

ZELPH YOUNG EREKSON FAMILY HISTORY

This history was written by William S. Erikson for presentation at the Zelfh Y. and Irene T. Erikson Family Reunion in December 1994. Hand written copy in the possession of Alma Y. Erikson. Allen B. Erikson scanned the typed document and converted it to "Word" and PDF in September of 2013.

My name is William Shirley Erikson. I am still addressed as Will Shirley by the acquaintances from my childhood. I am a brother to Zelfh Y. Erikson. He had an unusual name. I couldn't find a fitting nick name for him. I tried Zeke, Zebedee, and a few others, but none fit as well as Zelfh. Zelfh was the name of an ancient warrior whose bones were found on the travels of early members of the church.

Zelfh and Irene had five talented sons -- one of whom is probably your father, uncle, or brother.

There was Norman T. He was named after an uncle who was not baptized until he was a grown man. His Bishop called him to pray but he refused saying he was not a member. (At a later time, Uncle Will told us that he was baptized soon after that incident and eventually served as counselor in the bishopric.) You probably didn't know he was a speed skater (Norman T.) who was on the local hockey team.

Then there was Alma Y. Did you know he used to carry a trumpet mouth piece around in his pocket. That he could really make that instrument wail with the most catchy blue notes? Did you know he was named for an Uncle Alma? And also a boyhood companion of my father's.

Did you know that Klenner got his first name from Zelfh's best college friend? Did you know they corresponded until this friend died? Did you know his second name, Dow, was his great great grandfather's second name? Did you know this Great Great Grandfather's likeness is on the great monument at the mouth of Emigration Canyon. That he was chosen because of faithfulness to come here with first Mormon Pioneers of 1847. Did you know that Klenner is an unusual mechanic He can level a floor, hang a door, or fix the butterfly in an automobile carburetor.

Did you know that Allen can draw a straight line without the use of a ruler? Did you know he has a sense of harmony that he can express by drawing on paper? His name was chosen just because his parents liked it.

Did you know that Thomas Rock was a favorite family name chosen to honor his grandmother's forbearers who left an example worthy of following? Did you know that of all the hard tasks one might choose he tackled one of the hardest. He studied a language -- Chinese. He was sufficiently skilled that he went to the Training School for newly called missionaries and taught them some of the rudiments of that most difficult of all languages?

Zelph was born June 20, 1905 in a frame lean-to attached to the side and back of this store building just south of the present Murray City Hall, former Arlington School. On this picture is the store bearing the Ereksen name. This name was also in blue tile on the floor of the store front entrance. Zelph's birth was most difficult and there was concern that he would ever shape up.

Zelph probably didn't remember the home south of Murray High School where he escaped mother's attention for just a moment and he disappeared. Shouts of concern brought neighbors and one of the girls saw a gingham tag on a nail on the foot bridge over the irrigation ditch. She pulled it up and it was indeed the little dress of the year old with him in it.

In 1907 Father and Mother built a new yellow brick home at 545 Vine Street, There was a mortgage on it for about \$3,000 to \$5,000 which remained until it was sold in 1920. Only the interest was paid each year as cash flow was not very great. There was no lawn in front and some creeping ragweed grew near the back door. On the South the red roots and salt weeds took over. Zelph and I made some trails through the growth where we played with our imaginary friend, Slayen. Crawling through the growth, Zelph attracted our black and white Tom Cat. He sprang upon this little boy, sinking his teeth into Zelph's arm and scratching his chest. Scars of this attack Zelph carried all his days. When father came home he disposed of the cat.

In our back yard was a small coal shed with a plank floor and a roof with a hinged door, which was opened whenever coal was delivered. Also in the back and to the north was an unpainted out house. Its sole decoration was a cluster of golden glow, which bloomed each summer.

In Zelph's 5th year, we joined the Pioneers--Uncle Eddy Young came with his family in a covered wagon and took us to Vernal. We camped out each night and after a week we arrived at night at our great grandmother's cottage in Vernal. She lived where the Museum of Natural History is about 200 feet east of the County Court House. I remember a number of details of this trip, impressed more deeply because I was carrying my arm in a sling as I had broken my collar bone.

At Great Grandma Eleanor Jones Young's we slept on the floor and she was always rushing around getting things ready for breakfast, dinner, or supper. She had sheds for her cows and chickens, a fenced lot for her garden.

One memory is that we got acquainted with mother's sisters and brothers still living in this area. Uncle Maeser was four years older than Zelph. He came and let Zelph borrow his painter's cap so we got some little brushes and using water for paint, started to paint grandma's house with water.

