

# UPHILL - BOTH WAYS

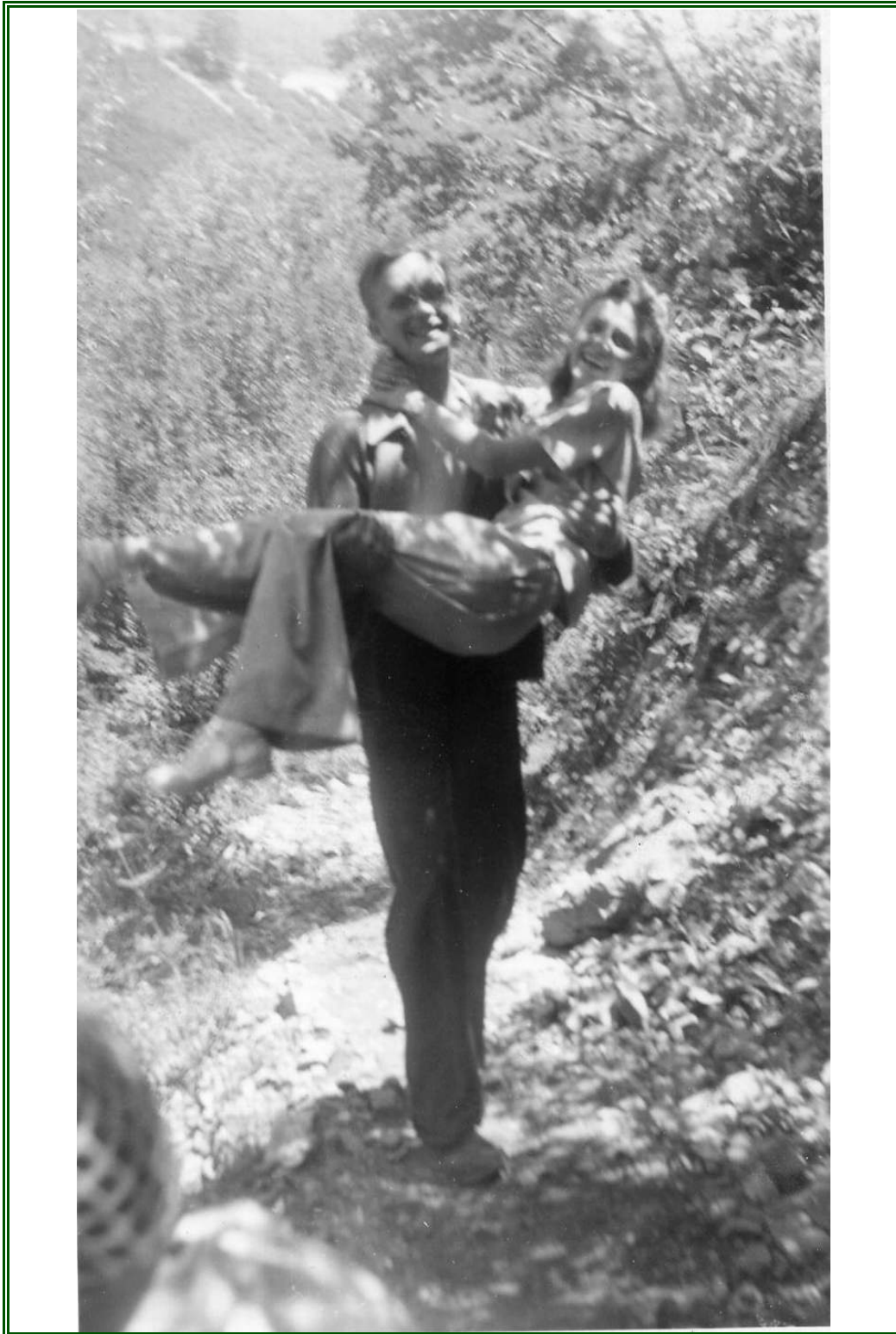


Volume 4 - Mercur 1939

James R. Jensen ©

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- The essential Jimmarie of Mercur



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## Introduction

Do you believe in love stories? The kind where a white knight rushes in, and sweeps a fair damsel off her feet and carries her off on his thundering steed into the gorgeous, iridescent eternal sunset? Where they live the rest of their lives in each other's care and keeping? If you don't, you won't believe the story of Jim and Marie - "Jimmarie" as I call them.

That's how it happened. No kidding. It all started here in Mercur. Listen carefully while I tell you of this miracle. Today mom is 79 and dad has been dead for 4+ years, yet she longs each day for the time when "they send her to Jim". Those are her actual words 2 weeks ago. She said, "Ron (a name I dislike but the only one she'll apply to us), I want to tell you something. It's sort of a secret. I'm happy. I'm happier than I've been for a long time. And I'm ready for the time they send me to Jim." So matter-of-fact, as if it was a well-understood phenomenon that one day "they" would come to her home and tell her, "Well, Marie. It's time to send you to Jim. Git yer bag packed, girl. You're goin' home." She would weep if someone ever said those words for, weepings of pure unadulterated, unaffected joy at the prospect.

She longs for Her Jim like a 16 year old, freshly for the first time, smitten with love, starry eyed, longing. Truly. I know her, I spent 2 weeks in her house, I've interviewed her over the last 2 years and it is the same thing. Her love for Jim and his for her, is something extraordinary.

UBW is my story, I say, but the first five volumes are actually about mom and dad, not about me. That's as it should be. My experience on this ol' mud ball is conditioned on theirs. I was dragged all over the US by these two, in hot pursuit of their dreams. So I offer you here my version of this eternal love story that is as puzzling as anything I've encountered, but nonetheless real, and as durable as Gibraltar.

### Where is Mercur

Mercur is a ghost town today. Nothing remains, but in the 1930's it was a thriving mining town. It is located at the red star - ★ - in this map, not too far from Provo. It's on the west side of Utah Lake. Leamington was down by Lyndyl by Delta. Dad didn't actually travel very far after all, but in those days when transportation was so slow, Mercur was a great distance from



Leamington. His Indian made a fairly quick trip I suppose.

Here's a wider map of the state to show you where Mercur was in relationship to Vernal. Mom was a long way from home when Pearl asked her to come over and tend her kids while she had a new baby



**1937 Spring (Alvin)**

*There were a few Notes in his Work Chronology that shed some light on this era of this life. It was the first time I understood how he ended up working there in the minds, i.e. though the intervention of his older sister Viola.*

Spring: Through sister Viola's boss Mr. Merry, got job at Snyder mines in Mercur, Utah. Leased first at West Dip, didn't pay out so was moved to lease with Ed Burnes in the old Resolute Mine above the famous "Electric". Didn't pay out so in summer went to work for wages on mountain south of Mercur. Quit in the fall to go to college again to have my mind trained."

**1937 Garfield Copper Smelter (Rondo)**

Running down the center of northern Utah, through the Wasatch Range, is a monstrous vein of copper. It isn't particularly high grade but it is so plentiful that the region continues to produce a significant percent of the copper used in the US, as well as some silver and other metals. In the early part of the century, there were many more smelters than today, among them the large Garfield Smelter complex.

Dad found his way from Leamington down in central Utah up to the Garfield smelter. Since he attended the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, he doubtless heard about jobs in the smelter and his sister helped him get a job there. He left the University after his Indian Motorcycle fiasco and relocated, probably taking



**Figure 5** Garfield Smelter in 1906 - Salt Lake County, Utah

[http://content.lib.utah.edu/cgi-bin/pview.exe?CISOROOT=/USHS\\_Shipler&CISOPTR=159&CISORESTMP=/qbuild/template1.html&CISOVIEWT](http://content.lib.utah.edu/cgi-bin/pview.exe?CISOROOT=/USHS_Shipler&CISOPTR=159&CISORESTMP=/qbuild/template1.html&CISOVIEWT)  
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the Indian with him. That was probably the machine that he courted Marie on. As far as I can reconstruct things, it must have been around the summer 1939 that he worked in this copper smelter, so he was probably working somewhere in the plant shown in this photo.

He was about 21 at the time, and had been around the U.S. by now but he apparently decided that it was time to get back to Utah and settle down. So he

probably worked at different jobs and ended up in Garfield County in this critical juncture.

Dad told several stories of his time there. In one he was standing on the ground behind a truck that was loaded with steel and tools like wrenches. Things were being handed down to be transported to a store room. Suddenly a guy yelled at him, "Here, catch this!" at which time he threw a large 3 foot long wrench down to dad. Dad was startled and angry because the acceleration of a heavy steel wrench from the truck bed would make it painful and hard to stop, but he lunged to catch it. To his surprise, it was not heavy. It was easy to hold - because it was made of magnesium or manganese, an ultra-light metal, and the guy was just jerking him around.

Another story involves one of his toes. In those days, steel-toed shoes hadn't become mandatory in industrial settings and so he didn't wear them. Somehow a slab of steel that he was transporting fell in the direction of one of his boots. He jerked his foot away but didn't quite get out of the way. The edge of the slab nicked the toe of the boot, cutting through and permanently deforming one of his toes. Fortunately only one.

When I was rummaging around in his stuff in July 2002, I found an envelope that contained his union book for this Garfield Smelter era. I scanned in the cover and pages that had entries that follow on the next page.

He apparently had to join a union to work there, so was admitted to the union on May 26, 1937. That places the beginning of his work thereafter Viola helped him get the job. Note the style of his signature. The fat vertical lines of the capital "j" and the narrow lines otherwise, plus the flourish on the tail of the capital "A" suggest that he actually signed his name with an old-fashioned nib. The other suggestion he used a fancy nib is the fact that there was so much ink in his signature that it created an inkblot on the opposite page. He wasn't long at Garfield. There isn't a single monthly dues stamp in the book.





