

## *Life Sketch of George Parker Stoddard*

My dad, George Parker Stoddard, was born in Rock Springs, Wyoming, February 6, 1920, to Stephen Oran Stoddard and Violet Chidester. He was the second of five children; he has two brothers—Oran and Ted Stoddard—and two sisters—Helen and Luella Stoddard.

Dad was born with a badly twisted left foot and weighed only 4 pounds. Despite several surgeries, by the time he was 14 years old, his left leg was 3 inches shorter than the right. His short leg concerned him throughout his life, but we children really never consciously noticed it much. We just saw our dad, the person.

**Family Moves—Tonsillectomy**—Dad’s family didn’t have much money, and they moved around through the years as his dad worked to provide a living. One of the moves the family made was to East Millcreek in Salt Lake. While the family was there, the doctor came to the house one morning with his operating tools. One after another the three children in the family at that time were placed on the living room table and had their tonsils out.

**Homestead Near Altonah**—One Spring, the family moved to a homestead near Altonah, Utah. Dad’s father built three 12-foot square tent houses on the homestead among the sagebrush and juniper trees. The walls were wood on the sides about 4 feet high with screen the rest of the way up and roofs of canvas. Of course, there was no indoor plumbing or electricity. Oran, Helen, and Dad slept in one; his dad, mother, and Luella slept in one; and the family used the third as a kitchen and living area.

While living there, dad was bitten by a wood tick and nearly died of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. He was unconscious for nearly a month before he recovered.

**Living in Delta, Utah**—The family moved from Altonah to Green River and then to Delta, Utah, where Dad spent most of the rest of his growing-up years. He attended Delta schools and graduated from high school there. As a youth, he was involved in Scouting and became an Eagle Scout. He had good memories of earning his Eagle Scout badge and was always proud of it. Just a few months ago, he sat in the Eagles’ nest with other Eagle Scouts at the Eagle Court of Honor for one of his grandsons.

Dad’s family was always poor; Dad worked hard at home and at odd jobs, and he learned to get by on what they had and to do without. He taught his children to work hard also as we helped him in his bee business and in building construction. If he didn’t have other work for us to do, he had us clean rocks off of our property, hauling them in a red wagon. And when the grass was planted and the remaining rocks were covered, he decided a large stack of bricks he was storing needed moved from one spot to another. We wore out several red wagons.

Dad got our first red wagon for us at Christmas time when we were very young. He came into the house on Christmas Eve rubbing his head and holding a wagon tongue. He said the wagon tongue must have dropped out of Santa’s sleigh as he flew over our house. The next

morning, there was a red wagon under the tree—minus the wagon tongue!

Dad's parents were members of the Church but weren't active; however, they always sent their children to church. Dad was baptized when he was 10 years old. He remembers walking by himself to the baptism and then walking home alone afterwards. He was ordained a Deacon, Teacher, and Priest through the years in Delta, and then was ordained an Elder in Blythe, California, a few weeks before his marriage to our mom.

**Delta–Danner–Boise--Sunnyside–Delta (April 1936-December 1937)**—When he was 16, Dad and his family moved from Delta to Danner, Oregon, where his dad leased a farm to raise alfalfa. During the school year, Dad attended high school in Boise, Idaho, where he worked for a family in exchange for room and board.

He went home for a couple of weeks for Christmas, and then his Dad drove him back to Boise after Christmas in the family's old Model T to finish the semester. While Dad was driving the car on a hill near the State Capitol, the car slid on the icy road at an intersection and slowly rolled over. Dad was okay, but his Dad was hurt. There was no money for much medical care or car repairs. So his dad took the bus home and told my dad to fix the car and bring it home in two weeks when the school semester ended.

Dad tells the story:

I patched the car up somehow. To fix the hole in the radiator, I bought some wheat cereal. When I put some cereal in the radiator, the wheat expanded and plugged the hole. The weather was so cold when I headed home. I think it was the coldest winter in history in the area—about 53 degrees below zero. The radiator held up for awhile but then gave out. I put in more ground wheat and got the car running again. But I didn't get very far before the radiator blew up and the car went into the barrow pit. There I was—a 16-year-old boy stranded out in the middle of nowhere in that awful cold. The road I was on wasn't traveled much, and even though I wrapped up in blankets, I nearly froze. Finally, someone came by in a truck and offered to take me to the nearest house. I think he saved my life. The next morning, he took me back to the car and pulled it into Jordan Valley. I got a ride from there out to our house.

After a year and a half of living in Danner, his father became very sick and couldn't keep up with the hard work on the farm. So the family moved to Sunnyside, Washington, where his dad hoped to homestead some land. His dad was sick most of the time there, and after the family had been in Sunnyside just a few months, he died at just 39 years of age while my dad and his mother were holding him in their arms. Dad's mom and brothers and sisters moved back to Delta where just two years later, his mother, also just 39 years old, died, leaving five children ranging in age from 20 to 4 years old. Although the relatives wanted to divide the children up and care for them, the children insisted on staying together in the family home, the older ones taking care of their little 4-year-old brother Ted.

**Working for Miller Honey Company**—Miller Honey Company had a branch right across the road from the family home in Delta, and Dad worked for them off and on in his late teens;

and then when he was 19 after his parents had died, he began working for them in Blythe, California. He learned a lot about bee keeping, and was made manager of Miller Honey Company in Blythe in 1942. While working in the bees through the years, Dad took loads of bees and honey to Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois, Idaho, Texas, and Utah, and had many interesting experiences. It was during the war years and gas was rationed, but beekeepers could get all the gas, tires, and anything else they needed that was available. America needed honey during the war because sugar was rationed; and the country needed the beeswax more than the honey for use in making bullets.

