

LEANDER HANCEY

“I took up a contract to bury the body of Blasphemous Bill McKai, wherever, whenever, whatsoever a matter of death he die.

....Do you know what it’s like in the Yukon wild, when it’s 69 below, when the ice worms wiggle their purple heads above the pale blue snow...?

Dad was fond of quoting the north land verse of Robert Service, the vagabond Scotsman. Handy entertainment for the kids, 11 children, 42 grandchildren and 48 great grandchildren. There are more to come.

Leander, better known as “Lee,” was the 5th child of 11 born to James and Annie Marie Christophersen Hancey. He was born in a 2 room log house with a lean-to shanty on the back, located in front of the present home at 33 West 200 North, in Hyde Park, Cache County, Utah. He was born on the 12 May 1890. He had 5 sisters and 5 brothers. Lee was one of the 31 children sired by James, a polygamist with 2 other families dwelling separately. That same year, 1890, the LDS Church Pres. Wilford Woodruff, issued the “Manifesto” that suspended further entry into plural marriage.

A second generation Pres. Benjamin Harrison, was Pres. Of the United States; Carrie Nation was smashing saloons in Kansas; Utah was not yet a state; Utah State University was 2 years old; 20,000 homesteaders had scrambled into the Oklahoma Territory; Railroad service was expended and Utah’s first sugar factory opened in Lehi, making Utah the 3rd state/territory to succeed in beet sugar manufacture. The beet sugar industry was to figure into Dad’s life for better and for worse....

While growing up, Dad felt that Family Home Evening was “old hat;” many times a week, the family was gathered around a large table with mother and dad discussing problems and needs, religious and otherwise, while the older children helped the younger ones with their homework.

Often, his mother, a professional mid-wife, was called out in the “wee hours” and he would be roused with, “Lee, I am going and won’t be back for breakfast, can you get the cereal on for the rest of the family?” This, no doubt, explains Dad’s deftness in the kitchen, especially in preparing breakfast; cereal, cocoa, eggs, sour pancakes, whatever...

School, strong on the 3 R’s, was in “the little rock school house” located in 1st West and Center, Hyde Park. Dad entered school the year Utah became a state and was immediately in competition with Lydia Nyman. When she was advanced from the 5th grade to the 6th grade, his chagrin was short lived; he too was advanced to the 6th grade within a few days. His teachers were Mary Ann Grant, Lydia Daines, J. W. D. Hurren and George Daines, who was also the Principal. Dad excelled in penmanship, the Palmer method, and was called upon by Principal Daines to do a lot of writing on the blackboard for him. Dad’s formal education ended after the 7th grade when he went to work full time for Will Perkes doing dairy farm work.

While growing up, Dad, contracted feet thinning for local farmers; he thinned many acres for Henry Hancey, a good paymaster. Many farmers complained to Henry for paying the ridiculously high wage of \$2.00 a day. In his early teens, he, his brother, George, and Wilford Christensen went with Isaac Jorgensen to herd sheep in the Amalga area. They lived in a sheep wagon and Isaac put up the grub for them. “It sure was good grub.” While herding sheep, they were also busy with a team of horses, a wooden-beam plow and a sub-soiler breaking up new land. He enjoyed this experience enough that later in life he said that someday he was going

back to sheep herding. The kids responded with “That’s just what you should do; then, when someone asks, “what does your dad do?” we can say, “Oh, he used to be the County Treasurer, but now he is a sheep herder. “Dad stomped his foot and said, “Now there wouldn’t be a thing wrong with that.”

During one school term, Dad lived on the C. C. Lee Farm west of Hyde Park, while sons Leander, Orville and Roy were going to school at the old BYC. Dad and Mart Reeder did chores and milked over 30 cows by hand, morning and eve. While there he adopted a little white filly pony complete with snappy saddle and bridle. He loved to ride this outfit into town. It’s assumed that this was Dad’s first “set of wheels.” Subsequent “wheels” Dad would sport about were: a Liberty, a Dart, 3 Model T. Fords, an Essex and a succession of Chryslers. One of the Model T. Fords was a coupe and a real test of “togetherness.” Bob and Faye were of the age and size to sit vis-a-vis of the ledge behind the seat. They sat face to face and feet to feet and proceeded to out kick each other. Since Dad did not like the din and did not enjoy being kicked in the back of the head while driving, a stern scolding would put either or both into tears. The Essex was a coupe with a rumble seat in the back. While short in seating, it was long on fun for the few that could cram into the rumble seat, squirming, waving, helloing, and never sitting still. This scene proceeding to the Hyde Park Reunion’s at Guinavah Park in Logan Canyon should have inspired someone to invent the seat belt way back when...

