

MY PERSONAL HISTORY

Life & Times in Southeast Utah...part 8

Verona Stocks

Pete's Dad and Mother and Brother Dick left for their Home in Old La Sal about a week after Little Pete was born. John stayed a few more days to work in the mine with Pete. Puge moved his family to the mouth of Brumley Creek so he could work with Pete in the mine. Pete would herd the sheep early in the morning and on stormy days we and Bob would herd them in the afternoon and bring them to the bed ground in the evenings. Some times Pete would work until after dark, he wanted to get out a shipment of ore. We did need a payday.

One beautiful moonlit night late in February Vee and Bob did not come home with the sheep. Yes, there was the sheep, but no kids and I could not go hunt for them. Pete came about 10 o'clock and went looking for the kids. They were bringing some sheep alright but the wrong herd and more than we had. They had been having so much fun sliding down the side of a steep hill in Mud Spring Hole they did not see our sheep leave and never knew there was another herd in the vicinity. Pete turned the sheep back and met the herder, he told Pete he had gone to his camp when Vee and Bob took part of his herd. He thought it a big joke, he said he had been watching the kids for the past three days and they were as active as mountain goats and did not seem to be afraid of anything. Pete was too tired to be amused and when he caught up with the kids he gave Vee a spanking, not hard just enough to hurt her feelings, then he told her to keep the sheep out of Mud Spring Hole. She was ten years old, and dependable.

When Bob died we owed John Jackson some money Bob had borrowed to buy sheep for us at the time he got Aunt Mam's sheep. When we sold the lambs in the fall and the wool in the spring we had to get a Mortgagee's Consent from John Jackson and at that time we always paid the interest on the loan and some of the principal. When we sold the sheep we did not owe Uncle John Jackson very much.

By keeping the ewe lambs in 1933 and 1934 we had built the herd up some but not back to the number of sheep we lost the spring of 1933 when we lambled in East Coyote Wash.

Dad traded his sheep to Lee Larsen in fall of 1934 but he did not have enough sheep for the trade so we gave him 70 head of ewes he needed. He got a nice place with a bath room, three bed rooms, living room and kitchen. There was a nice little family orchard on the place, some alfalfa fields, plenty of room for a big garden and corn fields. The mines were a short distance up the canyon from the house.

We sold the sheep to Plutes the middle of March 1935 for \$4.00 per head and was lucky to get that. We had 537 ewes and three bucks. They were able to give us a very small down payment, about \$300.00. We felt lucky to get that. Pete built us a tent house. We had the camper close by for the kids to live in. Pete worked in the Little Peter Mine, so did Felix, Nick, Puge, Jack Stocks and Dick. No one got much but we did eat. We all had big gardens and canned a lot. Pete got me a pressure cooker so I could can vegetables as well as fruit. When Plutes sold the lambs that fall they paid about \$900, enough to pay John Jackson off and buy a 1935 pickup for \$650. It was a Ford V8 really something for those days.

Jack Pogue was working for Tom Kelly on a cattle ranch in Colorado. We had not seen them for quite a spell so we visited with Mary and Jack before returning home.

We returned to La Sal Creek and the more we drove that pickup the better we liked it so we got Dad, Jo, Ray, Vee and Bob and took a trip back to Grand Junction and bought school clothes and groceries.

Paw the dog could run from La Sal to Moab with a car doing 30 miles per hour, but from La Sal Creek to Moab was not so good, so being a smart dog he just went to Brown's Hole and visited the Martin family.

That summer of 1936 Pete got a job in Dry Valley across East Canyon. He was the foreman and I cooked for the crew. There were six miners and I did not like that job. Pete and his brother John were very picky eaters, the rest of the crew just wanted plenty of meat, spuds and pie. Josephine stayed with us and helped out most of that summer.

I had some chickens and Vee made pets out of some of them. She would take one hen to bed with her, it slept on her pillow. Jo and Vee slept together, Jo kept getting lice in her hair. I would get rid of them but soon they were back. I finally figured out it was the chicken's fault. I did not know chicken lice would get on people but when I would not let Vee even put that chicken on her bed Jo had no more lice nits in her hair. The

lice would not stay on her but they laid their eggs in her hair. It was very embarrassing to a sixteen year old girl.

When school started we rented Uncle Victor Murphy's house across the creek from what is now the Martin Place. Earl and Neva rented it to send their kids to school, later they bought it. The bus stop was by their place and our kids had to walk across the creek to catch the bus.

