

# **Life Story by (DAD)**

## **George Earl Brunt**

Written in 1984

I have neglected to spend a few minutes a day and make a record of my thoughts and the days happenings. Now after my 78th year, I will have trouble remembering and making a record of my life.

I was born of wonderful parents and I have strived to live up to their teachings. I was born the third child to George and Clara Rasicot Brunt, June 17th, 1907. My father was born in New Zealand, Sept 1875, and my mother, the daughter of Alfred and Martha Rasicot was born in Franklin County, Idaho.

My grandmother Brunt was born in the Church and came to Utah with her three children about 1886 from New Zealand. Her husband, my grandfather, came to America a year later.

When I was three years of age I fell off the table and bumped the back of my head on some brass cupboard pulls. Then I got abscesses and infections, measles, chicken pox and pneumonia - all one after another. I remember when Dr. Cline had the folks hold me down on the dining room table while he lanced the

abscesses and the pus shot clear to the ceiling. I was so ill that the Doctor told my parents that I would never live thru another Idaho winter and he advised the folks to take me to California.

I remember going on the train to Oceanside where we had a small home on the beach. I remember playing on the sand with my little red bucket and shovel. My Grandmother Brunt also came down with us. James E. Steele and his wife and two daughters, Laura and Hanna, were also there. I got through the winter and started to recover.

I was baptized the summer of 1915 by a Brother Tonsen. I was baptized in what we called the "mud hole." This was a wide area of Willow Creek just before it ran into the Snake River. It was situated right under where the present Idaho Falls Temple now stands.

After my brother, Virgil, was killed in a gun accident by his friend, Allen Pike, my mother grieved very much and my father decided it would be good to go to California again for her health and for a change. I think this was in 1923.

We went to San Diego that year. Father sent his car on the train to San Bernadino and he picked it up there.

We later moved to Long Beach and I went to school there. The first year we lived on 7th East and the next year we lived in a flat on 4th East. It was close to the ocean and the Long Beach Pike where there were rides and everything that a carnival has.

Dad had sold his grocery store to Scotty Thomas and he had his partners had sold the Osgood Project (a 7,000 acre farm development with ample water pumped out of the Snake River from water rights from two ocean lakes at Jackson, Wyoming). This was sold to a sugar company operated by the LDS Church. They money from his store sale and his share of the farm sale was a considerable sum for that time. I think it was around \$300,000. A \$300,000 dollar value in 1923 would be several million in today's market.

Dad investigated investments in Southern California and put down some earnest money on a five-acre orange grove on what is now Signal Hill in Long Beach, CA. One morning soon after he received word that the State Bank in Idaho had not opened and Dad lost all. He still had a store building in Idaho Falls and our home which were both clear of encumbrances. Dad packed us all in the car in April and we all returned to Idaho Falls.

My uncle, Joe Brunt (who lived just around the block

from us) had some reverses farming with his brother-in-law and E. N. Musselman had just gone broke as the Chalmer's car agent. Dad put up the cash from borrowing on his home and store building and Uncle Joe and E. N. Musselman were to work for him for their interest. So at the age of 49 or 50 (having thought he had it made) had to start all over from scratch. They started the Auto Parts Supply Store and incorporated it.

This business prospered and eventually the three partners wanted their sons to come into the business. Soon Joe and George purchased the Musselman interest. I was made manager of the Auto Parts store. My brother, Bill, Noall Nixon, brother-in-law and a cousin, Paul Brunt worked at the store. Things were sometimes difficult in controlling the stock buying etc. after several emergencies with cash flow, a deal was made to sell the hardware portion to the Joe Brunt interest. So our family became the sole owner and by carefully watching the inventory and pushing the sales, we had a very successful business.