CARD ISSUED BY

*Garfield Smeltermen's Union* UNION NO. *347*

MEMBER'S NAME *J. A. Jensen* 598

WHEN ADMITTED *5/26/37*

HOW ADMITTED *Int*

LEDGER *New Book* PAGE

*W. F. Madill*  
Financial Secretary

*James A. Jensen*  
Signature of Member

Initiation  
or Reinstatement  
Stamp

19.....

| TRANSFER RECORD    |             |
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### Mercur, Utah Silver Mine

This is the town where Alvin met Marie and they decided to marry. Alvin and another guy leased an underground silver mine in Mercur, Utah some time



about now, on a share-for-profit basis. The region had experienced a mining boom and he wanted to cash in, as shown in this photo. This adventure turned out to be a loss.

It was a shock to see that this town has disappeared today. Not a building stands anywhere. According to the internet ghost town site I visited last night, the one listed in the URL, the only thing remaining is the cemetery and some heavy equipment left by Getty Oil company that strip-mined the location into oblivion in

the '80's.

How can a thriving community of this size fall into such disrepair that the very buildings disappear? Stunning, really, and not all that unusual I gather from looking at the history of ghost towns. By the way, that was something that dad loved to do. One of the books I gave him, that he enjoyed immensely, was a fat large book of ghost towns of the west. This love is the reason that I hauled him in the VW van up to Silver City, Idaho in the 1980's. He just had to see that place because it was both a ghost town and a living community. Too bad you didn't get to hear his commentary on what he saw. He knew mining. He explained to me how stamp mills work, what the difference is between a stamp mill with even and odd numbers of feet, how the building is constructed to allow gravity to do the work of moving ore from the mine through the stamp mill and on down to an area where the crushed ore could be loaded and hauled off to a smelter. Amazing knowledge. Even after the metal buyers of WW II denuded the town, he could still reconstruct for me what was where and how it worked. Too bad I didn't have a video camera to record his explanations.

Locate the dead center of the photo, and then watch downstream for the photo of dad and Marie sparking on his motorcycle. You'll see that they were sitting right on that spot. I believe that if Mom still had her memory of if Mable or dad or Pearl were here, they could point out their store and house because it has to be there. The town was not large. Here's dad's explanation of how things worked out.

### West Dip Mine (Alvin)

My older sister Viola worked for Henry Merry co-owner of the National Equipment Company in Salt Lake which sold mining equipment and machinery. In 1936 she asked Mr. Merry about a job for me. He said if I wished, I could go to Mercur and sign up with Snyder Mines, which I did. They sent me to their foreman, Jim Young, at West Dip, an old mine they were reopening, a mile below the mouth of Mercur canyon.

I had never worked underground so it was a new and interesting experience. I was assigned to a crew working on the 300 foot level. We rode up and down in a skip lowered on a cable by a large electric hoist. A skip is a metal box with a bail. If you don't keep your head inside on the way up it could get clipped off by overhead timbers.

There were only two experienced miners in the 300 crew. One was Jimmy

Goff from Lehi, Utah. Jimmy claimed to be one of the two people who discovered Timpanogas Cave, his co-discoverer being John Hutchings of Lehi. The 300 crew had a limited mission. We were to remove the rest of the ore in the mine shafts.

Theoretically the old timers left some ore as pillars as supports thereof, and some ore under the tracks. I couldn't figure out how we could remove pillars holding up the roof or ore left under the tracks when we had to use the tracks to do so.

One drift ran west from the shaft and another ran east. The eastern drift was too dangerous to enter because of cave-ins. Tracks and an ore car were already in place in the west drift when I arrived. The crew had only been working a week but had found no ore before I joined them. In fact we never did find any. All we sent up was waste from clean-up.

The 300 drift was a wandering passage held open by what seemed to be very old, spongy timbers. When the car was pushed along the tracks it headed for a rotten timber many times only to have the tracks jerk it away just before it hit the timber. Our work would require no timbering but I learned the system.

In a square set two vertical timbers called "stulls" hold up a cap timber. Wedges are driven in to tighten up the set. Two inch thick planks called "laggin" are driven in above the cap to form a roof over the drift.

I didn't learn much about the philosophy of mining but I did learn a few interesting things. One was how to make a primer. A primer is put in the bottom of every drilled hole to explode the dynamite put in after the primer. Every primer has a fuse which must hang out of the hole after it is loaded. There are two types of blasting caps; percussion and electric. We used percussion caps set off by a hollow, woven cord fuse with a core of gunpowder. Electric caps are detonated with a wire fuse.

To make a primer a percussion cap is crimped, with a special tool, on the end of a piece of fuse, of predetermined length, then after poking a hole transversely through the middle of a stick of dynamite the capped fuse is inserted through the hole and brought up and around to be shoved down endways into the stick. This is a "primer", which is then slid into the drilled hole as the first piece of explosive to be loaded. The hole is larger in diameter than that of a stick of dynamite so the next step is to crush the primer lengthways with the loading stick which mashes it out making it fill the hole in a solid mass.

I was always very timid when crushing a primer with its live percussion cap, and every time I crushed one I had a vivid imaginary picture of it exploding and shooting the loading stick back up like a javelin to pierce my skull. I'm sure I never

tamped the primer as solid as experienced miners did but my loaded holes always exploded as expected.

After the primer other sticks are slid in and each one crushed with the loading stick until the hole is loaded with a predetermined number of sticks. For a three foot hole I would load two sticks, a six foot hole would get four. A loaded hole has a fuse dangling out of it. A face with twelve holes in it would have twelve fuses of different lengths hanging out ready to be lit.

One must be careful when handling dynamite not to get the granular dynamite, some of which comes out when you poke a hole through the side of the stick, on your hands and into your mouth. Also, after the round is shot you can't enter the blasting area before the air is well cleared out or you'll get a terrific headache from breathing the gas/smoke.

We used carbide lights which served well to light fuses when all the holes, known as the "round", were loaded and ready to shoot. The drilled holes are placed in a planned sequence and when loaded the fuses are cut to varying lengths designed to shoot certain holes first with others following in a manner calculated to break out the most rock.

The first to explode are the center ("belly") shots, then the side blows out, next the "uppers" come down, and last those on the bottom called "lifters" explode, which serve to further break up material brought down making it easier to muck up.

After the fuses are lit one hurries off to a safe distance, which would be at least three hundred feet and around at least one corner, to wait for the explosions. As they go off each shot is counted to make sure they all explode. Men have been killed drilling into an unexploded round.

Before shooting, lagging is laid down in front of the face to serve as a floor to follow with the square pointed shovel as the loose material is mucked up. The trick when mucking up is not to shovel off the top of the pile but always follow the floor. An old timer once told me 'muck off the bottom, the top will take care of itself. This knowledge made me a hero once when I was traveling on a Greyhound bus.

We came to a high windrow of oiled gravel in the middle of the highway. An opening had to be made for the bus to pass through. The driver went to work with a shovel hacking and chopping away on top of the pile with pitiful results. I watched for awhile and finally when I couldn't stand it any longer, I stepped up (old Jackhammer Jake) and said, "Let me have that muckstick". Then I worked the pile from the bottom and in a short time had a passage opened for the bus. Hooray!

Kids yelled, women screamed, dogs barked, old ladies wanted to kiss me. What a triumph for a kid from Leamington! The bus driver moved people around so I could sit in the seat behind him. Every time I looked back in the bus everyone grinned at me. Old ladies would blow me kisses. But at West Dip I was no hero. I didn't last long.

### Resolute Mine and Ed Burns

After two weeks of nothing but waste coming up from the 300 level the company shut that level down and sent us all up to Mercur. I was assigned to work in a mine called the Resolute with a crusty old Englishman named Ed Burns. He smoked and chewed Peerless Tobacco, a product manufactured from roots and stems of tobacco plants. When burned it was foul smelling beyond description. He spit everywhere so I had to be careful to keep my gloves on when working at the face.

I used to tell others that when he walked along the drift smoking, and I followed with the ore car, the air was so foul I had to dig my toes in to push the car through the thick, choking haze.

Ed was an extremely stubborn man. I once sat in the rec. room at the bunk house and listened to him argue against a half dozen miners. He claimed the coming thing in air transportation was steam airplanes. Logic, reason, statistics carried no weight with him. His mind was set in concrete and budged for no authority. I once had a hard time dissuading him from leaving the mine to murder the cook. The incident had to do with the sack lunches we carried from the mess hall each day.

Carbide lamps came packed in small paper cartons with two circular, corrugated paper discs about the diameter of a slice of liverwurst. One time a jolly practical joker called "Skinner" was working with us and decided to play a joke on Burns. He went to the old mule corral in the mine where we ate lunch and substituted two cardboard disks for liverwurst in a sandwich in one of the sacks. Then he made sure Burns would get that sack by taking one to another place in the mine and coaching me to get first choice of the two remaining sacks.

At lunchtime Skinner made some excuse to go to another place in the mine, knowing he would go into fits of hysterical laughter when Burns tried to eat the cardboard. Burns and I went to the mule stable with me in the lead. Skinner was somewhere else in the mine and I knew he was almost dying from laughter just

thinking about stubborn old Ed Burns biting into the cardboard disks.

