeared when I walked across it to college, as shown in figure 2-38. You must admit it is beautiful.

### AN INTRODUCTION TO COLLEGE

I alluded to my college days, which occurred after moving to 17<sup>th</sup> and Irene. I guess I should now elaborate a little. I graduated from high school in May of 1946 just after turning 18. I remember being somewhat disappointed that



**Figure 2-38 The Boise River Bridge on Capitol Boulevard, from June's Christmas cards.**

the war was over and I couldn't join some branch of the service. Little did I understand the reality of such things and how foolish I was being in my thoughts of fighting the enemy. By this time the veterans were returning from all the services and many took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights, which provided for college, should they care to attend. I was thrust into the midst of them, which had its advantages and disadvantages. My unquestionable admiration for men who had fought in Europe and Asia seemed to create an urge to follow their

example within me. They could do no wrong or so I supposed in my young and foolish mind.

### STRIVING FOR ACCEPTANCE

It seems the GI's consisted primarily of two groups, the members of one were often married and really serious about education while the second group was usually single and were in school for the fun and games. I suppose both groups influenced me to some degree. I was able to compete scholastically very well and managed to obtain A's and B's in pre-engineering. At the same time I found myself wanting to be more-manly, like the big boys, and would sometimes get caught up in their activities. I think I was somewhat awed by their war experiences and their apparent macho image which, unfortunately, included considerable drinking along with established smoking habits.

I suppose my lack of funds kept me from getting too embroiled. I had to pay my own way through college and couldn't really afford to date, let alone pay for smoking or drinking. Certainly I tried them, mostly beer, cigarettes and a pipe but never got too deeply involved, mainly because of the cost, I suppose. Actually I didn't like cigarettes and only smoked one now and then to fit in with the crowd. Beer, I did enjoy and continued to drink a little from that point until I joined the LDS Church in 1962.

Hard liquor was out. I didn't like it at all, no matter how various individuals tried to convince me of the wonderful taste of 10-year old scotch or bourbon. I'm still convinced that most young people who begin drinking hard liquor or smoking do so under peer pressure. They may develop a taste and even an addiction in time but taste is not the initial attraction. The few times I drank hard liquor, I usually ended up stinking with its associated vomiting and idiocy. I knew that wasn't something I wanted in my life and didn't really have too much trouble divorcing myself from it. On the other hand I enjoyed a relaxing beer as well as the camaraderie associated with it. I was more relaxed under such conditions and wasn't quite as aware of my feelings of intimidation that so frequently plagued me. I never drank heavily or even frequently and thus, that activity had no negative effects on my married life during the time I did.

Now, I'm not advocating that practice at all, for I have found it to be dangerous to the good things of life. It numbs a person's sense of judgment

and responsibility, often extracting a terrible cost for a few moments of questionable pleasure. None-the-less, its impact on my life was minimal in the few years I allowed myself to get involved. I quit after I joined the Church because to do so was part of the covenant I made. I can readily see the problems associated with it in many people's lives and consider myself fortunate to quit when I did. My smoking continued through college mostly in the form of a pipe because of the "Joe College" image it provided. Anything for looks, you know. I quit that as soon as I graduated, so it's obvious the practice involved fitting in or making me more comfortable among my peers, more so than a habit.

Well that's enough of those kinds of experiences. Their only real value is the lesson of necessary restraint. I would have left them out except I wanted my posterity to know that I succumbed to peer pressure much too often. It's one of the severe temptations of life and requires the exercise of considerable will power, if one is to avoid it. Of course, proper teaching of values worthy of a desirable society is also of paramount importance. Had I had gospel values firmly entrenched in my life and been less intimidated by others, I might well have avoided these things and followed a more desirable path.

**SCHOLASTIC INTERESTS**

As I have mentioned earlier, my scholastic interests were primarily in math and science and thus engineering. I spent my first two years at Boise Junior College in pre-engineering. I really didn't have an inkling of what kind of engineer I wanted to be. There was no formalized effort in education at that time to really acquaint us with such fields of endeavor except a little written material. I suppose one could talk to parents or friends to gain a better idea if such were available. I had no such opportunity readily available and wasn't aggressive enough to go out and find someone. My dad could help little, having only had an eighth grade education, and mom was the primary stimulus for going to college. Looking back, however, I realize dad gave me more important guidance than that of which profession to enter because of the work ethic, integrity, personal responsibility, etc. he so aptly demonstrated. I have come to believe such traits are more important in life and of course for

**Looking back, however, I realize dad gave me more important guidance than that of which profession to enter because of the work ethic, integrity, personal responsibility, etc. he so aptly demonstrated.**

our eternal existence than is any discipline we might master. With such traits in hand, a young person will find his or her way to success in life. Of this, I feel quite confident.

**A COLLEGE MAN'S DUDS IN THE 40'S**

This is probably as good a place as any to describe the rather typical dress for a college and even high school student in the decade of the forties. Yes, I suppose we had our own image of what was cool and what was not but you can rest assured that such dress was neither extreme nor expensive. The first was hardly acceptable let alone desirable. The second wasn't possible, at least in my case. Most certainly I wouldn't have worn anything that brought attention to me personally. In fact, I preferred a low profile but in most cases, even those who wanted to be in the spotlight, so to speak, did so by other means than extreme dress. Almost every college student, in those days, considered neatness a virtue because it signified personal pride and responsibility. It was also necessary to establish the image that prospective employers looked for. There was no rebellion at that time against the establishment but rather a respect for those who had achieved, as well as a concerted effort on the part of young people to meet the requirements of society, including the business community. It must have been the Viet Nam era when the college group became so anti-establishment. Most certainly, it hadn't occurred in my era.

I would say nearly 90% of the guys wore white corduroys throughout my high school years and even through college in casual situations. I have included a photo of Ken and me to illustrate such dress, figure 2-39. I was wearing a white, blue and gray plaid sport jacket, which I thought was the cat's meow. It went well with the white cords as we called them and gave me a little ego lift, I suppose. Short sleeve sport shirts like Ken has on were typical for the day. Ken provided these shots taken at his house in about 1948 to 49, I would say. Note the cuffs, a mark of a cool cat.

