

My name is Donald Thurber Butler. My parents were John Lowe Butler III and Bertha Malvina Thurber. I was in the middle of a large family, the sixth of eleven children, but the first son and first daughter died as babies so I had one brother and two sisters older than me. I was born at Manard May 20, 1910. and was seven years old when we moved from there, so my memories of Camas Prairie are as a child.

My first memory is when I was three years old as we prepared for a camping trip to Magic Dam. I remember watching Father make a stove out of an old wash tub, He cut out a piece of the side then made holes in the piece and used wire to make hinges. He then turned the tub up side down and made a hole in the bottom and fitted a length of stove pipe in it. It made a pretty good camp stove.

We used two wagons and teams for the family and equipment. We lived in a tent and it was all so different and interesting to me. One day I went with others down to the water. I guess it was quite low as we had to climb down the steep side of the reservoir. I saw a fish jump out of the water and got all excited. When we left, the bank was too steep for me to climb so Grant carried me up.

On the way home I rode in the wagon Father drove and I remember hitting a bump and Father falling off. I looked over the side and saw him dragging along still holding the lines until the team stopped, and Father was moaning with pain.

We had a small three room house with a cellar connected and an unenclosed wash room between. I think Gladys & Edith slept there. I remember a house party we had there. I think there were about six couples invited and they surely had a lot of fun. Mother said I could stay up and watch if I would cause no trouble, and I really enjoyed myself just watching.

They played charades and Father was head of one team and they sure had a lot of fun, laughing and kidding each other. Father's team stumped the other team on a word and when he told them it was "asfitty" they all shrieked and laughed. I don't remember how they acted it out. Later I found he meant asafetida, a bad smelling medicine.

Our house had two outside doors with locks on the inside of the door. There was a small lever you could push to lock the door. One summer morning when we were all outside, two-year-old Glenn went in and locked the doors and couldn't unlock them. All the windows were locked so we tried and tried to get him to unlock the door but without success, finally Father came in from the field, went to the wood pile, picked up the ax and headed for the house. I thought sure he was going to beat the door down, but he wedged the blade of the ax into the crack of the door and pried, breaking the lock.

We had the most wonderful pony for us to ride and pull the buggy. Lucy was small, about 700 lbs., and so gentle we could even crawl under her or between her legs and she would just stand there. At age four, I could get on her and ride by grasping her mane and sort of climbing up her leg. One day I was playing around with Lucy in the barn yard as Father and another man were standing around talking. I discovered a small sled with a rope tied to it and wondered how I could hitch it onto Lucy so she could pull it.

I finally decided the only way was to tie it around her back leg just above the knee joint, which I did. Then I decided to give Glenn a ride, he was two years old, so I went into the house and got him. Mother was just ready to bathe him so all he had on was a tiny undershirt. I put him on the sled and told him to hold tight then I climbed on Lucy and started parading around the barnyard.

Father and the other man were laughing and I couldn't understand why, though each step of Lucy nearly jerked Glenn's head off. Father stopped me before Glenn got hurt.

I remember another party, or it may have been the finishing of the charade party. Mother cooked up a big batch of taffy and they all had a "Taffy Pull", they all buttered up their hands and got a big wad of hot taffy to stretch. But when any one pulled out their taffy, someone would usually grab some of it. The object seemed to be able to stretch your own candy without losing it and to be able to steal as much as you could from others. There was a lot of screaming, loud talk and even a tussel or two. But they sure had fun. Next morning I saw Mother prying a big piece of candy off the floor behind a door.

I remember some of the agonies Father had before going to the Mayo Brothers for his bladder operation, and while he was gone Grant broke his arm and Mother had to get some one to take him to the doctor.

About this time Glenn & I were playing out in the barnyard when we noticed the black grease dripping from the axle of a wagon wheel. I suggested we make ourselves negros, so I smeared his face real good and he did it to me also. We were real proud of ourselves and went into the house to show Mother our handiwork. - - She screamed! I guess she didn't appreciate our efforts. She got some old rags and wiped off all she could then rubbed our faces with butter and wiped that off. After several applications she got it pretty well cleaned off. That was one of a very few times when I saw her get really upset.

Our home was about a mile south of Manard and about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile west. Uncle Horace & Aunt Ida Butler lived about three miles east of us and I often rode there on Lucy to play with Ray. He was a year older than me but I felt he was my closest friend. Very often we rode around together, he on Tot and me on Lucy.