Burns opened his sack remarking, "Wonder why Skinner left?" His absence should have tipped Burns off when something went awry as we ate. Burns pulled one sandwich out and ate it in a matter-of-fact manner but the next one stripped his character of all the refinements of civilized behavior (such as he had).

He bit into the next sandwich but couldn't bite all the way through. He sank his teeth into the two cardboard disks and finding them extremely tough wouldn't give up because of his stubborn nature. He bit harder and harder, clamping the bread tighter and tighter, and twisting it back and forth, mashing off chunks of bread that flew off in several directions. With heroic determination he mangled the sandwich down until there was almost nothing left but the cardboard.

He finally gave up and taking his carbide lamp off his hardhat held it close to the recalcitrant liverwurst for a careful look. He could then see that he had been trying to chew up two cardboard disks from a carbide lamp carton. He sat there for a few moments trying to comprehend how it could have happened. When he thought he had it figured out, he looked around and picked up a short piece of a loading stick by his feet and got up cursing the cook. He was purple-rage mad. His language was stronger than the foul smoke from his Peerless.

When he started down the drift I jumped up and ran to head him off. He was going for the cook with murder in his heart. I tried to reason with him. "Where did you get your sack lunch? Didn't you pick it up from the lunch bin after breakfast when you left the mess hall?"

"Yeah".

"Well, how could he have given you any particular sack?"

"He wanted me to get this one. I know him, the s.o.b., he did it on purpose. I'll get him. He's always had it in for me" (Ed didn't even know the cook. He couldn't have picked him up out of a lineup). But as I have said, once his mind was made up it was set in concrete. I realized I had a tough job on my hands.

"How could the cook have known which sack you would take? Was he standing there when you picked it out of the bin?" "No", he said. I said, "He wasn't even there. He didn't know which sack you would take. The lunches were all stacked there in a big pile".

We were half pushing and shoving each other as we stumbled down the drift with Burns muttering curses too foul to write. I became desperate as we neared the portal and finally pushed the stick he was carrying up against his chest in a physical effort to stop him. Reasoning with him was totally useless. I knew nothing could have changed his mind even if he had been calm.

We reached the portal and stepped out into the light. Looking over toward the bunkhouse and mess hall I frantically played my last card. Using an excited voice I exclaimed;

"LOOK, THE COOK ISN'T EVEN HERE. HE'S IN TOWN. HIS OLD GREEN PLYMOUTH IS GONE! And he doesn't have to be back until late in the afternoon. There isn't anything you can do now. Let's go back in where it's warm".

Grumbling he finally dropped his stick and sat down on a timber. Pulling out his Peerless he slowly filled his pipe, and lit it with his carbide lamp—which was still burning on his hard hat. After several long drags he got up and I followed him back into the mine. My frantic bluff worked.

The cook didn't have a car. In desperation I made up the old green Plymouth hoping Burns didn't know the truth. My lie was a feeble shackle but it held. If it had failed I was prepared to out-run Burns (an old man) and barricade or somehow hide the innocent cook.

Burns mumbled threats every now and then during the afternoon but finally cooled off. Skinner came back to work late. If I could have seen his eyes I know they would have been red-rimmed from cryin' his gut-wrenching laugh. I also knew he was dying from curiosity to know how it went.

It wasn't until late after supper that he got me in my room to find out how his gag went. When I told him he practically rolled on the floor in convulsions of laughter. But some of his jokes almost went too far.

### Skinner and Hugo the Swede

One Sunday afternoon he pulled a gag on one of my roommates that sent the victim off with an ax bent on murder. The worst part of it was, I found out later, he went after the wrong man.

That particular Sunday afternoon I was lying on my bunk reading. There were three men in each room of the bunkhouse. I had two short miners, one a Scotsman and the other a Swede. Sunday afternoon was always a very quiet time in camp but not this day. While lying there almost dozing off, I heard some disturbance out side and in a short time a crash knocked the door open and in a moment a big timber, a stull, shot into the room followed by hearty guffaws from Skinner. When everything quieted down I reached over and pushed the door shut.

In about a half hour the noisy event was repeated and in bounced a second stull. I went on reading and things again died down. But after awhile someone



kicked the door open and in came a bundle of wedges and a short timber followed by Skinner on a laughing drunk. He had a project in mind and it was cracking him up just to think about it. He sat on Hugo's (the Swede) bed and after a roaring fit of laughter, went to work.

In a short time he erected a square set over Hugo's bed. This consisted of two stulls capped by a head timber. He had plenty of wedges to make it solid. Several times during the job he was overcome by laughter and had to set down to keep from falling, as he visualized Hugo coming off shift to find a square set over his bed. I have never seen a man get so much fun out of a prank before, or since. The job was finally complete and after sitting on Hugo's bed and pounding it in fits of laughter, he left with his guffaws and chuckles following him out of earshot.

I was still lying on my cot reading when Hugo came in dirty and tired from day shift in the Ingersoll shaft. He saw the square set and stood in the doorway for a long time looking at it. He had been working with square sets all day and here was one over his bed. He wasn't exceptionally brilliant so it puzzled him.

Finally he came in and got an apple out of his bedside box, sat on his bed and ate it, never saying a word or changing his expression. He ignored me as if I wasn't there. Apparently it never occurred to him I might provide some clues as to the identity of the prankster.

The room was heated by a little coal stove which had a hand ax by it to split kindling. After Hugo finished his apple he reached over and picked up the hand ax and went out the door. I didn't see him for nearly an hour. I- wasn't worried because Skinner was much larger than Hugo and very strong. When Hugo returned he still had the hand ax but as near as I could tell it wasn't smeared with Skinner's blood. I heard later he had gone after an Irishman who happened to be out of town. Hugo never learned the identity of the joker.

He carefully broke down the square set and threw all the wood out the door. As far as I knew he never mentioned it to our other roommate, Mickey the Irishman. Now there was a man who could hold his booze with never a wobble. One sniff of the cork and Hugo went after his harmonica to play and replay a Swedish schottische a thousand times. Mickey never staggered.

Mickey drank a fifth of whiskey every day. He was always up first in the morning to build the fire and would wake me up every morning by pushing the bottle under my nose saying, "Here Jim, have a snort". He never offered Hugo a snort. Hugo would never have made it to work if he took one. I liked them both. They were genuine higrade characters. There were also other colorful old characters in the boarding house. I regret to say I didn't document them. I hadn't developed a

feel for history.

## Bindle Stiffs

*(This is a poignant memory. He was touched by the tail end of a generation of wanderers, like himself I suppose, who had traveled these mines and towns, living it up. He understood how fortunate he was.)*

I later realized I had had the privilege of seeing some of the last of the old time bachelor miners called "bindle stiffs" as they ambled into oblivion. I was watching an era in American mining history draw to a close.

The bindle stiffs were all old and knew each other from their earlier robust years when they whooped it up in mining camps all over the west. The stories they told in the bunk house rec. room were marvelous and should have been recorded. Sadly, I didn't comprehend the historical significance of their characters.

They would talk about the colorful old characters they knew when they were young--which meant they were talking about men from the earliest days of the west's booming mining industry in the last century!

They talked about Pioche, Park City, Butte, Ruth, Eureka, and others. They all knew "Patty the Pig" from Park City who would get roaring drunk and bust up the red light district.

Every now and then a bindle stiff would show up at the mine and be hired, no questions asked. They knew he was an experienced miner. Their bindle was a bundle containing of all their worldly possessions.

Many of them, after working about two months, would get drunk and stay petrified until there was nothing left to drink and then, sobering up would do up their bindle and leave. They never went back to the mine or said anything to the company. They just left the way they came. The company expected it. A few times one of them did come to me for help.

The nearest liquor store was in Ophir, about twelve miles away in another canyon. I had a motorcycle and occasionally was called in to help end a drought. Someone would put a handful of paper money in my hand and say, "be a good boy, Jim, get us a jug" and I would oblige. Sometimes a couple of drunken stiffs would assault each other.

One Sunday afternoon I was lying on my bunk reading when I heard some intermittent scuffling in the next room. I didn't pay much attention to it until it

went on for the better part of an hour. I would hear thumps on the wall, grunts and muttering and then all would be quiet for awhile. Then the banging and muttering would repeat itself. Since it seemed to be an endless routine my curiosity got the best of me and I went over to see what was happening.

I found two big, old Irishmen, Sullivan and Murphy down behind one cot against my wall. They were locked in mortal combat, that is, as much as they could manage in their stupefied condition.

They would struggle a bit then Sullivan would say, "You son-of-a-bitch you git a snag, didn't you". They would lay quiet for awhile then after more struggling Murphy would respond, "I'm doin' the best I can with the tools I got", and they would lay quiet again. In a few minutes, more struggles and Sullivan would repeat, "you s.o.b. you-----," and they would rest until Murphy got up enough strength to reply as before. Since their contest seemed to be endless. I decided to intervene.

They were jammed in between the cot and wall so I pulled the cot away to give them more room to battle but they remained in a big lump up against the wall. I went back to my reading.

There was the Spaniard who would get on a murderous drunk. One day he came in looking for Hugo and found me there alone, you guessed it, laying on my bunk reading. He began to harass me but I was a big kid with long arms, and he was much smaller than me, so I grabbed him and after a short struggle, even though a drunk usually has superhuman strength, shoved him out the door and closed it. He banged on it a bit then went away.

