

Interview with Lester Gene Whiting July 3, 2015

Looking at Melt Stelter's area map for the time period of the early 1920's to 1940, the Whiting house on the corner of 7200 south and 1700 East belonged to my uncle, Lester Whiting. His wife's name was Nora, they were Duane Lester Whiting's grandparents. His parent's home was on Highland Drive just south of the Christian Hansen home near 6500 South. The Hansen's property was on the west side of Highland Dr. and south of 6400 South and the Whiting's just next door to the south.

The Whiting family to the west of that house was where I grew up. My father's name was John Edwin Whiting. The property on the east side of ours belonged to a family named Browning. I do not recall the parent's names but the children were Glen, Gaye, and Bob. We thought that they always thought they were better than us because she had come from the Holladay area. They had the nicest house on the whole hill. I do not recall the Perodi family, but, I did know the Petersen's. There was a Dootsie Petersen. That was his nickname and that is what his mother called him. He was the mean one, his brother's name was Frank. I don't remember the other children's names.

On the hill next to Browning's was a house, people seemed to come and go there. I don't know who lived there. Next to them was a family named Hudson.

My uncle Lester Whiting lived on the northwest corner, and kitty-corner across 7200 south lived the Cannons. I just remember the name Norene. So they were between the Hudson's and the Petersens.

In the house that is marked Johnson lived a Grace Wilcox, she was a Berrett. She was very beautiful, she had a very pretty daughter, I don't remember her name.

Then there was the Brothers. We were happy to live by them because they made everyone else feel better. The mother of the Brothers was very, very dominating, she had a large family. The father was always down in the well reading books. (Just to keep away from her.) He had dug the well. They had the windmill and it would pump water up through the well. He was a nice old man but we were afraid of the mother. She would not let them play with the other children.

We moved here from the Uintah Basin and bought 10 acres of land. We bought the land from a Mrs. Hattie Thaxton, she lived up on the avenues. We called her Aunt Hattie. We bought it for \$1,000.00. She would stop by and collect payments from us, if we had \$100.00 we would give it to her and if not, we paid her what we could and that was okay. Lester told us about the 10 acres. Ellen Whiting married a Mounter and they built her a house down the lane to the west of her father's house. I have a picture of Lester and all his brothers, I will find it and let you copy it. Irene was the oldest, Wayne, Ray, Paul, Mary, Henrietta, Karl, Hewett, I am missing someone.

Leo Larson is my half-brother, he dug a basement across the street from us. His daughter, Elaine Barr, still lives there. Down where Target is now, was at the time also up on this hill before the sand and gravel pit ate it away and at that time 1930's there was an old house on the edge of the hill sitting right where Target is today. It was vacant and my uncle told us about it so we moved into it the first year we

were there and then John, Leo, Earl (big war hero) Emma, Barbara, and Bert. My mother had these children by another husband, who had been killed in Idaho. Uncle Lester and his wife got my mother and John back together, they had been childhood sweethearts. I was the big surprise, their only child together. I was the youngest and my mother spoiled me to death. My father had been a smoking, drinking, swearing cowboy and my mother's job was to tame the bachelor, which she did. We swore a lot in my family and my next oldest sister helped raise me. When mother would leave me with her, she would say to my sister, "Wait ten minutes and then whip him into shape. After they left, she would shake her finger at me, and say "You little shit, I'm going to shape you up." Everyone called my father Jack not John. He wanted everyone to call him Jack.

Everyone moved down here with the family. My older brother, Leo Larson, dug a basement on the north side of 7200 South. And that's where the rest of the family live for another year. Then the boys dug another basement across the street and we made our final move there. There were lots of basements in that time span. They were called depression homes. We moved here in 1934. We lived in that basement from the time I was 6 until I was 18.

We were over to the Hyatt's in Sandy (cousins) and my dad was going to make a fireplace in the middle of their house. He said that since it would be covered I could lay the bricks. My dad was so surprised that I could naturally lay bricks that he said, "you are going to build your mother's house and I did. I laid all of the outside bricks and my dad laid the inside ones. The house is still there today. Because brick laying came so natural to me I got my first job down in Union.

On the east of Browning's lane at the corner a family named Hudson lived.

The Price family was already there when we moved here. Ellen's mother lived there and we called her Grandma Denney. She was very sweet.

There was also a Millet family, very nice, kept to themselves. They had a mentally challenged son and I would always be nice to him and play with him. I was asked by Mrs. Millet to go to Lagoon with them because I had been so kind to her son. I had been raised in a very poor background and it didn't bother me to have him for a friend. Their house is no longer there but it was by the Price home.

