

Chapter Three

The Green Years

Years of Wonderment and Awe,
Through every changing eyes, I saw
The wonders of nature, the ways of man
Were brought about through the Master's Plan.

The following year was a hard one for all of us, especially dad, not knowing what was best to do for his own well being and for that of the family. The responsibility fell to me to keep the house in good order. I did nearly all the housework and helped with cooking and washing the dishes. We were often invited out to meals in various homes throughout the neighborhood. These opportunities provided the love and support we sorely needed as well as good nourishing food.

I feel sure that the answer to dad's problems came in finding another good wife and a stepmother for his children. "Get ready children, I have someone I wish you to meet tonight. She is to be your new mother."

This came as a great shock to us because we were unaware that our father had any matrimonial intentions. Francis Madsen, the lady of his choice, was living with two companions in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vern Johnson in Provo. We were dressed in our Sunday best and were taken to her home to be properly introduced. We were told that the marriage was to take place soon.

Dad and Francis (left) were married March 12, 1924 in the Manti Temple. The period of adjustment came hard for us kids and I am sure it was hard for our new mother. We never felt we could call her "mother" and so adopted the title "Aunt Francis."

The following summer father bought Harold and I an old Model T For bug. This was a car with the chassis of an old Model T with a homemade body over it which looked like a bug. It was only a one seat affair. But we had a lot of fun chasing around in it. The following April Harold and his friend Wes Jorgensen took off for Washington and Oregon in the bug. They must have run into some kind of trouble in Oregon for they disposed of the car and went on into Nevada where they found employment in the mines for a couple of years.

One summer Clyde Olsen, Glen Olsen, Clyde Sumsion, Weldon Taylor, Morris Clinger and I decided to take a week long trip to Provo Canyon. We took Old Bess, one of Dad's horses and one of the Taylor's horses to make a team and made our way up to South Fork. The first night we stayed just below Conrad's ranch. A bunch of horses got loose there during the night and got into the hay we had brought along. They ate nearly all of it.

The next morning we were up early so we could hike to the top of Big Face Mountain. We hiked up Bunnell's Fork clear to the top of the mountain where we could look see the entire valley. About 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, we decided we would return down the fork that leads to the head waters of Bridal Veil Falls. We found this to be exceedingly steep hike and a long way down to the canyon floor. We climbed down to the big spring which feeds all the water for the falls just about a half block above where the falls actually begin to cascade over the rocks. The hike from there down was over high cliffs and we had great difficulty as we made our descent. In one particular place, we all had to take off our belts and tied them together into a long strap. This we used in letting each other down, one at a time, over the cliff.

We were lucky to get to the Canyon floor just before dark. By the time we reached the bottom, there were many cars parked up and down the canyon road. People had been watching us and were anxiously wondering if we could ever make it to the bottom without accident or injury.

After getting back on solid ground, we went on down the Canyon to where the Old Mutual Home used to be. This was just across the road north of Spring Dell. There was a swimming pool there so we dared one another to jump into the pool with all our clothes on. Later we walked through the gathering darkness up Provo Canyon to Vivian Park, and on up to our camp in South Fork. I think it was nearly midnight before we arrived at camp. I have never been more tired in my life than I was when I fell into bed that night.

We were up early the next morning. We stole some hay from the Giles Ranch to feed our hungry horses. We first attempted to buy some hay but our offer was refused. Later we learned that it was their cattle that had gotten out of the pasture and eaten the hay be had brought for our animals, so we felt justified in taking what we needed to finish our trip.

We drove the horses and wagon down South Fork on the third day. From there we went up Provo Canyon to North Fork and on up North Fork to Aspen Grove where we camped for the night. This was another long day and sleep came quickly that night.

The next morning we rose early and climbed to the top of Mt. Timpanogos. On the fifth day we went around the head of American Fork Canyon and on down to Timpanogos Cave. We camped the fourth night and at the bottom of the trail and early the next morning we climbed the trail that switches back and forth up to Timp Cave. We explored the cave, hiked back down to our camp and got home late that afternoon.

This five day trip up through Provo Canyon was much too hard on Dad's old horse Bess. She was never any good after that and seemed to have something wrong with her breathing. But it was a wonderful trip for a group of boys in their early teens. These experiences cemented our friendships. These boys were the friends I attend church with. We all went to dances, sporting events and school activities together throughout high school. It was these guys that saw me through the Green Years.