When I told this to Mickey he said, "Be careful. That man has killed two people." I went to the Spaniard's room after that when he was sober and listened to him play his guitar. After watching him I learned a Spanish Fandango, a nice little Spanish dance tune. He was okay and didn't seem to remember me throwing him out. But I learned it was wise to be careful. *(I learned that Fandango from him later but he criticized the way I played it. Of course, he did nothing to teach it to me. I simply heard him play it, loved it and learned to copy it to the best of my abilities. But no praise was forth-coming. It bothered him so much the way I played it that I would stop playing if I heard him come into the house. Pretty sad.)*

Once I got in a tiff with Ed Burns in the rec. hall and as I seemed to threaten him several old miners got up and I calmed down real fast. Ed finally left camp in an odd manner. A friend and his wife came over from Nevada in an old pickup truck to visit him. They got a jug and after several days Burns ran off with the friend's wife, in the friend's truck, and was never seen again in Mercur. The poor friend sobered up and hung around four or five days waiting for their return

but they never came back. I don't know what finally happened to him.

Mercur was an old mining town first known for its deposits of cinnabar, or mercury, then for its gold, which was so fine that it could never be seen. Miners had to take daily samples to the assayer at the end of each shift and pick up the results every morning before going in the hole. There were over a half dozen mines in operation when I was there. Two were daily wage, company operated mines, the rest were leased. The company paid all expenses, such as powder, timber, hand equipment, compressed air and board for those leasers who were not making anything because they were unable to find paying ore. Gold that assayed .35 of an ounce to the ton would pay wages. If they found good ore they got 20 of the net, after all expenses. Except for a short time working for wages just before I left Mercur I never made any money as a leaser.

*Somewhere in this sequence of stories dad should have told the story of Ed Burns and his immaculate automobile. I heard it several time. On the day in question, Ed was called upon to drive a bunch of men over the mountains for some project. As they got underway, he cautioned the men to not dirty his car because he kept it clean, polishing it with a handkerchief. Well, the guys in the car got to whooping it up at Ed's expense. He put up with this for a while, chewing furiously on his tobacco, silently driving. But the time came where he was fed up to the top with the guys' behavior and their pointed comments to him about him. In his anger, he finally turned his head to the left, and as an expression of his anger, let fly with a huge mouthful of tobacco juice out the window. That wasn't rolled down.*

### Skinner and the Electric Mine

I never learned Skinner's full name but he was the most engaging miner in Mercur. He loved practical jokes, as noted above. He also liked to sing, but not while he was sober. When he would get boozed up he would come looking for me and my guitar. He had a lusty voice and used it. One of his remarkable talents was perfect pitch. He would begin a song and I would then find his key and accompany him. But the most unusual ability he always displayed was after ending one song he would pitch the next one in a different key. I would have to hunt around to find out what key he was in. I tried to explain this to him but it meant nothing. He said he just liked to sing.

One day the company sent him up to the Resolute to work with Ed Burns and me. It was during this time he pulled the cardboard lunch-meat trick on Burns.

Eventually Burns ran off with his friends wife leaving Skinner and me to work the Resolute alone.

It was against state law for a man to work alone in a mine but every now and then Skinner would go off on a two week drunk. I could either lay around bored in the bunkhouse or I could go to work as usual, which I did.

I did a lot of thinking, as worked there alone in the dark under a mountain. I thought about my future and the fact that I was not making any money. I wanted to make some money so I could go to college and get my mind trained. I thought about the many successful, dishonest ways men make money but concluded they were already too crowded with professionals. I finally decided I would have to use my God-given intelligence to make some money. I thought about the old saying, "build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door". I decided to build a better mousetrap, theoretically that is. I didn't know it at the time but I was doing exactly what I needed to do to activate my subconscious powers of creativity. I set a goal.

I had put my mind/intelligence on notice; we, you and I, are going to invent something/things. I reasoned that better ways to do old tasks would find a ready market. I had set my subconscious creativity in motion. I had confidence that the thing called "God given intelligence" was a powerful resource. I would use it to achieve my goal of getting to college.

I didn't fret over what I would invent I felt confident that as I went along the pathway of life opportunities to invent new or better solutions would present themselves naturally. The background for this attitude were the many things/hobbies I was involved in before I left home. I had a conviction that for every mechanical problem there was a solution, and further, that for every old solution there were probably several better ones.

One day a miner offered me a chance to share in a new lease three of them were about to open in a mine called the Electric. They were going to drift into virgin ground so, although there was a chance they would hit some good ore, I had been offered a chance to go to work for wages and decided a wage was much better than another gamble on luck. This turned out to be a bad decision.

After drifting in fifty feet they hit a pocket of cinnabar, the oxide of mercury. The company had them take it out in little canvas bags with hand tools. It took them five days to clean the pocket out and their 20 was \$29,000. apiece! I was so disgusted by my bad luck I kicked the bunkhouse cat clear across the canyon.

By that time Skinner and I were working for wages on a new company

project on top of the mountain south of Mercur. It looked like a good prospect and the tracks and a bin were already in place when we arrived. Compressed air was furnished by a big portable compressor so we went to work. It didn't last long.

The ore body went down on a forty five degree angle. We worked two weeks when a fault pinched the vein out. The experts couldn't decide whether the ore body had been faulted down or up. They finally decided to abandon the project leaving Skinner and me out of work. I had transportation on the motorcycle so I went to Tooele and rustled the Anaconda smelter where I got on as a laborer.

I had worked at the much larger American Smelting and Refining Co. Garfield smelter near Magna but my experience there was of little use in the Tooele facility. It was a primitive operation without a casting wheel and other modern processes. The crew I was on worked in various places as needed. One job we had was to clean out a small reservoir in the mouth of the canyon. This was done with a slip scraper pulled back and forth by a gasoline powered winch.

While I was working at the smelter, I met Marie in Tooele and we laid plans. She would go back to Vernal and finish High School and I would go to Alaska to seek my fortune and when she was 18 I would send her the money and she would come up and we would get married.

### 1937: Fall

*[Note from his Work Chronology]*

Fall: Enrolled at BYU with old school mate Rondo Jeffery. [This is the guy I was named after.] Worked on grounds for 13  $\frac{1}{2}$  cents an hour. Couldn't make it financially so quit at Xmas. Visited home, went to SLC.

### 1938: Spring

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*Spring: Rustled AS & R at Garfield and got a job on "Surface." Progressed to "Silica (?) Train", then to "Larry Train" from "Roasters" then to "Skimmer's helper" on "reverbratory furnace" floor; then to "copper casting" department where I lost the end of my big toe. Then to "punching convertors" at*

*%5,70 a day, top pay in those times.*

### 1939: Late Winter

*[Note from his Work Chronology]*

*Late winter: Quit smelter and went on a tour of the U.S. hitchhiking through many states. Often going hungry. Tried to sell "Woman's World" magazine subscriptions in Missouri but failed.*

### Harold "Bud" Hegyessy (Rondo)

Harold "Budd" Hegyessy was dad's best friend. He loved dad and stayed in touch with him through the years, the only man who did. Budd was more a friend than even his favorite cousin Woody Stout. Perhaps this friendship stemmed from the high school friendship.

Budd went into the air force and saw combat where he was permanently disabled in one extremity. I dated his daughter two times. The second time I took her to mom's house for a formal dinner. She sat on the side of the dining room table looking at the long mirror. At some point mom wanted me to hand her the enormous platter with the enormous ham, probably because everyone had been served and space was needed. I stood up and grabbed the platter from dad. As I twisted between her chair and the book case behind it, I wasn't paying attention to the platter. As a result, I poured ham juice in her hair that quickly coagulated into fat. She was polite when I took her home that evening. We didn't date again.

