

# MY PERSONAL HISTORY

## *Life & Times in Southeast Utah...part 6*

### Verona Stocks

That fall of 1931 the snow came early and it was cold at the head of the valley. I had trouble finding wood I could cut for the sheep camp. Grandma sent me a chocolate cake and some apricot jam. I thought it was the best I ever tasted. I had not seen my kids for about six weeks and Mary and Jack Pogue were off on one of their many trips to Missouri. I really missed them. It was mighty lonesome.



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This is the young cowboy I met that night who did not want to play the guitar with me. He was a happy man, laughing and talking to everyone, and very much a friend to young and old alike. His best friend was a young man Lynn Day, and Lynn's Mother, Janet Day, Pete Stocks always called her his second mother.

I had been alone in the hills so much, that watching these people joking and teasing each other, and laughing together was very fascinating to me. Felix could sure mix in with Pete and Lynn, even though he was much younger. Dad was enjoying himself.

Pete and Felix got together whenever they had a chance because they both liked to ride horses and if one bucked, that was fun too.

Pete had a horse that did tricks. She did not look like much, but if he told her she was dead she would lie down, stretch out and close her eyes. When he told her she was lazy she got up. When he whistled a certain tune she danced. He got on her and whirled a rope around her. She walked or trotted through the loop. She had many other tricks he had taught her. He really had a way with animals.

Two days before Thanksgiving Dad and Felix came to the sheep camp. Dad thought it would be easier for him to herd the sheep than to live with so many people. I hated to leave him but I sure wanted to see my kids and I knew Felix would be coming back to stay with him.

We left the sheep camp in a blizzard. The roads were slick, but Felix was a good driver. When we reached Blue Hill we caught up with some people in an old Model T Ford truck. It was overloaded. There was a woman and several kids trying to push it, not a good pair of shoes in the bunch. Their clothes were thin and ragged. There were several young children peeking out from various places on the truck. We told them we thought it best to go back to Moab, but no, they were from Okla. dust bowl and were headed for California. We helped them up the hill and told them they had better stop for the night at Kane Springs. I have often wondered if they ever made it.

When we arrived at La Sal I sure understood Dad's preference for the sheep camp. Too many people in the house and no place for him to rest. The next day while buying supplies for a Thanksgiving dinner I talked to Leland Redd.

There were several houses in La Sal that the owners had left. Mr. Redd got one of those for Earl's sister and four children could move into. The country gave them aid, food, and clothes. She was close enough so Earl could help with the wood.

Earl did not have a job, and after his sister moved I only had to buy 50 lbs. of flour a week. We hauled water from the La Sal store as most of the people did who lived on the La Sal Flats. When it snowed we melted the snow. It took a lot of snow to get enough water for the big washings we had for so many people.

Neva did most of the cooking; she made very good light bread. I kept up the house, did the washings and ironing, made all the girl's clothes, including my own and Neva's. Made quilt tops and repaired all the old quilts that were wearing out. (I still do that, cover old quilts and make new ones.)

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Earl got a job soon after Christmas. I believe it was February or March the Vern Bliss traded his ranch in Browns Hole for the Martin ranch in Castle Valley. Earl and Neva moved to Browns Hole and Dad got his room back so he could rest.

We consigned our 1932 wool crop for about 18 cents a pound. We had 1025 sheep in the herd. 180 belonged to Dad and 110 to Larsons. They were sheared on the homestead below Stocks Flats. Uncle Felix, my brother Felix, and Tom Hudson sheared some also, and I do not remember who else sheared. Annie and Tom lived there and she cooked for the crew. I herded the sheep and helped her.

When the shearing was finished the lambing started. My brother Felix, age 16 March 7, and I handled the lambing. We worked it as Bob and I did; he tended the sheep before they lambbed, and I took care of the mother sheep with the new lambs. However, when a ewe had trouble while lambing, Felix came for me. I got to be a pretty good sheep midwife. I delivered lots of lambs; some of them Felix had to help me with.

The first part of May the lambing was finished and we moved toward Dry Valley and closer to the La Sal ranch. Felix had to stay at the ranch and help get the crops in. Felicia stayed with me. The way she stayed was a night or two at the camp, then riding horseback to Browns Hole and a day or two there. Then back to the camp with some fresh garden produce. Another day or two in camp, then a trip to the ranch. She brought from there eggs and butter and a few things we needed from the store. Felicia never seemed to mind the long rides. Felix came a few times and moved the camp.

The people of Old La Sal had a good rodeo and dance on the 4th of July. Pete was a good rider. He rode the wild bulls from the range and some little wild mustangs. He showed Felix how to ride with just a surcingle or a rope. They had fun together. It was lonesome in Dry Valley herding those sheep when I would have preferred being at the dance.

They got my car fixed so Felix and Nick came to the sheep camp to stay for awhile. They were caught up with the ranch work and I had to start canning. Uncle Felix and Grandma came from Moab to see another rodeo the La Sal people were having on the 24th. They also brought me some fruit to can. I had not seen my kids since early spring and Bob who was only three years old I was missing so much.