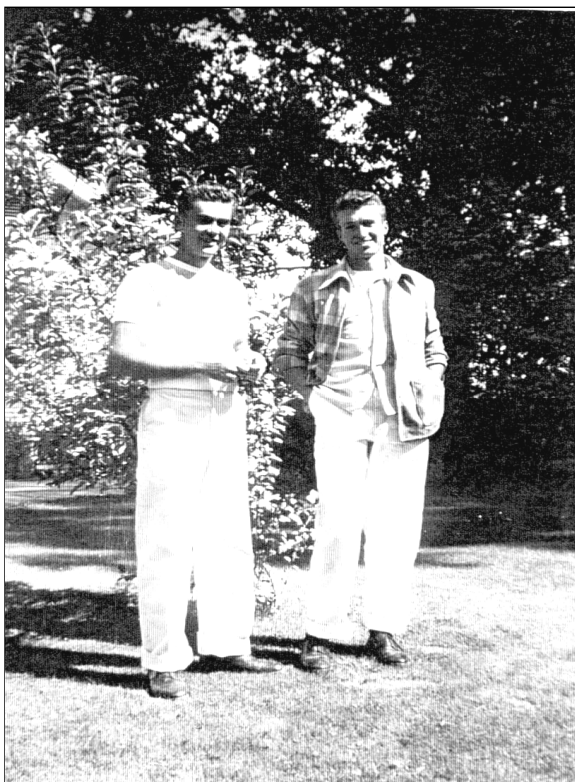
**ESTABLISHING A DISCIPLINE**

I struggled in college with trying to make up my mind about which branch of engineering to enter but by the time I entered my junior year I had settled on geophysics. I really only knew that

that discipline involved the math and science I enjoyed so well in addition to the out of doors which had become important to me. I had no desire for a desk job. The forest service had definitely impacted my life regarding that issue. Earlier I had considered going into forestry but the ranger under whose direction I worked (7 of 8 years) convinced me there was little opportunity there. He said advancement was largely blocked due to the lack of open positions and the practice of rangers working until they were 65. Anyway, I accepted that council and looked for alternatives, which brought geophysics to the fore. As I got deeper into that field of study, I found I did, indeed, enjoy almost every part of it from geology to the math and science, which were involved. Looking back now, I can see my choice was right for me regardless whether it was motivated by inspiration or perspiration.

#### MOVING TO A FOUR YEAR INSTITUTION

My Junior College years seemed to go by in a flash and before I knew it, I was considering a



**Figure 2-39 Ken Karcher and I prior to departing for college in Corvallis, Oregon.**

four year institution. No one in my family had made that step as yet and I seemed to be on my own. Parental advice was out of the question.

Mom had little interest or knowledge in the disciplines that interested me and dad had only attained an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education as mentioned earlier. My quantitative chemistry teacher, whom I admired a great deal, advised me to go to Oregon State College, which had a good engineering school. Unfortunately it was weak in geophysics as such but I was able to get the necessary courses for a proper foundation. I decided to apply there because, I suppose, of his recommendation and the fact that two of my friends, Ken Karcher and Ross Schubert would also attend O S U in electrical engineering. Cost was also a big factor, which included transportation to and from school. My parents were unable to help me, in terms of money, and I had to earn it all. Though the ranking of O S U in geophysics should have been a prime factor, I suppose I was too unsophisticated to know better and took the path of least resistance or at least the one I could afford. In any case, I simply took the applicable courses and enrolled later in a more suitable school for that discipline.

We lived in a dormitory and traveled back and forth during vacations in an old 1933 ford one of my friends owned. I dated little, primarily because of lack of funds, and most of my involvement with girls was at joint dormitory dances and other college arranged socials. I worked several hours each day in the cafeteria to pay my room and board while I reserved the savings from my summer's work to pay tuition and buy books. I suspect this frugal effort on my part to stay financially solvent is where my tightwad image came from, which seems to be preserved in my kids' minds.

The image was further enhanced after I was married to Esther in December of 1950, as our early years in graduate school and the service were lean to say the least. Somehow I must have carried that same frugality into later years with the family. Usually I could save just about enough money in a summer to get me through two quarters tuition at Oregon State. Then, if I filed my income tax return promptly (and I always did), I would receive enough money back to get me into school the spring quarter. As before, that was supplemented by my working in the cafeteria. At the end of the school year, I was, once again, destitute and had to virtually hitch-hike back up to the forest service to work another summer and replenish my limited financial reserves. There was no extra cash available for fun and games and though I would have liked to date more, school, I couldn't.

Of course, I loved the forest service environment and the chance to camp out and do physical work. It really was no particular sacrifice on my part because I essentially viewed it as a vacation but, I must admit, it did little to overcome my natural shy and withdrawn nature. We mingled with few people during those summers, a situation I needed for personal growth, but I suspect the overall environment was hard to beat. I give it at least partial credit for helping me develop a strong physical body and the willingness to put in an honest day's work. The interpersonal relationships, however, simply had to come later. It's somewhat difficult to advance in that area when your primary partner is a dad-burned mule with little interest in communicating.

### SPECIAL STORIES OF OSU UPON SIMPLIFICATION WE FIND

The math requirements for geophysics were heavy including advanced calculus, vector and tensor analysis and advanced differential equations. The latter course brings to mind a test I took in my senior year. In my advanced differential equation course there were only ten students, all of whom had good math backgrounds. The course was tough and the lectures given by the professor difficult to follow. I usually completed the daily work with considerable effort but the weekly quizzes were killing me. By mid-term, I had pretty well decided to drop the course and try again later. I made an appointment to talk to the professor and explained my feelings based on my record to date. He insisted I could still get a better than average passing grade and talked me into keeping the class.

Things got a little better but by finals I was still carrying an average just above passing. Well, the final consisted of ten problems, which he gave us one week to complete. He said we could use any reference we wanted except our neighbor. The work was to be our own even though comparing answers and methods was quite easy. To make a long story short, I struggled through the week managing to get 9 of the 10 completed. Sunday evening I was in the library looking for material regarding number ten. We had been given a three dimensional equation expressed in rectangular coordinates and were asked to express the same in cylindrical coordinates. We had seen the

equation in spherical form but not as a cylinder during the semester.

As luck would have it, I stumbled across the equation in cylindrical form in a book. However, the battle wasn't won yet, in that I had to show my work leading up to the answer. Going back to my work I realized two things. First my efforts to date had produced an equation filling one whole side of an 8 ½ x 11 paper and second I could see many of the terms canceled. I spent some time trying to simplify the equation and arrive at the answer but couldn't seem to drop enough terms out. With the library ready to close and my having to get up at five thirty to work in the chow hall, I realized I was in a predicament. To myself I said, "What the heck", and wrote down, "Upon simplification we find the equation becomes \*\$#&%^@", and wrote in the answer I had found in my reference. Considering the effort necessary, I doubted my professor would go through my work to see if such was true and maybe, just maybe I would get credit for the problem. Well, my ruse worked and I received 95%, the highest in the class. Even though I had a twinge of conscience, I accepted the grade, which translated into an A in the course. I never did go back and rework the basic equation I had produced to see if, indeed, it would so

**"Upon simplification, we find the equation becomes \*\$#&%^@", and then wrote in the answer I had found in my reference.**

simplify and to this day wonder if my simplification statement was true. Fortunately, I have long since thrown away the material and couldn't check it out even if I had the time, energy and a 22-year old brain to work with. Thus, I assume the best and have long since gotten rid of any guilt feelings I might have had earlier in life. Yes, good fortune had been on my side, smiling upon me that fateful night.