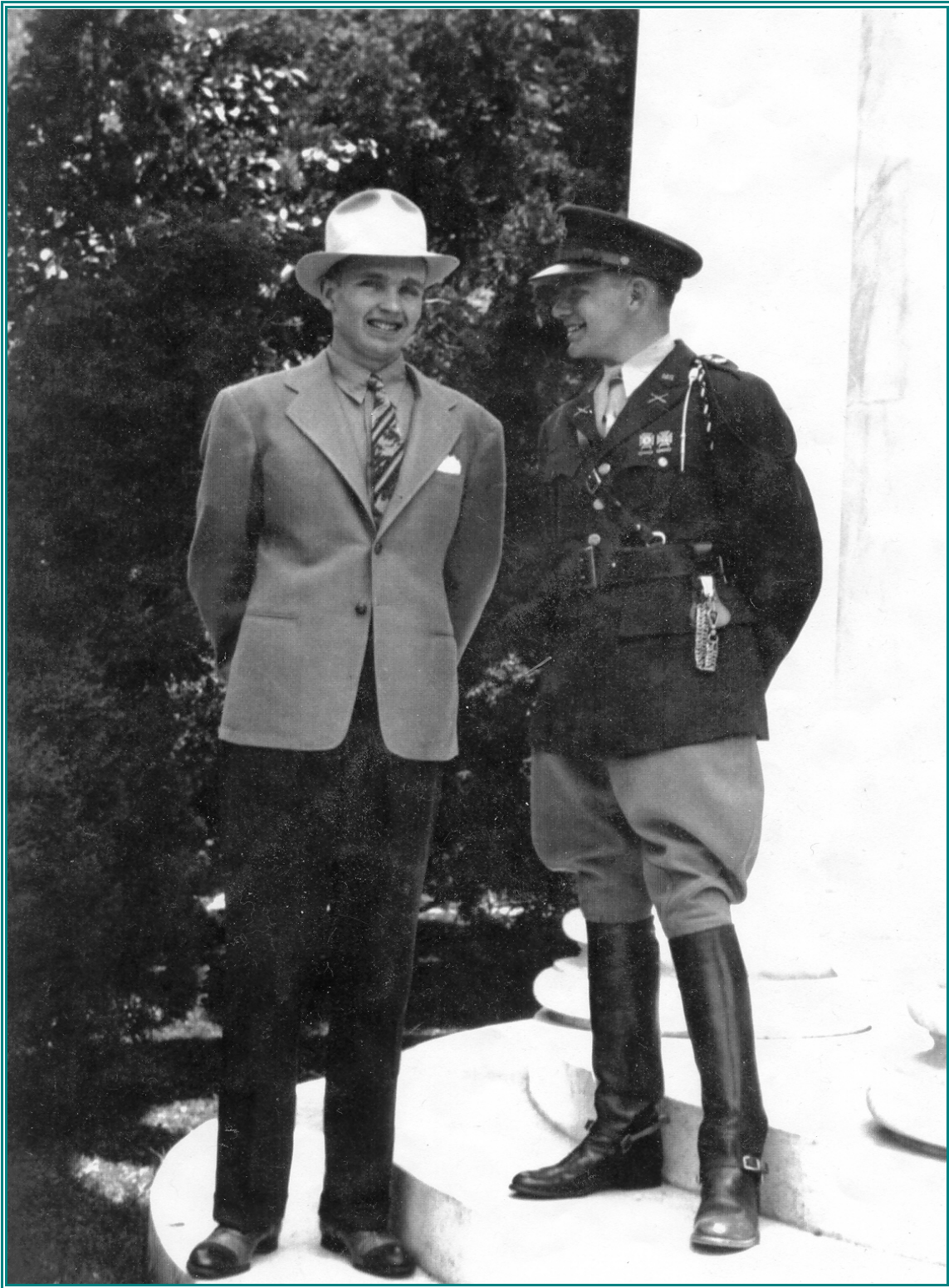
*(CORRECTION: I'm keeping that story in here but it's a lie. When I told Budd that story he laughed and immediately said, "Oh, you're talking about Blaine Sampson's daughter." He's naturally right. But it's a good story even if I have the wrong dad. Budd liked it.)*

Harold spoke at dad's funeral and gave a wonderful rendition of their friendship and of dad's good traits. He ended his remarks with the powerful phrase from Hamlet, "Good night, dear Prince." Which sort of makes my throat tighten.

After the funeral Budd gave mom a check for \$5,000 and said that he had been charged by dad to be sure that she was taken care of.

Harold and Jim show up on the next page in their early 20's. you saw several photos about these two in Volume 2 - Leamington. Such a love.





Years later I talked to Bud about this photo. He was bed-ridden from a fall that ruptured some discs in his lower back in an assisted living center out in Orem. I called him on the phone to see if it was OK for me to come out to visit him and he said it was. I took mom out there and it was a remarkable time. Mom and he reminisced about old times while his wife lay in her bed, well-coiffed and smiling but unable to communicate more than to lift her hand to motion mom to come near to her. Mom did and mom, with remarkable confidence and aplomb, spoke to the woman, asking her if she couldn't talk. The woman said she couldn't by shaking her head and mom went on, undeterred, to speak to her about things, asking her questions at the same time, simple questions framed with intelligence and sensitivity, that only required a "yes" or "no" so the woman could respond with a shake of her head. The woman beamed while mom held her left hand, enjoying the intimate moment with a person who wasn't afraid to encounter her in her disability. Remarkable. Mom was so impaired that I wondered if she would be able to rise to the occasion, but she did and I was proud of her - for her. Wonderful experience.

Meantime, Bud and I started talking about things involving dad. Bud had a clear memory of his teenage years with dad and a deep affection for dad that persists over the years. I told Bud I was writing my own history and he said he was doing the same. He struggled over to a book case and pulled down the first volume that he had written about his life. He handed it to me and struggled back to his padded chair to continue our conversation. It was a professionally printed and bound volume. He told me who had done the printing and who had done the binding, a firm in SLC, Schaefer I think it was. He was rightfully proud of his work and said that he continued to work on the next volume.

I told him where I was in my own writing and started to ask him questions about the things that I was confused about in dad's teenage years. He was able to answer every question I asked, and took great satisfaction in recounting several humorous stories about Alvin and his exploits or misadventures. Those stories have been added into Volume 2 - Leamington. His mind was clear and his spirit was good. He said he is confined for the remainder of his life but showed no particular anger about it. Instead, he is taking the time to review his life, finding the things that are important to him, recounting them for posterity. He, like I, has a profound sense that the writing he is doing will survive him and provide meaning and significance to the family that follows him.

He was particularly proud of his time in the air force in World War II where his plane, was struck with shrapnel, severely damaging it. He was able miraculously to bring the plane safely down to crash land, preserving the lives of all of the crew

members, something that was unlikely given the extent of the damage to the plane. That was important to him. He was justifiably proud of the experience and gave credit to the outcome to miracle. I don't doubt it.

Back to the photo: Bud said that the above photo was taken in Memory Grove behind the Capitol Building in Salt Lake City. He was wearing a uniform of an ROTC officer because he was attending the University of Utah at the time. Dad was wearing a dandy outfit to match him, standing one stair down so their height was equal. Bud had a marvelous career in the Air Force and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, a not unsubstantial accomplishment. At his retirement party he looked like he did in this image, a comfortable, peaceful, competent person that anyone would be comfortable calling "friend".

This man was my dad's best friend and I speak to him as if I had known him my whole life yet I have no memory of ever meeting him before I encountered him at Dad's funeral in 1998. I think he is my friend too. Indeed, when I called him on the phone the first time, I addressed him as "Bud", only knowing him by



that name. He laughed and said that no one calls him that name anymore. After we sorted each other out, I knew he liked me and felt comfortable entering into conversations with me that took him back 60 years to a time he was an awkward kid out there in the desert with Alvin, horsing around and having a grand time.

He knew I was hunting for what he had to offer. He did and I was enlarged by the experience. It is a lovely thing to find an "old" person to defer to, to mine for information, to enjoy, to take comfort in, to find solace and security in. Do you know what I'm talking about? It's a powerful thing that our modern world denies us, indeed, it derides such relationships, discounting them as foolishness. They are

not. My, what a wonderful thing. He was old, he was wise, he was my dad's best friend from 60 years ago. And I weep knowing it. The time will come shortly where he, too, will pass through the veil and I will lose my last contact with the world of my dad's Leamington. I need to call him regularly with questions about the things I write to collect as many memories for you as I can.

### Mom with Pearl

Mom was staying with her sister Pearl whose husband Tharyl had a small store. Tharyl needed help in the store, help that Pearl couldn't provide because she was tending a crop of kids, so little sister Marie who was 16 was summoned to either help with the kids or the store. [The source of some of this information is the last conversation I had with dad before he died. On July 4, 1999 when Dick and I dropped our affairs here in Portland and flew together down to Provo, at dad's request, to spend some time with him. He pleaded that we come to see him. That was the last time I discussed these things and it is evident today from dad's writings that I still have confused things. I leave them as I said them however because I can tell from external, objective evidence this his own stories are not entirely consistent. That doesn't bother me the least, but it is reality.]

### First Date

Dad and mom met there in the town where Tharyl had his store, on a blind date set up by her sister Mabel sometime in 1940. That's "Mabel's version", according to Mom when I talked to her about it recently. She said that it wasn't a blind date even though Mabel always represented it that way. But when dad told the story in the nursing home the year before he died, he, too, described it as a blind date. His pleasure in meeting this neat woman on that date was palpable when he recounted the experience.

I think there was something significant about dad being brain-damaged while he told these stories. He was no longer cloaked in whatever it was that had previously enveloped him. He told his stories with pleasure, re-living the feelings of the moments when they happened.

Mom was sort of indignant about this difference in perspective and accused Mabel of not being honest. Whatever the exact reason and manner of the date, Marie and Jim did have their first date in that area at that time. They apparently hit it off immediately and dad described taking her for motorcycle rides right away. He loved it that when she rode behind him, she didn't anxiously squeeze her arms around him like other girls did, which made it difficult to drive. His impression was that they did that because they were actually afraid of the ride. He despised fear. Instead, Marie coolly sat back in the saddle. And put her fingers through his belt loops. Like a seasoned rider.

In that conversation he waxed eloquent about that magical 6 weeks together. He found her to be the girl of his dreams, a woman who was strong and unafraid. Doubtless on account of having had to defend herself against 7 brothers and 3 older sisters, most of whom seemed to regard her as their personal handmaiden. One evening on a date with Mabel and her beau, Marie and Jim went for a ride in a car that only had a front seat. Marie had to sit in his lap, and he liked her comfort at doing that, so small and loveable, unaffected by the proximity of them to each other. He really was smitten and revealed it in this account. He told other stories that I didn't record, which were illustrative of the fun they had together and of Marie's qualities that impressed him. You ask him when you see him again.



