

Memories of Melvin Samuel Jackson

June 6, 1978

I will try to make these memories in order of their occurrences. My first memory was living with my sister Elvira and Warren Rasmussen in Ogden, Utah. He was a veterinarian and had a state practice where he would go out into the country to test the cattle for "Bangs and T. B." I remember him buying us drinks and ice cream cones as I spotted the good places to buy. He had Chinchillas behind the hospital and we all helped take care of them.

I enjoyed living in Utah with Warren and Elvira. Warren was my "Dad" and my real earthly father was "Pa Pa." When we used to visit them in Colorado Elvira always had me learn a poem or give a reading to "Papa." I really thought that was great. And then there were the "boys" in Colorado (my brothers). I enjoyed them and looked on them with awe for their accomplishments on the ranch with the sheep, cattle and horses.

Then one day Warren called me to him and with tears in his eyes told me my "Mommy" was dead. I remember her being ill, laying down a lot and having a full stomach (fluids due to her heart condition) but I wasn't ready for her death. I felt the loneliness for the first time of losing a mother.

At the funeral Warren held me up to her so I could kiss her goodbye. I was shocked that she was so cold. I'm sure the Lord left her on earth an extra ten years so that she could give me a start in this life. I was about ten years old at her death.

I was put on a train to Colorado. I had a sign on me telling them where I was to get off. I remember Will Jackson (Brother) picked me up at the railroad station and I had more fun riding in the back of the pickup with Jay and Ray and Jean (his boys). I was going to live with "Papa" and the boys. I was excited, it was a new adventure for me.

One of my first impressions of "Papa" was his discipline. He never spanked me but he gave you a talking to that you wish he would spank you. I love and respect that man as no other. I admire his courage to raise his family alone. I commend him for his spiritual strength and wisdom. I soon learned that Dad and Papa were one and the same. His boys and girls all learned to respect his patriarchal place in the sacred circle of the family. I remember sitting down to the supper table. There was a long bench on the one side and chairs all around the rest of the table. Everyone would be talking, giggling or fighting and Dad would thump his hand on the table three times and then extend his index finger up in the air with a stern look. And you could hear a pin drop. One time he looked right at me and I burst into tears. I spent the rest of my life with him trying to be found in his favor. I wanted him to think good of me. I wanted to please him in word and deed. I loved and will always love my gentle, earthy father.

I remember every morning and I mean every morning we got up and started the old coal stove with wood chips brought in the night before and put on a pot of mush (cracked wheat cereal). We all really ate big helpings with thick cow's cream that we had separated from the milk the night before. Then you ate eggs, bacon and toast etc. Dad always said eat a good breakfast. You might not get home 'til supper.

Dad taught me to drive on the ranches. I wouldn't ask. That was being too brash. But he knew I wanted to. So when we would come to a gate I would get out and open it for Dad, he would drive the pickup thru and then scoot over to the passenger side. Boy, I was thrilled and would jump in the driver's seat and get my lesson!

Dad was older by the time I came along. I was the last of 12 and he had been through all the experience of raising a family. But, we would be walking on the ranches and all of a sudden he would draw a line on the ground and say "go" that meant the race was on and I would run like the dickens. Of course he always got the head start but let me finish first.

Jay and Ray and I would work at shocking grain. Sometimes the shocks of grain were as big as we were and weighed about as much. Dad would come by and pick us up and we were sweating, dirty and tired. Then he would drive the pickup around by the river and drive slow. We would all be in the back looking at him to give the word. He would turn around, smile and stop the truck. Boy in two seconds we had all our clothes off and were in that river for a good dip. We didn't know how to swim. That came later at the "high banks" in the San Antone river.

When I was 13 years old it was decided that I would go on the trail with the sheep for two weeks. We drove them from Manassa to the pasture in the mountains. I was given the task of going with a Mexican herder who couldn't speak English. And I couldn't speak Spanish. I was to take three horses with the tent, camp etc., cook our meals and help him drive the sheep. It scares me now to think about it. I know I wouldn't let one of my boys do that. Ha! We had 2,500 herd of black face sheep, the toughest of them all (there were three herds of the Jackson sheep).

I would drive sheep with him until about supper time, then by waving his arms, broken English and drawing on the ground with a stub he would tell me where to go put up camp. I really learned to pray. I was alone but I had been taught of God, a Heavenly Father who I could call on.

I would set up the camp and cook a meal. The herder would come in, eat and return for the night. I would do the dishes. Next morning early I would get up, get breakfast, he would eat and leave, and I would throw the camp on the horses and race after the herd. This process was repeated morning, noon and night. We grew up fast in Colorado.