### OTHER GEOPHYSICAL COURSES

I did well in all of math courses receiving mostly A's. In pre-engineering, chemistry was involved which included levels up to quantitative analysis and organic chemistry. Naturally, courses such as mechanics including both static's and dynamics were required as was a good deal of geology. I found geology extremely interesting and particularly those courses that involved geometric phenomena. By that I mean I enjoyed structural geology with its folds and faults, etc. as well as mineralogy with its crystalline studies. Such courses provided geometric forms, which could be visualized and even expressed

mathematically, adding to their reality. Other forms of geology were also interesting to me but to a lesser degree because they required more memory and a different kind of imagination such as visualizing grain or particle size and energy environments..

### THE MAD PROFESSOR

Maybe the least interesting geologic course I took was stratigraphy, which is a study of sediments. It labors heavily on grain size of materials transported by streams and currents of various kinds and just how the energy involved determined their depositional patterns. Somehow I couldn't get excited about such things. There was little reasoning involved, it seemed to me and the memorizing required related to such things as grain size, depositional patterns, stream energy and other equally boring things. Ugh!

To make it worse the class was given under the tutelage of a PHD who wrote the book we used. He knew it by heart and droned on and on about the classes of sediments and the forces controlling them. I have taken the liberty of depicting him with click art in figure 2-40. Additionally, said class was at 8:00 AM which didn't particularly enhance one's receptiveness. It wasn't unusual for someone to fall asleep, which caused his ire to steam and usually resulted in a very cutting remark or sometimes an eraser being thrown at the guilty one. Actually, he was quite good with that particular weapon. I learned early to sleep with my eyes open which activity, or lack thereof, bore only the risk of his calling on you or maybe snapping your neck. The former was the most dangerous, often resulting in some rather stupid answer as you tried to gather your wits. I must admit the course had value once I entered the oil business.

I suppose, I shouldn't be too critical of him. After all, he did submit my name for recognition in the

PHI KAPPA PHI, the national honor society in geology. It was approved and I was elected to that society as certified by the photo of the diploma in figure 2-41. It would seem, however, that the only value it had was bolstering my often-flattened ego. I don't remember it being of particular value in any other way. I suppose it might have helped in my acceptance at the Colorado School of Mines the next year. That was a rather difficult institution to gain acceptance to, having only 1000 students and being among the top schools in geophysics. Whether it did or not, I'll never know but at least it demonstrates to my posterity that grandpa had some measure of gray matter in that old bald head of his.

### BE SURE TO DRIVE ON THE TOP HALF OF THE TANK

During Christmas break in 1949, we headed back to Boise over our usual route, to and from Corvallis that is, over Santiam pass to Bend, then to Burns, next to Vail and finally on into Boise. It was a five hundred mile trip and took a good twelve hours if all went well. The title for this little escapade seems appropriate to me, as you shall see.

The little ford, and I do mean little, had a small tank as well, making frequent fill ups essential. The car was black

and is shown in the photo of figure 2-42. Ross, on the left, owned the car and provided our much needed transportation back and forth to Corvallis.

There was a trunk, of sorts, on the back of this grand machine, which really isn't visible. It looked somewhat like a store bought trunk just hooked on over the bumper but considerably narrower. There was little room in it; hence we would ride with two of us in the front seats and one in the back with the luggage. Needless to say, we traveled light. If we were careful we could make it from Bend to Burns on one tank,



Figure 2-40 Hmmm, I do believe a shale particle is a bit smaller and shalier than is the quartz grain.

that is, if the wind was with us. Usually we gassed up at a service station midway between to relax, stretch a little, drink a cup of coffee and maybe eat a **little junk food**. **This stop also kept us on the safe side** in terms of gasoline in a less than adequate tank.

On this particular trip Ken and I were half asleep and Ross, our friend, decided he could make it all the way without stopping. We came awake as the car flew on by the midway station and in spite of our doubt and vocal concerns, he continued on. Needless to say, we ran out of gas about 30 miles outside of Burns. The

Burns. I don't suppose I have ever been colder than I was sitting in the back seat of that little Ford. We tried to pay our benefactor but he wouldn't take anything. He said he was happy to help out. I guess he could tell our economic condition was somewhat less than satisfactory.

Anyhow, we gassed up and lo and behold, the engine quickly overheated after we started out. Ross quickly figured out the block was frozen resulting in no circulation in the cooling system. Well, we decided to put a blanket over the hood and drive around town until it thawed. I'm was glad everyone in town was asleep because we