Courting on motorcycle

### What really happened?

A year or so later, I think I have figured out why mom has been so indignant all my life about Mabel's version of how this first date came to happen. In Mabel's

version, Mabel gets the credit for making it happen. In so doing she fundamentally alters the intrinsic quality of the experience that mom remembers. In mom's version, the initial meeting was a sort of off-hand incident. Dad had been taking Mable motorcycle riding of evenings and on this particular evening, mom was outside the house when dad drove up with Mable. After Mable got off, dad just asked Marie if she wanted to go for a ride. She said yes. And in that instant, the universe moved, bells rung, hearts stopped and the deed was done. I sound facetious but I am not. That is mom's memory of the experience today and I do not doubt it because she has told it the same way my whole life. She has resisted Mabel's version for as long as I have a memory of hearing the story and hearing Mom's reaction to Mabel's version. I think today that the resistance to Mabel's story is a resistance to having the magic removed from the meeting, a magic that fills her heart today. The evidence of her commitment to Jim makes it easy for me to believe there were bells that night and that the universe did indeed shift. As noted in the introduction, she told me recently in a phone conversation that "I'm happy and am ready for whenever then send me to Jim". She's 79 years old but like a smitten teenage girl, she longs again to return to Jim. Quite literally. I, discount Mabel's version in favor of mom's.

### Alvin's photos of Marie

The following set of images was taken by dad. They present a lovely quality of early, young love out there in a rough and tumble mining camp. Mom and dad were head over heels in love and thoroughly enjoyed each other's company, probably to the exclusion of others. Mercur was a mining town so there was no real down-town where they could find some entertainment. They wandered through the surrounding countryside on dad's motorcycle with a picnic, taking advantage of the constant sunshine. They met, as best I can tell, in late 1939, though there is evidence that it was in 1940. I can't tell what to believe. In any event, if it was 1939, mom was just 16 years old, and dad was 21 years old. Take yourself back to the age of 16, and imagine that you were sent away from home to live with an older sibling, free to be and do what you want. Pretty heady stuff isn't it. Mom was a brave woman.

Dad had a wonderful Kodak camera. It was not one of the simple box camera, rather was a professional version. A latch was released and then the cover was moved in an arc at which time a bellows opened and locked into place. The film size was large so he got good quality negatives, though they have aged over time. The aging is partially the result of poor handling and storage I think.

The images that show both him and mom were taken either by Mabel or with a self-timer when the camera was on a tripod. I remember as a kid that he had a wonderful tripod for his fancy Kodak Camera. The tripod was heavy duty, made out of wood, and looked like the kind that surveyors used to hold their transits. He's unscrew the bolts, stretch out the legs, re-secure the bolts and repeat the process for the three legs. Then he'd hoist it up in the air and carefully position the legs to get a level table for the camera.

This is the camera he used until he went off the deep end and bought the Exacta Varex IIA. We were on our way to the Yukon and he decided to buy this new-fangled single lense reflex in Anchorage, a complex camera that he'd never even seen, let alone use. He took wonderful photos as you'll see in the Seward volume where I wrote a long story about that trip, using some of those images.

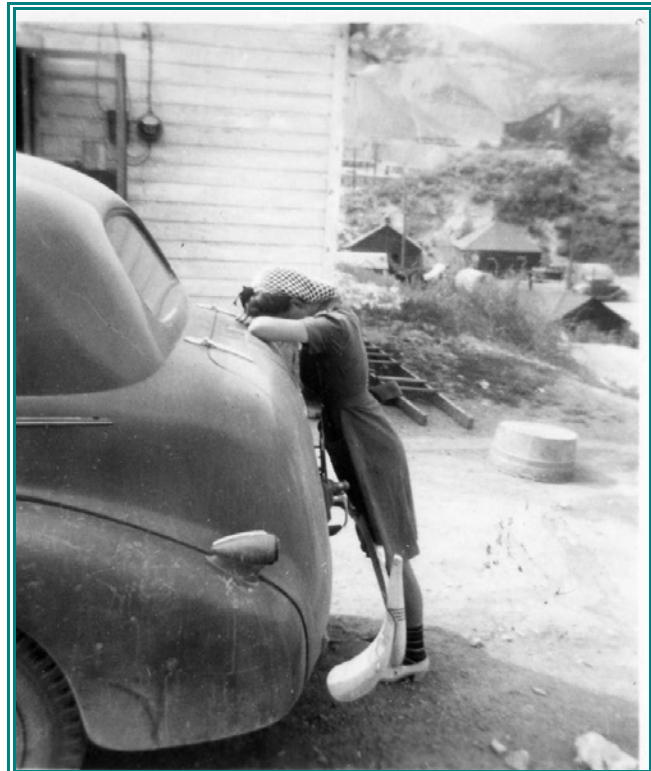


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### Sunday Afternoon in Town

Mom was a gorgeous woman. Look at her in this image, holding onto the handlebar of dad's Motorcycle smiling into the sunshine. The image is out of focus but you can make out the stylish hairnet hairdo, and the fancy dress she wears for Jim. She was only 5 feet 2 inches tall and didn't weigh a hundred pounds until she was pregnant so she weight about 95 pounds in this picture. So pretty.

Mom is wearing the same hair net and dress in this image. She apparently was playing hide-and-sick or was sulking at the time dad took this photo. Hopefully it was the former. That must be Tharyel's car. You can see how tiny she is against this standard size car. Based on her attire, I conclude that this was a day spent in town rather than on a picnic in the foothills. They probably went to church with Pearl and Tharyel.





## Picnic in the mountains

This time was magical for them both, dad and mom in love. By dad's account, he was nervous and uncomfortable with girls, never having a date during his five high school years. So his bells were ringing with this little woman. They played like in-love people do, mom riding Marion's tricycle here. This was on a different day because she's wearing a jump suit, but the car is still there.



Before they left on their picnic that afternoon, dad got a nice photo of her in her jumpsuit, standing there in the sunshine, hair done up. The town was pretty primitive. It appears that there was electricity or possible a telephone system based on those poles.



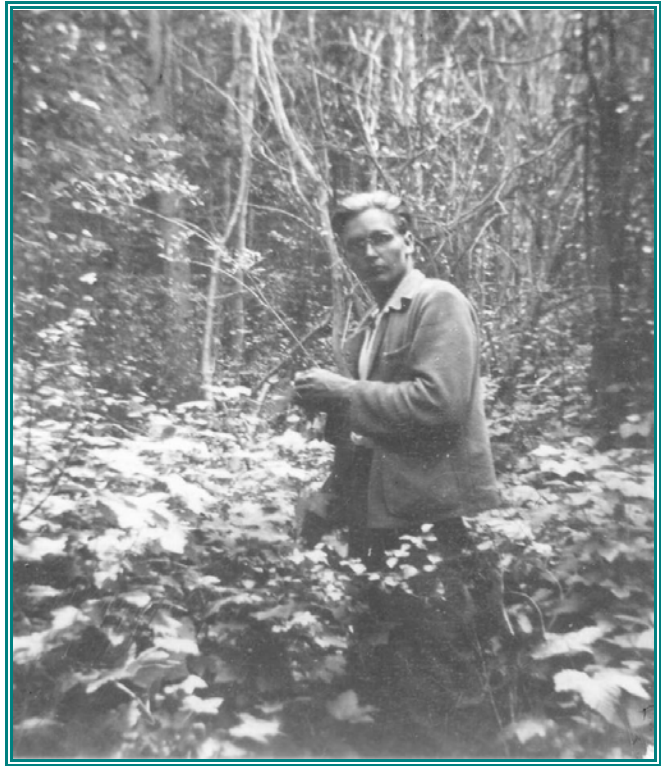
While she was wearing that jump suit, they went on a picnic up in the mountains around town. You can tell it's the same day because her hair is long and loose. In other photos where she wears this jump suit, her hair is done up tightly. On this picnic they wandered through of trees and light. He carries her in his arms, both of them smiling in the bright sunshine and the solitude of the setting.



It was a surprise to discover that dad wore glasses back then. I did not know. Mom laughed when I expressed surprise. She said "Oh yes, he wore glasses back then," and seemed to think it was a fine thing. He looks pretty handsome here in his glasses, pompadour and tie. He was apparently duded up for church or Sunday dinner. I think this looks like Nate.



Dad took his tripod with him this day. He set it up to take photos of himself and of both of them. He posed himself to appear that he was examining foliage., wearing his glasses and Sunday go-to-meeting jacket. It's a wonderful composition, back-lighted with a spotlight of sunshine.



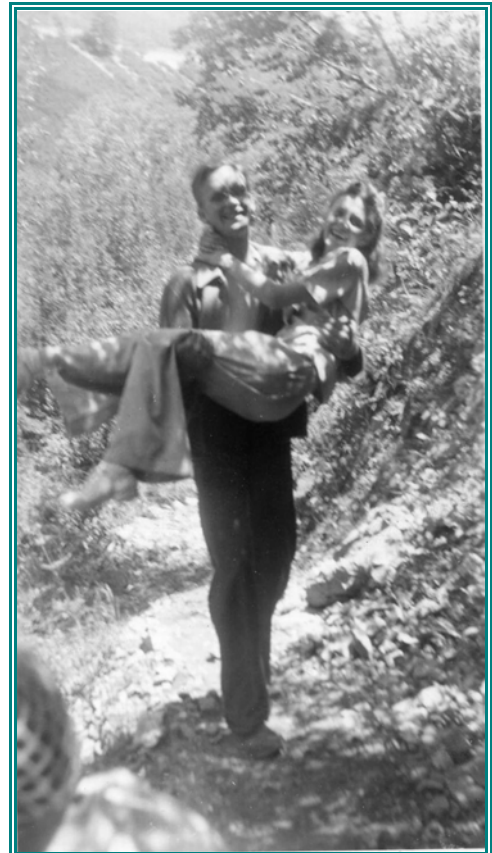
The locale they spent the afternoon in had a mountain brook that apparently flowed fairly quickly, based on the fact that it is blurred in this image. Mom stands on the rocks nearly in the stream, smiling against the background of the boulders and trees.



