

MY PERSONAL HISTORY: Life & Times in SE Utah

Verona Stocks

MY LIFE AS A SHEEPHERDER

Part One

1926. The sheep are looking good and a few lambs are big enough to ship. Bob is going around them and once again showing them to the baby. She too is growing and feeling good. Mary and Jack had lost their baby in 1924 so my baby was special to them and Mary had helped to make all her baby clothes. People seeing us all together would say she looked more like Mary than she did me.

We all spoiled her because she was a good baby and seldom cried. She did have that hernia, and I did watch her carefully.

Bob was a coal miner, one of the best. He cut coal, loaded mine cars and was a mule skinner. Mules or horses were used to haul the mine cars out of the mine. He made very good money, kept a little, and turned the rest over to me, telling me not to give him any if he got drunk. I bought the groceries and did not know what to do with the rest of the money, so I put it in the bank. We

could have used some more clothes but we could not get along with-out, so I did not buy any.

I sure missed my garden, house work was so easy for me, and I got pregnant right away and Bob did not want me to mop a floor. He said he would mop when the floor got dirty. It never got dirty because I mopped it every morning just for the exercise that summer.

Aunt Pearl and Uncle Nate lived in Segó, so we visited them some, then Mary and Jack, Vick and Ethel came to work at Segó that fall. It was not so boring then.

I should not say it was boring because usually there was a dance at the coffee house on a Saturday night. Some time girls I had known in school came and stayed with us for a few days, most uninvited but always welcome.

Jan. 30, 1926 I went to get a bucket of water at a community hydrant, there was lots of ice around it, I slipped, did some gymnastics trying to regain my balance, caught hold of the hydrant, my feet went up and I sat down hard, but saved myself from a tumble of about 20 feet on the ice to the bottom of

**Bob was a coal miner, one of the best.
He cut coal, loaded mine cars and was
a mule skinner. Mules or horses were used to
haul the mine cars out of the mine.
He made very good money, kept a little,
and turned the rest over to me,
telling me not to give him any if he got drunk.**

the wash. That night my first child was born. My sister Mary was there and I thought she should have been a midwife, she sure could have helped a lot of girls. Bob got the Dr., but Mary told me what to do, so I had my baby girl, a premmy. For the next three months our baby was in a lot of pain because of a hernia due to undeveloped stomach lining, so the Doctor said. Bob and Mary got her named too, Verona Edna Muir, an odd combination. I had been raised around babies but I sure did not know much about a baby that young. Mary helped Mother with the young babies and the cooking. I preferred to do dishes, sweep floors, make beds, bring in water and wood and best of all tend the garden. Now I sure had a lot to learn.

My Uncle, Otho Murphy, stayed with Bob and me off and on. He was a dreamer, he thought of a lot of things a man could do on his own in this country, but all his ideas required work. Bob listened then he talked to Dad. Some of Otho's ideas were good, but Dad's was more practical. He told Bob with a little money and of course work he could get a start. Dad helped us with both his

knowledge and his time.

First he had Bob file on a homestead up in Spanish Valley close to Pack Creek. There was a good spring on the place. Dad and Mother come to Segó the last of March and moved us to Moab. Dad had an old Model T truck. Then Dad and Bob went to Kayenta and bought 300 Navajo sheep, five dollars a head, most of them were old ewes: \$1,500 for the sheep, going after them, and the move from Segó, all that money I did not know what to do with was gone. Well we did have a baby and a new car, but no new clothes.

Dad and Mother gave us a little one room frame house, 12 by 15 ft. to put on our homestead. Dad loaned Bob his mules to plow a garden spot for me, he also put a fence around it. I was happy now that I had a garden to work in. We were broke but the Millers Co-op gave us credit. Bob was not a farmer and he knew nothing about sheep or the range. I had been helping Dad with cattle and sheep since I was 13, so I did understand range conditions. I tended the garden and also the sheep much of the time. Bob did odd jobs on the ranches, he worked for a horse and he helped Earl Somerville with haying and took hay for wages.

We herded our sheep all that first summer around our homestead. The lambs did not get very big. We did have fun learning about the sheep and exploring around our place. We found Indian ruins and arrowheads.

The sheep lambled most of the summer as the Indians did not separate the bucks from the ewes. We kept the ewe lambs and sold the wether lambs that were big enough to sell, about 30 head. It was not enough to pay the

Co-op. Bob took our lambs to Thompson with Boyde Hammonds; they had to be trailed all the way.

When the lambs were sold, Bob got a job at Segó. That left me to herd the sheep. My sister, Annie came to stay with me and help care for the baby. Our car was broke down, she had to ride from the head of Spanish Valley where our homestead was to get groceries from Moab. She did not mind that horseback ride, but I had to walk and carry my baby to herd the sheep while she was gone. Annie seldom made it to town and back in one day.