We visited and stayed with Mother's Father, Edward Jones Young, at a farm he was leasing east of town. Here was a big corral and our Uncle Seymore was riding a bucking horse. Near the head of Ashley Creek, Uncle Frank and Aunt Ella took care of the power plant for Vernal Power and Light Company. Uncle Frank was an accomplished catcher of fish. Aunt

Ella took us with a buggy and horse to watch him. In one cast he caught 2 fish, one on each hook.

Aunt Irma and Uncle Dell lived in a red house out in Maeser Ward. Mother's Uncle Frank Young and family lived here along with others Mother took us to see.

After visiting many relatives we left Vernal during a rain storm in the stage coach. - Not like in the movies, but one with seats facing the front, riding not on great leather strap springs, but on iron leaf springs, similar to those now used in autos. My memory tells me we went to Dragon, Utah, (down in Eastern Utah by Utah border where bitumen is mined, south east of Vernal), where we got on a narrow gauge steam train, which we rode to Mack, Colorado. Where we transferred to the Denver and Rio Grande regular gauge train. During this trip at dark the conductor lit gas lights in the car we were in. A man went through with refreshments. Mother bought Zelph's favorite - a banana. Also we were introduced to Black Jack chewing gum. Each stick was covered by paper which was colored and fringed at the ends.

There was a bridge washed out so we had to walk across a foot bridge and embark on different cars which had come to receive all of us.

We arrived at Salt Lake after dark, but Father was there with a horse and a surrey he had borrowed from Orson Sanders.

The next day we went with Father to return the surrey he had borrowed.

That fall Father got typhoid fever and Zelph and I went to stay with our Grandma Isabella Benbow Erikson. She lived in the log room of the house her father, John Benbow had built in 1862. She had joint usage of an adobe kitchen and buttery lean-to built on the east of this log room. Water was carried from a flowing well and a bucket was on a bench just inside the door. The Buttery had a cupboard where food was kept. It had screen on the doors so mice could not intrude. To the south of the house was a brick room built over a spring where the white sand was kept in a turmoil by the bubbling of the clear water coming from the depths of the earth. Bricks and shelves had been placed so milk in pans could be kept cool.

Living in three adobe rooms on the north was Uncle John and Aunt May Erikson and their two boys, Reid and Arthur.

Grandma fed us and cared for us for about six months. She had a bed in the north and east corner of the room. Zelph and I slept on a meagerly springed sanitary couch. This was our bed. When we were not there, one side became a back so it could substitute for a settee.

For Christmas that year Zelph got a toy engine and I got a street car. Both had a heavy fly wheel (which) kept the toy moving even after it was given a push.

When a new snow came we filled the dish pan with snow, added some cream and flavored it with vanilla and grandma fed us ice cream.

She took water, put in a bit of vinegar, some sugar, and some cream of tartar I believe, and we were treated to a fizzy drink.

Stories we enjoyed were about her childhood. Her mother had several children none of whom lived. These babies were buried on the hill by their home. She told of the sadness she felt at night when the coyotes would come to that hill and give their wailing howls.

Grandma was just a little girl when her father loaded their meager belongings together with the wheat he had stored, into his wagon and left his simple log cabin on the banks of the Little Cottonwood Creek and traveled south several days to beyond Springville, where they camped. How they all rejoiced when the call came that they could return to their home and their farm. (Johnson Army episode)

In the spring of 1862, John Benbow was visited by Brigham Young. He was shown his farm, the pole and brush fences he had built, then when they saw the bubbling spring flowing cold, sweet water, Brother Brigham said, "Here is where I would build my home." So grandfather did that. It was this home where our father was born and the home our family lived in from 1920 until we each got married.

When spring came we were still at grandmas. A neighbor boy told Reid and Arthur there was a bounty on English sparrow eggs, so with a ladder, the older boys climbed up the trees and got eggs from many nests. So the eggs wouldn't break, they carried them down in their mouths. They said I was too little so I was assigned to hold the ladder steady. I don't know if our cousins were ever paid any bounty money.

With the beginning of summer, Father started to walk. The first day a blister came on his hand from leaning on his cane.