Pete moved his mining crew to the Water Fall claims. It was a beautiful place, big trees all around and a really nice house. I did not move to Moab with the kids, Pete had quite a crew for me to cook for and Josephine could send kids to school. She was a junior in high school. (I think)



Jack had a job and Mary was staying with Neva. She found out the kids really needed her so she moved in with them. Josephine did not like to cook. Then I got sick so Mary stayed the winter. Pete came home on the week ends and Jack was a trapper so he was gone about as much as Pete was. They did keep us in wood and meat. I had been sick about a month and Uncle Felix came to see me almost every day. Then one day he came in a hurry, sat by my bed and told me what I had to do to get well. He left and I never saw him again. He was killed that night, Dec. 12, 1937. I did what he told me to and started to get well. But how I did miss him.

Spring came and Jack and Mary moved back to the mine at Brown's Hole. The Water Fall mine was not doing so good so Pete got the Snow Flake mine and Jack and Mary, Pete and Victor moved onto it. They were then closer to Moab. They lived in tents and Mary was the cook.

I was not a bit well that spring but I was able to plant a fair sized garden.

June 11, 1938 Phyllis was born, a tiny dark haired little girl and the doctor had told me I would never have another baby. The pain I had gone through all winter was all worth it to me when I looked at that baby. Pete planted a tree for her and he bought the place so she would have a home and always a birthday tree.

The men mining Uranium did work hard. The ore had to be 2% and the pay was slow in coming so that spring of 1938 we did get hungry. I said to myself, my family will not get hungry again. I knew hunger. We got one of my Grandmother's cows to milk, I had a dozen hens so we had some eggs and when a hen would set I put 13 eggs under her and soon we had baby chicks. After my baby was born I worked to get a little pig and later helped the neighbor can sweet corn and took sweet corn for pay. I raised string beans, big white beans, peas and black eyed peas, all went in cans and jars. Mary would take vegetables to the mine and Jack and Pete would bring us rabbits.

I nursed my baby every three hours and when I was working Vee would tend her as she did Little Pete. Vee and I spoiled Pete, if I was sick she took care of me, she helped with the canning, the garden and milked the cow when Bob was not there to do it. We worked well together. I did not expect Pete to do anything around home, he worked hard enough in the mine. He mined with hand steel, single jack or double jack, shovel, sorting pick and a wheel barrow.



When Germany began attacking the small countries in 1939 Pete thought Hitler was going for all of Europe. He began worrying about what the U.S. was going to do. Several miners from Moab were selling their ore to a Jap. When a friend of Petes brought him

to our place he saw the 300 sacks of high grade ore. The Jap said "That will fill my order and I will give you a good price." Pete told the friend to get that man off his place because as soon as the Jap ship gets out away from U.S. waters Japan would attack the United States somewhere. Sure enough on Dec. 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Philippine Isles and Malaya. The U.S. declared war on Japan, Germany and its allies.

The mine at Yellow Cat, the Catus Rat, which Pete owned was doing well so he hired more miners and began leasing to other miners. The claim was rich in both uranium and vanadium. The government at that time was only paying for the vanadium.

Felix enlisted in the army May 9, 1942. It was not long before Dick and Ray enlisted. Eddy Edwardson enlisted in the Navy. He had a wife and three little boys. Nick enlisted, he had a wife and one child so all three of my brothers were in the service then John signed up. Pete had two brothers in the army. Of course we both had cousins and nephews. Before the war ended my son Robert Muir was in the army in Europe. There was very few young men left in the country. They figured they had better help England. Pete sure felt left out. We had six kids at home when the war started. Pete was too good a miner, he did not need a geiger counter to tell him where the ore was. The government needed the kind of ore Pete was mining. We did not know then about the atom bomb. Pete kept getting letters from the Government, all marked secret and he would read them and put them away.

My youngest sister, Eddy's wife Josephine, took her three little boys to Portland where Eddy's folks were, then she got a job in the ship yard. When the war ended Jo and Eddie did not come back to Moab to live. Eddie is a baker so he got a good job there in Portland.

Pete lost a cousin, McBeth Scharf and Felix was badly wounded June 9, 1944. All the rest of our family members made it home safe. Nick was sure glad to greet his baby girl, she was born soon after he was shipped out. Bob was in the occupation army in Germany. His troop reached Italy just as the war was ending. When he was discharged the first time and came back to Moab he ordered a beer. They told him he was not old enough. Pete and I were there because meals were served there also. I told them he had been old enough to fight for his country at age seventeen therefore he should have a beer at age twenty if he wanted it. He got the beer.