The Lost Watch

It was a beautiful moonlit night and I was just returning home about 1: A.M. in the morning. We had been dancing at the old Geneva Resort. I felt it was just too wonderful and beautiful of a night to go to bed. I decided to hook up the team and begin cutting second crop hay. It was at the blooming stage and just ready for the knife.

I changed into my work clothes and went to the barn. I harnessed up the team and hitched them to the mowing machine and began cutting an eight acre piece of land that lay between the house and the barn. There was a full moon that night and I can never remember it shining brighter. How I loved the smell of new mown hay and the feel of the fresh canyon breeze upon my young arms and face. The night seemed to give the horses more zest as well. They also enjoyed this beautiful night time work in preference to the heat of a midsummer day sun.

Around and around we went. Every round brought us nearer the center and the fishing of the hay field. It was about 7:00 A.M. when I finished the field, unhitched the team, gave the horses feed and water and returned to the house for a hearty breakfast with the rest of the family. I decided to lie down for a couple of hours before continuing the mowing on another field of hay down by the Lake.

As I began taking off my overall, I discovered to my sorrow that I had lost my watch. I had just purchased it a couple of months earlier. I treasured this watch very highly. It was bought with the first money I had ever earned. I saved a few dollars at a time over the space of many months until I had enough to buy the watch.

I just couldn't go to bed. I had only one desire. I had to finding my lost watch. I put on my shoes and returned to the hay field. My shoes and returned to the field. I searched and search. I got down on my hands and knees and crawled for rods and rods in the likely places where I thought I may have lost the watch. But it was all to no avail. I just could not find it. After about an hour of fruitless searching, I decided it was no use looking further. I was just too tired. So I went back to the house expecting to search again after I got some sleep.

I remember going up stairs to my bedroom, the one on the south side, with tears in my eyes. I was sad indeed as I had not been able to find my watch. There I knelt and prayed: "Dear Heavenly Father, please! Oh, Please! Help me find my watch! You know how hard I worked and how long I saved to get enough money to buy my watch. I want to find it more than anything else in this world. I believe if you help we I can find it." I prayed for a very long time and afterwards I felt much better.

I rose to my feet and went down the stairs. I went to the field to continued searching in likely places. Places where the knife had clogged and I had gotten off the mower to clean bunches of tough sod from the hay knife. I crawled up and down the corners of the field with my ear hear to the ground trying to hear a ticking sound that might come from my watch. Finally,

after about ten or fifteen minutes of searching in this manner, I found my watch. It was in the middle of the field. I had lost it while cleaning the knife when it clogged while cutting the last swathe of hay which is nearly always left standing in the middle of the field.

“Thank you God! Oh, Thank You!” I exclaimed as I picked up the watch and examined it to see if it were broken. My watch was still in perfect condition.

This experience of my youth made a huge impress on me. It provided increased faith in the power of prayer. I came to know that with God., anything is possible. I came to recognize that if I did my part, my prayers would be answered.

About a year and a half after Dad and Aunt Francis were married another son was born to the family on August 15, 1925. He was named Edward Dale Johnson in honor of Edward Hatton, Dad’s sister’s husband, whom we all knew as “Uncle Ted.” This child was born while I was on another camping trip up Provo canyon with some of the boys from this end of the ward. We were camped just above the old Wallsburg bridge. While we were here Morris Clinger got shot through the foot with a 22 riffle. One of us swam across Provo River to call his folks. They came up after him. When we returned we were glad to discover that Morris’ foot was not seriously injured and I was happy with the news that we had a new baby brother.

In the fall of 1926, I began my freshman year at Lincoln High School in Orem. I became interested in the opposite sex and began going out to dances and parties. My best gal was a dark complected girl named Norma Sumsion who lived in our neighborhood. She was lively and full of fun and we had good times together.

My favorite subjects in school were animal husbandry, mechanical drawing and shop. I was large for my age and gymnastic sports became important to me. I became extremely interested in basket ball in my Sophomore year and for three years was a regular member of the basket ball squad. The “Green One” had reached a height of six feet two inches and weighed about 180 pounds. I played center on the basket ball team. I became captain of the team in my senior year and was cited for being high point man in Alpine School District during the first half of the basket ball season. I enjoyed traveling from school to school with our coach and the other members of the team.

During the spring of 1927 I was operated on for a hernia on my right side at the old Aird Hospital. I had suffered with his affliction for about ten years. As it was, father did not have the necessary cash for the operation and so had to borrow money from Uncle Ted Hatton so this problem could be attended to.