Putting up hay was a fascinating process as six wagons would keep a Mormon derrick busy stacking huge stacks of alfalfa hay. I remember Will would ask me to "thread the derrick" as we moved from one derrick to another. That meant I would have to take the loop of cable out to the very end of the derrick and put it over the lead pole. It was higher than any tree around. It was that same love for Will that I had for Dad. I would do anything he asked me to do and not ask questions why. One day in stacking the hay the stackers got sick. In fact there were two stackers. Will told me to get up there and take over. I scrambled up the derrick, jumped on the stack and worked my heart out. If noon hadn't come I'm sure I would have killed myself. I was so tired but I didn't want Will to know it.

I didn't know my mother but have heard wonderful stories about the kind of woman she was. Oh, how my heart goes out to Dad. To lose such a companion during her prime of life. But I never once heard him complain to us or to the Lord. I'm sure mother's strength and heritage show in her great family. I'm so proud to be one of her sons, even the last.

My high school days were very memorable to me because of basketball and girls. During my senior year our team made it to the state finals but due to our inexperience with the outside world we took third place.

I met Pauline at a high school dance in La Jara, Colorado. She was dancing with someone and I was playing the saxophone in the band. I watched her all night. Later I asked if she noticed me at all. She didn't even know there was a saxophone in the band! I danced with her the first time at the school dance in La Jara, Colorado in an old gym that used to be the garage for the buses. I called her up soon after and made our first date one month in advance.

Taking her home one night after a nice formal dance it was raining and as we were walking into the house she stepped off the bridge over the garden ditch clear up to her waist in muddy water. We had a good laugh over that. I didn't kiss her the first night but when I did first get up the nerve I kissed and ran as fast as I could. It took a lot of courage for me to kiss a girl. The only one I had been used to kissing or being kissed by was my Papa.

Pauline was the cheerleader for the La Jara team so we both enjoyed basketball. It was common ground for us to start a lasting relationship.

After graduation from High School I decided to stay on the farm. Mother and Papa had planned that I go on a mission but no one asked or encouraged me to prepare. I was never interviewed by a bishop to go. It is a goal in my life to have that opportunity still and with my sweet dear wife.

Pauline and I were married May 18, 1949. I served as counselor in the bishopric to bishop La Vere Bagwell. Then I know the Lord called Pauline and I to other parts of His vineyard to serve in other callings.

We sold all we had with not chance of coming back to work with the boys or Papa. Our bridge was burned behind us but that turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

We went to Alamosa, Adams State, for one quarter then packed everything we had into the pick-up and moved to Fort Collins, Colorado to enter Veterinary school. I would be afraid to do that now but the Lord blessed us and I was accepted into the school a year before I thought I could make it. Only one out of ten applicants were accepted into this school. What if I hadn't made it? I had to borrow \$500 to get out of town when I graduated. During school Pauline worked as the President and Superintendent of the Mutual. Many a night she would go to our meetings when I needed to study. But oh, how the Lord watched over and guided us. We didn't get the best grades in the class but I came out with my testimony intact and much stronger than when we started school. Some of my fondest memories are of our struggle to get through school financially and physically. We would have only pennies, nickels and dimes at the end of the month. We would pack all the kids in the car (Steve, Greg and Curt) and go to a show. The kids would sit quiet or go to sleep. We couldn't afford a baby sitter. And then to the root beer stand for ice cream. We were really living. I worked five part-time jobs at \$0.75 to \$1.00 an hour. I would take my things to memorize and do that while I worked my jobs. I hoed weeds thru the campus along the railroad track while I memorized chemistry formulas. I did yard work in lawns and gardens. I worked on the veterinary farm taking care of the sheep and cattle. I washed flower pots to raise colbeberrie for someone's agriculture experiment. I got up all hours of the night to read the weather meters and teletype it into Denver. I

emptied all the waste baskets in the administration building for \$1.00 a day (\$30/Mo). The rent on our apartment was \$30/month. I took care of an office: vacuum, windows and wastebaskets and all. We washed out blood bottles from the hospital at home. Pauline worked as a nurses aide. I bought into a root-tiller company (three veterinary students). We worked people's yard during our free time. I put data cards of veterinary medicine procedures into plastic and sold them to the four veterinary classes for \$1 each. I helped type up and produce the surgery notes of last years class and sold them to the upcoming class. Lot of work but we made money. I sold rubber stamps to veterinary students in the locker room during breaks. I remember I always wanted to buy a candy bar or pop but just couldn't to bring myself to splurge. The first whole bottle of soda pop I remember of drinking was when a more affluent friend invited Pauline and I over for dinner with our two kids and we all had a full bottle each. I told Pauline after, "those guys must be rich to drink pop like that." When we had pop we all shared, and that wasn't very often.