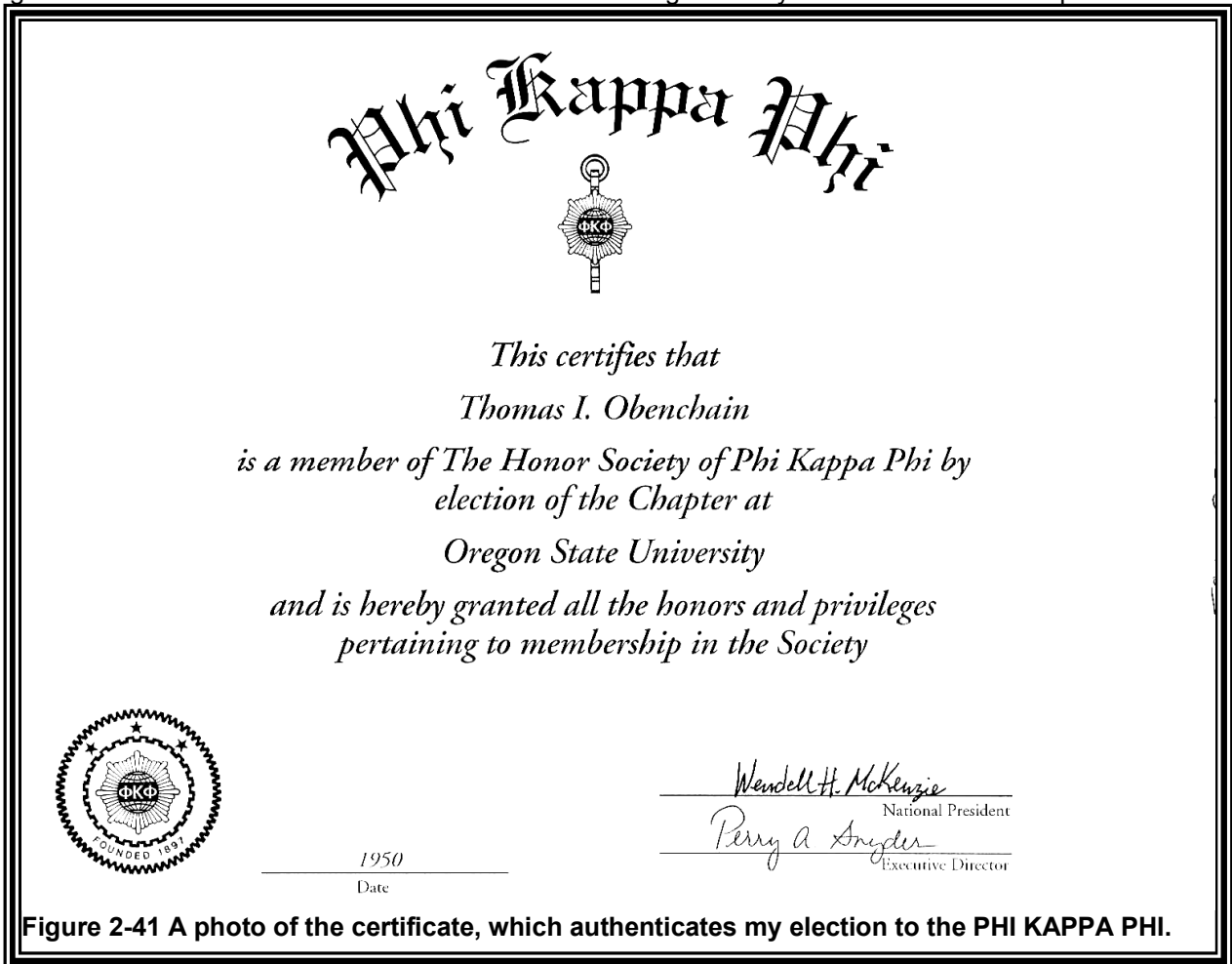


Figure 2-41 A photo of the certificate, which authenticates my election to the PHI KAPPA PHI.

country was snow covered and the temperature about zero or lower. Traffic was light that time of night, about midnight, and we sat there for some time before a farmer came along in a pickup. He listened to our plight and decided he would help but chose to pull us into Burns rather than make a round trip. That suited us and away we went. Of course there was no heat in the car and we were about frozen when we arrived in

could easily have been mistaken for a runaway steam engine as we plied the various streets waiting for that event, engine thaw that is, not spring thaw, which I thought might come first.

Soon the circulation broke loose and the engine temperature dropped indicating we could safely head out across country for Boise. The lesson I learned from that was, **"always drive on the top half of the tank"**. It's a lesson that

managed to serve me well through my oil field years. I'm confident it prevented several long walks, with gas can in hand, across the Rocky Mountain landscape and, quite probably, helped protect me from weather which was all too often in the subzero range. Yes sir, that experience has paid off over the years in time, safety and general well being.

### OTHER COLLEGE RELATED STORIES

In my senior year at Corvallis, Ken brought his motorcycle back after spring break. Although the weather was beautiful around Boise and even through eastern Oregon, it turned to winter



**Figure 2-42** Ross Schubert, Ken and I next to the 1933 Ford, our transportation to & from Corvallis.

on Santiam pass. Ken was prepared in terms of the clothing, having a lined waterproof suit in the car, but he was one miserable creature making his way over the Cascades that day. It was slow going and cold. The snowfall was steady which half blinded him and made the traction rather precarious. No one could spell him because the suit would only fit Ken. Besides, I wasn't that good with a cycle and would have had trouble on a dry day. However, we all finally made it back to Corvallis in one piece where it was raining cats and dogs. I think it took our old buddy, Ken, a good week to finally thaw out. He may have questioned the wisdom of bringing that cycle along during that particular day but I thought it was great. Isn't that how it works when someone else is handling the tough stuff? That is the bystanders enjoy the show.

We had some good times going to the coast and generally seeing the countryside that spring quarter. I spent a little more than usual and ended up getting a school loan, about three hundred dollars, to finish out the year. Although I didn't blow my savings, for that wasn't my nature, I suppose I was a little more free with my spending than I had been. That loan didn't get

fully paid back until I was in the USAF in 1952. Attending graduate school and getting married put a crimp in my disposable income for a number of years.

I graduated that spring and mom was able to come to the ceremonies. Her picture with me figure 2-43 attests to the validity of both events because, she just wouldn't be part of my trying to mislead my posterity. No, she too, like my dad, was brimming full of integrity, a virtue, which I had some struggle with in life but, I suppose, finally adsorbed a dab. Actually, at that time of my life, my posterity was the least of my worries but had I thought of them, I wouldn't have been above creating a little diversion for them. Mom was a nice looking lady, as I have said before and I was pleased to have my picture taken with her. She would have been 56 here in June of 1950. It's hard to believe I have now passed that milestone by some 24 years.

### A LITTLE MUSING

Time really does fly as the old adage says. It's interesting, as I have been engaged in this work and look back on life. It seems like only yesterday that many of these events occurred. Life has been a blessing to me and I really have no desire to change anything. I suppose I would tune a few things up if I had the chance but even the mistakes and



**Figure 2-43** Mother and I at my graduation from Oregon State College at Corvallis in May, 1950.

various dumb things I managed to include seem to be part of the growing process that has



brought me to the point I now find myself. Because I am now supremely happy, at least I think I am; the mistakes don't seem to matter because they are behind me and life is good. Little did I know, when this picture was snapped, what lay ahead, including two fine ladies I have been privileged to have as my wives and some wonderful children, grandchildren and even stepchildren. And now, by golly, I have nine great grandchildren. All my life, I strived for greatness with little success until Jacquelyn, the first great grandchild, came along. With her, I automatically received the title of "GREAT" grandfather. Yes, life is good, so why worry about how I got to this point.