Other Business Memories: At the end of World War II, my brother, Bill started the real estate business. Both businesses were owned by the Auto Parts Company. I was the manager of the Auto Parts

Supply businesses and Bill headed the real estate business. My brother-in-law, J. Noall Nixon was in charge of sales and another partner, LaVaun Merrill whom joined us in about 1936 was the bookkeeper. This arrangement worked out well. We had a good organization. Our sales volume stepped up and we held our buying in line with our sales so we could take advantage of our cash 2% discount.

Our business prospered and supplied about 15 to 20 families with their financial needs.

During this time, we were developing land west of town that my father had purchased at a tax sale. It was about 1500 acres.

We put water wells on it and had main pipes running throughout the farm. To this, we had 4" lateral lines with rain birds every 30 feet - each lateral being 1/4 mile long. We had at each well 450 HP motors to bring the water to the surface and 150 HP to put 40 lb pressure to all of the rainbirds. We finished the first well in 1958 just two years after my father, George Brunt, had died at the age of 80 years. This had been his dream.

I had arranged to give George Wakins, owner of Snake River Equipment credit in Auto Parts for part payment on the pump and we borrowed enough money

to get the farm moving. Many nights, LaVaun Merrill and I spent from 6:00 pm to 3:00 am plowing and disking the land. We hired Dudley Tucker to farm the land and things went quite well.

We later purchased 2500 acres at the foot of Kettle Butte. My Uncle Frank has homesteaded 320 acres for dry farming. We purchased this from Uncle Frank. It joined the other land we had purchased.

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Side Story: Uncle Frank homesteaded this land when I was about 9 or 10 years old. He would drive the team and wagon of supplies the 18 miles from town and asked me to go with him. I was real anxious to go. Uncle Frank smoked a pipe and right away I asked him if I could smoke his pipe. Finally, he said I might as well learn about tobacco. He filled his pipe and I smoked it down in a few minutes, so I packed some more tobacco in the pipe and smoked it down.

About that time, we stopped at a neighbors home, Russell Deardon. He smoked cigarettes. I thought I was pretty big so I took a cigarette when it was offered. It wasn't long until the room was spinning and I was very sick. I laid down on the bed and fell asleep. When my uncle came to bed, he could not wake me so he took my clothes off and put me to bed. I didn't wake the next morning so my

Uncle went out to plow. At noon when he came in, he still couldn't wake me so he went back out to the field. About 4:00 pm he became worried and came back to the house and I was still asleep. He hooked up his team to the hayrack and was carrying me out to take me to town and the doctor. I woke up the first time when he was carrying me out to the wagon for the 18 mile trek back to Idaho Falls. I learned tobacco is a dangerous drug. It almost killed me.

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Back to World War I - I remember World War I. I about seven years old. I remember the young men that left from the railroad station. The trains were filled with a generation of our young men. President Wilson's appeal was to make the world safe for democracy. I would hear stories of the battles and can remember the number of families that received word that their sons would not be home.

At the end of the war, I was 11 or 12 years old. Since we didn't have radios or TVs, the Idaho Falls Post put out an "EXTRA" telling that the Kaiser had surrendered and the boys would be soon home. I remember when the Armistice was signed and the great celebration that happened. Everyone went crazy and started to celebrate. The boot leg whiskey was very evident. I was selling the "EXTRA" telling about the war's end. The first customer I had, Chet Lamberson, who lived

down by the river took my papers and wouldn't give them back. He carried them for about two hours and when he finally gave them back everyone had purchased papers from the other kids. Later in the day, Chet was standing in a crowd of his cronies and I reached through and pushed him and he landed in the gutter. This was before they had paved streets and the gutter was muddy. This was one of the few times in my life that I sought revenge.

McClasky Blacksmith's shop was on the corner of Capitol and C Street and to help celebrate they took their large anvils to the corner of C Street and Park Ave, where the Bonneville Hotel is now located, and put powder between the anvils and ignited it. It would blast 50 to 60 feet in the air.