The problem with mining at that time; just one buyer in Grand County. He paid about one half what the ore was worth then he doled out the money to the miners in small amounts, \$10 or \$15 at a time. He came from the East and his theory was "Keep a man hungry and he will work harder." He made the mistake of saying that to me one time when we were going to Grand Junction so Pete could sample ore for him. Then the man left Moab for a month without paying the miners. Pete talked to some of them and they went in together and got a 1/2 ton pickup load of ore. Pete took it to Denver and sold it, he brought back about \$1500. Other miners joined in and Von Taylor had a larger pickup so with him and Pete made several more trips to Denver to sell ore before the Uravan mill was ready to handle the ore.

Whenever Pete had a little extra money he bought land. He was still mining the hard way, with a double jack and hand steel. Most miners were buying compressors and jack hammers.

What was I doing when Pete was busy mining and buying land? Well! I had my hands full with my kids, the garden, canning and wondering what Pete had in mind to do with the land he was buying. He was not a farmer. I had an idea but first I needed some help. I got it too, a couple of good sized guys. Oct. 10, 1939 about 2:00 a.m., Joe came first, mad, red as a beet and yelling about the whole situation. 20 minutes later Jerry came, a white, quiet little thing letting brother Joe do the yelling. After delivering his twin sons Pete walked out the door like that was the hardest work he had ever done. He was going for a doctor to come and cut the cord. Mary was there to help but she got lysol in her eyes so Vee helped Mary and bathed the babies.



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Philip Richard Stocks (Little Pete) started to school so he never went to the uranium camp in Yellow Cat with us. He stayed with Mary and Jack. He liked school and was always in the school activities. I missed his first one. Everyone told me I should have been there. He was really funny. One time we came in from the mine a couple of days early. Little Pete met me at the gate and he was very angry because him and Neal had planned to do something. I told him he could stay with his Aunt Mary but no, if I was home he was supposed to be there with me.

We had to carry our water from a spring just down a ledge below camp. The trail was steep and rocky. I should have known better but I was carrying two buckets of water up that trail and fell down. Had to go back for more water and it made me so mad I still carried the two buckets full of water up that hill. I had a cut above my eye and of course I had a black eye for quite some time, the head ache went away after a couple of days.

Pete worked in several different mines, including the one in Burkholder draw on North Mesa. At that time they were not being paid for uranium. He was mining 5% better vanadium and selling it for 31 cents per pound.

The war in Europe was getting worse, then Japan hit Pearl Harbor so we were in the war also.

This country needed vanadium ore. It was used in iron. Pete bought a big cabover Ford truck to haul his ore to the Urivan mill in Colorado. Then he bought the Yellow Cat mine from Tom Kelly paying \$1000 down. His brother Dick had a compressor and wanted to work with Pete. They had a working agreement, each taking 50% of the net earnings until Dick went in the Army, then Pete would take care of their parents. He



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kept the compressor and bought a jackhammer and finished paying for the mine. Pete bought a bulldozer

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Pete bought a lot of land. The question I asked was; what to do with it. He cleared more land and planted more peach trees. We had one work horse. We needed another work horse or something so Pete bought a farm tractor. With it was a disk, a plow and a scraper. I still cultivated with a horse. I put Peter on the horse to guide him down the rows of corn. That didn't work out so good so Pete bought a cultivator and a mowing machine because I had also planted alfalfa.

Pete assured me I did not have to run the tractor. He and Little Pete would do that. Little Pete did not like to farm any more than his dad did but he was one of the 4H boys that raised a calf to sell.

Pete did some disking around town for people who had small gardens. Then when he was working on our ditch, the tractor flipped over on him. He had seven broken ribs and three were torn loose from his breast bone. He spent three weeks in the hospital and was unable to work for a year. I got on that tractor and fixed that stretch of the ditch so a car could go on it. I thought no one else could get into trouble there. Puge and Dick went up to finish the dam. I was working up in the field when I heard a crash. Sure enough, Puge was driving the tractor and he went right over a ten foot fall and into the creek. He jumped off and the tractor landed on its wheels so neither the tractor or Puge were hurt. Dick and Puge had to go somewhere the next day so I went to finish the dam. I took some sacks and filled them with dirt and sod. Grandpa (Will) Stocks came to see what I was doing and he filled the sacks and I put them in the holes where the dam was leaking. By the time we were through the water was up to my waist. Then he helped me fence the orchard. He dug the holes and put the posts in. I strung the wire with the tractor and he nailed it to the posts. A six strand barbed wire fence on three sides of the orchard. The creek bank was on the fourth side and needed no fence.

When Pete was there his father would say "Here Pete, another little snort won't hurt you". It did, Grandpa, Pete's father could drink the wine and keep going but Pete could not, and no other drink ever satisfied him any more. He became an alcoholic.

NEXT ISSUE: The final installment of Verona's 'Personal History.'