

1895

An ERA OF GOOD FEELING

Beginning in the city of Stillwater, Min, a beautiful rich
brunet, Elizabeth Fritschie, decided to go out West to visit
her brother Rudolph. He lived in Bellingham, Washington. She
loved the Pacific Northwest, the sights and sounds, the
aroma of new cut lumber and cedar shingles.

After the invention of the ten block shingle machine Washington
practically roofed the world. The ten block saw could cut 20
shingles in a second as apposed to ^{the} one block which would saw
only 20 per minute.

In 1896 Elizabeth was introduced to Dell Bingham, a tugboat
captain, a tall, handsome, robust, flat on his ass bachelor.
and she married him in February 1898. His job was towing booms
of logs to various mills in Puget Sound and the Straits of
Georgia. My Dad got a little weary of being away so much towing
booms of logs around the sound so he quit the captain job and
took a job as a resawyer in a lumber mill in Bellingham. At
that time, December 1, 1899, Lawrence Frederick, was born to
Mr. and Mrs. Dell Bingham. That was a tough way to earn money
after being a tugboat captain for ten years. And two years
later, 1902, ~~xxxxxxx~~ Clyde Henry was born. He died in 1918
of Spanish influenza. I was born in 1904. Dad was still
running the resaw. Dad bought an acre of land near Larson Station and
built a house on it. Larson Station was on the electric line
between Bellingham and Lake Whatcom. Larson was the owner of
a huge mill - thus the name Larson Station.

Just about the time our house was completed we got a letter from our grandmother, also named Elizabeth Fritschie, inviting us to come to Stillwater, Min. Dad just dropped the hammer. We went to Bellingham and got the train that went to Stillwater. It seems she didn't know there were three kids. I think Grandma had a short fuse, so we didn't stay in her house very long. And Dad rented a house down the street from Grandmas. She came to visit us quite often, bringing us goodies. Dad worked at the school. I don't know but, somehow Dad got hold of a team of horses and a wagon. ^{WE} They left Stillwater in the latter part of June 1907. 300 miles away they stopped at Fargo where my father's brother was Chief of Police, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ James K. Bingham. I don't think Jim enjoyed Ma and Pa with three kids driving up unannounced, and after a day or two we left. Next stop ~~xxx~~ 100 miles away to Jamestown, North ~~Dakota~~. It was very necessary stop as Rebecca Fern Bingham was born on Oct. 14, 1907. Dad must have gone to work around there as we stayed a year and a half. And I remember Becky's milk bottle which was fastened on her bedstead and a long tube, about two feet long, with a nipple on the end. That is all I remember of Jamestown. Dad must have used his horses around Jamestown because we had a team of horses and a wagon when we left Spearfish, South Dakota, about 300 miles away. South and West of Jamestown. It was spring when we arrived in Spearfish. We lived in a tent and Lawrence went to school. April 7th, 1909 Rachel was ~~born~~ born. I think we only stayed in the tent that summer. In Spearfish my Dad opened a bakery. Made all kinds of French pastry. I remember especially jelly rolls.

Then Dad worked for a logging company by the name of Clark and Dacy. How do I remember? I was four years old. We left Spearfish and we stayed at Deadwood, a few miles away for a short time. We lived in a yellow house on Spearfish Creek and my Dad worked at the gas plant. Deadwood, South Dakota, that is. They had a terrible flood down Spearfish creek. The railroad was washed out, the bridge was washed out. Pigs and chickens were going down in torrents. There was a flour mill close. When Ruth and I were back there we found the old mill stone broken in half. There was an old cemetery and a statue of a Civil War veteran with a small iron fence. They said Calamity Jane and Wild Bill Hicook was buried there, but in later years we found out they didn't even know each other. We forded the Belle Fourch River before we got to Dead Wood. I remember fording the Bell Fourche River with horses and wagon. I remember leaving Dead Wood by train because the train had red cushions. From Dead Wood, through Wyoming, ^{through} Idaho, to Seattle where we waited for Dad. Then to Friday Harbor. Lawrence remembers Dad driving the team of horses to Bellingham. I can only remember we went to Friday Harbor, but not how we got there. Next we were living in a house in Friday Harbor with electric lights. Lawrence, Clyde, me, Rebecca and Rachel. It was great for us kids. We fished and dug clams, had crabs and cockles and a clambake every night. After six months we went back to Bellingham. That is Alki, 6 miles north of Bellingham. I first went to the Albineto School at Alki. The school had a pump in the front yard for drinking water. 2 room school house Grades one to four and five to eight. Clyde was in the 4th grade and Lawrence the 7th.