Uncle John enjoyed his horses. Father got no pleasure from using them, therefore, he never had an animal of which to be proud. A horse was something that needed care and simply provided a means of transportation that was better than walking. At first, we only had a buggy that was light and probably inexpensive. In the summer if father went visiting either the sick members in our ward, or even relatives or friends, Zeph and I sat in the small box behind the seat. Mother wouldn't let us sit backwards with our legs and feet hanging out, but we must sit facing forward with our feet stuck under the seat in front of us.

Finally the size of our family required a two seated carriage. It was a disappointment to Zeph and me. It was very sturdy, but it had no mud guards over the wheels and the wheels were not red, but were ordinary black.

The first colt born at our place was foaled on a slope which led to the big ditch. In its struggles to gain strength, it stumbled, fell, and drowned in the water of the big ditch. The second colt born we named Cap. He grew to be large, but was always ungainly. Uncle John took him for break in training and eventually he came back for our usage. Old Queen, his mother died in our shed and he took her place.

We drove to Salt Lake in the buggy to get the surrey. We went to the Utah Machine and Vehicle Company on State Street. It was on the east side of the street directly across from the Consolidated Wagon and Machine Co. We tied the buggy to trail the surrey and went over to Main Street. Father cut the corner as there was no traffic to speak of, a policeman stopped us and said, "Don't you know you aren't allowed to do that? Now turn around and go around this corner by keeping beyond the center so that your turn is on the square."

In 1915, Father bought a Model T Ford. This was a great day. Zelph and I went with June Lindsay as he taught Father to drive. We drove clear to Magna where he had a branch show room. When we got there the radiator was boiling so Zelph and I were introduced to responsibility of removing the steaming radiator cap and filling it with cold water. Certain drives we knew where we could get fresh water. Other times we would get water from a bag we would fill and tie on the base of a bow which supported the top. The cost of our new car was about \$350. Not much money now, but a lot of money then.

It was that summer we drove to Vernal in this car. Father, Mother, Zelph, Irma, Ed., Alma, Aunt Mary, and Jasmine. Eight people together with clothing and, bedding. The roads were rough and dusty. We stopped frequently to refill the cooling system.

We traveled south then up Spanish Fork Canyon then down Indian Canyon. It was dark when we started down this steep incline. Father used the foot brake as he felt needful. All of a sudden, the brake wouldn't slow the car. Father applied the emergency brake which was only partially effective. He then turned off the ignition. This turned out the car lights. When he turned the car into the embankment, Mother cried, "Oh, my Father," and the car didn't tip over and finally stopped. We could see a campfire down the canyon about a quarter of a mile.

Father went down and the rest of us stayed with the Ford. Soon he returned with a couple of men. One said that father could use the Reverse pedal as a brake and so he drove us down to their camp. They were from Kansas and they welcomed us to the comfort of their fire. Here we made our beds and spent the night.

The next day we drove to Duchesne. They had no garage. The Blacksmith said he could not make repairs, so we drove on to Vernal.

Two cousins, Reid and Arthur, and Zelph and I started school the same day, going to the Arlington School in Murray. The big bell rang at 8:40 to tell people to get ready for school. At 9:00 it signals that we should be (in) line in front of the door to march to our assigned rooms.

Zelph Y. Ereksen was a kind and caring brother. He was neat. Took care of his few clothes and kept his shoes blacked. He was baptized through immersion in the big ditch at the back of our lot. Using a canvas dam, the depth of the water was increased so a complete burial in the water was possible, just as indicated in the Bible.

Zelph was always good. His speech was clean. In about the 3rd grade we had a new boy in our class. He used vulgar words we had never heard before. He swore and could hardly speak a sentence without a cuss word. Zelph avoided adopting his ways

of speech. However, one day a friend said to me, "That's the first time I ever heard you say that." "What did I say," I asked. "You took the Lord's name in vain." I couldn't believe it, but I monitored my speech closely. I didn't want to be held as guilty at the last day.

Our father, William B. Erekson, was first a Bishop, then a Counselor in the Stake Presidency. He took us to the Stake Priesthood Meetings each month. Zelph was ordained a deacon at 10 years of age. Previous to this time, many of the older men passed the Sacrament. But, from the time Reid and Zelph, Owen Reynolds, and the Ballard twins were ordained deacons, there was never again a time when these younger men and their successors failed to discharge this holy assignment.

Father also took us each quarter to Stake Conference. Here we got to know the Apostles, to listen to their testimonies, and those of the other General Authorities.

Soon after Father got his first Ford, at the final meeting of a Conference, President Miller said, "Brother Erekson, would you mind taking Elder Heber J. Grant to his home in your car?" Father said he'd be honored if Brother Grant didn't mind riding in a Ford! Brother Grant said, "It would be a pleasure as that is the kind of car I have."