**MORE GRADUATION PICTURES**

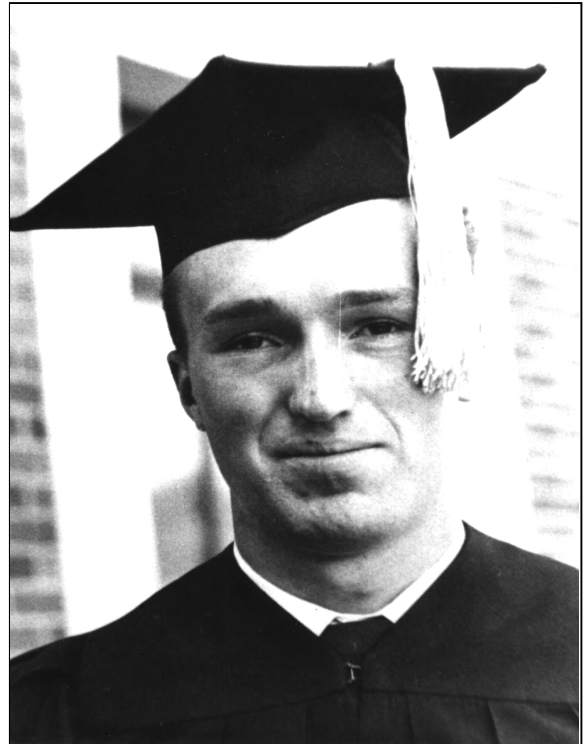
Well, enough of my musing. Let's get on with the story. I decided to add a couple of more pictures of myself, taken at my graduation from OSU. They provide a close up, figure 2-44 (not that that's desirable) and a bird's eye view of the OSU class of 1950 in figure 2-45. It was of record-breaking size, though somewhat puny by the standards of today, having conferred degrees upon 1968 recipients. If you closely examine the newspaper photo, you may be able to recognize grandpa in the eleventh row of the left section, third from the aisle. I think it's my wavy hair that makes me stand out, don't you?

You may notice that I dwell quite a bit on baldness and the hair I once had. It has been said that one tends to think about and talk about that which he misses the most. I won't dispute such logic but misery also has rewards. In the mornings, as I comb my hair with a quick swipe of a cloth, Lethia bemoans the time it takes to fix her hair. She threatens to cut it all off like mine while I remind her that such action could be grounds for divorce. After all, I didn't propose to a bald headed lady and though she accepts my condition, I doubt that I could stand facing her each morning with her head in a similar state of deterioration. Of course, her other endearing qualities do help but bald. Wow! I suppose, however, that should she take such a drastic step, I would adjust and my appreciation of her other endearing values would win.

**MORE FAMILY**

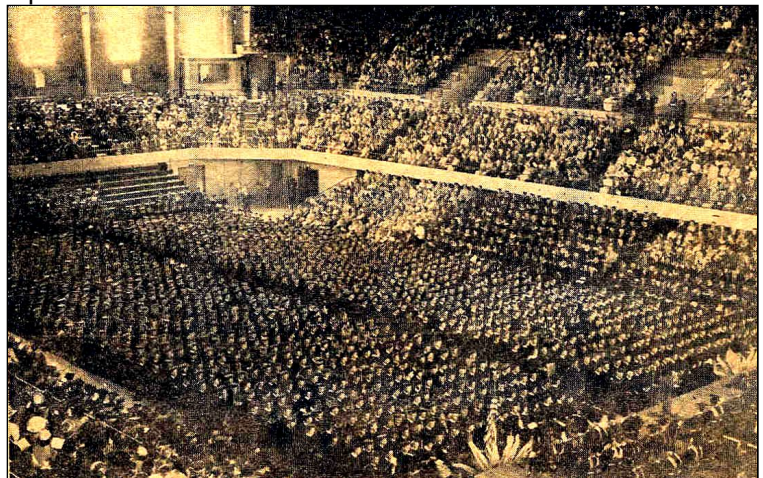
Phil and Rose were married on October 29, 1949 according to my records. Esther and I

were married 15 months later on December 29, 1950. I mention this because the next family picture included had to be taken between those



**Figure 2-44 A smile of success as I realized my education goal had been realized.**

two dates. Rose is included and Esther is nowhere to be seen. I suspect it may have been taken at the Christmas get together in 1949. In



**Figure 2-45 A bird's eye view of the OSC class of 1950 upon whom 1968 degrees were conferred in coliseum.**

any case I have included the photo here as figure 2-46, which should be its proper chronological location in this momentous work of

grandpa's. As you can see, we were all thin and trim with no thought for what the future might bring in terms of girth. Fortunately added girth has come with a measure of mirth, which seems to provide the necessary compensation. Likewise, we had hair, all of us. Phil's gives a hint of receding but that's about it. Little did we understand the future would bring re-seeding by the bushel basket but no apparent solution. So be our destiny, i.e. barren of foliage but fruitful in laughter and fun.

### POST GRADUATE WORK

The Korean conflict was in full swing when I graduated and I was a prime prospect for the



**Figure 2-46 A 1949 Christmas photo. BR L-R Jim, June, Rose, Phil, Tom, Dan, Shirley & Connie. FR L-R Ted, Madeleine, Kathy, mom, Susan, dad, Pat, Delight, Oaks & Carl.**

draft. Entering the service didn't bother me particularly but serving in the infantry did. I figured I would rather serve where I could pick up some technical education if I had a choice. I had already made application to enter graduate school in Colorado (The Colorado School of Mines) and was soon accepted. There, I planned to continue on with my geophysical studies in a school, which was among the best in that particular discipline. Consequently I spent another summer with the forest service trying to accumulate sufficient money to enter Colorado School of Mines that fall.

Little did I realize the significance of the blind date I had accepted in early June of 1946 or did I really understand the ramifications, which that particular date was to have on my life. Yes, Ken Karcher torpedoed my well disciplined life and

plans for the future with a simple phone call in which he asked, "Would you like to go out with Rosalie and I and her friend named Esther? Would I have changed my answer had I known the repercussions to follow? Of course not, life and Esther have been too good to me.

### ESTHER

Things were hunky dory for a time (that's "mighty good" in the slang of our era) but then I became afflicted with that dreaded disease that seems to run rampant in young folks. I began having visions at night of a young lady I had met that summer. She messed up the logic of my mind, which I had always been so proud of. I found it difficult to describe mathematically the various forces controlling geologic phenomenon or the sun, earth, moon or other heavenly bodies when there seemed to be room in my mind for only one heavenly body. Yes, Esther was beautiful and had a winning way about her, which had attracted me since our first date in early June.

### COMMUTING

Ken and I came down from the forest as frequent as possible on weekends to double date with Esther and his girl, Rosalie Ellis. His motorcycle was of infinite value in that it provided easy, reliable but not necessarily safe transportation to and from work. We took different routes out of Bear Valley, sometimes through Warm Lake and Cascade and at other times through Lowman and Idaho City. We would come in from a pack trip, tend the live stock and away we would go, heading for Boise and smelling much like the horses we had just left. A quick shower and shave after arrival at home gave us the necessary energy for a night on the town. Of course youth must have helped too, giving us the necessary stamina. Though we worked hard, such activity didn't slow us down. We were ready for a good time in town after spending a week in the woods with the likes of old High Pockets and his pals.

When in Boise, he or I could usually borrow a car for the evening. Although Esther was LDS, she was inactive and didn't argue about my having a few beers while dancing at some local beer joint. It only took a few to make me think I

could dance and she was kind enough to keep the truth from me. It may not have helped coordinate my feet but it did relax my inhibitions, which at least allowed me to use what little talent I had. Now, I don't want my posterity to take this admission as an endorsement for beer or alcohol of any kind. However, my purpose isn't to lecture or even advise at this point, so on with the story before I bore you with my lecture.

