

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF MY FATHER LESLIE BRUCE GOODRICH

By LaRene Goodrich Kimball, January 1974

Leslie Bruce Goodrich was born December 7, 1884 at Morgan, Morgan County, Utah. He was the tenth child of George Albert Goodrich and Eliza Ann Taggart.

In October of 1885 when Dad was not quite a year old, the family moved to Maeser near Vernal in Uintah County, Utah. His father operated the Johnson flour mill there and they lived in a log house just east of the mill. His father operated the mill for about three years. During this time his father purchased land and built a home of logs in the Naples Ward. This home consisted of two large rooms on the main floor with some upstairs bedrooms. Since the Saints were still living polygamy at that time, Grandfather Goodrich had three wives. This home was where Grandfather and two of his wives, Eliza and Harriet, lived with their families. The third wife Rhoda and her family lived in the log home by the mill.

During this period of time the families were stricken with diphtheria and six of Dad's brothers and sisters died of the disease. Dad had the disease also and although very seriously ill, he recovered from it, but was to suffer with complications from it later.

Dad attended school in a little one-room log school house. It was located nearly a mile from their home, which distance they had to walk all the time no matter what the weather. The school housed from the 1st to the 8th grades all in one small room. The school was also used to hold church services and it was there that Dad was ordained a deacon.

A new brick school house was built later in which Dad attended school for a few years. He then attended the Uintah Academy in Vernal up to the 8th grade. Dad didn't have very good health as a child. He had yellow jaundice and other complications caused by the diphtheria. As a result he missed a few grades in school. When he was seventeen years old he quit school to work. With his father having three wives and thirty-two children it became necessary for the boys to work as soon as they were old enough.

Dad's first job was at the Gilsonite mine. This job just lasted for a couple of months in the fall, so he returned to school for the rest of that school year. Then in the spring he got a job herding sheep for S. R. Bennion, president of the Uintah Stake. He helped around the shearing corral for a month, then went to the mountains to herd the first part of May and stayed there until the following April. He spent most of the next few years herding sheep and was seldom home. His sister Dode (Rhoda) scolded him for staying out in the hills so much, like a coyote. He said he'd rather stay in the hills like a coyote than be in town with the grey wolves. There wasn't much work around at that time and the town was full of idle men with nothing to do but visit the saloons.

In the summer of 1905 when Dad was twenty years old, he worked at Dragon, a gilsonite mining town building a hotel there. That winter he worked at Daniels' ranch, fifteen miles east of Vernal, feeding cattle.

In March of 1906 he took an Indian lease on one hundred and twenty acres of land on Indian Bench east of Roosevelt. On this land he raised hay and grain. It was during this summer that Dad met the girl who was later to become his wife.

Dad, his brother John, his brother-in-law Bert Henry and Elmer Manwaring who also later became his brother-in-law all attended the first 4th of July celebration held in Roosevelt. People from all the little surrounding towns came to participate in the celebration. As the day progressed they decided they would find themselves dates for the dance that was being held that evening. Dad spotted a pretty girl in a red skirt and white blouse and told the fellows that he had chosen his date. They were surprised when he took her home that night. Her name was Almira (Mina) Hancock.

After a seven-month courtship he and his sweetheart were married on February 27, 1907 in Roosevelt, Duchesne County, Utah. The marriage was performed by Joseph H. Hardy, a member of the Stake presidency, in the home of the bride's parents, Levison Hancock and Emily Mangum Hancock.

The newlyweds lived with the bride's parents for three months. They then moved to Vernal. Dad became very ill shortly after their move and was found to have Rocky Mountain spotted (tick) fever. He was in bed for over a month. In those days a person was lucky to recover from this disease. The doctor told him that the fact that he didn't smoke helped considerably in his recovery. After Dad had regained his strength from the illness they returned to Roosevelt and stayed once again with Grandmother and Grandfather Hancock.

Dad had filed on a homestead in Bluebell, Duchesne County, Utah in 1906. In 1907 he bought lumber and he and Grandfather Hancock hauled the lumber to Bluebell and built a two-room home on the homestead. In the spring they returned to Vernal once again where their first child, a baby girl was born on May 29, 1908, but she died in birth.

During the summer of 1908 Dad worked for a short while at the Gilsonite mine and Mother cooked for the men who worked there.