We would walk down the hill to where Milne Lane ended and go over to Milne and Hilton Service Station. Gil Hilton and Mike Milne owned the station. Mike's property went up to the edge of the hill. I knew the McCormicks, Darrell Curtis, Maxine Walker, another family across from Milne's Lane, but I don't remember their name. (Later remember it was Atkinson.) There were the Jensens and Hathaways on little lanes going east off 1300 East. The west side of 1300 East was called Bradyville. From Ft. Union today south to a little lane where Atkinsons lived, were all Bradys.

My mother-in-law has a photo of all of the Brady brothers. I am going to a party on and will see if I can get it for you. Hyrum, Lawrence, all had nick names, a daughter, Alice, married to a Gould and lived in last house, also Royal, and Kenneth.

A family by the name of Gottschalks lived down a little lane by McCarthy's. She was a very nervous lady and was frightened of men. I remember one day when a group of children were by her door and she came out with a pan of hot dish water and saw us and dropped it. It went down her legs and I remember the big red blisters. She didn't say anything, just went back in the house.

When we first moved out here we did not have running water, we had to go over to the Munteer's and fill a bucket from their well and carry it home. You would have to hand pump the water.

I did know the Tuckers, but not well. They had a son who was killed, he was Garth Cowley's older brother. They lived next door to the McCarthys. On the corner of Highland Drive and 2000 East were fields and farms. The farm on the east was Boyce's. The farm on the west side (Colbrooks) was available for us to use. We grew green beans for the cannery. We would fill the baskets and they would come and pick them up. Lester was very good at growing string beans. We also grew peas and carrots.

When we first moved out here, the mail was delivered to mailboxes located on the southwest corner of 7200 South and Highland. The kids were sent up to get the mail (one mile) and they would pick up everyone's mail and deliver it to the houses on their way back down. Later the mailboxes were in front of the Stakers on 7000 South and 1700 East. This was also where the school bus stop was. We were so excited when the bus stop was moved to the corner of 1700 East 7200 South. Mike Mine was the bus driver. The man who delivered the mail was an old man in a model T ford, his name was Millard Christensen. His son married my mother-in-law, Ivy Croxford.

My father was in WWI and got gassed with mustard gas. It made him have a cough every morning. His cough was like an alarm clock (rooster crowing). He eventually died from lung cancer. I still have the gas mask he used in the war. My dad started smoking when he was 14. During the war the soldiers were given packs of cigarettes. My dad's best friend was George Faust. He would give my dad his cigarettes. George Faust was a good Christian. *I went on a mission and got really upady and my dad said to me, "I am proud of you for being one of those damn second lieutenants in the ROTC, I am real proud of you going on one of those missions, and you are a good boy, but you are not one damn bit better than anyone else. You grow up to be as good a Christian as George Faust."*

I got in trouble in class (taught seminary) because I would swear in class and was so laid back. All of the other teachers would send their bad students over to my class. I had what I called "the bad ass kids." They liked me because I could speak their language. I taught from 1962 in Idaho, went down to BYU and got my master's degree, then was sent up to open Brighton High Seminary. I taught there from 1969 to 1998. I also got in trouble there for being too laid back, and they gave me a choice of retiring very early or being the Chaplin at the Juvenile Detention Center. You can't teach Mormons but you can teach generic Christianity to the gang kids. Much to their surprise I jumped at the change to teach at the Detention Center. I had a very successful career there. I never felt God closer than I did with those gang kids. God will forgive them of the sins, they will have to repent, but he will forgive them because they are innocent, they hadn't been taught better.

We considered that we lived on Poverty Flats in Union. We told people that was where we lived, Poverty Flats, ok then, everyone knew where we lived. The school bus first picked us up at Staker's corner, then

we changed to 1700 East 7200 South. We thought we had it made. We associated more with the Union people we considered the Butler people thought they were a little bit better than us on the flats. We would go up there and buy fruits and vegetables. They were a lot of Italians. They were nice people in Butler, but sometimes they would take our water. I still have one share of Brown & Sandford water and it doesn't cost much to water my property. I live at 2520 East Bengal Boulevard. I bought the old Morse house. It was just a basement and I had someone dig out the basement to the west of the house, increased it by 15 feet and then built up. The tree in the front yard was planted by the Morse's in the early 1940's.

I kind of thought the Millet's were descendants of polygamists and that's why they did not mix with the neighborhood. They didn't go to our ward but they went to church. I had friends that were Zittings, Browns and others down in the creek. It just was not an issue. We use to go to Greer's woods and swim in the water and swing on ropes from the trees. We found many Indian arrowheads by the gross. Especially up on the sand hill where the condos are now on the east side of Highland Drive where the sand pit was. We would sled down the sand hill in the winter.