We all went to the rodeo, but without Felix, Pete was the only rider and all went well until Pete was getting ready to ride the last bull. Someone who was holding its head gave it too much slack. It swung its head and caught Pete in the eye with a stubby horn. It broke some bones around the eye. He rode a pony after that while still in shock, and was going to ride another one when Jack got hold of him and took him to the house. That was a mean looking eye for a long time. He never went to the dance but Uncle Felix was there to play the guitar with Jack Stocks.

I did not go back to the sheep camp until September for I had canning to do

besides making school clothes for the girls. Those few weeks at the ranch were wonderful, but the boys had to come home to put up hay and Nick had to go to school.

While the boys were herding the sheep they lost part of the herd. They rounded up between three and four hundred ewes. A lot of the big lambs were missing because it was the better grade of sheep that had split off from the main herd. The coyotes had been living good and we did not have many lambs to sell that fall. After shipping the wether lambs and keeping the ewe lambs, we had 1095 sheep altogether.

Redds took our lambs to Thompson that fall and Dad did not have to help trail them. He got the money and paid the Jackson interest, the store bill and a few other out-standing bills.

While I was at the sheep camp Dad let Lou Couchman drive my car and he decided it needed new rings and he could fix it. He did, too, so it threw a rod one cold night when Nick and I were coming from Monticello after a spelling contest Nick was in. Nick caught a ride to La Sal to get help to get the car home. That was one time I was singing "Out on the wind swept desert", and meaning it. Steve Day came out with Nick about 3 a.m. and pulled our car home for us.

Felicia and I picked turkeys for Ray's. We were paid by the number of turkeys we picked. There were about 50 pick-

ers besides the men who caught and killed them. Pete was there and besides picking, and he was fast, he helped pack them for shipping. Every morning he helped getting the turkeys killed and hung up before he started picking. Pete picked almost as many turkeys as I did besides his other work and he made more money, but I did get more turkeys so they gave me a turkey for Thanksgiving. Pete was invited to eat Thanksgiving dinner with us. After all, he had picked more turkeys than anyone else but me.

Pete got to our place in time to help Dad and Nick butcher a hog before dinner. He really enjoyed our family and thought the kids were funny. Felix ate bread and milk until Pete got him to taste the lemon pie, then he ate a whole lemon pie. Bob ate leftover pancakes with whipped cream and syrup. That, they both had every day.

We picked turkeys again just before Christmas. Rays had about 15,000 turkeys to get to market and young people came from Moab and Monticello



them. They had three more miles to get home. Vee was six, and she fell off once when the horse was bucking through a snow drift. Mr. Wilcox who had come to meet his six year old son, who was with our kids, put her back on the horse and told Nick to stay close in case she fell again.

When they got home I helped Jo and Ray off the horses. They could walk, but Vee's eyes were froze shut and I carried her into the house, then rubbed her face and hands with snow. She did not seem to have any frost bite, even on her cheeks.

Nick did not come into the house until he had cared for the horses like he did any other day. I had never seen a blizzard like that, but all afternoon the weather looked bad, so I had brought in all the wood I could and tended the stock before the storm reached us. But Nick was ready to go on with the chores

if there had been any left for him. We played music and sang songs and let it blow.

I bought our Christmas presents for Neva's kids with the money I earned picking turkeys. After the turkey picking we got a lot of ticking. Rays would let anyone who wanted feathers gather them. Felicia and I sorted out enough to make four feather ticks for Dad's place, two for Neva and Earl and two for me and several pillows. A feather tick was used as a mattress. Several other people were at Ray's at the same time as we were. I wanted more warm bedding because that fall the whole family was down with the flu at the same time except Vee and me.

There was cows to milk, chickens and pigs to feed, wood to chop and bring in, keeping the house and cooking, taking care of the sick people. Besides, I had to herd those sheep. Vee was six and a big help. She kept the fires going, brought water and broth to the ones in bed. As soon as they were all well Dad and Felix moved the sheep away from the ranch.

That fall of 1932 the government sent out what was called commodities; that was flour, sugar, rice, beans, butter, oranges, ticking, cloth, blankets, and I do not remember what else. Both Dad and Earl got some. I could not because I had too many sheep. The man in La Sal who was entrusted to pass the commodities out to the people hated to let anyone have the government supplies. When he died there was tons of food in his shed which the rats had destroyed, holes in the cloth and blankets. There was nothing left fit for people to eat or use.

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to work. Pete and John rode over from Old La Sal the day before the picking began. They were facing the worst blizzard I have ever seen. John got his ears frosted because he never wore a hat.

When Felicia and I were picking turkeys Dad had to be home with the kids and Felix had to herd the sheep.

From our place to the school it was 4 miles, and when the teachers saw that blizzard coming, they started most of the kids on their way home. Nick had snow shoes, Jo and Vee were riding on one horse and Ray on another one. The snow was drifting so bad in places the horses had a hard time getting through. The kids had only gone about a mile from the school when the blizzard caught

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The States and Counties made a few jobs but only for the head of the household. But young people who did not live at home had to eat, so the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) was created and many young men started working.

They got \$30 a month and had to send \$25 home to their families. They built the CCC camps or barracks, got their meals in camp, were furnished clothes