He set up his tripod and Kodak in another location, taking advantage again of the bright sunshine to get the best exposure. Remember that in those days cameras didn't have light meters, in fact, light meters were only used by wealthy or professional photographers. Dad had to estimate his F-stops and shutter speeds after eye-balling the light and estimating what would be the best combination. His images show that he rarely failed.



He took another photo of him carrying her. Mom said she hated it when he carried her but didn't say why. I couldn't tell if it was because she was afraid he would drop her, which didn't seem likely since she was so light, so I think it was just a dislike of being held that way. She was an independent cuss but he loved to carry her and I have at least a dozen images of his triumphantly holding her up, while BOTH of them smile.



I know that his favorite image of that afternoon was this photo of the both of them. This time he chose a shadowy setting which took a much longer exposure, forcing them to hold still for some period of time so as not to blur the image. He is enchanted by this small woman.



### Mabel

Mabel was always in the picture because she too lived with Pearl most of the summer. She was the one that originally got motorcycle rides from dad and she continued to hang around. Mom still thinks she really wanted to marry Jim herself. When I showed her this photo, she said that she remembered the dress, not surprising because it has a memorable pattern and cut. Mabel was apparently nervous or was pretending to use a telephone. Nervousness wasn't one of her strong points.

On one of the afternoons that Alvin came by after work a-courting, mom and Mabel played at driving the motorcycle while dad took their photo.



## Tharyel's Investigation

Mom's parents finally agreed to let her go to Alaska. I don't think their initial reaction was positive. Grandma Merrell was as unhappy about this match as she was about anything in mom's life. July, 2002 mom revealed things I had never heard. My problem, which is more academic than real, is trying to figure out how much of this candor results from her brain damage and how much results from a new maturity wherein she regards me as a human being worthy of her confidence, as an adult who won't be somehow critical of her if I hear the "truth", the facts. My inner child, poor needy little smiling kid that he is, would like to believe he had finally entered Valhalla. But he knows better.

Whatever, I am pleased with her revelations that sort of rock my foundation sometimes, e.g. "That's when you dad kicked me out of the house!" Man alive, I had no clue. "Kicked" out? I wanted to do that a time or to but I had no rank. Nor do I understand today what some of these revelations even means. But somehow they enrich my understanding of them, and endear her and him to me. They are human, after all, as troubled and confused and frustrated and tentative and frightened as I am. Even though my impression of them was totally different. Good for them. I'll give them license to screw up if they'll reciprocate.

Back to grandma Merrell. You've heard how mild she was? Mom says to this day that her mother never, n-e-v-e-r, hear raised her voice for anything That sort of puts her in the ranks of Saint Augustine, or perhaps Paul. But listen, my hearties, to the rest of the tale. When good ol' peaceful quiet grandma discovered that her 16 year old Marie had been sparking with this James Alvin from foreign territory, i.e. Leamington, and that they two of them, in 5 or 6 weeks decided they would get married, something snapped. She hatched a plan to figure out for herself whether or not this rascal was worthy of her Marie. So get this. As you know, Marie was living with sister Pearl, who was having a baby. Pearl was married to a man named Tharyel, the most god-awful male name I've ever heard. [He ticked -that's the nice word- mom off mightily until he died. Every time he visited her in Provo, the first thing he did, according to her, was head straight for the kitchen whereupon he rifled the cupboards and refrigerator and satisfied his hunger. Repeatedly. No asking for permission, or other politenesses, just pure gluttony, with intermittent burps and sighs and grins, and other signs of happiness and satisfaction. She wanted to slap the beggar, but didn't.]

What grandma did was find her self a telephone there in Naples and she did the extraordinary thing -you kids simply can't grasp how momentous this event was

- of making a long distance telephone call to Mercur. Mom suggested that this phone call was mediated in some manner by her brother Ross' wife Nelma who had been a telephone operator for the Uintah Railroad being based in Watson. That's where Ross met Nelma. Pearl and Tharyel lived in their little store and apparently had the luxury of a telephone for business reasons or some arrangement was made by mail or messenger such that this portentous phone call could take place at such-and-such time. Whereupon, grandma, over the scratchy, hard-to-understand noise, asked for Tharyel.

"Tharyel," she said, "Marie has lost her mind. She says she wants to marry this guy named Alvin Jensen. Do you by any chance know the bouncer?" Tharyel, the honest man he was, said, "Yeah, mom, I know him. Why, he hangs out 'round my store most every night. Ya' see, he comes over here and gives ol' Mabel rides on his motorsicle." Grandma didn't know whether or not to be relieved about that information, the motorsicle not having too good of a reputation in them parts. "Would," asked the gentle woman, "you please do some discreet inquiries in the environs about the bonafides of this Alvin and call me back? Specifically, ask if is he a good man, a reliable man, a man worthy of Marie, a man who can be trusted, one who is true to the faith?" Well, ol' Tharyel was cornered like a cat up a tree. What could he say except, "Yeah," which he said, whereupon he did in fact query Alvin's co-workers and friends.

That investigation must have been interesting from Alvin's perspective. Some of the guys who talked to Tharyel doubtless commented about it to Alvin. After completing this FBI background check -of course, I'm assuming her did it without a shred of evidence either way- Tharyel called grandma back and gave his report. He said that no one had any reservations about this Alvin, other than that he rode motorcycles. This allayed grandma's anxieties. She had a pow-wow with Fuller and shared the report. They decided, on the basis of Tharyel's report, to allow Marie to marry Alvin, sight unseen. Remember that part: they never met Alvin until 2 years later.

But anxiety persisted. When the time came for Little Marie to make her virginal trip up to Seward, Alaska, which was on the edge of the map in those days where sea monsters were drawn in next to vacant, vaguely drawn continents, good ol' grandma allowed as how it was ok for Marie to make that trip with one little proviso. Mabel had to accompany her as a chaperone. Well, now we see the truth. Grandma didn't really trust Alvin in spite of Tharyel's heroic investigation of the character of the man. So Mabel, to her eternal delight, since she met her husband there, journeyed to Seward, on Alvin's nickel. More of this later.



The most telling fact I've heard the reveals the extent of grandma Merrell's anxiety about allowing her last daughter to venture alone up to Seward is this: Mom told me this summer that her mom cried more about this than she cried in the rest of her life. When you understand that more than one of grandma's sons found himself afoul of the law, and in jail, etc., you get some perspective on this admission. Poor grandma. But Marie was absolutely determined to follow this vagabond on her own adventure, which she did for the remainder of her life. Will you let your 17 year old kids leave home for good on an adventure to no-man's land to marry a person you've never met?

## Another Evening

Alvin apparently carried his precious camera over to the Cook household many times that summer. There are more images than I have included here and it is apparent from mom's different dresses that he took her photo many times.

She's looking pretty serious here, whether out of irritation at him taking her photo again or something else, we don't know. But her crossed arm and solemn face tell the story.



## Marie and the Tooele Anaconda Mine (Alvin)

The most wonderful thing that ever happened to me in my entire life was MARIE, a little girl I met in Tooele<sup>1</sup> when she was seventeen years old. I rode a Harley Davidson (my total worldly possessions) and was working at the Anaconda smelter in Tooele.

Idly cruising around town one evening I stopped in at a carnival for no

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<sup>1</sup> I have totally confused this episode. I thought that the meeting was in Mercur, and don't remember ever hearing about Toole as part of their courtship. He's obviously right but my apologies.

particular reason. This stop turned out to be the single most important random act of my entire life. I was hailed by someone in a green Pontiac sedan. I ambled over and met a couple of people I knew, Mabel Merrell and Harold Hutchings, who had Mabel's little sister Marie with them. Harold wanted to make it a foursome so invited me to get in. I did.

In those days sedan front seats were not really four people wide, but I crowded in anyway, ending up with little Marie halfway on my lap. She didn't strongly object but it was obvious she was a conservative person. Harold went for malts. I held mine up making a toast; "Here is to the happiest moments of my life, spent in the arms of another man's wife,-----my mother".

Mabel exploded instantly, I mean EXPLODED, blasting the windshield with a mouthful of malt. Marie chuckled a little. It was obvious she was not a pushover for every guy who happened to come along. Later on she almost let me hug her. A kiss? Nothing doing. I was impressed. She was one of the cutest little girls I had ever almost had on my lap. I was attracted to her, I don't know if the feeling was mutual but when we were preparing to end the night I asked her if she would like to ride over to Stockton on the back of my motorcycle.<sup>2</sup> It had a buddy seat. The Pontiac would follow, picking her up there as I returned to Tooele. She said she guessed it would be okay and climbed on. I laid rubber and cut out of the parking lot on two wheels! Ha! She never winced and didn't even hold me tight around my waist, as I was accustomed to having girls do when I took them for their first motorcycle ride. I found out later one of her brothers had a motorcycle and had long ago conditioned her to survive "scary" rides.

I knew Mabel fairly well and had taken her on several rides up in Mercur. They were both staying with their sister Pearl and her husband, Tharyl Cook, who ran a little grocery store in Mercur. So one day I decided to run over from Tooele to see how they were all doing. I admit I was fascinated by little Marie.

