

a respectable thread of water entering into the first four of the furrows in the plot and feeling that the most painful part of my re-education in agronomic arts was over I sat back to watch the water seep through the soil until it saturated the seeds.

It was then that I discovered how different Utah soil is from Idaho soil. First it became obvious that a rise in the center of the plot was keeping the water from getting past the middle of each furrow. But the blocked moisture did not seep laterally to the parched seed as it would have done on the farm in Idaho. It percolated straight down into the light soil for an hour and a half and never progressed horizontally more than an inch in either direction. The radish and spinach seeds seemed forever safe from inundation by this particular irrigation system.

Finally, I disconsolately admitted that my genetic endowment was less than I had imagined, attached a sprinkler to the hose, placed it squarely in the middle of the plot and successfully completed my task. Wiping the sweat from my brow, I was suddenly struck by the fact that in those few moments I had learned better than through days of reading old documents how brilliant had been the accomplishment of farmers who in 1847 began settlement of the arid Intermountain West. I quietly added my own, less florid, ode to that McClellan had written in 1907.

Grandpa's Place

*"The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long."*

EDWARD GEARY

My grandfather, for whom I was named, was born in 1878 in a four-room stone house built by his father in Round Valley, near Morgan, Utah. My great-grandfather had a small farm there and a job on the Union Pacific Railroad, but in the spring of 1883, in response to a call from the Church for settlers and also in search of more land, he packed his family and belongings into two wagons and traveled to Saint Johns, Arizona. During that summer and fall, the family lived in the wagon boxes while Great-grandfather worked on the canal. By the time the canal was finished, however, he had reached the conclusion that there would never be enough water to fill it, and so he returned to Utah, settling in Emery County. The family arrived at Huntington in late November with their resources exhausted, but Great-grandfather was a tireless and driving man (he died at the age of eighty-six as a result of getting out of a sickbed to repair some leaky plumbing), and he proceeded over the next several years to accumulate land and cattle until he was the biggest taxpayer in the community. My great-grandmother, however, was not made for such a life. Her photograph shows a rather delicate young woman with clear eyes and thin lips. She died in 1886 after giving birth to her fifth child in eight years.

With the mother's death the family was broken up, the three younger children being parceled out to relatives and Grandpa and his next-younger brother Frederick remaining with their father. Two years later Frederick died during a typhoid

epidemic, and Grandpa and his father were left alone together except for an interlude in 1889 when Great-grandfather married a young girl who died seven months later. Grandpa survived emotional deprivation, bad health (he was asthmatic as a child and suffered severely from hayfever throughout his life), and endless hard work to grow to maturity. (One night in his teens he went to a dance after a long day in the hayfield and arrived home after midnight to find his father dressed and waiting. "If you've got energy to dance, you've got energy to work," he was told. And work they did, through the remainder of the night and all the next day.) With the demands of the farm, the threshing machine, and a contract to haul freight from the railroad at Price to the Indian reservation at Fort Duchesne, Grandpa never completed a full term of school in his life. However, he saved enough money from his freighting to attend a business college in Salt Lake City for three months, acquiring, as the letter of recommendation he brought home with him put it, "such a knowledge of Bookkeeping, though he did not complete the course, that he will make a good assistant bookkeeper."

On his twenty-first birthday Grandpa received from his father a forty-acre farm and a team of horses. With the beginning of a livelihood of his own, he began courting a young lady in the town, but his plans were interrupted by two events, a call to serve a mission to the Northern States and—only days before he left for his mission—his fiancée's death from consumption. After two years in the mission field, most of the time as clerk of the Michigan Conference, he returned to Huntington, received another team of horses from his father (the first team having been sold to help finance the mission), married the younger sister of his deceased fiancée, and settled down to making a living and a life by farming, working in a bank, operating a threshing machine, serving as county road supervisor, contracting, operating a general store, selling insurance, and serving as a census taker and as a correspondent for the *Deseret News*, among other things. In addition he spent almost twenty years as a counselor in the ward bishopric plus terms as town clerk, county commissioner, school board member, board member and secretary of the irrigation company, organizer of a livestock show and of a community coal mine, and during the depression served on the farm debt adjustment committee.

Grandpa built a two-story yellow brick house at the edge of town which, by the time I came along, was surrounded by tall trees and looked as though it had been there forever. Our place was just through the orchard, with a path running from our house to Grandpa's, past the big pear tree where I built my tree house and the sweet cherry with the low-hanging limb on which I used to chin myself each time I passed. The family gathered formally at Grandpa's place each Christmas and Thanksgiving for the huge meal. Informally, the cousins gathered there daily, helping themselves to fresh bread and honey and peanut butter in Grandma's kitchen or playing No Bears Are Out Tonight late into summer evenings on the lawn.