Early in the spring of 1909 they went to Bluebell and lived on the homestead. They were true pioneers of this little community. There were only two other families there at that time. They were Elmer and Lila Gale and Grandfather and Grandmother Hancock. Their second child, a daughter Reatha Mae was one month old at this time. She was born April 30, 1909 and weighed only three pounds, being premature. The doctor didn't expect her to live, but through Mother's and Dad's loving care she did live. They placed her in a small box lined with blankets, with hot water bottles under them to keep her warm. They told about having to feed her with an eye dropper.

Shortly after they were settled in Bluebell Dad, his father-in-law and two brothers-in-law formed a partnership in farming, raising sheep and cattle. This partnership lasted for fifteen years. They planted and harvested a good crop the first year they were there.

Much of the next few years Dad spent a lot of time away from home herding sheep. Sometimes he would be gone for seven or eight months without seeing his family.

By October of 1910 there were enough people in Bluebell to organize a Sunday School. Dad was chosen as 1st counselor to Alfred H. Powell. Bluebell was a branch of the Ioka Ward at that time. During the summer of 1911 he helped haul logs to build the first meetinghouse in Bluebell. In the fall of 1911 the ward was organized and he was called to serve as 2nd counselor in the bishopric to Bishop William P. Merrill. He held this position for thirteen years. He said they had a thriving little ward and had many good times. He recalls his first frightening experience came shortly after his call to this position when he was asked to officiate at a funeral in Altonah. Altonah and Mt. Emmons were branches of the Bluebell Ward then.

On October 6, 1911 their first son, Leland Leslie was born. Then two years later their fourth child, a daughter Elda was born on November 17, 1913.

Dad and Mother took their three children and went by team and wagon to Price, then on the train from Price to Salt Lake City where they were sealed, along with their children, for time and all eternity in the temple. This special event took place on October 2, 1914.

While they were in Salt Lake City they purchased merchandise for the first store in Bluebell. This was started by Grandfather Hancock, his sons and Dad. The freight was shipped by train to Price, then hauled to Bluebell by team and wagon. A few years later they purchased a truck to haul the freight from Price and Salt Lake.

By 1916 the Bluebell Ward had grown to about 400 members. Dad's church work took quite a bit of his time, but he has always said that he wouldn't take anything for the experiences he had and the friendships he has made over the years of serving his Heavenly Father. It was in this year on May 3, 1916 that their second son Owen was born.

The partnership had purchased some sheep and kept them on the ranch until the herd was built up. They then got a permit to take them on the forest to herd. At this time they combined their herd with Dad's brothers John, Fred and Gard. Then they would all take turns going on the mountain to herd. This way they didn't have to be gone away from home so long.

In 1918 there was a bad flu epidemic and a lot of other illnesses. They were soon expecting their sixth child when the other children got the whooping cough. The doctor had Mother leave and go stay in Roosevelt because she hadn't had it. Dad stayed home

and cared for the children. He too got the whooping cough. Thelma, a girl, was born in Roosevelt on September 3, 1918. Mother was away three weeks before the baby was born and three weeks after. By then it was safe to bring the baby home. You can bet it was a very happy reunion.

While Dad was serving as a counselor in the bishopric Louise Willard, a widow and her family moved to Bluebell. They were neighbors to Mother and Dad, and it was through their kindness and generosity and just being good neighbors and friends that she and her children became members of the LDS Church. They gave her milk, vegetables etc. and Dad brought the deacons of the ward to chop a winter's supply of wood for her. She was so impressed she asked for baptism. She was known as Grandma Willard and she requested that Dad baptize her. She weighed 250 pounds so this was quite a challenge, but he said that with the help of the Lord he was able to accomplish it. He also baptized her three little granddaughters. Her husband had been a Methodist minister for thirty years prior to his death.

On April 11, 1921 another daughter, Veda was born. About this time Dad spent over a year performing the bishop's duties as Bishop Merrill was away at Monticello, Utah.

On February 12, 1923 when another daughter Velva was born, Dad was beginning to think that he was doomed to raise a family of girls.

He was chosen to serve as Bishop of the Bluebell Ward on January 18, 1924 and was set apart for that office on June 14, 1924. He chose James O. Larsen as his 1st counselor and Alva D. Hancock as 2nd counselor. He was set apart by George Albert Smith, who later became president of the Church. Dad discovered at that time that Brother Smith was a missionary companion to his father George Albert Goodrich.

Dad's first goal as bishop was that he would not be just a Sunday bishop. He accepted many challenges, not only for the building of a better ward but also a better community.