The Malad River ran east between our place and Manard. Between our place and the river was a large open area we referred to as "The Flat", in the spring this flat would be covered with a variety of flowers and it was a wonder to see. Yellow bells, buttercups, johnny-jump-ups, and many more I can't remember.

The east & west road that ran in front of our place was not too heavily travelled. Once I went with some one a few miles west and was surprised that it was mostly hilly and covered with brush and trees and grass. I think it was used mostly for cattle range. We crossed the river and went along the side of it a while. The river divided for a short distance making a sizeable island on which several cows were contentedly grazing and this fascinated me trying to figure how the cows got out on the island.

The summer I was five Grant must have been about twelve. I heard Father tell Grant to get a horse and ride out to that area, probably to get some cows, and I immediately thought maybe I could go with him and see the island again, so I asked him and he said no. I began to coax him but guess he was in a bad mood. (He probably didn't want to go himself.) He raised his voice to me, "Why do you want to go?"

I said, "I want to see the island."

He raised his voice higher, "Why do you want to see the island? it is just a bunch of grass and willows on it."

How could I tell him why I wanted to see it, I didn't know myself.

He started shouting, "Why do you want to go? Why? WHY?"

Suddenly an idea popped into my head and without stopping to think I shouted, "Because I have a wife there!"

Grant roared with laughter and went around telling everyone that I said I had a wife on the island, and they all smiled indulgently.

I went off by myself and tried to figure why I had told him that, I knew what a wife was, and I knew I didn't have one. Why did I say that?

Aunt Jane, and Uncles Taylor & Lee lived just across the lane from us, so we were over there often. Taylor had a bunch of chickens and a big red rooster that didn't like us children, and often chased us. One day I saw Taylor go into the coop so I went over to see what he was doing and I forgot about the rooster.

I walked up to the front of the coop and looked in pressing my face against the chicken wire. Just then the rooster landed on the back of my shoulders and started pecking the top of my head and beating me with its wings. I guess that was the worst fright I ever experienced. I started screaming and Uncle Taylor dashed out, grabbed that rooster from my shoulders and walked to the chopping block where he ended its career.

Another scare I had about this time was on the 4th of July. We all got into the white top hack and went to Fairfield to celebrate. I think Father gave me a couple of nickles to spend, which didn't take long. Mostly I just wandered around looking at things. I had lots of curiosity.

I spotted a man sitting on something near a food booth and he had only one leg. His left leg had been amputated at the hip. I had never seen or even heard of a one legged man before and my curiosity and my imagination went wild. I circled around him trying to figure what he was. Was he an ogre? Was he human? He couldn't be human, humans had two legs. I wanted to get closer to him so I could see him better but I was afraid or timid to do so.

After watching him for some time I saw a man and a boy about my age go talk with him so I decided it might be safe for me to get closer. When the man and boy left I screwed up my courage and walked up a few feet from him and just stared.

He tried to talk to me but I didn't answer. Then he called to a man over in the booth, "Hey Joe, come hold this boy for me while I eat him!"

I turned and ran as fast as I could but kept looking back expecting Joe to be after me. I was now sure that man was an ogre because ogres eat people and I could just about feel him taking bites out of me. I found Mother & Father sitting in some shade and huddled down with them, but I kept looking for Joe to come after me. I felt very relieved when we headed for home. For some reason I didn't tell them why I was afraid.

VISITS- I must have been only three or four when I went with my folks to visit a man. They said he had been in the pen. (Probably for polygamy). I fully expected to see him in some kind of enclosure such as a pig pen or cow pen. I don't know who he was.

I was probably a year or two older when I went with the folks to visit John L. Sullivan after he had been gored by a bull. He was in bed but he showed us the wound in his thigh where the horn had pierced him.

We often visited the home of Uncle Erin and Aunt Carrie Thurber, and I was always fascinated with the sword hanging on the wall. I think it belonged to Erin's father. Once when no adults were around, Rex took it down and showed me all about it but wouldn't let me handle it.

Once we were playing out in the yard when Glenn & I spotted something a short distance out in the field. It looked like a tall stick with something fluttering on top of it. My curiosity got the best of me and I went out to look at it. It was a tall stick with a piece of rag fastened to the top of it.

I noticed Father was on a plow way out across the field, but I didn't pay much attention to him. I didn't know he had set this up as a marker to plow his first furrow toward.