Born with the beet sugar industry in Utah, working beets in the field and now, again, the industry beckoned and Dad went to work for the Sugar Co. Over a period of time at Dayton, West Idaho, Lewiston, Trenton, South Logan, North Field Logan, North Hyde Park and South Hyde Park. Farmers in Lewiston were rebelling for not getting fair weight and had taken to weighing each others beets so Dad was sent there to keep the books, with the beets and keep the peace. He lived in the weigh house part time and stayed with people nearby as arranged by Bishop Hyde. To get home on weekends, he took the train to Cache Junction, thence the Oregon Short Line to a land some 2 miles west of Hyde Park, then by foot to town and home.

Bishop Charles Hyde was a main field man for the Sugar Company and arranged for Dad to go to Weston to build a weigh house, then weigh the beets and keep the books. His employment season was thus extended and came to include building and repair of beet dumps. This was for better; for worse, an accident took him off the job. A ladder rung broke, a long fall, an injured knee. This was in 1930 and he was laid up for several weeks. Then, back to work, still favoring his right knee, he was given work that was physically demanding. While tending a “high line” (a long and high conveyor belt system for beets) at the Logan Factory, another mishap. This time the conveyor caught his glove and dropped him some 20 feet causing a broken collar bone and severe damage to his already weakened knee. After a period of 5 years of pain, swelling, draining and one problem after another, he went to a Dr. Dunkley, a bone specialist. It would be necessary to immobilize the knee by removing the active part of the joint and allowing the bones to fuse together, a procedure called ankylosis. He went to the hospital on the 1st of Sep. And got home a few days before Christmas. The result was a stiff leg from hip to ankle that required a shoe with a built-up heel and a discernable limp. There was no discernable handicap however; he played ball, hiked and was physically active and never complained. While in the employ of the Sugar Co., Dad took a correspondence. While in the employ of the Sugar Co., Dad took a correspondence course in business from the International Correspondence Schools. He completed it in less than 2 years at

a cost of \$90.00, paid for on a monthly basis, and received his diploma. The diploma was a source of pride and hung on the living room wall for years. The handsome green and gold bound boundaries volumes, his text books, had a prominent place in the bookcase.

Work for the Sugar Co. Was, for the most part, seasonal. Dad worked on a continuously extended seasonal basis and for 2 years he worked year-round with Herb Hawks, one of the company's field men. During his work with the Sugar Company, one of the company managers, Horace Cather, repeatedly praised Dad's penmanship, impeccable and very legible bookkeeping Dad took great pride in what he worked at.

Before going to work for the Sugar Company, and during the off-season periods, Dad worked at various jobs in the building trades and the lay-out of drainage systems in the valley. One such job was building the Atkinson barn in Benson. It was a large, lofty structure with a round-pitch roof, covered with about a "jillion" shingles. When Dad deftly nailed the shingle into place, he took off his nail apron, called James Daines below and forthwith stood on his head on the ridge end-point to announce completion of the shingling. James, convinced that he had taken leave of his senses, lost all composure. Dad was lithe and acrobatic; head stands done so easily and often were no worry to him, even on the ridge point of a tall barn. Later James told Mother at the Post Office, "Do you know that you won't have a husband very long?"

While working on the construction of the Cutler Dam, on the west side of the valley, Dad's agility caused considerable consternation with the management. He did not make use of a life line while climbing about the on-going structure. The management finally insisted that he do it the safe way by using the life lines available.

In 1934, Newton Town citizens found the ground oozing around, between and over their toes; the town had become waterlogged. A drainage system had to be laid to solve the problem. Dr. O. W. Israelson of the USAC recommended Dad to engineer, layout and put in the system to assure drainage of the ground. Every day or so, Dr. Israelson would inspect the progress of the project and praised Dad for "Laying it in there perfectly."

Dad's abilities in Newton won him recommendation to oversee the development of North Logan's culinary water system from Green Canyon. Again it was Dr. Israelson's recommendation, and Dad got the job. He chose his brother-in-law, George Kirby, to assist.