I was so excited to get to Idaho and go to work with my brothers Delwyn and Ivin that I didn't even wait for graduation. Who needed that stuff? I had my diploma. As a matter of fact during my freshman year I worked on the veterinary farm while they had freshman initiation. I was too busy and in far too big of a hurry to get through school.

Idaho holds fond memories of starting to work in my chosen profession. My brothers taught me so much and how to work. I have always looked up to Delwyn and Ivin as idols. I wanted to please them. I didn't care what they paid me. I just wanted them to be proud of me. Before we got out of school Delwyn and Betty took Pauline and I out to dinner. Delwyn took \$14 out of his bill fold and paid for that dinner. I told Pauline I couldn't believe anyone would carry that much money around with him and to spend all that on dinner one night was unheard of. I was impressed!

I remember going on ranch calls stopping getting my Merek Manual of Veterinary Procedures and Medicine and taking a quick check up before going on a call. I lacked the confidence but Delwyn and Ivin soon helped me with that.

The Lord soon saw fit to call us elsewhere. We moved to Rancho Mirage, California. We had a new baby, Ron J. He was 14 days old when we hit town. It was well over 110 degrees. Pauline and I both had second thoughts.

The Lord stood by us. Pauline always saw that we paid our tithing and the windows of heaven were opened up again to bless our lives. The practice prospered. Our lives were busy. We forgot the Lord. I was too busy to work in the church. Only made Priesthood Meeting and Sacrament occasionally if I wasn't busy at the clinic. Pauline saw to it that the boys were active. I was called to be the Webelos teacher. I accepted the challenge and had fun with the boys once a week that I taught. We became the best Webelos pack in the Den.

Then something happened and someone saw fit to draw a circle that took me in. This poem is a favorite of mine:

He drew a circle that shut me out. Heretic, Rebel a thing to flout. But, Love and I had the wit to win. We drew a circle that took him in.

I was called to serve on the high council of the Palm Springs Stake. I didn't know why and I really didn't know why the Lord ever bothered with me, then a rebellious spirit. I accepted the challenge with enthusiasm. Within the year the Stake Presidency was re-organized and I was asked to be the second counselor. My life was changed. I functioned in this capacity for one year, then President Lake was released as Stake President of the Palm Spring Stake.

Elder Kimball, then President of the quorum of the twelve, and Elder Boyd K. Packer of the twelve met with the priesthood leaders to find the man the Lord would call to be the Stake President. I remember I felt so good after my interview with the brethren, like a burden had been taken off my shoulders. They called me back in several times to talk about the stake leadership and I gave my opinions enthusiastically. Then Elder Kimball said, "Brother Jackson the Lord has called you to be the Stake President, will you do it." I was overwhelmed. I hadn't even thought of such a thing.

I chose my one counselor and then asked for time to pray about the second counselor. Elder Kimball taught me a lesson as he said, "Brother Jackson, it doesn't take long for the spirit to work. I'll knell down with you and let's find the one." Within a few minutes the second counselor was called.

This call from the Lord has been a humbling experience. He has taught me many things about myself and those whom I serve. He has literally led me by the hand spiritually as I have humbled myself before him. I want to serve Him and my fellowmen with all the strength that I have. I have learned that I have a personal Savior even Jesus Christ. I want to spend my life gaining a closer meaningful relationship with Him. I love him and acknowledge Him in all that I am or hope to be.

Just a word about my boys. They are all different. They all have there special qualities. They do bring joy and happiness into our lives and now we have two grandchildren. The family unit is surely eternal and oh so sacred.

When Dad passed away. I just missed him by a few hours. I had just come home from college and was staying with Pauline's folks that night. The next day I was going to Manassa and talk to Dad. He was a rich man in his day but when he passed away he left the children all \$75. That was his estate to us. But he left us so much more. He taught us how to work and of a God that lives and of Jesus Christ and of that great plan of salvation. He served and taught us to serve in this great and marvelous work that is rolling forth among the children of men in this dispensation. He left a heritage that makes my heart swell with pride. I'm proud to be his son. I'm proud to be a Jackson. I know someday I'll get a chance to report to Papa as I will to my Heavenly Father. I hope they will be proud of me.

I know that someday I'll get to know my mother and report to her. I felt her presence on a day so vivid that I'll never forget it. Pauline and I had drove to Salt Lake to the temple after a session we were in the tabernacle listening to the Mormon Tabernacle choir practice. I felt her presence on my left side so strong that I turned my head quick to see her. I know she was there. I know she has been a guiding influence in my life. I'm sure Father has let her spirit touch and impress my sprint as she is so concerned for her little family still here on this earth. I know Papa and Mother are preparing a place for us to dwell with them if we can only live worthy to be in there presence.

Sam