**A DAY AT MCCALL**

We also spent what few Saturdays we could, going on picnics and generally enjoying life. One such picnic took place at McCall on a beach of Payette Lake. I'll add a picture of that outing as space permits as Figure 2-47. We made the trip up (100 miles) early in the morning, spent the day swimming and eating and made the trip back that night dog tired. Esther was badly burned and it took some time for her to return to normal. I was somewhat surprised by that because she really didn't have a light complexion. Of course, she hadn't been out in the sun working like I had and she got too big a dose all at once. In the picture, Esther is in the middle next to Rosalie while I am looking on. What a ball we had. No beer involved here that I remember, only good clean fun. The other gal on the left was a friend of theirs who was also a nurse but her name escapes me. Primarily, I remember I didn't like her very well and like many bad memories, simply put her out of my mind. I thought she was rather stuck up but that might have been a poor evaluation on my part. She may have been more reserved but I never really got to know her.

**PREVIOUS FORAYS TO THE LAKE**

Payette Lakes was always a favorite of mine, so beautiful and peaceful. It is one of the few lakes, natural or otherwise which has rugged mountain scenery and is yet low enough in elevation to warm up to a reasonable degree in the summers. In June the water is chilly, to say the least, but July and August bring a more tolerable temperature. You don't need a wet suit for water skiing, etc. and it is ideal for family fun along its shores. Like any other good place, I guess it has gone the way of resorts, etc. and will eventually be out of reach of an average family if not already so. I had some fun times here while growing up, namely at YMCA camp and at a couple of Church of Christ camps. Oddly enough, they both rented the same property for their camps and I became quite well acquainted with that particular part of the lake. It

was located near the northeast corner of the main part of the lake. We used to hike a few



**Figure 2-47 Esther, I and Rosalie Ellis, who introduced us, at Payette Lakes with a friend.**

miles around the bend to the so-called north beach and spend the day swimming there.

I think that's still available to the public with a campground near-by or at least that was the case in about 1980 when Esther, Tom, Celeste



**Figure 2-48 Esther's picture of high school graduation (1947 in Glens Ferry, Idaho).**

and myself made our last trip there. Connie had been kind enough to let us use their family cabin for a few days. Cuddles, our little gray poodle

died at that cabin and we buried her along a road in the vicinity of the north shore. We had other outings there, which I'll describe another time if they still seem appropriate. If not, I may still add them. It depends upon how desperate I am for material.

### COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES

That September I took a bus to Denver and transferred to Golden, which was located 12 miles to the west. At that time there was a



**Figure 2-49 Esther's graduation photo from Nursing School (St. Lukes Hospital Boise).**

distinct separation from the suburbs of Denver to Golden. However, that empty space had almost disappeared when we moved back in 1980. I found a room for rent and also a place to get my meals. I was enrolled in the masters program in geophysics, which involved some rather challenging courses, including such things as "structural geology of oil fields, seismic methods, advanced calculus and vector and tensor analysis". These courses kept one's mind off the fairer sex by requiring logic that hardly mixed with my fantasies of the previous summer.

Soon I had a roommate who hailed from Mexico. He was a nice fellow and a devout Catholic. We

got along fine and became good friends. He spoke rather good English, so conversation was no problem. He also studied hard, as did I. We did little together of an extra-curricular nature but frequently had lengthy talks in our room. The courses I took were tough and Colorado School of Mines was rated among the best in the nation in mining and geophysics. I didn't work because jobs weren't available to any degree in the little town of Golden, Colorado. Even so, classes and study seemed to occupy all my time.

Although the school wasn't restricted to males, girls were somewhat of a rarity and I didn't have the inclination to date. Besides, as I mentioned earlier, Esther was definitely on my mind. When I wasn't thinking about her I was studying. That may sound boring but not if it's done in the right proportion and particularly so for me when Esther was the subject of mental exertion and I was doing the thinking. I believe you will agree that she was a very pretty girl if you take time to examine the photos I have included as the figures of 2-48 and 2-49. I liked her smile and the way she did her hair (which is similar in both pictures) as well as her easygoing personality.

During this same time period, I had to have a picture taken for the Colorado School of Mines yearbook. The result is shown in figure 2-50, proving I still had hair at the ripe old age of 22.

### WEDDING PLANS

We wrote each other on a frequent basis and by about October, I suppose, I had proposed. If you could commune with the deceased, I'm sure she could tell you the exact day. Anyhow, we decided to get married during Christmas break and she would work while I continued in school. She had obtained her R. N. that summer and only had to pass her state board exam. She came from a humble family even more so than I and we, or maybe I should say she, decided on a simple wedding at her brother's house in south Boise. We felt sure she could get a reasonable job in Denver and we moved forward strictly on faith with little logic or detailed planning. I had always taken a given situation and made it work for me and felt this would be no different. My, wasn't I naïve or both of us for that matter but then again, without such naivety, and associated risk, how would young folks progress? They have to learn somehow.

### AN UNUSUAL WEDDING GIFT

I'll never forget a set of earrings my Mexican friend gave me for Esther just before I left for

Boise at Christmas. They made a very appropriate wedding present in his culture, I feel sure, they having been hand crafted silver fish. The heads were next to the ear with the tails hanging down and the bodies were flexible. Undoubtedly, they were expensive as well but Esther would have no part of them. She said she wasn't about to go around with fish dangling from her ears. No amount of persuasion on my part seemed to do any good. After all, I didn't have to wear them.