Dad married Mother, Florence Reeder, on the 14 of July 1915 in Salt Lake City. They lived for a short time in the old Reeder home on 2nd West and Center, Hyde Park. They bought the David W. Grant home on 2nd West and 1st North where both lived the remainder of their lives. 11 children were born to them, 10 of whom are living as of 1987; Leander Maurice, Ellen, Marjorie, Anna Marie, Roland Reeder, Charles Ray, Lois, Robert, James, LaFaye and Owen Reeder. Dawn, the 11th, a girl, died 2 days after birth. The children were his pride and joy and indeed the purpose and fulfillment of life itself.

Dad was a first-rate gardener. He succeeded in growing vegetables that were difficult for others to grow. Just as with any other job undertaken, he laid out his large and beautiful garden with precise care and cultivated it the same way. Rarely was his dander up any greater than when someone cut off his irrigation water before the scheduled time. He would shoulder his shovel and march up the street to find out who the culprit was and didn't usually mince any words on the subject. The large corner lot of the home was groomed with care and for the most part, it was the work and effort of Dad, alone, that kept it that way. The garden yield always exceeded, by far, the family needs and all the excess shared with neighbors and relatives. Potatoes, and carrots for winter use were kept crisp and good in a big straw-lined pit. Cabbage and parsnips were heeled-in

deeply in a long trench. Lois and Faye were once sent out to get some little green onions for supper. With 6 long rows of onions they decided that they should just pull every other one. With the job finished, they had stacks and stacks of little green onions. When Dad saw all those green onions uprooted, his keeping of the peace was “You leather heads, I ought to make you go out and sell them.

The home lot was fenced off with a pasture in the south end and then the barn yard—small barn, a chicken coop and a pig pen. A cow or 2, a flock of chickens and a few pigs were other objects of Dad’s daily and faithful care for many years. The livestock and garden furnished a big share of the family’s subsistence. Several apple trees furnished fall apples of a tasty variety, though most of them were not too storable.

When a new baby arrived in the family, Druzella Saunders Nielsen came and lived in the household for a month to help out. Chad and Rollie thought “Drue’s gruel” was the greatest. The older children of the family always said, “We always had the feeling that every baby that came into the family was wanted, loved and received loving attention from all.

Saturday was haircut day for the family, some relatives and quite a few regular customers. Dad was adept as a barber and devoted much of this day to that trade, except that most were non-patrons insisted on paying the going fee of 25 cents. A high chair was a board across it’s arm’s served as a barber chair. Sometimes it was hard to sit solidly when the hand clippers uprooted some hair on the back of one’s neck. Dad also qualified as a Coiffeur. During a time when the “shingle bob” was the “in thing,” Ellen, Marg and many of their girl friends became patrons.

So far as church was concerned, Dad was there in attendance, support, and financial contribution. He was a High Priest, but chose to listen more than participate. He was insistent, however, that the children gain the benefits of the church and part of “keeping the peace” was going to church every Sunday.

Dad was just as fussy and particular about himself and what he did as were his brothers Leslie and Clarence. He was about 5' 8" and remained slim and trim throughout his life. He grew a little mustache the family referred to as his “Little Charlie.” He took great care to keep it trimmed short and blackened with a burned match stick. The mustache, being prickly, caused the kids to prefer a cheek kiss. His shoes were always shined and looked like new. It always amazed us that every morning or so, before he left for the office, his “spit” shines could make them look even better.

Dad enjoyed his brothers Les, Clarence, George and Evan, each year on their annual trip for 2 or 3 days. This he looked forward to very much. It was just about the only regular, leisure recreation he sought. Dad and his brothers were close and seldom did anything break down or need repair that one or the other couldn’t set it right.

In 1968, Dad went to Hawaii with Marj and Jim. At the age of 78, he and his sons Maurice and Rollie, joined Bob in Alaska for a week-long float trip down the Gulkana River during the salmon run. It was a very rough trip for all of them, Dad said, “I was glad to come away from it with my life. I wouldn’t have missed it for anything, but I wouldn’t give ten-cents for another trip like it.” After the trip, when the daughter picked up his laundry, he said, “If my underwear look like I messed my pants, it was because my “prat” wasn’t dry for a solid week.”

Dad became a member of the Hyde Park Town Board, and then the Town Clerk, a position he held for 30 years. Many of the town mayors would say, “I’ll run again, only if Lee stays on as town clerk.” He left a beautiful set of records of the Hyde Park Town. He became acquainted with Dr. Israelson where he was on the town board. Also, he became interested in town, state and federal politics. While still employed by the Sugar Co., he was encouraged by Fred Duce, then chairman of

the town Democratic Party, and J. W. Seamons, to put in an application for the position of Deputy Cache County Treasurer for the November 1934 election, M. T. Beck from Newton became County Treasurer. He wanted his brother-in-law for a deputy and had promised him the job. The County gave Mr. Beck to understand that he had to choose someone from another town other than Newton. Dad drove over to Newton, recommendations in hand, and talked with Mr. Beck who promised that he would consider him.