I remember when President Wilson died in office and Vice President, Warren Harding became President. While President Harding was in office, he stopped off at Idaho Falls. I remember his presidential train. The Republicans of Idaho Falls (Heber Austin and others) took him on a tour of farms in the area. I was in the procession with my father and the first farm we stopped at was in New Sweden. Heber Austin was explaining irrigation. He had a shovel and he asked President Harding to take the shovel for a picture. President Harding declined. It was about two weeks after this that President Harding died on the



way to California while aboard this special train.

When I was quite young, my father had me work at the grocery store. I was 8 or 9 years old and my main job was counting eggs that the farmers brought in buckets to exchange for groceries. I filled many cases of eggs and I received half interest in an Indian bicycle that was too big for me to ride. I had to ride through the bars and not on the seat.

I attended school at Riverside Elementary School. I has some speech impediments. They thought I was tongue-tied for which I had my tongue clipped three times. It didn't help much. I wasn't able to start school until I was seven as they wouldn't take me because of my speech defect. I had a hard time learning to pronounce words and I am still conscious of the ribbing I got when I pronounced a word wrong. This has always made me timid of talking in Church or in any public gathering. I have gotten over the fear, but it still sticks with me sometimes.

I remember one summer we lived at the Rasicot farm about four miles from Idaho Falls. This was the time we had dirt roads and most of the time they were muddy. Dad had a chain drive Metz car he commuted in. Some nights that three 1/2 miles was an all night venture...getting stuck in the mud and the car often breaking down.

Haroldsons hired me many summers to drive the derrick horse during hay time. Morgan Haroldsen and I rode horses every day and on Sunday about ten of the cattle ranchers would gather for a social and dinner. The dinner was catching the young male calves and relieving them of their testicles. They all would go to one of the houses and have a banquet. They had wood cooking stoves and Morgan Haroldson asked me to go get some wood. I refused saying I wasn't going to eat what they had and I could give him mine if he got the wood. He got the wood and preceded to take out of his pocket a large knife. He took me down on the bed, took my pants off and pretended he was going to castrate me as I told him he could have mine. Needless to say I was scared. Haroldsons were great, good people.

About the time I reached 13, we had a terrible tragedy in our family. My Mother had gone to Dubois, Idaho, as part of her job as a member of the Stake Relief Society Board. My brother, Virgil, at age 15 went to the sand hills with his friend, Allen Pike, to shoot their pistols. I tagged along with them. Where they were shooting was the place where the LDS Hospital was later built. On the way home, Allen twisted his 38 revolver around his finger.

When we got home I stopped in the kitchen to get myself a slice of bread. Virgil and Allen went down our basement. No sooner had they gone down, I heard a shot and Allen ran up the steps and said he had shot Virgil. At that time, my oldest sister, Opal, came home and she rushed down stairs and Virgil was laying in the coal bin. She dragged him over to the steps and about that time a car drove up in front and it was the Relief Society sisters bringing Mother home. I excitedly told her that Virgil has been shot. At first she thought I was teasing, but she could see the fear in me. She and Sister Andrew Johnson and Sister James Laird got out and went into the house.

Mother said to go and get Dr. Hatch who was our neighbor. I rushed over to Dr. Hatch's home and Mrs. Hatch called the office and Dr. Hatch came right over. I stayed over to the Hatches as I was afraid to go home and I didn't want to know that my brother had been killed. I finally went home and found out that he was dead. It was a terrible time for our family. Dad had gone to Jackson Hole, Wyoming to arrange for water from the two ocean lakes to pump out north of Idaho Falls and to pump to the 7,000 acre Osgood Farm Project.

They contacted him and he came as soon as he could. He arrived about 3:00 a.m. I woke up hearing

Dad crying and sobbing. It was a terrible ordeal for our family, especially for my mother. She never could get over it. To help Mother forget, we started going to California during the following winter - first to San Diego and then to Long Beach for two winters. (I should like California by now, but I don't. But I guess I have made my bed here so I will have to lay in it.)