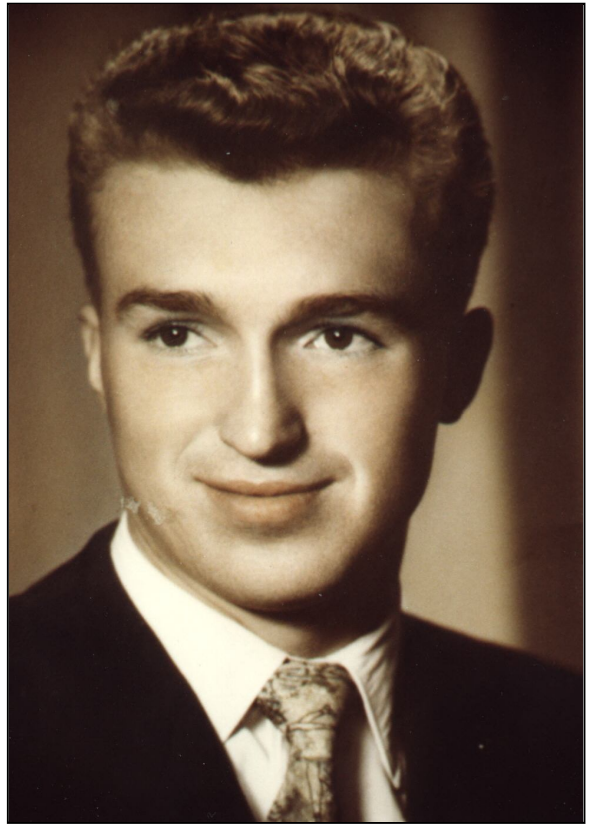
#### MY NEW RESIDENCE

I managed to find a basement apartment within walking distance of the college for some small price, which, I believe, was \$50 per month. I know it had an icebox and a gas stove. The wedding came off as planned on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1950. We stayed one night in a motel for our honeymoon. Don't laugh, it fit the budget and our expectations weren't that high. We just wanted to be together. After that we must have stayed a couple nights at her brother's before leaving for Golden, Colorado.

Esther had never been farther from home than Boise, which was 70 miles from Glens Ferry. Actually, as a young child she had been to Oregon with her family but that hardly counts. I, on the other hand, had been to Oregon to school for two years and to Golden for a semester, so you can see we were loaded with experience. There was no discussion regarding travel to Golden. Finances definitely dictated the mode of travel. We climbed aboard the Greyhound bus on some-thing like the first of January. It traveled down through Ogden and maybe even Salt Lake on the first leg of a 900-mile trip. As I remember, the trip took in the neighborhood of thirty hours. At that time, there were no interstates in the intermountain west. I remember the long hard pull out of the great basin country into Wyoming. It seemed as though we just crawled along. Of course, truck traffic controlled our pace because there was nowhere to pass. Thus even the cars essentially plodded along at truck speed. When the bus arrived at Little America, everyone piled out to stretch their legs and get a bite to eat. It was the middle of the night and as usual, a stiff wind was blowing at temperatures that were hovering just above zero. Needless to say, it was cold and Esther was beginning to wonder just where we were headed. She agreed the name "Little America" definitely fit the environment she was now experiencing. Byrd or whoever coined that

name must have stopped there a time or two. There was little leg stretching other than within the protection of the restaurant and gift shop areas. Soon we were on our way again and after what seemed to be innumerable stops the bus arrived in Denver. There we boarded a regular scheduled city bus to Golden, packing what little material possessions we had. The basement apartment was ready for us, though sparsely furnished, and we settled in.

I have included a map of Golden as it appears in 2001 to help acquaint the reader with the area.



**Figure 2-50 A photo taken at the Colorado School of Mines in 1950 for the yearbook.**

See figure 2-51. Of course, it has changed immensely with interstates, 4 lane thoroughfares and expansion to the town and college but the basic layout of the town is about the same. The approximate location of our basement apartment is shown in red as is the general campus and my route to and from school. I have also indicated in blue the location of my upstairs room prior to Esther's arrival, the general down town area and the bus route to and from Denver. We utilized the bus for transportation to and from the grocery store located near down town, exiting at 20<sup>th</sup> Street and then packed them

home as indicated by the green arrow. It wasn't difficult since our limited budget limited food.

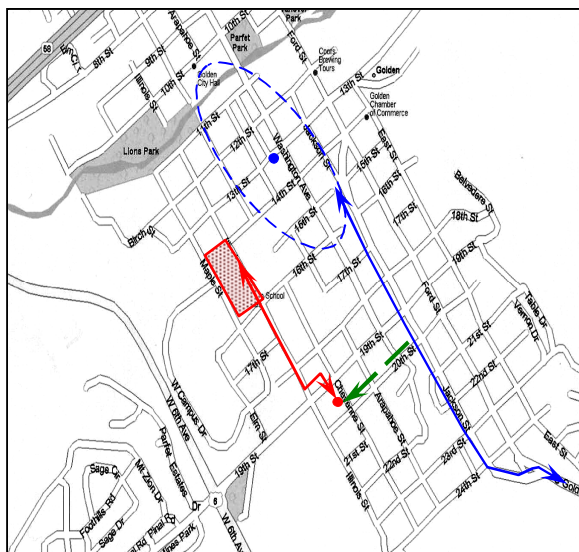
In the time we were there, we did little other than the necessary activities for living. School kept me busy and any entertainment had to be cost free for us to participate. Although a little after the fact, it seems appropriate to insert a traditional photo of the two of us, as well as the wedding cake, as provided in figure 2-52.

I soon found Esther was terrified at the thought of going into Denver to find a job, let alone to work. The trip required taking the bus with a couple of transfers involved. She grew up in Glens Ferry, a town of 1000 people at its peak. She just couldn't face a city the size of Denver.

She tried but couldn't find work in Golden and, try as I may, I couldn't convince her to hunt in

experienced the use of natural gas. Here, we not only had a gas stove but an old icebox as well. The latter had to be replenished with ice twice a week. Cooking with gas was a real challenge for her limited skills. As well as being antiquated, both were new to her and caused her considerable grief. They were also the culprits, which precipitated our first misunderstanding, as you shall see.

Esther was adjusting well, until one day she managed to scorch a white shirt of mine. When I got home she was feeling pretty bad and said she hated the apartment. First it was the icebox that never really kept things cold, and then the gas stove that wreaked havoc with her limited cooking skills. Now the stupid gas supplying the iron had caused her to scorch my shirt. She just couldn't regulate the heat properly. She surmised that the iron was being controlled by gas since the stove was. After all, both were heated by electricity in Boise and Glens Ferry as well, so why wouldn't the opposite be true in this case. Well, I broke out in a laugh about the iron and told her it hadn't changed since we brought it with us. The electric outlet was still the electric outlet. I don't believe I was too diplomatic about it and she felt like I was making fun of her. I suppose in a sense I was but only in a playful manner and I didn't intend to hurt her feelings. At any rate, she began crying and I soon found myself apologizing, while trying to soothe her feelings. This was a new experience for me and I began to realize I had a little more to learn about dealing with the new love of my life. Engineering logic just wouldn't get it when feelings were at stake.



**Figure 2-51 A map of Golden, Colorado today. However, the basic town layout remains essentially the same.**

Denver. I mean she was terrified. She spent most of her time being a good housewife, a job she felt comfortable with in a safe environment, well comfortable except when it came to the gas stove. Let me insert a cute story here, at least cute to me but not so cute to Esther. I might have been shot if she knew I was including it.