After looking at it I decided to take it over and show Glenn what it was. Soon Father came walking across the field and picked up a stick on the way which he used on me. Boy! was he ever angry.

It was in the spring a month or two before I turned six when my Father gave me a difficult job to do and left me to figure how to do it, I rode with him on the wagon to Manard where he tied the team to a hitching rack with a halter chain. Then he unsnapped the wrong end of the chain and left it hanging on the hitching rack. When we got home he asked me to walk back and get the chain.

I started walking and as I got to the river I had a small shiver come over me, never before had I been allowed to go into town alone. I went on into town, got the halter chain, coiled it up and started for home. I think the chain was about four feet long with a heavy snap on each end and, Boy, was it ever heavy.

I held the chain in one hand for a while then in the other hand then in both hands then over one shoulder then over the other shoulder then I put it on the ground and drug it a while then let it go and just stared at it trying to make it lighter. I guess that chain was as heavy for a skinny five-year-old as a large log chain would have been for an adult. I continued that rotation of carrying it and resting until reaching home and it took me well over an hour.

My arms and shoulders were so tired and sore I could hardly stand it, but I finally went trudging up the lane and heard Father in the barn, so I went in holding the chain in both hands. Father smiled, said thank you and took the chain.

Suddenly I felt elated in spite of my aches and pains, and I went to the house to rest. I had done a difficult job and Father was happy with me.

Once Mother found a hidden hen's nest with quite a few eggs in it and showed us how to test the eggs with a bucket of water. Good eggs sink to the bottom but spoiled eggs float.

A week or so later we had dinner with Uncle Erin & Aunt Carrie and family. After dinner I went to the outhouse and Rex went with me, he noticed my shoe laces dangling and asked me why I didn't tie them. I told him I didn't know how, so he proceeded to teach me. And, even today I think of him whenever I tie my shoes.

We heard a lot of excitement and shouting so we went out to find the women angry at Glenn and were giving him both barrells. Erin Jr. had taken Glenn into the chicken coop and showed him a setting hen on a nest full of eggs that were close to hatching. Glenn had gotten a bucket of cold water and showed Erin how to test the eggs in that cold water evidently killing the unhatched chicks.

June 16, 1916 was Primary day and after Primary let out Grant met us with the buggy and said we were to go to Aunt Carrie's instead of going home. (No explanation) He took us there and left us. Aunt Carrie took care of us and fed us, then at bed time started getting us ready for bed, when Grant arrived to take us home and told us we had a new little baby brother. (Ross.)

I think I was about five or six when, one day, our parents went to town leaving Gladys in charge. I guess Grant was working around. Glenn and I found a small rope and started playing horse, using the rope for hobbles, but only one could be hobbled at a time. I got a bright idea and got some scissors and made hobbles for us by cutting a long slit in the leg of our new overalls just above the bottom hem, then we could stick our other foot in there and be hobbled.

When Gladys found what I had done she was so angry she cried.

When the folks came home I was sitting relaxed by the heating stove playing with a rung from an old chair. Gladys led Mother in and pointed at my trousers and said, "See!"

Mother grabbed that chair rung from me and used it well for about a minute.

I heard Uncle Lee Tom Butler tell a story a couple of times and think it should be related here if no one else has recorded it:

Lee said, "I was too young to go to MIA so I had to stay home while all the others went. Taylor had gotten a big watermelon and intended having a group in after MIA to eat the melon.

"I was there all alone with that melon and Taylor had told me to not touch it. I walked by it a few times thinking how good it would taste. Finally I decided to just test it, so I rolled it over to make the sample plug on the bottom. I made a fair sized plug, pulled it out and tasted it and it sure was good. I thought about it a while then got a spoon and took a deeper sample. After a while I couldn't reach it with that spoon so had to get a longer one. A while later I suddenly realized what I had done and got scared, Taylor would sure be mad.

"I looked around and saw a batch of small biscuits Jane had made and stuffed them into the hole and put in the plug. When the gang came I went out and hid then came over to the window to listen. I could tell by the conversation when Taylor got the melon and started to open it. Suddenly he let out a beller, 'That damn kid!' I had to hide out until he calmed down."

I'll never forget the year I turned six and could go to school. I was ready because Mother had taught me the alphabet and numbers. I could tell dates on the calendar.

My teacher was Miss Barrett who became Mrs. Olson before the year ended. I liked her I think she was a good teacher. One day she asked us first graders how many toes we had and wanted us to go up and whisper it in her ear, one at a time. I did some fast thinking and it came to me that we had the same number of fingers as toes. So I counted my fingers and gave her the right answer. Surprisingly, about half the children were wrong.