We lived in a small house up a little hill across the Guide Meridian, from the Richey and Shelton Lumber mill where Dad worked. On that side of the highway was a planing mill and a dry kiln and, of course, a shingle mill. The other side of the Guide Meridian were homes, a boarding house, school, etc. Once in a while Dad, Lawrence and Clyde and I would walk to Bellingham to see the Barnam and Bailey Circus when the circus was in town (or the Sells Flota Circus.) We would get up at 4 a.m. walk to town to the RR to watch the elephants push the cages off the flat cars - the tent cars and the cook's car and the steam calliop. Then we would have a donut and a glass of milk and stand on the curb and watch the parade. Our Dad was the greatest. Becky and Rachel were too little to go. Our Dad was poor in worldly possessions but rich in charm and humor and trust in God. We were his boys. Later years I saw the inside of a tent. We carried water to the elephants between shows to get in free. The circus in the tent was not that great. Not as interesting as unloading at the R.R. yard. We would walk the six miles back home - a day to remember.

1912 we moved back to Bellingham because as surely as the sun came up, in 1914 the world was coming to an end (Ma said so.) And us kids did not want to be to be stuck on this farm.

They were happy years in our lives. The Boy Scouts trampled all the hay down. Dad let a Boy Scout Troup sleep ^{in the} hayloft. A horse fell in a deep ditch and we had a horrible time getting him out.

* In 1910 the Guide Meridian was the main highway between Bellingham and Vancouver B.C. about 20 miles

We burned a house down that Dad had rented, and not moved in yet. We filled the airtight heater half full of pine knots, then lit it on fire. Then we took our little wagon over to the sawmill to get another load. On the way back we saw the house was on fire. When we were a little closer we saw the flames shooting out of all the windows. But it wasn't our fault. We wasn't there when it caught on fire. The owner didn't like it much. He lived close by. He, like my Grandmother, had very little humor and a very short fuse.

A year later we moved back to Bellingham. Dad found a house in Bellingham at 1409 Iowa St. It was a green house on about a half acre. Where we put in a garden, and Whatcom Creek was two block away. After hoeing the garden we could always go swimming. The owner ^{did'nt} tell my Mom or Dad that in flood state Whatcom Creek filled our yard chuck-a-block and we needed a row boat to get to land. We couldn't move in the winter as we had no room for our possessions in a rowboat. The river went down a little and we moved to higher ground overlooking Bellingham Bay. This new place had a copper bath tub. No doubt it leaked, but we were on the ground floor. That was across town from Iowa Street. In winter we could slide all the way down the hill on our home-made sled. This place was terrible. Ma refused to live in it.

In 1917 we moved to 2221 James St. A beautiful big house with lawn in front. Woodshed ~~xx~~ in the back and an ally for tradesmen. Dad, Lawrence and Clyde were working and Mom loved it for a year. Then later Lawrence decided to go back to Seattle.

A year or so later Clyde went East of the mountains to Leavenworth, Wn. We moved to Exenia^N St. After living there a year or so, the 1918 war was on. We moved this time to ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Everson, Wa, and I went through the eighth grade in the Roder School. An engineer on the CM and stP got me a job as a locomotive fireman^{in 1923} and that lasted about six months. Lawrence came home from Seattle and said "let's go to San Francisco." And I said "Let's go." We arrived ~~in~~ in San Francisco on New Years Day and we each got a room in a private home. We went out looking for a job. Us two guys were not cloistered.

I applied at the Southern Pacific for a job as a locomotive fireman in 1926. A few days later I found a job as a tool sharpener for the Vermont Marble Co. I didn't know how to temper tools so I asked my brother Lawrence. I went to work on the job and did fine and dandy for two years. I got paid a \$20.00 gold piece every week.