About this time I became interested in a couple of blond girls: Jessie Farley from Orem and a friend of her, Velma Nelson who lived near the school. Actually I met Jessie before I entered high school at an Eighth Grade Dance held at Lincoln High. We were introduced by Florence Burningham, one of the Lake View girls. Jessie and I went on dates a few times.

Our first date was a picnic at Saratogo on Easter Sunday. Morris Clinger and I had planned to take our dates over in his father's car. In the mean time, Harold sent me into Provo with his girl friend. I should have had plenty of time to get back in time to pick up my date. But luck was not with me. Just as we got to Provo Floral on 1st South and 2nd West the motor died. Try as I would I could not get the car started. Finally I took off running all the way home which was a distance of about five miles. This was the longest distance run I ever made, before or since, without stopping. I made it back home in time and got ready in time to leave with Morris. I had a nice time at Saratogo with Jessie.

I was a good student at Lincoln High School and participated in lots of extracurricular activities. I won a part in the school play and was also chosen to be a member of the debate team. Due to my position on the basketball team, my teachers encouraged me to skip debate and devote my time and energy to basketball. I was elected Vice-President of my Freshman class and President of my Senior class. I had the honor of giving the welcoming address at our graduation exercises in the spring.

I met Velma Nelson in the spring of my Sophomore year. I went on a blind date which had been arranged by Kenneth Olsen. Velma was a tall, athletic blond with an interest in all kinds of outdoor sports such as ice skating, swimming, hiking and horse back riding. Our interests were similar and we went steady for about two years. In the spring of 1929 we became engaged as life took on a rosy flow. I came to have a great deal of love and respect for Velma's mother Daisy. She was always fixing me good things to eat and doing little things for me.

During the summer of 1929 Velma went to work in the Southern Canyons to obtain money in anticipation of a mission call in the fall. I graduated from Seminary and High school and began laying plans to fulfill a mission.

Sometime in September, while working on a country road project with our Bishop Spencer Madsen, I got up the courage to ask: "How are you fixed for missionaries this fall?" He replied "We will see what we can work out." In the meantime he must have had a conversation with my dad. Evidently it was agreed that I could go on a mission "after the work was all done that fall."

I was indeed fortunate to grow up with good clean companions who had ideals similar to my own. Weldon Taylor, Clyde Sumsion and I spent many weeks working together on Uncle Will Taylor's farm where we helped with the harvest. We went out together on dates, to parties and spent a great deal of time in each others home. We were all anticipating mission calls so we went together to Patriarch Keeler's home in Provo where we were given Patriarchal blessings. Mine reads in part:

"...You have descended from Joseph who was sold into Egypt through the loins of Ephraim, his son. Now upon Ephraim rests a great work in these latter days. So it is your destiny to assist your brethren to bring to pass the purposes of the Father in these latter days. . .

You were born in this day for a wise and a glorious purpose and your parentage was also ordained of God. You merited this blessing through your good works in your former home. . . you were faithful and true in that life. . .

You will have the right to enter the holy temples and be joined with one of the daughters of Zion in holy wedlock. . . Children will be your heritage and your crown. . . Your work will not always be at home but it will be in other lands and climes. Prepare yourself by storing your mind with knowledge; read the scriptures and be familiar with them. Become acquainted with the histories of nations and people of ancient and modern times; also with language that you may express your thoughts and ideas clearly, for you have this talent within you. Therefore cultivate it. . . Be not timid or backward in good works but consider yourself the equal of any man. . .

You have great incite into hidden things of God and nature. This is a natural characteristics. Cultivate this. You have the gift of fath and if you exercise it, it will become a great power in you. Disease will be overcome by your administration, even the winds and the waves will be subject to you in time of need. Evil spirits will be rebuked and many other manifestations of the power of God will be brought to view . . .

I confide you to your Guardian Angel. You have heard his still small voice whispering to your soul when you have been tempted to do wrong. By that same voice he has urged you to do right. Follow his whisperings and you will be lead into paths of safety. . . October 28th, 1928.

Velma left for her mission to the Northwestern States in October. I received my call to labor in Australia on October 18th. I was notified in a letter from President Heber J. Grant to appear at the mission home on Monday, November 19th. I was set apart for my mission there by George Albert Smith, a member of the Twelve Apostles who later became President of the LDS Church.

I received my endowments in the Salt Lake Temple on November 22th. This was a very inspirational day. Following the endowment work, we were permitted to go into nearly all of the various rooms of the Temple. We were told of the importance of each room and there was an explanation about the construction of the temple and the purposes for which they are built.