When they went out to the car, Zelph was sitting in the driver's seat, but he surrendered it so Father could drive Elder Grant to his home. This was the same man who would become President of the Church about three years later. This was the same man who would sign a letter to Zelph in about 1925 asking if it was in harmony with his feelings to accept a call to serve as a missionary in the Australian Mission.

It was our privilege in those years to listen to some great Church men. James E. Talmage was an exacting student of the scriptures and a thorough explainer of their words. He came many times to our Stake and he was a favorite of my brother, Zelph. Zelph listened intently and later would discuss what was said with our father.

In his early years Zelph was moved by the Holy Spirit and he humbly testified that he knew that Jesus was the Savior and that he was privileged to be a member of Christ's Church.

Because he demonstrated his mental abilities Zelph was advanced in school. He skipped a grade so he became a member of E.E. Boggess' class. Mr. Boggess introduced the Palmer method of cursive writing. Zelph embraced this instruction and soon he was making circles with his pen point. He controlled that instrument so it made the mark on paper which he envisioned in his mind. He practiced every day and as a penman he had, in my opinion, no superior.

With the new writing ability came a decision on his part and on Father's part to record in personal journals each day's experience. They persevered for a short time and then turned their attention to other matters.

Before he was in his teens, he inherited a pair of somewhat rusty girls' skates. They belonged to our Aunt Jasmine, who lived with us from the death of her mother shortly after I was born. These girls' skates were Rocker Runners. They fastened on one's regular shoes by a lever which forced clamps against the shoe sole. The back of the skate was held in place by a leather heel and a strap which was buckled at the ankle. Zelph became proficient as a skater and the next Christmas he received as a present a pair of nickel-plated clamp skates. I then inherited the girl skates.

Zelph was an excellent skater. There was a large ice pond in the pasture just below our home and Zelph skated at every opportunity. He played Hockey with a curved or "L" shaped stick. He played Steel Sticks and Pomp, Pomp Pull Away. He was the best skater in his size and class. His next goal was a pair of straight runner Hockey Skates, which he eventually got. He also got the first Official Hockey Stick which came to the ice pond.

When Zelph was about 10 or 12, Father turned over the chickens to him. This was not a gift, but a price was placed on the poultry. Zelph was to buy the chickens and the business with its profit. As long as this was in operation Zelph kept a record of all eggs gathered. When a case was accumulated, it was taken by the Thomas Martin Store to Murray. They credited Father's grocery account with all eggs received. Any difference would be charged to the household use and thus to Father.

At first the Martin Store would deliver chicken feed, which Zelph charged to his chicken business. Periodically the profit would be determined and these funds would be used by Zelph. One of the gains he had was a new Remington automatic shot gun.

Zelph bought a Peteluma 100 egg incubator. He hatched and sold baby chicks and baby ducklings. He also bought some setting hens and transferred up to 15 baby chicks to their nests. Such hens were good mothers and the chicks seemed to know when the mother sounded alarm, because they would flee to the safety of their little A-shaped shelter.

There was often cause for this alarm, as the Blue Bullet hawks would swoop down out of the sky and get a little chicken.

Ern (Ernest) Turner hid out in one of these shelters and a hawk did come in and he shot it. His brother then came and he shot the second bird. This ended the raiding for that year.

Father took Mother to a special church social event. It was close to Mother's Day. Father had taken Mother and bought a new dress with beads sewn on the collar for decoration. It was beautiful and was her Mother's Day present. Zelph wrote a note to his Mother. It said, "Mother, I don't have any money to buy you a present so I scrubbed the kitchen floor." "Happy Mother's Day." It touched Mother deeply.

Father enrolled at the L. D. S. Business College. J. Rueben Clark was the principal. Father took Accounting, Typing, and Shorthand. He would practice his shorthand on Sundays. In those days there was a Sunday Evening Meeting held at

the Tabernacle, and most of the General Authorities attended. During one of these sessions, Father practiced his shorthand by recording a sermon given by J. Golden Kimball, who was inclined to use very descriptive words. He then typed up his notes and sent a copy to Brother Kimball. Elder Kimball sent a thank you note to Father which said in part, "You know, it is a very sobering thing to find in print what you have spoken over the pulpit."

Father continued to practice on Sunday nights and especially enjoyed the challenge of recording Willford Woodruff, who spoke very rapidly, as did Brother Heber J. Grant.