

FAMILY NIGHT WITH GRANDMOTHER

(As dictated by Olive Butler Smith to Frances Smith Christensen about 1965.)

Every Wednesday night was our family night. We would all stay home and enjoy each others' company. And Grandmother would come over and tell us some of the stories of her childhood. We all sat in a circle around her chair and with a twinkle in her eye, she takes us back to the days when the west was young and Indians and Cowboys really did have fights and some men really wore guns.

"Well children, which story do you want to hear tonight?" Grandmother asked while settling herself back in the rocking chair. "The one about the bull in the sheep pen, we all piped up in unison. "Very well then." she sighed as it was also one of her favorites.

"I think it happened the spring when I was just past three. We were living on a cattle and sheep ranch on the Sevier River at the mouth of a canyon. The winters were very cold. In the spring before the sheep were brought in, my brother, Horace and I had the habit of running down to the sheep corral to chase each other and play. We scrambled over the fences and climbed the scaffold which was at one end over the shearing pens."

"This scaffold was used during the shearing. It held huge bags about 6 feet tall into which the men would put the wool as it was sheared from the sheep. I used to go down to watch them and I would climb all around the hole in the scaffold above the wool sacks and watch the shearing. Because the men didn't like me around, they told me that the hole would pull me through and they would haul me off to Provo with the wool and sell me to the factory!"

"One day Horace and I were listening to some neighboring men chastising our father for being the first man in the country to put up a barbed wire fence. At that time everyone had rail fences. Father replied, "well, I've been having a lot of trouble with Reed Benson's bull. He has him penned just south of my sheep corral. He has chased some of the family but when he took out after the wife, I really had to do something." The men agreed that Father had solved his problem."

"That was where we went to play, so we decided to go and look at the new fence. We saw the bull and some cows on the neighbor's side of the fence and my brother picked up a stick and ran it along the fence, scraping the stick over the barbs, chanting, 'Bull you can't hurt us now.' Just then the bull raised his head up, stared at us and began to paw the dust until a cloud went over his back. Horace continued to run back and forth scraping the stick on the barbs. Then the bull started to run toward us. He struck the wire fence and blooded his nose. He snorted and circled and pawed the dust and made a second attempt at the fence. This time, he broke the fence. By this time I had run across the corral and was half way up to the scaffold over the shearing pens. Horace was right behind me urging me to climb faster, but I didn't want to go to the top as I was afraid that the hole would pull me through but he gave me a swift whack on the seat and flew up to the top where we huddled together for what seemed like hours and hours while the bull circled round and round the base of the scaffold, snorting and pawing with steam and blood pouring out of his nose while we shook. It seemed like we were there half of the day but we didn't climb down until that bull had wandered back out of sight."

The End