After a little more than a week at the mission home, I returned home for a few days. My farewell party and Testimonial was held in the Lake View Church. On November 27th at 10:00 A.M. my folks, Uncle August and Grandpa Johnson accompanied me to Salt Lake to bid me farewell as I left by train for San Francisco. Three other missionaries were bound for Australia accompanied me. They were Therice Duncan, William Tingey and Neil Davis. We arrived in San Francisco on November 28th and sailed aborad the S.S. Sanoma at noon on November 30th. Dinner was served at 1:00 p.m. I was sea sick by 3:00. I could not eat supper and was sick all night. With the coming of dawn my sickness left me and I was all right for the rest of the voyage.

Stops were made at various islands along the way. We docked at Hawaii on December 6th, at Pago Pago, Samoa, on December 12th; and at Suva in the Fiji Islands on December 16th. At Pago Pago we had the interesting experience of seeing bananas growing on the trees. We bought an entire stock of bananas for 50 cents which we hung it in our state room and feasted on for many days. We arrived in Sidney, Australia on December 21 after twenty two days at sea. We were met by President Tingey of the Australian Mission and some of the elders.

During the Christmas Holidays we were permitted to remain in the Mission Home in Sidney. I was assigned to labored in Adelaide in the South Australian District. I left Sidney on until January 3, 1929 and arrived in Adelaide on January 6th. It was forty days from the time I left Salt Lake. Adelaide was to be my home for the next 1 ½ years.

I was thrust into full service, tracting, speaking at all kinds of meetings, teaching classes in Sunday School, Mutual and Priesthood and visiting saints and investigators and holding cottage meetings along with taking care of the living quarters back of the church and the chapel itself. We were invited out for three or four meals during the week which helped sustains us along with our own home cooking. To include an account of all our activities and rich experience would fill many books. Therefore, I will mention only a few of my missionary experiences.

My first trip into the country was a trip to Gawler. We left Adelaide July 22 and stayed there until August 2nd without much success. We distributed tracks and other missionary materials and returned on August 3rd. Gawler was a distance of 300 or 400 miles from Adelaide. We made another country trip to Mr. Gambira on September 9th. We went to a little village called Kalangadoo, which is in the old sheep country in the southwestern part of South Australia. It was a very beautiful village of 300 inhabitants. We stayed at a sheep station called "Wattle Range." This consisted of a large ranch of several thousand square miles.

It was while I was here that I spent a few days helping to round up the sheep. We also went kangaroo hunting for a couple of days. While at the sheep station I also helped tear down an old shack which was used for a dining room for the sheep herders. I help to rebuilt it and it became quite an orderly place for feeding those who worked at the station.

We had many wonderful gospel conversations while doing this work and these people became acquainted with Mormonism. I think there was much good accomplished. However as I had no further contact with these people I do not know what may have been accomplished. I enjoyed the kangaroo hunt very much and was successful in killing three. I had the hides tanned and made into rugs. I brought them home with me. I also shot many rabbits on this trip.

We left the Wattle Range on September 20th and returned to Adelaide. There I continued with my labors until October 27, 1930 when I was transferred to the Victorian District with headquarters in Melbourne. There I was appointed President of the District, a position I remained in until my release from the mission field. This district included two other branches

besides the city of Melbourne. One was organized at a town called Balleret and the other at Bendigo. These district lay one hundred miles or more from district headquarters. I made several trips to these districts to help reorganize them and establish the church there on a solid basis. At Bendigo we organized the first Sunday School that the branch ever had.

Before leaving Adelaide I assisted the Hennesy family in procuring their passports and the necessary legal documents for their emigration to the United States. Two months after my transfer to Melbourne, the family passed through the city prior to their embarkation to the United States. I was very happy to visit with them. Since my return we have kept in contact with each other almost continuously.

About three weeks before my mission was completed, I received word from Velma that our engagement was broken . She did not know where she would be when I returned. We had written constantly and things seems to have been progressing satisfactorily. Our intentions had been that she would meet me in Hawaii where we would be married in the Leiea Temple. So it was quite a shock and disappointment for me to receive that letter and it worried me a great deal. I sought my Father in Heaven again pleading for his help that events might happen and our marriage could take place as planned. By now I was closing my prayers with “They will be done not mine!”

I received an honorable release on January 3rd 1931. I can truthfully say that my mission experience had been the happiest days of my life until I received Velma’s letter. It was there I learned the good life and the true meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I drew nearer to my Heaven Father in Australia. In fact my mission brought me closer to him that I had ever been before and life took on a different meaning as I learned what was really important: lasting friendship and service to God. These are the principles that Christ gave his life for.