I used to go to the Southern Pacific office every few weeks to see if my name was still on file. Finally they called me in July of that year, 1927, and I was working from then on until I had already met Ruth in 1926, a beautiful, well educated blue-eyed blond you ever did see. We were married June 16, 1928, which was the smartest thing I ever did in my life. She was Chief Clerk in the San Francisco branch of the P. G. & E. I quit the Marble Co. to go to work on the Southern^{Pacific}/Co. And here come 1929 and the bottom fell out. Hundreds of thousands across the U. S. were out of a job and I was one of them. Lawrence got me a job at the Livermore Shop ^{for the} Hetch Hetchy. Real easy job, I had to bore out mining car

wheels to 10-1,000 under three inches. Then the guy on the next lathe turned the axle down to exactly 3 in. Then they pressed the wheels on the axle and then the little cars were used for taking the dirt and rock out of the Hetch Hetchy tunnel. So now Ruth and I were doing all right again even though ~~there were~~ still tens of thousands of people out of work. On March 18, 1931 the first greatest joy of our lives was when David arrived healthy and happy. I worked at Hetch Hetchy until 1936 or until the R.R. called me back to work. And, of course, my brother being the supervisor of the Hetch Hetchy shops helped a little.

Lawrence and I used to commute to San Francisco Saturday afternoon from Livermore. Lawrence had a 1929 Hudson Super Six and I had a 1924 four cylinder ^{cher-}coupe. He said he would give me a 10 minute head start and bet me a dollar he could beat me to San Francisco. And he used to win every time, except once. One Saturday afternoon I left Livermore headed for S. F. I had the old boiler right in the whistling slot. I saw a state police at the cross road of Dublin Canyon. I came to a screeching halt. I said, "officer, will you do me a favor." "Yeh," he said. I said to him, there will be a 1929 Hudson Super Six barreling through here about 100 miles per hour. Will you slow him down a wee bit. I told him what was up. He grinned and said, "I will take care of it." So I won that time and Lawrence does not know why. Lawrence's Hudson was beautiful until his son, Don's dog tore up the seat.

Now I was back on the R.R. and we decided to rent our flat out and go to San Luis Obispo where it was easy living. One picnic after another on Avila Beach. And, you know what, on November 21, 1937 Wesley Showed up, healthy and happy. And David was so happy to have a little brother. And Wesley, only two or three days old, would grab on David's little finger and hold on until Ruth would come to his aid. Now there are four of us. Christmas we took Wesley and David back to San Francisco for the holidays.

* A year later we moved back to San Francisco. The kids were healthy and happy under the guidance of a lovely mother. They went to Kate Kennedy school and to Pinecrest every summer. Roy first told us about Pinecrest. Ruth and Pearl took turns staying with the kids, all the kids in the two families. Ruthie and David were budy-budy. The years go by then Wes and Charmie were also budy-budy.

I remember going to Bellingham with Ruth, David and Wesley many times.

END OF AN ERA

David was in the Airforce and doing well. He was in Victorville, Cheyenne, and many other camps. Then Korea, the city of Seoul. He was in communications the whole four years.

Mom, Wes and I went to Grand Canyon by auto. Wesley was 15 years old. He was needling me and bugging me all the way. AS we were approaching Lancaster, the Southern Pacific train from

*** A year later, 1940, I was promoted to Engineer and we moved back to San Francisco.

Los Angeles to San Francisco was just coming in to the station. I said "hey Wes, why don't you get on that train and go to Auntie Pearl and Uncle Roy's house." Wes was delighted. From then on Ruth and I went alone and for every year thereafter.

Wesley graduated from Lincoln High School. Then entered University of California for one year at which time he received a fellowship to Davis University of \$200.00 a month for one year. Then, as he had decided to follow a teaching career, he enrolled at San Francisco State University and graduated after majoring in biology and botany. He went to Europe for the summer and came home to teach in Napa. David came home from the service and enrolled at San Francisco City college and received his A.B. degree, and then went to work for the P.T. & T. and stayed to climb the corporate ladder.

In 1970 I retired at the age of 66. David and Arlene had two kids, Don and Chris, about 6 and 8. Wes and Janet had two kids, Aaron and Meredith.

Ruth and I have been married 57 years. I am not her Lord and Master, I am just her husband. I loved her every mile of the way. We have had, and are having, a beautiful life.

as I remember.

Lee