One time while tending the sheep and watching Vee play with the dog I saw some sheep in the bend of the creek away from the herd so I went after them. I crossed the creek below them in order not to be between the strays and the herd. I also saw a big cat on the bank above the sheep. I yelled at those sheep and they took out of there toward the herd. The big cat stood up, only it was not a Bob cat, just a lion. I followed the stray sheep to the herd, the small sheep dog stayed close behind me growling and trying to hurry me along. We got back to the herd and started the sheep on their way to the corral, a half mile away. It seemed like a hundred miles. Every time that dog growled a little louder and pushed at my heels, I looked back and that lion looked to be much

**First he had Bob file on a homestead
up in Spanish Valley close to Pack Creek.
There was a good spring on the place.
Dad and Mother come to Segó the last of March
and moved us to Moab.**

closer. Finally when we were almost to the house the lion stopped by a cedar tree and I did not see it again. My baby was 8 months old. I put her in the house then put the sheep in the corral. It was mid day but those sheep stayed in the corral until the next morning. Annie was back from town then so I had a horse to ride.

Bob came home from Segó when he could hitch a ride. He had ordered a new part for the car. When it came he brought it home but did not have time to



put it in before he went back to work. Sometimes he had to walk from our place to Moab to catch his ride. While he was gone I took the transmission out and put the new part in. I just was not big enough to line the transmission up on the shaft, or whatever, to get the car back together.

When Bob came home it did not take him long to fix that car so he could go to work and come home every weekend. He worked until Thanksgiving then he came home and my sister Mary visited us a few days and showed him how to trap coyotes. From then on we always had enough money to keep us going until the lambs were sold in the fall or the wool in the spring. Jack Pogue, Mary's husband was a good trapper and he showed Bob how to get scent to trap with. There was a bounty on coyotes but he caught some good fox. The grey ones were 50 cents to \$1.50 but the cross fox were \$25 to \$30.

The summer of 1927 Bob put our sheep into Boyde Hammond's herd. Bob herded them all on the mountain, Moores Range, Clarence Tangren was the camp mover. Boyde paid no wages to Bob but he did furnish the groceries and our lambs did very well. I rode once a week to our place to water the garden and young peach trees I had planted.

I lost Vee on the mountain once, there was no chance of tracking her in the thick trees, but I called the dog and he came back to me then led me to her. The first time I lost her was the fall before, she could not walk then. I was herding the sheep on foot and carrying her. The sheep took off and I knew I could never turn them back unless I laid her down, so I did just that, and ran. When I came to pick her up, it was a big area of sage brush and I could not find her. I had to locate my tracks and back track to where she was sleeping very peacefully. It took me at least 1/2 an hour to find her and as I was frantic it seemed like

The summer of 1927 Bob put our sheep into Boyde Hammond's herd. Bob herded them all on the mountain, Moores Range, Clarence Tangren was the camp mover. Boyde paid no wages to Bob but he did furnish the groceries and our lambs did very well.

forever.

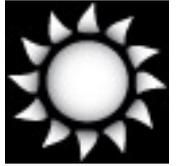
When we came off the mountain our sheep were pulled out of Hammond's herd except the wether lambs which Bob drove to Thompson with Boyde's lambs and were sold. If our neighbors had not been so nice we would have had more trouble selling our lambs and wool.

When Bob got home I moved to the ranch in Moab to help Mary care for our mother. We stayed 6 weeks, Mother was very bad all that time, she had cancer of the stomach. She died Nov. 14, 1927, leaving Dad with 5 children under 12. The youngest was 4.

I came to Dad's home from the hospital, Christmas eve after my pesky appendix had been removed. They had given me trouble since I was 7 or 8 years old. Bob came from the sheep camp and we spent Christmas with Dad and the kids.

My aunt Mary Duncan gave Bob \$500 and asked him to buy her some sheep. May 1928 my brother Felix just turned 12 years old, went with Bob to Kayenta for Aunt Mame's sheep. He walked all the way back driving 100 year-

NEXT PAGE...



100% solar-powered

**REQUESTS:
259.5968**

**LISTEN TO US
ANYWHERE ON THE
WORLD WIDE WEB.**



community radio
90.1 & 106.7 FM

KZMU is a grassroots, community, public radio station isolated in the dramatic landscapes of Canyonlands and the Colorado Plateau country. KZMU is truly an aural oasis in the desert airwaves of southeast Utah.

www.kzmu.org



"Maybe I can help you save money on it."

Central Utah Insurance

435-259-5981

170 East 100 South
Moab, Utah 84532

