

MY STORY:

LESTER TAYLOR

son, grandson, husband, father, grandfather...



Mary, Lester, Louise Taylor



Cliff, Lester Taylor

My name is Lester Taylor. I'm 77 years old and think maybe time is running out on me and if I'm going to leave anything about my life in written words, I better get started now. This will give my children, my wife and my grandchildren a little more knowledge and information about me who is their grandfather, father & husband...ie: how he spent his youth and what were his goals & inspirations were.

I was born in a small farming village in southwestern Utah (Delta) on May 24, 1929. My parents were both born in Salem, Utah in the southern end of Utah County. They moved to Delta in the early twenties with hopes of a new water development and cheap land. This turned out to be a pipedream that was never realized.

My father was able to get a job at McCormic-Deering Company. They build and serviced threshing machines and machines, hay mowers and all sorts of farm implements. I guess he was an excellent student and they send him to various schools giving him expertise in repairing all those machines. I guess he worked there for several years until sometime after I was born in 1929.

My family now consisted of 4 boys and 3 girls, Lloyd, Clifton, Ruby, Mary, Rex, Louise and me—their baby. One of my fondest memories of my oldest sister, Ruby holding me and comforting me when I was little. After all these years my family moved back to Utah County in the early thirties.

Life there was probably not any easier for my Mom & Dad, but they rented a house and my dad could always find work because of his skills as a mechanic.

My early years were very happy ones. I worked on my uncle's farm, weeding beets, hoeing tomatoes and doing all kinds of farm labor. It was in these early years that I loved going up into the hills & mountains which were not very far from our home. It was during those early years that the Bishop of our ward, had a "dream" in which he saw large veins of gold in the one closest mountains. He was a respected man and many of the local people believed in him. Money was raised and many volunteers agreed to work the winter months when farming left them with nothing to do.



My grandfather Hanks who was a respected man in the community felt his dream was real and he and many others followed him in helping. All work was exchanged for "stock" in the company. Work began and nothing was ever materialized in the form of the fold they were promised. I have 100 shares still in the mine given to me from my mother's inheritance. As a young boy I used to hike up to the mine and look for the tailings debris. We always found small pieces of a substance called calcite or something like that. We would put a small piece in a tin can...mix it with water.. And watch it explode propelling the can about 10-20 feet in the air. I suppose that is something we didn't tell our mom's about!

A terrible depression swept across our country in the early thirties leaving 25-30% of working men out of work. It was during those years that

President Roosevelt began federal a to get people to work—PWA, WPA and the CCC which was a Civilian Conservation Corps. This one gave jobs to young men 17 to 25 years old. They built and repaired roads in our mountains and national parks. My bothers, Lloyd and Clifton joined. Sometime later on a salary of \$21 a month my oldest brother, Lloyd, bought a used car. He was very proud of it and one weekend he brought it home. I had been with him with him in the car and then he had to take his partner in the CCC's back to Provo and wanted me to go with him. He stopped at our house and for some "unknown" reason my mother didn't want me to go so she took me out of the car. He drove down to Provo and on the way back he failed to see a Denver & Rio Grand train at the crossing. The train hit his car and that was the end of my oldest brother. I was just six year old.

It took a long time for my parents to get over this and little did they know or realize then that the same fate would take my father in 1941. My dad started working for the Strawberry Waters Users Association and in the summer they would send him up into the Unitah Mountains high up to measure and record the water and snow depth. In the summer of 1941, he asked if I might go with him for 2 1/2 months in the summer. As a little boy my dad always took me everywhere with him where ever he could. My dad had a great sense of humor and was always telling some of the humorous experience he'd had. Anyway, my Mom let me go with him. We went up as far as we could go in his pick-up truck, the on horseback high into the Unitah Mountains. A sheep wagon had been placed there and we found all the comports of home, except no running water. However we were very near a small crystal clear creek that supplied all our water needs.

A lot of trout lived in this stream and it probed to be the main source of our food. He had these trout and sour-dough biscuits, potatoes, etc every day. My dad has a small radio and it was from a night broadcast, we learned of the German Army invading into Russia. Although the summer was long also, I still have memories of all the time I spent with my dad.

After about two months I started getting homesick for my mother and my life in Salem. My dad decided he would take me down on horseback to the highway to get on the bus which went to Provo. So I left, but a lot of memories have stayed with me to this day of our expeiences and of my dad who was oly going to live antoher month or so.

Looking back on those early years I can say they were very happy ones and I enjoyed them a lot.

My father was transferred to control the waters of the Diverson Dam which sat at the mouth of Spanish Fork Canyon.

After being home for the weekend my dad drive back to work. Two trains tracks went up and down the canyon carrying mainly coal from the rich coal fields in Carbon County. So it was there that my dad waited for one train to pass by and then was hit by another train going the opposite way. He never knew what hit him.