While living in Blythe, Dad met Mom. They married in the Mesa temple September 15, 1943, and made their home alternately in Delta, Utah, and Blythe, California, while Dad continued to work for Miller Honey Company. One year they lived in Minnesota where they worked in the bees. Soon after Dad and Mom married, Dad's brother Ted, who was then eight years old, came to live with Dad and Mom, and they raised him as if he were their son.

They did missionary work in Blythe and helped the small branch of the Church there grow. Dad worked occasionally with the full-time missionaries. In 1947, Dad and Mom moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, where they bought 100 acres of land covered with pine trees. They fixed up a small old log house on the property and lived there. They hoped to run bees around the area, but that wasn't too successful, and they moved back to Blythe.

**Move to Salmon—A Growing Family**—After five long years of waiting and hoping for a baby, Dad and Mom were blessed with their first child, Diana, who was born in Blythe. Then, Dad bought a bee business of his own in Salmon, Idaho, and moved his family there in 1951. Four children were born to them in Salmon—Cherie, David, Douglas, and Bart.

Our family has many good memories of living in Salmon including trips to the mountains, fishing at Williams Lake, cookouts, making homemade ice cream, and helping in Dad's bee business.

Dad had a wax shop where he melted the beeswax scrapings he'd collected over the year; the wax dripped down into 5-gallon open-top cans. After the wax hardened, he dumped out the wax cakes to sell. We children had lots of fun dipping our fingers and hands—sometimes our whole arm—into the melted wax and making “casts.” After we had played with them for awhile, Dad had us toss them back in to be melted.

We washed out honey cans, helped extract honey, canned it, and helped him in his bee yards; we painted bee boxes, labeled and sold honey to the local stores, and helped make new frames for the bee boxes. Dad worked the bees in the spring, summer, and early fall, and then worked in construction in the winter to support his family. He taught himself building construction in Salmon as he built a fine house for our family in the mid-1950's by asking questions of other builders and reading a construction book at night to figure out how to build what he needed to on the house the next day. Over the years, Dad built many houses in Salmon.

Dad served on the High Council in Salmon, and then in the early 1960's was ordained

Bishop of the Salmon First Ward. He felt inadequate but served very well and loved the members in his ward. He in turn was much loved and respected by the members of our ward. Dad also had a good name in our town and was known as an honest and fair man. If George Stoddard said he would do something, everyone knew he would.

**Move to Rexburg**—In 1969, Dad sold his bee business and moved to Rexburg where he bought some apartments and rented them to students attending Ricks College. He worked full time in building construction in Rexburg and over the years completed many fine homes for families there. In his mid-60's, he retired and then built homes for several of his children and for Mom and him with all of the family helping on each one. He lived in a small camper on the back of the lot when he built my home in Lindon. While finishing my home, he developed sugar diabetes and a hernia that needed surgery. But he waited for the surgery until he had finished the house.

Dad and Mom moved to Orem in 1988 and have very much enjoyed living here. For many years, they traveled around the West in their fifth wheel seeing the sights, visiting friends and family, and just enjoying being together. When our family thinks of Dad, we think of beekeeping, building construction, and fishing. During his retirement years, he often went fishing, always with Mom or some of his children or grandchildren.

**His Later Years**—In his later years, walking became increasingly difficult because of the damage that resulted from so many years of doing heavy work with one leg shorter than the other. He had triple bypass surgery and suffered from limited eyesight after a retina detached following cataract removal, probably due to his diabetes. He'd get cross when he didn't feel good, but he wasn't a complainer. With all of his health problems, in the end he died of cancer only a few weeks after it was diagnosed.

The combination of being crippled, poor, and in a Mormon family with inactive parents among other things was hard for Dad, and all his life he fought his feelings that he and others didn't think he measured up. He developed independence to a fault and insisted on doing all he could on his own. The last few years, he shoveled his driveway and cared for his garden working from a chair that he moved along a few inches at a time, steadily refusing help from others. However, his continued struggle these last few years to do all he could on his own gave him purpose and kept him going.

Family has always been very important to Dad, maybe partly because he lost both of his parents when he was so young. He worked hard in Salmon and in the awful Rexburg cold and wind to provide for them. Dad suffered from depression for over 40 years and at times had an especially hard time; what kept him going he said was primarily his love for his family and his hope in the Gospel. Not long after moving to Rexburg, in talking about his years as a Bishop in Salmon, Dad said, "I enjoyed my visits to the older members of the ward while I was Bishop. It seemed to me that they were a product of the gospel, and for me to see what rewards the gospel can bring has influenced my life for good." Dad was surely a product of the gospel—of striving to develop a testimony and struggling to live its teachings even when—and especially when—it wasn't easy. In knowing him, our lives have been influenced for good.

Dad has a wonderful heritage of pioneer ancestry, with every one of his family lines going through great grandparents, or great-great grandparents, who crossed the plains in wagons or handcarts. A few are well known in Church history, but all were ordinary people, good people who carried on without fanfare even when things were very hard. Dad followed in their footsteps.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “I have discovered that life is not a series of great heroic acts. Life at its best is a matter of consistent goodness and decency, doing without fanfare that which needed to be done when it needed to be done. I have observed that it is not the geniuses that make the difference in this world. I have observed that the work of the world is done largely by men and women of ordinary talent who have worked in an extraordinary manner” (*One Hope*, p. 24). Surely Dad was an ordinary man, with human weaknesses as all of us have, who worked throughout his life in an extraordinary manner, with courage, faith, and determination. We are grateful and blessed to be part of his family.