In my early years I spent much time with Grandpa. He always rose before dawn to tend the water and do the morning chores. Then he would return to the house for breakfast, and sometimes, if I got up very early, I could get there in time to share his grapefruit and tag along after him as he went about his work. Grandpa was a silent man most of the time, seldom speaking except to give succinct instructions (so succinct at times that you had to know what he wanted beforehand in order to understand him) and occasionally to swear at a recalcitrant piece of machinery or at a cow that couldn't see an open gate. I have been told, in recent years, that he liked to have me with him because I didn't chatter. We might go half a day without exchanging a

dozen words, but we understood each other quite well. Oh, he was capable of sharp rebukes, having little patience with blunders, but he punished me only once, when I refused to share a boiled egg with a younger cousin and instead smashed it in my hand. I remember three things from the incident, which must have occurred when I was four or five: the sensation of the mashed egg as it squeezed out between my fingers; my strong conviction that I was right (her two brothers had eggs of their own; why should I be the one to share?); and the hardness of Grandpa's hand as he paddled me. But that was the only time.

It is seasons of life that I remember more than individual incidents from those years. I remember the raw days of early spring when I used to clamber up and down ladders in the half-empty barn while Grandpa pitched manure in the odorous shed adjoining. When the manure spreader was full I would ride beside him as we hauled the thick stuff out to the fields. I liked best the part where he engaged the lever that set the spreader mechanism in motion, when the slatted floor began moving slowly back, feeding the load into the whirling tines which spread it out behind, leaving a brownish path on the still winter-bound earth where a few months later would be the vivid green of young alfalfa. I remember haying in the dry heat of midsummer, when I struggled to stay atop the growing load and keep out of the tromper's way as the hayrack was heaped higher and ever higher until the pitchers had to throw the prickly piles from the ends of their pitchforks, until the ground seemed immensely far away. Then at last Grandpa would pause, take out his handkerchief and wipe his eyes, look up at the load and out at the hay still remaining in the field, and say, "I guess that's about a load." Then he would climb up onto the load, helped at the last by grasping the handle of the pitchfork which the tromper thrust into the hay at the top of the ladder, settle himself in the hay, flick the reins and say, "Hup there, Prince; hup Belle," and we would lurch across furrows and through breathtaking ditches toward the barn, with me certain that at the next instant the whole load would fly off and land atop me on the ground. At the barn I would watch as Grandpa maneuvered the big Jackson fork into the load, burying the vicious-looking curved tines then throwing his weight against it a final time to get as big a bite as possible (he was a small and slightly built man; I marvel to think of the sheer physical effort he exacted from himself day after day), then standing back with the trip rope held loosely in his hand and calling out "All right." "Awright" would be the muffled echo as the tromper inside the barn passed the signal along to the boy on Old Belle at the back of the barn (usually my cousin Ted until I grew old enough and he was promoted to tromper). Then pulleys would begin to groan, the slack cable would grow taut, and slowly one large segment would disjoin itself from the load and rise slowly toward the overhanging peak of the roof where it hit the track and went whizzing back into the barn. At a shout from the tromper, Grandpa would tug the trip rope and a sudden cloud of green dust would billow out through cracks in the barn wall where the hay had fallen on the growing stack. Then Grandpa would begin pulling the fork back. As the rope grew longer, I would catch the end and from the ground help him pull, watching always to see the fork as it reached the end of the track, was released from the carriage, and fell with a frightening clatter back onto the load of hay. I had visions of Grandpa being impaled by the long tines, but he never was.

I remember fall and Grandpa working into the night carrying bundles of wheat beneath the September moon, standing them in long shocks which had a tunnel in the center into which I could crawl. I remember the intricacies of the beehive-

shaped stacks and the great occasion of threshing day. Grandpa no longer had his threshing machine when I was a boy. Our threshing was done by Neil Howard, a remarkable man who had lost his legs as a boy when he was run over by a train and who consequently stood no taller than a child on his thick leather stumps but who could move with incredible quickness on his two short crutches and keep men pitching, belts humming, machinery shaking, straw blowing, and still have time to drop a leisurely pinch of snuff into his lip and chat with watching children while from time to time he sent long jets of brown liquid from between his teeth.

I remember early winter evenings when Grandpa would come in from night chores, stomping his feet on the porch, pausing in the kitchen to warm his hands at the stove, and then, if he didn't have work to do at his oaken drop-leaf desk in the corner of the dining room, perhaps telling us freight-road stories. He would tell of the time, on his first trip alone, when he was frightened by an owl as he lay in his bedroll in the mountains, thinking it was someone demanding to know "Who's there? Who's there?" Or the time when an Indian rode into his camp and demanded cake when there was no cake and so Grandpa had to mix up something from breadcrumbs and a little sugar. Or he would tell of the winter trip when he nearly died from hypothermia before another freighter saw that he was falling into a stupor and forced him to get down from the wagon and run. Or the time when he developed a severe cold which infected his weak lungs so that he was unable to drive his team back from Fort Duchesne. A young drifter of questionable reputation, a man called "Six-shooter Bob," offered to drive the team to Price, with Grandpa in a make-shift bed under the wagon cover. On the way up Nine Mile Canyon they met another group of freighters who asked Six-shooter Bob whose team he was driving. "Ed Geary's," he replied. "Where's the kid?" "Oh, he's damned sick in the back," Bob said. "Be dead before we get to Price." "However," Grandpa would say, "I didn't die."