The impact on my mother was overwhelming as she mourned the loss of her oldest son and now her husband. The had started a new home and only the basement was finished so it was covered over and we lived in that basement home until my mother married another farmer who had lost his wife, Ezra Edman. He as very good to me, but he didn't like all the modern conveniences in his house. So we had a outside toilet all the time I lived there.

I grew and got bigger and stronger and I worked for several famers. World War II was on and farmers had a hard time getting help to sustain and harvest their crops. Here, I developed a very good work ethic which I believe was a God's blessing because I became a very dependable worker. I'll never forget my mother's words—"Be sure you put in a good days' work."—she would say every time I left for work. We didn't have hundreds of socialists telling us how poor we were or the way the employers who abused us by working us too hard!

Since my dad left very little in savings, the only money I ever had was that which I earned by working with my own hands. Again the work ethic came into place over the next several years when I was trying to get through college. I went to high school in Spanish Fork and it was there that I found my many friends and developed relationships—many which have tasted to this day!

I tried out and loved sports and hunting. I wasn't big enough to ever be a great football player, but did get to be captain of our high school football team. I played quarterback and played every minute of every game my senior year. I also played baseball and basketball. At the beginning of our senior basketball season I was hauling chicken manure for my neighbor and hurt my left elbow and didn't get back until the season and State-play-offs began.

Nothing was ever said about academic achievement and there was no reason to try to excel. I did get above average grades, but we didn't get a real sound high school education.

World War II was now over and I had to decide whether to go to college or go to work at the Steel Mills. That was enticing because I could buy a car

which I didn't have. My stepfather saw no use for autos and saw only the merits of horses.

School tuition was only \$300 per year at BYU which was ten miles away. It seemed that that is what I needed to do. Anyway, I went two quarters and quit...getting only passing grades. I worked until the next fall and then decided to go back to school. Two quarters passed and I still didn't like school and wanted to go into the Navy Air Corps. My brother, Rex, was a Navy Carrier Pilot in the WWII and I thought that was what I wanted to do so I went up to Hill Air Force base and took the test only to find out that I had a motion problem. I always got sick just swinging high in a swing.

Our Bishop was taking to me about going on a mission for the Church. I wasn't too interested at first, but decided later that a mission would give me time to do some thinking on my own and maybe then I would know what I really wanted to do with my life.

In looking back at my early years, I think of only the many friends and the joyful times I had—ice skating on the lower pond which froze over every year. I started with “clip on” skates which were always coming off. Eventually I got real shoe skates for Christmas when I was about 12 or 13 years old. In the summer we went swimming in the Salem pond which was a fresh water lake with springs flowing out of the ground on the south end of the pond. So many times my Dad took our family up Diamond Fork Canyon for Saturday picnics and hiking and fishing.

I was so healthy it was seldom that I would ever get sick. In fact, I went five full years of school without missing a single day of school. I got a plaque from my teacher commending me for such good attendance.

I got and accepted by mission call to the Northern States Mission which included Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois and upper Michigan. Our success was not good. In fact, the mission president reported that we only got one convert for 3 missionaries. Not too good for success, but the great reward was the realization to me that God is real and lives in our lives. I also had a great deal of time to reflect on what I wanted to do with my life and not spend it working at the Geneva Steel Mill the rest of my life!

After spending the last 10 months of my mission in northern Wisconsin working with the Indians, I came home and got in school at BYU, Tuition was only \$300 a year including books so I could afford to go there. I knew I'd have to have part-time work in order to do that. Summer jobs were hard to get, but I soon learned that the best of those were in working in construction. Pay was often twice what I could make in other work.

I was able to get a used car (my first) and got back in school. My thinking was I would be a veterinarian as I had some experience seeing what they did. The pre-med classes were much harder than I had ever taken before.

About this time the Korean War was raging and I got a draft notice and after getting my physical exam at Ft. Douglas in Salt Lake, I got lucky as the draft board reviewed my file and found that I was a pre-med student.

They gave me a deferment. "We would rather have you as a "Doctor" rather than a foot soldier. So it was! I had to be in the upper half of my class to qualify. I knew with my renewed goal that I could do that.

It was about this time while at BYU that I ventured into the school library. To my amazement sitting at one of the tables was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen in my life. The light was shining thru the window and it magnified her countenance and beauty. I sat at the other end of the table thinking she would recognize a very good looking young man like me, but she didn't even notice me! At a later date I saw her again and introduced myself. She said that she had recognized me before and knew I was from Spanish fork area. It seems her mother had grown up there and her grandparents lived there. After those initial visits she finally agreed to go on a date with me. I soon realized that she was the one I had been dreaming about for some time.