During our time in California, before the bank went under, Father had started some investments in California. He had put earnest money down on two homes on five acres on Signal Hill in Long Beach. We were preparing to move there when one morning Dad got a telegram that the State Bank failed to open. All his money from the sale of property was in the bank - around \$250,000 to \$300,000. Back in 1923-24 that represented a lot of money. Dad had sold his grocery store and had sold the Osgood Project to the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company. All the proceeds of these sales were lost. We were quickly taken out of school, loaded in the car and returned to Idaho.

About the age of 50, Dad had to start all over again. At this time there were some Auto Parts stores in California, but none in Idaho Falls. Dad borrowed money and E. N. Musselman came in as a partner bringing his knowledge of parts. Uncle Joe Brunt had started a farm with this brother-in-law at Albion, Idaho. Farming was hard to stay in because of low prices on

produce so Uncle Joe quit farming and came in as a third partner and brought his skills of bookkeeping, something he was very good at.

If the purchase of the Signal Hill home had been completed, we many have been some of California's millionaires. I have much respect, admiration and love for Dad. He had plenty of money to retire at age 46, but due to the bank failure, he had to start all over again and he did accumulated a fair fortune by the time he died.

1931 to 1948

October 21, 1931 - Borrowed \$100 - borrowed DeSoto car and went to Spanish Fork. Convinced Thelma to marry me and went to Salt Lake. We got a marriage license and were married in the Salt Lake Temple by George W. Richards. We spent most of our money on a leaky gas tank on the way. We stayed in Salt Lake on the 21st - Nephi on the 22nd and Cedar City on the 23rd.

We arrived in Cedar City late ...arriving at 2:00 am and stayed at a new motel, but found the bed covered with bedbugs. We left our night clothes there and left for Bicknell around breakfast time. Thelma got a catch in her hip and I got to carry her into breakfast. We had

our famous ham and egg breakfast which was the beginning of many. We stayed there for two days and then went back to Spanish Fork for a party for us on Oct. 27th. The party was held at Thelma's Aunt Ethel's home and a lot of family and friends attended. Thelma cried while driving to Salt Lake since she was saddened to leave her family.

I got the gas tank repaired and left for Idaho Falls where we staying at my parent's home. They had invitations printed for our open house and announcements of our wedding reception in Idaho Falls. Thelma wore a light blue, long lace dress and I wore a tuxedo. We stayed at my parent's home about nine months until Thelma recovered (and Annette was born).

1932 - We bought our home on Canal Street just up the block from my parents for \$2,500. Two tenants lived in the upstairs apartment and some Japanese lived in an apartment on the first floor. There were the first Japanese to live in our town. Annette was born July 26, 1932. the first Christmas in our Canal home was special. We had decorated it with popcorn, cranberries, tinsel and candles. On New Year's Eve and for Thelma's birthday we had a toboggan party at Opal's home. Bert Musselman and I had to take inventory at the Auto Parts. While pulling the toboggan at John's Hole and in making the big turn,

Thelma fell backwards and hit her head on a lava rock. she was unconscious for three days in the hospital. Annette was nursing at the time and Grandma took care of her. Then Thelma came to. She had suffered headaches and had a black eye.

Our friends at the time were Sonny and Edna Ulrich, Veda and Loren Summers, Grace and Cecil Sandburg, Opal and Noall Nixon, Esther and Arthur Morganegg and Alice Oswald. We had roast beef sandwiches with Sonny and Edna nearly every Sunday after church and then played pinochle. Sonny had a Model T Ford.

1933 - I felt that prohibition was not working and I told the Editor of the paper during an interview and it appeared the next day on the front page. It was conference and President Ball read the article in conference. It was very embarrassing to Thelma and I to have him do this in public. I resigned from the Young Democrats the next day. President Roosevelt had asked all Young Democrats to speak against prohibition. I was also the Senior President of the Quorum and Seventies and Thelma was teaching the older girls in primary and helping to produce stake plays.

1934 - I made \$115 a month salary.