My Harley had a blooie pipe, which I kicked open going up Mercur canyon, producing a deep throated roar you could hear for miles. It reached Mercur long before I did, letting all concerned know I was on my way. However, I stopped at the pool hall for awhile, causing some curtain-peeking at the Cook residence up on the hill. I finally rode up the hill and met the Cook family. After awhile Harold came by and the four of us went down to the store on main street, where Mabel

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<sup>c</sup> Compare the background of this photo with the image above of Mercur. Mom and dad are right in the middle of that image.

slept. While Mabel and Harold were busy elsewhere I sat little Marie on the grocery checkout counter and kept track of kissing her with the adding machine (so you see by now great progress had been made).<sup>3</sup>

### Another Sunday Afternoon (Rondo)

There was little to do in this dry dusty little town, but there wasn't much to do in their respective farm towns either, so it was natural for them to enjoy picnics and the world and each other companies. On another Sunday afternoon after dinner, mom and dad wandered around the mine. Dad took her photo while she climbed on tailings. The dress gives away the story. I asked mom last nite if her dresses in these photos meant that she and dad had stayed in town on Sunday and she said that was so.



### Bud and Alvin in Mercur

I have no photos of Bud with dad and mom there in Mercur but Bus has a clear memory of working that summer with dad in Mercur. Crystal clear. He referred to "living three valleys over" from where mom was. Mom, too, has a memory of Bud being there. She said that he would come over with dad on the Indian to spend Sunday afternoon. He'd have Sunday dinner with them and talk to the family while she and dad went out for a walk. So But was somehow part of the

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<sup>3</sup> Compare the background of this photo with the image above of Mercur. Mom and dad are right in the middle of that image.

Mercur experience. I need to pick him brain about it.

### Let's Get Married

After 6 weeks together, they decided that they would get married. A shockingly short time, isn't it, to make such a huge decision. Well, did you realize that you own mother, i.e. Marvel Workman, proposed to me after a mere week?! She may deny it but this is God's truth: we were sitting in dad's old turquoise Ford in the parking lot outside of her dormitory 6 or 7 days after our first meeting. As we waited till the last minute for her to get in before the curfew was imposed and doors were locked, she said to me, casually as could be, "After we are married....." Blammo. Blammo. I was shocked and stunned. I had never entertained the thought. Well, that's how it went and I suppose an attorney who crossed her fingers behind her back and ignored what had happened could argue today that "Marvel did NOT propose to Jim" because technically she did not specifically ask me if I wanted to get married, but any reasonable person would have to admit that Marvel, not Jim is the first one to broach the topic or marriage in that sentence "After we are married..."

After another few months of talking about what they would do with their lives and how they would make money, they agreed that dad would go to earn his fortune in Seward, Alaska after which she would follow him. Such a romantic idea, so characteristic of both of them. Full of plans and nothing else. That never stopped them however and they did extraordinary thing with those plans and little else. The plan was for him to go up to Alaska first, to get a job -jobs- and save enough money to pay her passage after which she would go up, they would get married, set up housekeeping and live happily ever after. A reasonable plan if I ever saw one.

### Dick Lynch the Instigator (Alvin)

A few days later I went up again, blooie pipe blasting away up Mercur canyon. Again the irritating stop at the pool hall. Up on the hill I invited her to "go for a ride". She climbed on, a cute little figure in slacks, and down the canyon we went

to West Dip. It was almost a moonless night and the hoist frame and hoist house produced weird, threatening silhouettes. Marie didn't seem to be too bothered by it all so after awhile we roared back up to Mercur. I asked her later if she wasn't just a little bit apprehensive. She replied, "Not really". A few days later I went to Salt Lake. When I walked in to the House of Hopper, the Harley agency, the salesman, Dick Lynch hailed me saying,

"Hey Jim, let's go to Alaska".

"What's up there?" I answered, and got a detailed sales pitch.

"Lavon (his recent bride) and I", he said, "are going up to begin a new life,-- live off the country in a frontier land. You can homestead 360 acres with timber on it, and a creek running down through grass shoulder high, and when the tide goes out you can go down to the beach and pick up coal. Why don't you go along with us? We're going to give up smoking and really start a new life". I thought about his suggestion all the way back to Tooele.

I had always liked to travel and his story caused ripples in my pioneering instincts. Hmm.. The country was still in the Great Depression and I was gunshy of all 'settling down' schemes because it was hard enough for a single person to make a go of it in the states. Maybe in Alaska???? The next evening I roared up to Mercur again, eliminating the pool hall stop. Marie was a bit surprised to see me so soon. Dick had planted some seeds in my mind which took a couple of weeks and an uncounted number of trips up to Mercur to germinate. But the more I saw of little Marie the more I was attracted to her. I had never thought that way about any other girl and I was already 23<sup>4</sup> years old. But she was only seventeen and not yet out of high school in Vernal, Utah. But in a natural way things began to get more serious and then I was invited to go on a 4th of July picnic in American Fork canyon with Pearl, Tharyl, Mabel and Harold.

We stopped by the creek, in the upper main canyon, where the road makes a hairpin turn left and cuts back up across the mountain as it climbs up out of American Fork canyon up to the pass behind Timpanogas.

It was a very pleasant afternoon, with Mabel and Harold going off to "hike" up in the woods leaving Pearl and Tharyl, Marie and me to amuse ourselves with a watermelon we put in the creek to cool. We lounged around on a quilt with our feet in the creek, doing nothing in particular, but our presence together helped our

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<sup>4</sup> His own numbers don't match up which is just fine. Makes me feel not so bad about my own errors in chronology. He was 23 in 1941 when they got married, but was less than 20 when they met. So I'm not the only one who's got screwy numbers.

feelings mature beyond a simple fondness into something more compelling. I was hooked.

### Dance in American Fork

That night Pearl and Tharyl let Mabel, Marie and me take the Pontiac and go to a dance at the open air floor in American Fork. I shall always remember that night, not for the dancing but for the increase in the depth of my feelings for little Marie. I could tell she was a wonderful person. Another reason I was so attracted to her were the reasons my mother had given me years before about choosing a girl to marry. Mother thought I should look for a girl from a large family because she would know how to get along with people and how to keep house; Mother said to choose a girl who wasn't too outgoing with boys but one with a more reserved nature, I could tell that was little Marie's nature. In fact the better I got to know her the deeper my feelings for her became. We stayed at the dance all night and on the way back up the mountain to Mercur the Pontiac picked up a spike in one tire and needed changing. I remember feeling a little fuzzy as I jacked the car up, all the while feeling the delightful presence of little Marie. I remember her beautiful, dainty little hands. I had never seen a girl with such delicate fingers.



- 17 years old

In a few weeks our conversations became more serious. She was still in high school so an idea about Alaska gradually developed in our minds. We talked about it. It seemed a good idea for her to go back to Vernal and finish High School; I could go to Alaska to seek my fortune and when she was 18 and through with school I could send her the money and she could come to Alaska and we would get married.

It was a romantic, thrilling plan so we decided we would do it.<sup>5</sup> I remember the last time I saw her as I left Mercur on my way to check out of Tooele and head north.

I had a feeling of fondness and deep regret at having to leave her. I have a bright picture of her standing in front of the house in pink slacks, a beautiful, desirable little girl, one who might someday be mine. What a wonderful thought. But that event was to be a long time in coming and the plan almost fell out of my mind when it seemed I must go to Panama when my work in Alaska ended.

I had been working on a labor crew at the smelter. Bob Coucher was my boss. When I said I was going to Alaska he asked me to be sure and visit his cousin in Anchorage, who was an attorney there (turned out to be an

extremely important referral). I sold my motorcycle deciding to hitchhike to Seattle to save money. Dick and Lavon said they would meet me at the Alaska Steamship office on the Seattle waterfront so I headed north on my thumb. I had already had a lot of experience hitchhiking around in the U.S. so wasn't worried about making it on time. I made it okay.

I was instantly enchanted by the waterfront and the SS Mount McKinley tied up to the dock. It was an entirely new world of sights, sounds and smells. The slap of winch lines against a boom, the vigorous pounding of steam winches playing out their impatience on a steel deck, seagulls, a fishing boat offloading, waterfront characters, and the smells that went with it all. I was captivated. It still comes back with the clarity of a yesterday happening. I was well into the most romantic



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<sup>5</sup> Mom clarified for me later: the idea to go to Alaska was dad's own as was the plan and execution. She didn't oppose it but I sensed that she would have been content to remain in the "Lower 48".



period of my life and was loving it.

### Mercur Years later (Rondo)

In about 1969, mom and dad went back to Mercur to explore. What they saw saddened both of them. They knew it had changed dramatically but the impact of seeing the change first hand was different than thinking about it in their living room in Provo. The town has basically disappeared. A few crumbling structures remained, but not one of them was habitable. Only the land remained as it had been.

I selected a few of the slides he took that day to include here. I'll put them into a two column table and include any notes he made on the slides themselves.

This is a wide-angle view of the town as it looks today. The tailings stand out above all else.



The is the west end of the old town.  
Very nice shot, the kind he knew how to take.



The only note I make is to point out the big yellow Chevy Bel Air, the one with the 400 cubic inch V-8 That was a REAL car.



Cook shack



Mercur Old Mill site



Another view,  
building falling down,  
overburden of the  
vein in the  
background.



## Afterword

My favorite photo of the two of them on dad's motorcycle -on the next page- shows him looking back at mom or the mines. He has a big smile as he sits there holding his Indian while mom sits side-saddle on the passenger seat. She looks into the camera with a quizzical glance, wondering what is about to happen to her, content to let it happen. She kept her eye on the ball while he dreamed. What a life they had!

Actually, that look on her face is so familiar. I've seen it all my life. She looked at dad when he said or did something she didn't really approve of, holding her tongue, not expressing what was in her mind, but feeling it nonetheless. She knew how to hold her tongue with him.

