

DONALD SOUTHAM COOK

A PERSONAL HISTORY

I was born September 29, 1923 at my parents home in Cedar Fort, Utah. I was the ninth child and fifth son, born to Barnes Alma and Alice Southam Cook. There were four children born after me.

MY MEMORY OF ESTER'S DEATH

One of my earliest memories is of the death and funeral of my baby sister Ester. She died when I was three years old.

One thing I remember before Ester's death was when I got my first pair of coveralls. It was the custom then that little boys wear dresses until they were two or three years old. Shortly after mother put me in my first coveralls, I wet my pants. She put the dress back on me. You can be sure I never wet my pants again. I can still feel the humiliation. I have pictures of me holding Ester and wearing those coveralls so I know it was before I was three.

A MARK FOR LIFE

Something happened to me before I can remember that left a mark on me for life. Dad left his grain drill parked in the yard. The kids found that they could get quite a thrill by sitting on the seat while someone lifted the tongue up and down like a teeter totter. They were having so much fun that they thought that the baby should have his turn, so they place me on the seat. And of course I fell off onto a rock which caused a "Y" shaped cut on my cheek. I have carried the scar from that cut on my cheek all my life.

ANOTHER MEMORY

Another early memory is of following my older brothers to the barn when they went to milk the cows. I would take my tin cup and they would fill it with warm milk. I love it and remember getting foam all over my face.

MY FIRST CHORES

The first chore I remember doing was taking my little red wagon out to the corn patch and loading it with red root weeds. I would then take the weeds and feed them to the hogs. I remember grandpa Cook paying me for doing this.

I was given other chores to do according to my abilities like feeding the rabbits and gathering eggs. As I got older it was milking cows and taking them to the pasture, riding the stacker horse, tromping hay, and worst of all, tromping thistle during the drought years when we didn't raise any hay.

During the drought of the early thirties, there wasn't enough water in the ditches to water crops. Because of this we didn't raise any hay or grain. There were some storms during the summer which caused the Russian thistle to grow. We cut it and stacked it just like hay and were able to winter our cattle with it. It was made palatable by sprinkling molasses obtained from the sugar factory over it.

I remember going with Rulon to take the cows to the pasture in the morning and bringing them back in the evening. At first we walked, later I rode a horse. The summer before I was in the third grade I was given more responsibility of taking care of the cows when Rulon had other things to do. To do this I was given an aging horse we called Old Bob. He had weak knees and would often fall to his knees especially if we tried to run him. He died the following winter.

I BROKE MY LEG

Just a couple of weeks before school was to start when I was in the sixth grade I met with an accident while going out to bring the cows in from the dry farm north of town. I dismounted my horse to open a gate. In doing so I failed to tighten the cinch on the saddle before getting back on the horse. When I attempted to remount my horse the saddle began to turn and my foot went through the stirrup. I fell and was dragged about fifty yards before my leg broke in two places between the ankle and the knee releasing my foot from the stirrup. While this was happening I thought I was going to be killed.

The next thing I remember, my horse, Old Cal, was coming back towards me with the saddle still under her belly. When she got to me she stopped. I tried to get back on her without success. So, I dropped the saddle to the ground and took her bridle off. I was hoping she would go home so someone would come looking for me. However, she would just go far enough that I couldn't hit her with a rock, and wouldn't go any further.

I then thought that the best chance to get help would be to get over to the Lehi road which was about twenty yards away. I slid along the ground holding my broken right leg in my left hand till I reached the road. There I passed out. When I came to, Stella Strickland was kneeling on the ground holding my head in her lap. She told me that her husband had gone to get my dad and something to splint my leg with.

Mr Strickland (Ryle) and my father soon returned along with a number of neighbors. They put me in Glen Peterson's Packard and sent me to the Lehi Hospital where I spent the next three weeks. It was April before I was able to walk again.

I went to school for part of November and December. Then during the Christmas holidays I got blood poisoning in some cast sores that hadn't yet healed. This kept me out of school another six weeks. In spite of all this I was promoted to the seventh grade.

GOING TO SCHOOL

I attended school in the two room school house in Cedar Fort through the sixth grade. There I had only two class mates, both girls. They were Necia Ault and Maxine Berry. I attended seventh grade in Lehi where I had about eighty class mates. This was quite a change. I soon made friends and I enjoyed my time at Lehi High School.

RIDING THE SCHOOL BUS

Riding the bus was sometimes boring and at other times quite exciting. Our bus driver would allow us to do different things to entertain ourselves, such as singing or playing cards. If you were caught whistling you walked. If a fight started, he would stop the bus and order the combatants outside to continue the fight. When he thought they had enough he would let them back on the bus and we would be on our way.

Our bus driver carried a 30-30 rifle in the bus which he used for shooting coyotes. If a coyote was sighted he would stop the bus, get out and take a couple of shots at it. If he couldn't hit it he would had the gun to one of the older boys and let them try. If by chance he killed the coyote he would skin the animal, sell the hide, collect the bounty, buy a box of rifle shells and with the money left over he would buy peanuts. Then we would have a peanut bust on the way home.

GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL AND LDS SEMINARY

I graduated from Lehi High School and LDS Seminary in May of 1941. I spend the summer working with dad on the farm. In the fall I went to work at the Snider Mill in Mercur.

ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Many of my friends and relatives were either drafted or enlisted in the Service. My brother Rulon joined the Navy. My brother Marion went into the army a few weeks after returning home from his mission in April. I felt that I should

go into the Service too. However, dad need help with the farm. I was able to get an agriculture deferment so I stayed home for the next two years.

I SIGNED VOLUNTARY INDUCTION PAPERS

I worked the next summer with dad on the farm and then spent the winter working on the construction of the Dessert Chemical Depot in Rush Valley. After another summer on the farm I went with my brother Sheldon and worked in the lead silver mine, about 30 miles north and west of Montello, Nevada. When we came home for Christmas I found I had a notice from the draft board that my deferment was being reviewed. I felt then that Bernard was big enough to give dad what help he needed, so I signed voluntary induction papers.

SERVING IN THE NAVY

After passing a physical at Fort Douglas I was given my choice of which branch of Service I wanted to join. I choose the Navy and was soon on my way to Farriget, Idaho and "boot camp." After completing boot camp and spending a short leave at home I was sent to a basic engineering school conducted by the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn, Michigan. After graduating and another few days at home I reported to San Francisco for further assignment. After about three weeks I was on a troop ship headed for Pearl Harbor. From there I went by plane to the Naval Air Station at Johnston Island in the Pacific where I spent the next year as engineer on a crash boat. It was rather isolated there but we kept busy. Hundreds of plans were landing and taking off every day. After a year I was transferred to the Kaneohe Naval Air Station in Hawaii where I remained until the war ended. I passed under the Golden Gate Bridge in April and received my discharge at Shoemaker California a few days later.

RETURNING HOME FROM MILITARY SERVICE

When I returned home I went to work for the summer for my brother Thyrel on a ranch in Jensen Utah. When I started looking for work that fall my brother-in-law, Ralph Smith, ask me if I thought I could be a carpenter. I told him I could try. He told me to show up with some tools and I had a job. I spent that fall and winter working on the Salt Lake Aqueduct.

About this time Bishop Afton Chamberlain approached me about going on a mission. My papers were sent in and an interview was scheduled with Elder Mark E Petersen. By the time I went for the interview, dad had become ill. He had contracted both Undulant Fever and Tularemia. When I told Elder Petersen what the situation was he suggested postponing my mission for a year so I could help Bernard with the farm. I spent that next year splitting my time between farming and construction.

NORTHERN STATES MISSION

I left for the Northern States Mission in September of 1947. I served a year in Ottumwa, Iowa, nine months in Lima, Ohio, and the last three months in Danvile, Illinois. It was a good experience. I liked to feel that I served the Lord well. We were called on to do many things that missionaries don't do now, such as traveling without purse or script, holding street meetings, performing marriages and conducting funerals. Street meetings were the hardest to do. However, once you got started you felt the spirit stronger than at any other time.

HOME FROM MY MISSION

I returned home from my mission in September of 1949. The night I got home Rulon came up to the house and said he had a job for me if I could get my tools together and be ready to go in the morning. I needed a job bad because I was completely broke. The job was with Pritchett Construction company working on the Salt Lake Aqueduct.

BLIND DATE WITH CLEO HAYES - WE GOT MARRIED

Just before Thanksgiving my cousin Ruth Cook asked me if I would be interested in a blind date with her friend Cleo Hayes. After some doubts and negotiations, it was arranged and we went to the Thanksgiving dance together. We seemed to hit it off well, and went on several more dates. We became engaged Christmas Eve. We spent the next four months getting to know each other better and still felt good about it. We were married May 3rd, 1950 in the Salt Lake Temple. Cleo continue to be my sweetheart and best friend today after forty five years together.

PLACE WE HAVE LIVED

We lived for a short time in Cedar Fort. Then for about two years we lived in American Fork. Vernon, our first son was born while we were in American Fork. Next we were in Lehi for a short time where Jeanne was born. I was working for Young & Smith Construction at the time and they asked me if I would go to a job in Fort Lewis Washington that would last about six months. We went and for the next three years we moved about every six months - South Tacoma, Washington, Portland, Oregon, The Dalles, Oregon, and Reed Bluff, California.

OUR HOME IN COTTONWOOD

We returned to Utah in 1956 and purchased a home in the Cottonwood area of Salt Lake Valley. For the next two and one half years after we moved into our home in the Cottonwood area I worked on the Davis Aqueduct. We welcomed Nancy to our family in March of 1956. For the next ten years I worked on various projects in Utah, Colorado and Nevada. During this time our last three children came to bless our home: Darrel in 1959, Carla in 1961 and Terry in 1964. In 1967 we sold our home and moved back to Portland and purchased another home. We only stayed in Portland about eighteen months and then returned to Salt Lake Valley and bought a home near the one we had left two years before. This in the home we still live in. During all this time I have continued to work in the construction business. I have worked as a carpenter, carpenter foreman, general foreman and superintendent.

SERVICE IN THE CHURCH

We have been active in the church wherever we have lived. I have served as counselor in the Sunday School four times, Sunday School President two times, Sunday School teacher four years, counselor in the Mutual (MIA) three times, Mutual (MIA) President, two times, Seventies Group Leader, High Priest Group Leader and an Ordinance worker in the Jordan River Temple.