1935 - Carol was born in May 21st. Grandma Boyack

came to Idaho Falls to tend Annette. Marge & Alice kept Annette and Carol in style with new dresses from their shop in Spanish Fork. We remodeled our Canal house after Carol was born. We made two apartments downstairs and moved to one of the downstairs apartments. We had two bunk beds made for Annette & Carol for the small bedroom and Thelma & I slept in the front room.

1936 - I loved to play tennis. Sonny and I were partners and we won the Idaho Falls Championship Tennis Play Off this year.

1937 - We made a tennis court in our back yard. We tore down the barn and chicken coop. Mrs. Ross asked for the wood and she and her son build a house with the wood. It still stands today down by Highland Park.

We bought Musselman's Auto Parts interest and I became the manager of the store until 1958.

1938 - Margary Moore and her daughter, Judy, lived in our downstairs apartment. She was from Ohio and had come to establish residency for her divorce. She became a good friend to both of us, but she was killed in an electrical storm on her way home to Canton, Ohio by a fallen electric wire.



We went to Macks Inn and stayed in Dad & Mom's cabin with the girls at this time. We also went to Long Beach this year and stayed with my parents there. The girls had their photos taken in their new outfits.

I was the 1st counselor in the Stake Mutual and Thelma was the Stake drama leader.

One fall evening, Thelma and I had La Vaughn and Ivanelle to dinner. We were enjoying ourselves and the children were playing when Orson Wells came on the radio and told of the Martians landing. We became so frightened that I got my shotgun and we were going to Macks.....until we heard it was all a joke. It seemed so real.

They used to have one night at the movies that was called a "bank night" and one night Thelma won \$250. That was quite a sum for then and she bought Annette a Shirley Temple coat and Carol a Shirley Temple dress.

1939 - We moved into our new house at the end of Memorial Drive (520 G Street). We did the painting and papering and put in the yard. The Hatches sent over rolls for our first dinner there. We were so thrilled and after the children were in bed Thelma said it was the most beautiful motel one could ever imagine. We sold the Canal house to Arthur Morganegg.

1940 - This was the year that Linda was born. Thelma was ill and was told she could not carry the child to term. In the 7th month she went to Uncle Joe (our patriarch) for a blessing. She was told that she would give birth to a healthy, normal child and this child would bring fame to her name. We thought maybe a young prophet. Lo and behold - another girl. Miss Underhill who lived at Grandma Brunt's helped care for Thelma and helped with Linda. She was born December 27th.

I started finishing the basement, put up fence, etc. Also we started tearing down our old chapel so we could begin the new building.

1941 - Pearl Harbor, December 7th. I was at the Rexburg Auto Parts store taking inventory and having dinner with Reva Strong when the news came over the radio. Thelma was at church at a play practice when she heard the news. She ran home to the children and told them, "we'll lick those sawed-off Japs in a couple of weeks."

Carol started school and Linda swallowed a pin which caused us quite a scare. She had to have x-rays which revealed a pin, but it did pass.

1942 - I joined the Home Guard and participated two

or three times a week. We marched and had a rifle. We guarded the railroad and other strategic places. We had rations on gasoline, sugar, etc. and save all our tin cans.

1943 - We all did our part for the war effort. Thelma decided to also help by picking potatoes. She ended up with bronchitis in the hospital and spent all her money for hospital bills. She did knit socks for the Red Cross, too. Georgia was born October 16th. Since she was a girl, we decided to name her after myself and my dad...only she was named Georgia instead of George.

1945 - President Roosevelt died to most everyone's great sorrow. He had made home ownership possible and took the country out of the great depression.

1946 - We went on a trip this year to Atlantic City for an Auto Parts convention. We met Jane and Tommy Land who became lifelong friends. We saw "Annie, Get Your gun!" and "Oklahoma." Also saw the Rocketeers, Radio City Music Hall. We planned to stay three weeks and Alice came to tend the children, but Thelma got so homesick for the children, we returned in two weeks.