Ray Butler was a grade ahead of me but I usually tried to eat lunch with him. He often had a hard boiled egg in his lunch and he disliked the yoke so he would eat the white and we would play catch with the yoke until it fell apart.

That winter of 1916-17 was a wild one with lots of snow and extreme cold. Taylor usually broke horses to ride for Father but I guess he was not available so Father took the horse out in the snow and climbed on, the horse tried to buck but with snow up to its shoulders it couldn't do much and gave up.

The next summer Father traded farms with the Packham family and we moved to Acequia.

There are a couple more stories that should be told:

One Sunday we had company for dinner and after dinner we younger ones went out to play while the others visited.

West of the house we had a few "A" pens, each with a mother hen and a batch of young chickens. The chicks were maybe three weeks old. Looking over there I saw some movement and went to investigate. There I saw a weasel dancing around shaking a young chick in its mouth. I ran to the house, put my face against the screen door and shouted, "There's a weasel eating our young chickens!" I had to repeat it a couple of times before Father understood, then he shouted, "Grant, the shotgun!" But Grant was already running for the bedroom and came outside loading it and ran for the A pens with me right behind him.

We saw two weasels dancing around with chicks in their mouths. Grant shot one but the other one got away. Grant took the dead one and proudly showed to those who came out to look.

There was a large red barn on our place and the hay loft was full of pigeons. One day Grant killed a bunch of them and Mother made them into a large meat pie. She called it Pigeon Pie.

For some reason there was but little of the pie eaten at dinner, probably for sentimental reasons, so Mother gave it to the dog, Shep, and he ate the whole thing, crawled under the house and didn't come out for three days.

Father bought his first automobile a second hand 1915 model-T Ford Touring car, and had a few little problems but nothing serious. Once coming home from town with some of the family with him, he had crossed the river when he happened to run off the grade into the Flat. He started running around in a circle, jerking on the steering wheel and shouting, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!" But the car wouldn't stop. Finally he circled around and got back on the road and home without harm.

When we left the Prairie Mr. Labrum went with Grant, each driving a team & wagon and they took Shep with them. The rest of us went in the little Ford car. I still don't see how we all got into it. Helen Thurber was with us and we took her as far as Filer where her folks had moved. That made nine of us in the car, Father, Mother, Helen, Gladys, Edith, Don, Glenn, Etta, and the baby Ross. But we survived.

Donald J. Butler

DON BUTLER also wrote:

Concerning the Packham family, I don't know how the trade was done, but they got our property (John Low Butler III. 160 acres, at Manard) and home south of Manard in 1917, and we got their 80 acre farm two miles north of Acequia (Idaho). I think stock and farm machinery were exchanged also, including our little beloved bay mare, Lucy, which we all rode and Mother used on the buggy.

I often wondered how the Packham family fared on the Prairie, but it seems they became good solid members of the community.

Now here are some things I thought you should know, but maybe not put in the book: (I, Helen, copy it, only for Ross Butler's copy and for Gladys' copy).

In 1918 W. J. Packham and one or two of his sons came to my father at Acequia and tried to talk him into trading back again. They seemed to be unhappy with the exchange. One of the boys was wearing a knee length horsehide coat and said the hide had belonged to Lucy. Father refused to trade back, so they kept pestering him about it.

Father's health was never good after his operation in 1914, so he wondered if a change in occupation might be best and, to get the Packham family off his neck, in January 1920 he traded the farm for a store, home and warehouse in Acequia.

It was a bad move, and led to his going completely broke. He was spread too thin. Beside the store he was Postmaster, on the School Board, County Commissioner, and Bishop.

A postwar recession hit about 1920, and business dropped. People had no money, so Father allowed credit and had thousands of dollars on the books which he never collected. A Mr. Paraboon stole a wagon load of goods and got away with it.

In 1922, Father traded our Acequia holdings as a down payment on a 10 acre place at Twin Falls, and lost the place when he couldn't make the payments.

Thank you, Helen, for letting me be a part of your Camas Prairie book.

Love, Don

P.S. In that large group picture beside the Manard Chapel, I was sitting just in front of Grandma Agnes B. Thurber. I was three years old.

Don

Source:
From letter to Helen, from
Don Butler
Box 263
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dated 22 Aug, 1988