Dad became Deputy Treasurer and served in that position for 12 years. In 1946, he advised Mr. Beck of his intention to file for the Treasurer position, so Mr. Beck retired and Dad ran for and was elected to the position. He served as County Treasurer for 20 years. He loved the job and justifiably took pride in the fact that he and Sheriff Wes Malmberg were the only 2 Democrats to remain in office 4 out of the 5 terms they were in, they had survived an overwhelming Republican vote. While campaigning with other Democratic candidate in various towns in the county, Dad refrained from the usual long and drawn out speeches; he merely expressed his desire to serve the public well and that he would appreciate their votes and that was it. Dad was just that: a good public servant who tried to treat all equally and fairly. Many times when Alfred Chambers and Attorney Newell Daines inspected the Treasurer's books, they would say, "Look at those books...Perfect...Not an error....a beautiful hand....Hancey, they couldn't be any better."

Dad enjoyed election time and loved to discuss politics. He enjoyed "Give 'em Hell" Harry Truman and John F. Kennedy. He claimed to be a devout Democrat, but he would be there to help the best men win regardless of their politics, so long as they were Democrats.

In 1944, just one year before Dad was elected County Treasurer, he was on a ladder painting the house. Mother came down the street and said, "Oh it looks so nice to finally get some paint on it. Maybe, now that we can afford to fix that house up, one of us will probably up and die." Before she went in, she added, "I speak it not to be me." In less than 6 months, Dad was left a widower at the age of 54. Mother was a great companion to Dad for a short 29 years. While he was Deputy Treasurer, there were times when Mother could have gone with him "politicking" but did not have a nice dress to wear, and she would say, "Ill wait until you are the County Treasurer, and then I'll go with you. This she did not live to enjoy.

In 1944, at the end of World War II, 5 of their children were married and 2 sons and 2 son-in-laws were in the military service. Dad was right there helping with the canning and doing all he could to keep the family together. This was a difficult time for Dad. One neighbor said of him, "I knew your father would never marry again, because he loved your mother too much. Often at dusk, I would see them with their arms around each other's waist going for their walk around the block." Their walk was important, as it gave them a few minutes to be alone and away from the commotion of the 10 children. Occasionally, we asked to go with them, as we knew that Verna's Service Station was in route and there may be an extra nickel to share an ice cream cone.

He was a charter member of the Hyde Park Lions and was active for many years. On "Ladies Night," he would usually take one of his daughters for a partner. They also accompanied him to the Democratic Conventions in Salt Lake City. He attended Governor Rampton's Inaugural Ball on 4 Jan. 1965, a formal affair. He said, "I had to wait 75 years to wear a tux."

Dad often said, at the age of 76, "I go to my office and get the morning "Trib," turn to the obituaries and check to see if I am listed, if not, I settle down for a good day's work." Many asked why he didn't remarry and he would say, "I Have 2 women to put up with for 8 hours a day. That is more than most men have and that is enough for any man." His 2 deputies were Berdette Harris and Margaret Knowles. Margaret was a spinster and many a self-styled Dan Cupid tried to make a

match there.

Dad kept young at heart 81 of 82 years of life. At 78 he sported a new Chrysler and took the rough Alaska River "Cruise." At the age of 80, he and 2 of his daughters went to Illinois to visit another daughter. He drove all the way. It was a good trip with a bit of excitement, which merited the daughters doing all the driving coming home.

Dad's garden was then turned into lawn and pasture and the lot had never been so large with all the out buildings gone. He, however, enjoyed the neighborhood boys and their football games on his big lawn. A couple of windows were broken, but his philosophy was, "If when you are older, you cannot be friends with the younger generation in your neighborhood, you've really got problems."

In caring for Dad the last few months of his life, his daughters never did for him without receiving thanks and appreciation. His posterity of 104 children are proud of their Father, Grandfather, and Great Grandfather; proud of his faith, honesty, and sense of humor as a father, husband, businessman, public servant, barber and hard-working priesthood leader of the family.

His sons and daughters are especially proud and grateful for a legacy of wholesome family life full of the ideals that are now embraced in the LDS Church Family Home Evening Program.

Written by himself and includes information from family members. All is included in the book
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