In reviewing my log I discovered I had spent 606 hours tracking, 595 hours visiting Investigators, 2,219 hours studying gospel subjects, 1,987 hours visiting the saints and 951 hours attending meetings. I had traveled for 1,310 hours, and spent 1,533 hours teaching 124 different investigator families. I spent 998 hours having other gospel conversations. Due to my duties as District President. I did not tract for eighteen months as I needed to spend a lot of time traveling to the outlying branches. I sold 790 Books of Mormon and loan out 42 others. I sold 12 copies of the church’s standard works. I performed two marriages, blessed one child and assisted in sixty-two administrations for the sick and afflicted. The total cost of my mission was \$1,533.00. Dad provided \$1,240, my friends \$28 and ward members donated \$265 to cover my fare from Salt Lake to the mission field. I had performed four baptisms.

I felt sorrow at bidding goodbye to the people of this far-off land, but gratitude that I had the opportunity to serve a mission. I came to realize and better appreciate the help and sacrifice my dear father and stepmother had rendered in keeping me in the mission field. All financial matters and practically all the letters from my family were handled by Francis, my stepmother. I came to better understand the great responsibility to assumed when she became the mother of our

family. I admired her for her courage and am ever grateful for her kindness and help. She always had an even temper and never raised her voice to criticize us.

We were given a farewell party at the Mission Home in Sidney prior to our departure. Many presents were given up by the Saints who wished us bon voyage and a happy return home. I sailed in company with two of the elders who had gone to Australia with me—Therice Duncan and Neil Davis. We set sail on the ship S.S. Sierra.

When we arrived in Hawaii I met Elder Ray Gammon from Vineyard who was serving a mission there. He took me on a tour of the Island and I had the privilege of going through the Laiea Temple. I also read in a paper about the marriage of my former sweetheart, Velma Nelson. This was a sudden surprise, but released from my mind my great anxiety as to what our future might hold

I arrived in San Francisco on January 22nd and made this entry in my diary: “Tuesday, landed in San Francisco, went shopping, went to the Fox Theater. Called up the folks. What a wonderful thrilling experience to hear the voices of my father and Francis again.”

Two days later we boarded a train for Salt Lake City, Provo and home. I arrived at 6:30 p.m. on January 26th and was met by father, Francis, Nathan, Leila and Ted. What a happy reunion. When we returned to Lake View my brother Harold, his wife Lola, Uncle August and Aunt Ruth were there to greet me along with Grandpa Johnson. We talked far into the night and I told them about many of my mission experiences. After all the company left and the family went to bed Francis and I continued in conversation until 2:00 A.M. I became ever closer to her that night and realized that indeed, she had taken her place in becoming a real mother in our home.

The next day I had a telephone conversation with Jessie Farley. She was about the first girl I spoke to following my return. On Saturday, January 31, 1931 I met her in Provo at the old Orem Station. I felt a great desire to continue in her company so asked her to return home with me so I could show her my souvenirs. Afterwards we went up to her home and I met her family. Later that evening we attended a movie “Gun Smoke.” It was a poor show so we left early. I met Uncle August and Aunt Ruth in the lobby so it quickly was noised about that I already had found another girl.

Returning to farm work, milking cows, hauling manure, etc was a vast change from missionary work and quite a difficult adjustment. There was a large welcome home party given in my honor the following week. It seemed hundreds were there to welcome me home.

A few days later I had another date with Jessie. It seemed from that time on our minds were made up. In fact we went so far as to decide that unless we had marriage in mind, we would not continue to date. Our courtship continued and on July 25th we drove up City Creek Canyon and there in a secluded spot at 8:00 P.m. I gave her a diamond ring and we became

engaged. We planned to be married in the late fall.

During the summer I was able to get a job along with Clehon Boulton working on U.S. Highway 91 through Midvale and Lehi. While working at Midvale I purchased a motorcycle that I used to drive to and from work. In September I traded it for a 1928 Overland-whippet. This was my first automobile.

During the fall I rented the Frank Taylor farm, which dad had been operating for some years previous. I expected to fix up the house a little and get married around Christmas time. Our plans finally materialized and our wedding date was set for December 16th. Jessie's mother and I worked for several days in painting, repairing and decorating the house. Jessie cashed in her stock at D.T.R.'s and we were able to furnish four room with modern furniture. The stock was acquired as a Christmas bonus while she had been a secretary there. Our home was ready, the day arrived and now we were to be married for time and all eternity.