**THE GAS IRON INCIDENT**

Esther certainly was a hard worker and she wasn't about to sit around all day. The apartment was always shining and my clothes as well as hers were kept clean and pressed. However, Esther had always used electricity for both ironing and cooking. She had never

**FROM SCHOOL TO MILITARY LIFE**

Well, things went downhill financially very quickly and our meager savings were soon depleted. Esther was quite unhappy during that time because she had nothing to do and I believe, though never voiced, she felt guilty. I had to study a lot which left her alone to read. Remember, no TV and not real good radio. This didn't help either. We lived meagerly but could only make it through the winter quarter. As the end of that period approached, she still didn't have a job and I decided to quit school and enter the U. S. Navy or Air Force rather than be drafted. This I did and we returned to Boise about the end of March. Mom and dad put us up in the apartment upstairs where we had our own kitchen and bath as well as one bedroom for a period of time. Esther resided there,

working at St. Luke's hospital until she was able to join me some 5 or 6 months later in Biloxi, Mississippi.

#### NO KNOCK KNEES IN THE NAVY

First I gave the navy a whirl but failed the physical in Salt Lake. They told me I was knock kneed and couldn't stand watch for the period of time that would be required. I was devastated because I had never suspected anything like that. Sure enough, if you look at my legs, my knees do touch before anything else. As I made the trip back to Boise, I wondered, "How will I tell everyone, after all, both of my brothers had served." Then I began to wonder if they really knew what they were talking about, the navy I mean. I was in good shape and frequently walked many miles a day as well as worked very hard physically. I had never experienced a problem with my knees and I could out hike the majority of the guys I had worked with in the good old USFS. I also realized the seaman who attended me was about as fat and unfit as



**Figure 2-52 Esther and I posing in a traditional manner on December 29, 1950.**

anyone I had ever seen. If I couldn't run circles around him or stand guard at least twice as long I'd be mighty surprised. Right or wrong, I decided they were satisfying some Navy quota

and didn't need me at that particular time. Furthermore, I'd just join the air force and that would be their loss, so there. However, once again my ego took a severe beating and I found my big talk with myself really didn't help that much. I was knock kneed, like it or not, and I really didn't want to disclose it to anyone.

#### FROM NAVY TO AIR FORCE

Well, I didn't have time to feel sorry for myself so I immediately sought out the USAF and was accepted promptly. In just a few days, early May of 1951, I was on my way to San Antonio, Lackland Air Force Base, in Texas for basic training. Of course, Esther stayed behind until I could get a permanent assignment and send for her, as I mentioned earlier. She continued to stay in the apartment we had stayed in until that time. She had been working at St. Lukes Hospital and did so until she left for Biloxi, Mississippi that fall. I won't elaborate here because I expect to add a chapter regarding our service years.

Though the time was short, i.e. four years, those years were significant. Our two daughters were born in Biloxi while I was in the service and my father was killed in a hunting accident during that time period. Also, it was the first real time Esther had spent away from home, excluding Golden, Colorado, which was short lived to say the least. Thus, we did a little more growing up or maybe I should say maturing during those rather difficult and trying times. They were only the beginning of our nomadic life, which caused us to traipse around from Mississippi to Montana. We never spent more than a couple of years in any one place in the early years of my oil field career. Esther was a wonderful wife who supported me in every way as my job took me around the country. I could not have asked for a better companion. I became aware, over the years, of several women who simply could not stand to live away from home. Thus, the husband would quit and, I suppose, find his employment at some location more acceptable to his wife. I can appreciate the need for a man to consider his wife when selecting a job but she has to be able to compromise as well. In my case, I loved my work and I wouldn't have been happy in my early days sitting behind a desk in some office in the middle of town. I'm sure I would have survived but at that age, a desk job wasn't what I envisioned. I think Esther must have sensed this and seemed happy to be wherever I was assigned. Consequently, I really

learned to appreciate the way she accepted the rather unusual environment I selected to work in.

Though there are pluses and minuses in such a nomadic life, I certainly don't regret having gone through the experience. In fact, I would choose it over again, given the opportunity. It was an era of learning through study, experience and it eventually led to my joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. For this latter event, I will always be grateful.

AN AFTER THOUGHT

I stumbled across an old newspaper photo and reproduced it as figure 2-53. Because it is the one and only newspaper account of our wedding that I am aware of, I thought it would be nice to include it here. I realize it is a little out of place and the quality is likewise questionable at best. Even so, it's the only such account I have with writing which is legible. I blew it up for that very purpose just so all of you would have a legible record of it in a book or on a CD, which ever happens to be your document. I know it is legible because, if I can read it, so can you yunguns with better eyes. It's meant especially for you because it may be the only newspaper account you'll ever have of your grandma or great grandma or great-great grandma or even a grandma greater than that, depending on the generation you happen to decide to join up with this rag tag family of ours. Remember, Esther was a wonderful lady and deserves your very best memories. I wish you could have met her in this life rather than wait for the hereafter but then, maybe you already have. It might have been before she came to this earth and she was your good friend, as well as mine or it might have been after she left mortality and rejoined you in the spirit world.

The Idaho Sunday Statesman ☆

## Esther Spencer Wed To Thomas Obenchain

Making their home in Golden, Colo., are newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Obenchain, who were married recently in Boise. The nuptials were read by the Rev. Hartzell Cobbs of the First Christian church in the home of the bride's brother, Lewis Spencer of 1622 Abbs street.

The bride, the former Miss Esther Spencer of 107 Main street, is the daughter of Marbie Spencer of Glens Ferry. Mr. Obenchain is the son of Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Obenchain of 1901 North Seventeenth street.

**Satin Is Worn**

For her marriage the bride wore an ankle-length gown of white satin and marquisette with white accessories. It was fashioned with a fitted bodice, cap sleeves, Peter Pan collar and full skirt. A small satin halo held in place her short veil. She wore elbow-length mitts of marquisette and white accessories. Her bouquet was an arrangement of white chrysanthemums and red roses.

The bride's sister, Mrs. Theresa Capner of Boise, was matron of honor. She wore a brown satin and crepe cocktail dress with brown accessories and a corsage of yellow chrysanthemums.

Kenneth Karcher was best man. Miss Connie Obenchain was soloist.

**Fete Honors Pair**

A reception followed the ceremony. Assisting were Miss Isabelle Levesque, Mrs. Marne Hollingshead and Mrs. Elaine Spencer.

The couple left later for a short honeymoon before going to Golden, Colo., where the bridegroom is a student at Colorado School of Mines.

Out-of-town guests included Marbie Spencer, Miss Julia Spencer and Eugene Spencer, all of Glens Ferry.



**MRS. OBENCHAIN**  
*Miss Spencer is wed.*  
Photo by Carr

Figure 2-53 Newspaper clipping from the Statesman announcing our wedding of December 29, 1950.

We covered a lot of country together and underwent a lot of experiences, which never would have occurred in a town such as Boise.