Through Grandpa I got to know other men of his generation, hard-working farmers like himself. I remember the glow on Peter McElprang's face as he washed himself with fresh mountain water one chilly October dawn in roundup time. I remember a trip to Sanpete County with Grandpa and several other men to buy bulls when Frank Robbins, getting out of the car in Gunnison, saw the long streak of tobacco juice on the right side of Grandpa's white Plymouth.

"Hellamighty, Ed, did I do that?" he said and started rubbing vigorously at the stain with his handkerchief. (It was Frank Robbins and his wife Kate who took a trip with Grandpa and Grandma to Southern California in 1935, one of the driest seasons in history in Utah. When they first visited the beach, the tide was out, and Frank turned to Grandpa in some alarm. "Looky there, Ed," he said. "She's drying up!")

As I grew a little older I learned two things, first that farming was hard and often uncomfortable work, and second that I was rather lazy. I gradually stopped seeking Grandpa out and began, at times, trying to avoid him; for his view was always that if there was a job to be done there should be no question about whether one wanted to do it. Then the short distance between Grandpa's place and ours became something of a problem. I learned, in my teenage years, how unpleasant it is to throw the hay higher and higher on the load, with itching leaves and stems falling in your face and down your neck, waiting for Grandpa to call it a load. I learned how hard it is to breathe in a hot, stuffy barn as you struggle to spread one forkload of hay over the stack before the next one comes in, and how the sweat runs into

your eyes and makes the dust stick to your skin. I learned how endlessly large a few acres can seem when you have to plow them or mow the hay, going round after tedious round. I learned to look forward eagerly to the end of the day, to a bath and clean clothes and then a night bumming down on Main Street with the boys, and it irritated me that Grandpa never seemed to recognize the proper quitting time.

Grandpa knew how I felt and disapproved, and I knew he disapproved, and our relationship grew less comfortable, though neither of us ever said anything about it. There was one occasion, however, when we talked more than we ever did before or afterwards. We were harvesting grain in the Middle Field, south of town: not in the old way but with a big orange combine cutting and threshing the grain in one operation (Neil Howard was dead by then). When the machine's hopper was full, Grandpa and I had to hold the sacks as the grain was transferred to them then stack them on the wagon. While the combine was making its rounds, however, we had nothing to do but sit on the full sacks and talk.

Grandpa pointed out the notch in the hill through which he had come when his family first arrived in Huntington. His father had stopped the wagons and indicated a little cluster of huts on a treeless flat, saying that there would be their new home. At the announcement, Grandpa said, his mother began to weep. He told me about the hard first years and how, just when they had begun to get situated a little more comfortably, his mother died. He told, too, about the death of his brother, how his father woke him in the middle of the night and told him Fred was dying and sent him out to get a neighbor to lay out the body. He told about the short-lived second wife and the long series of housekeepers and hired girls before his father finally, when Grandpa was sixteen, married a witty and sensible English widow. "Her entrance into our home made living conditions much better," Grandpa said. He told of his own teenaged years, saying that he was small, with a head of thick black hair (he was bald when I knew him), a large Roman nose, and "a very poor personality." "I was a poor dancer," he said, "and not popular with the ladies." That expressed much the way I felt about myself at the time and re-established, if only for a little while, a bond that we had known when I was little.

Grandpa's heart failed in his last years, and he had to depend increasingly on others to do the work on the farm. This was very painful to him because he had always prided himself on starting earlier, quitting later, and working harder along the way than anyone else. He kept pushing himself as long as he could. I remember him staggering out to tend water, his shovel over his thin, boney shoulder, when he looked as though he would collapse at every step, and I fully expected him to die before he could come back home. At last he grew so weak that he had to keep to the house, often with an oxygen tube in his mouth. I remember one day that summer when I was windrowing hay. The work went slowly, with the machinery breaking down again and again, so that by sundown I still hadn't finished the job. But I was tired and angry, and I had plans for the evening, so I brought the tractor and rake into the yard and parked them, even though I knew Grandpa had very definite opinions about getting hay into windrows before it grew too dry. As I was walking up the orchard path toward our place, I heard a gate slam and turned to look. It was Grandpa in his field clothes, shuffling toward the tractor in the fading light.