1947 - We moved the Auto Parts to Broadway from Shoup Ave. Bill started the Insurance and Real Estate business in the Milner Apartments. Now I was Supertinent of Sunday School and Thelma was the

president of the Mutual. I bought a new Nash from Ira Corey and loved it.

1948 - We built our very own cabin at Macks this year. Merrills also built their cabin next door. We were the only ones on the hill and took showers under the trees. We started with two basic rooms - kitchen/living area and a bedroom with a loft for the girls.

His history ends here.....but his boy, George, was born on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1950.

Dad loved his family and took very good care of all of us. He and Mom built us a cabin in about 1948 and we all know all the good times we all have had in that cabin and in the Macks Inn area.

Dad and Mom were able to spend many winters in the San Diego area where we could visit them and have fun. They later moved to Hemet and bought a double-wide mobile home. They really enjoyed living there and made many friends and did some traveling with them.

From there they moved to Laguna Hills, closer to Carol and Ron and finally to St George in 1987. Dad's greatest joys in life were all involved with his family and his love for Mom. They celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1981 at the Hacienda Country Club with

all the trimmings which included a limo ride for them. They traveled to Paris with Carol and Ron and loved that trip back to France. Other trips included the Carribean, Hawaii & Mexico.

They ended up moving to St George and bought a cute condo in Willow Run. They as always made a lot of good friends there. Mom had Parkinson's disease even tho we did not know it this time. She had some heart problems and Dad did too so even tho they enjoyed the area they began to have more and more health problems.

Note....Before Dad was married he became very sick. He had infection in his arm and the doctors thought is should be amputated. He was very sick, and they decided to operate to see if they could treat the infection that way. Dad tells of an "out-of-body-experience" he had at that time. He said he looked down at his body on the operating table and he felt great. He flew out of the window flew around before he entered his body again. He was never sure if it was a dream or really happened, but he seemed to think it did happen.

A little more about "Dad," "Gramps,"  
by Annette

George Earl Brunt said he "was born of wonderful parents and he said that he had always strived to live up to their teachings." And he did!!

He was born the third child to George and Clara Jane Rasicot Brunt on June 17, 1907. He was born in their home on Canal Street which was located in the middle of the block. They lived just a short ways from his grandmother, Elizabeth Susan Burnett Brunt whose home was on the corner of Canal and H Street. They later moved to their new home at 1001 Canal St. where he lived as a young man.

When he and Thelma were married they lived in the Canal Street home in the middle of the block until 1938 when they built and moved to their new home at 520 "G" Street. This was next door to Grandmother and Grandfather Brunt. They lived there until about 1960 when they built an apartment complex on Rivera Street off 17th Street. They lived there until 1974.

In many ways Dad lived in exciting times...electricity was new, telephones were a rarity....and so were inside bathrooms...He saw the landing on the moon and so

many inventions and the changes during his lifetime were immense. He lived through the depression where he was fortunate to have a job at a very low rate of pay. And saw our nation rise to great heights.

After returning from this nearly three year mission, he continued his studies at BYU. There were only 4 cars on campus at this time and they, of course, attracted attention to the owner of one of these cars. It attracted the attention of one, Thelma Boyack. It was love at "first sight" and they have been sweethearts every since.

Dad had a deep work ethic. He felt very responsible not only to his own small family, but also to his siblings. He never asked anyone to do anything he wouldn't do. He always asked his employees and friends, "how's your family?" He really had a concern about everyone he came into contact with. He worked late and hard. Mom and our family waited many, many meals until dad got home from work at the Auto Parts Company.

He first worked with Delbert Groberg as a State Farm agent, the first one in Idaho Falls. He then managed the Auto Parks Company until about 1958. The Auto Parts Company grew to a fairly large retail and wholesale company which supplied auto parts to the whole region. They also ran a large machine shop and

glass shop. It was quite a large business for the area and employed about 25 people.