He was always loved as well as respected by all the young people of the ward. He had the outstanding qualities of love, patience and understanding which helped win many a young friend for him.

Dad and Mother were called upon to do many things beyond the call of duty, which they always did willingly and unselfishly, things such as being janitor, caring for the sick, preparing, dressing and sitting with the dead. There were no morticians available there then. Mother served as assistant to the doctor in delivering thirty-five babies. Several of these she delivered by herself. She also nursed and cared for many of these women and new babies for a period of two weeks. At that time new mothers were required to stay in bed for two weeks after giving birth to a baby.

Dad also was the Bluebell dentist, though not trained as such. He owned a pair of forceps and he pulled many an aching tooth for members of the community. He said he only found one tooth that he couldn't pull successfully.

Two children were born to Mother and Dad while he was Bishop, and yes, they were girls. LaRene was born on June 5, 1926 and Virginia was born on August 16, 1929. By now Dad knew he was doomed to raise a big family of girls. The older brothers, Leland and Owen were a bit disappointed, to say the least.

In 1932 Dad became very ill with a high fever. The doctors didn't know what he had and treated him for typhoid fever. He was so very, very ill they were afraid for his life. Mother sat with him night and day until she was near the point of exhaustion. He was ill for eleven weeks. The illness was finally diagnosed as undulant fever. It took him a long time to gain his strength back after this illness.

He was released as Bishop on June 27, 1938 after serving for fourteen years. He was then called to serve on the stake high council, a position he held for many years.

One of Dad's greatest attributes is his ability to love. He has always had a special gift of being able to make friends and his friends have been numerous. He has a special gentleness about him. His grandchildren and great grandchildren adore him. He could always make up to a little one no matter if they hadn't seen him for a long time.

He has always had a special gentleness with the sick. I can remember the comforting feeling of his gentle hands whenever I didn't feel well as a child. He has always seemed to possess a great healing power, not only when he would administer through the power of the priesthood, but whenever he was around anyone ill he instinctively seemed to know what to do to comfort them. Whether it be a neck or a back massage or whatever, his hands possessed both power and gentleness.

Dad has always loved the great out-of-doors. He loved to walk in the woods. I remember whenever we went to the mountains for an outing or fishing, Dad was always out first thing and exploring the surroundings.

He loved to work with the soil, to plant and grow things. He also loved animals.

As children we used to love to pack a lunch and go with Dad to get a load of wood or to the ranch to get a load of hay. He was never too busy to help us catch baby rabbits and pheasants in the hay field, or too busy to help us find pine nuts and pine gum in the mountains. He always took time to answer our questions and we loved to listen to his stories about his experiences with the Indians, the mountain lions and the bears.

Dad has always possessed a great sense of humor. He never owned an automobile and we didn't know that he could drive until one day when he came driving up the road on a tractor. As he approached our lane he called to Mother in the yard, "Hey! Come and move that shed quick!"

Dad's automobile has been his faithful wheelbarrow which he often took to the store to bring back groceries. His grandchildren teased him by saying, "Hey, Grandpa! Why don't you get in your wheelbarrow and come to see us?"

Another great quality which Dad possesses is that he never complains. He is always so grateful for anything you do for him.

Dad had the opportunity to really exercise his ability to comfort others when his brother Gard was bedridden for so long before his death. Dad spent many hours with him visiting him and helping Aunt Jennie get him up in his wheel chair. He mentioned several times that he liked Dad to help get him up because he could do it without hurting him.

He also had this opportunity with Mother. She had poor health for several years before her death on November 5, 1968. He cared for her so very devotedly and patiently. They always had a wonderful relationship, and this was a great loss to him.

He was saddened again when his oldest son Leland was taken in death by cancer on October 10, 1972.

He has always enjoyed good health in spite of the serious illnesses he has had. He is now eighty-nine years old and except for his eyesight and hearing he still enjoys good health. He lives alone, prefers it this way, and still does his own cooking and housework. This past summer he surprised us all by climbing up a ladder and topping some of his trees.

He has eight living children, forty-one grandchildren, eighty-five great grandchildren and one great great grandchild, all who love him very much and are proud to call him Dad or Grandpa. He has truly been an inspiration to all of us.

Note: Leslie Bruce Goodrich passed away on May 17, 1974 at Roosevelt, Duchesne County, Utah, after a five-week illness.