

Reminiscences of a Trip to Cedar Breaks

G. HOMER DURHAM*

"We'll take it easy and camp the first night at Jinny Beck Flat."

"Good pasture for the teams, good water, and good rest for the Mammoth hill next morning."

"Let's make it over the 24th."

Papa, Uncle Willy, and Uncle Wilford were the speakers. It was Sunday afternoon. Fast meeting was behind them. The men were sitting around after dinner. Mama, Aunt Mamie, Aunt Alice and the girls were washing up. It was the first Sunday in July. It was hot. A trip to the "Breaks"—to Cedar Breaks, 16 miles up Parowan Canyon, and ten thousand feet above sea level, was a natural topic. To an eight-year-old boy it sounded like an expedition to the moon, except, in a covered wagon. But we tried it first in an automobile.

The year was 1919. No automobile had yet ascended to the high 10,000-foot grassland plateau—"the Mammoth"—below Monument Point. Called Brian Head on the maps, Monument Point broke abruptly into the grass of the Mammoth, which more abruptly gave way to the pink and white clays, sands, and stones of Cedar Breaks. Father, in his 1918 Ford touring car, with all the family aboard, had made it "up Main Canyon" as far as the First Left Hand. The First Left Hand was another canyon near the mouth—the first on your left—which broke from Main Canyon. Actually it *wasn't* the first left hand. It was the second. The *first* canyon on the left was Dry Canyon which formed a "Y" with Main Canyon about two miles from the valley entrance—near, of course, the Two-mile. The First Left Hand, with its own assortment of red cliffs, a miniature Bryce Canyon, broke off to the left at "the Four-mile." The Four-mile was a grassy spot where Slim Bruhn, or one of his ancestors, had once built a cabin. There was a patch of grass and a spring at the Four-mile with watercress. A

*Dr. Durham is president of Arizona State University.

corduroy road ran up the First Left Hand to Grandpa Marsden's ranch. The ranch was called "Over the Mountain." Over the mountain, too, was Panguitch Lake. But nobody in Parowan called it Panguitch Lake. It was simply Fishlake. The mountain was Fishlake Mountain. Whether you liked it or not. And whether or not there actually was a big Fish Lake on the map east of Richfield.

Father had urged the Ford, boiling like a teakettle, up the First Left Hand. Beyond the little combination sagebrush-and-grass flat called the "Five-mile" (another spring, watercress), we had gone to the Six-mile (spring, watercress). He had even tried to go up the Hog's Back. In 1919 I thought the Hog's Back was spelled Hogsback. So that's the way I'll spell it here. It's better that way anyway.

He'd made it up the Hogsback, in low gear, up a sandy red corduroy dugway, halfway to the top. Then we ran into Jess Guymon driving a bunch of sheep. They were right in the middle of the dugway and couldn't move. Neither could we. Sheep never moved for automobiles in those days. They just stood, panting, crowding together, pushing each other with the shepherd yelling "Ho! Ho! Sic 'em, King! Sic 'em!" Then King or Rover or Nig would bark like sixty. The herder would slap his leather chaps with his rope or quirt. His horse would snort but the sheep would just crowd up and push each other more.

When we met Jess Guymon on the Hogsback that day, Mother said, "Oh, George!"

Father just said, "The bloomin' things," and took his foot off the clutch. Taking your foot off the clutch in those days meant going from low gear to high. So, of course, being on the steep hill, the engine killed. We began to roll back gently.

Mother *yelled* this time. "Oh! George!"

Father George let out a high-pitched groan (today I say "Aw, Nuts!" to the same musical theme), and reached down the left side for the emergency brake. He yanked it on. We stopped.

By this time the sheep were about to envelop us. We were to become a Ford island in a sea of sheep; on the Hogsback dugway. A year later we made it over the Hogsback, in low gear, radiator boiling, up to the Bowery. The Bowery was a long pine-and-quaking-aspen-filled valley on the valley side of

the mountain. It had a nice stream and lots of black volcanic rock. Papa tried Fishlake Mountain that day, that time, but gave up because of high centers. A high center in 1919 on that mountain was a high center, too, believe me, because the differential of a 1918 Ford was nearly two feet off the ground. But on this occasion Jess Guymon, his dog, Sport, and his horse were masters of the situation. We backed down the Hogsback, turned around, and that little Ford went down the First Left Hand back to the Five-mile, the Four-mile, and to Main Canyon. Past Dry Canyon, the light plant on the left (going down) and the grist mill on the right, then we putt-putted past the cemetery like a top. We were pioneers! At the age of eight, in a Ford, I was baptized by immersion in the Spirit of Columbus, the Pilgrim Fathers (in whose Massachusetts neighborhood I had grown up), and in the tradition of Brigham Young. The top on our Ford was black. The top of Uncle Wilford's wagon was white. But I translated easily. Besides it was easy for a boy to translate.

The trip to the Breaks, by covered wagon, was scheduled to leave Parowan City on July 21. Not an early start. Convenient. We would camp the first night at Jinny Beck Flat.

Uncle Wilford had two horses. They were black. I thought they were black but he and Uncle Willy laughed and said they were brown. One was called Old Ted, and the mare was Old Kit. Old Kit and Ted; or, Old Ted and Kit. Old Ted was kind of lazy. His double-tree always sagged a little behind Old Kit's. Either Old Ted was wiser or Kit was more willing. Maybe Kit's metabolism was better. Anyway, although Uncle Wilford sang bass in the choir, I heard a new voice come out of him on occasions as he broached the subject of the lagging double-tree to Old Ted.

The year before, upon arrival from Boston and discovering the Parowan way of life, to me the team seemed huge. Their weights were mentally cataloged. Uncle Wilford didn't brag. He suggested, however, that Old Ted weighed about "1400" and Kit about "1200." I suspect that Old Ted was slightly less in poundage. Once I offered the opinion that Grandpa Marsden's Percheron team, Old Kurt and Old Frank, at 1600 each or more, was "better." A man's team and their weight, in 1919, I discovered, was a sensitive subject. At an early age one learns that people are happier when their super-ego is well above the

ego. Hadn't the Prophet Joseph said that "Happiness was the aim and object of our existence?" Who was I to run counter to the Prophet Joseph.

The morning of July 21, 1919, was sunny and bright. Uncle Wilford drove up to Bentley's house (which we rented) about 9 a.m. The horses were spanking bright and shiny-black (or brown). The harness was new. It had enough bright metal rivets to shine. Wagon hoops were in their places forming parallel "U's," upside down, the length of the wagon box, and they were covered with a white canvas top. The top was rolled half way up the sides of the wagon. People inside could see out and be ventilated, yet sit in the shade. General Motors and Fisher Bodies have produced nothing to equal it in the field. Instead of the spring seat, Uncle Wilford was sitting on a sack of oats. Bedding and grub boxes were neatly arranged for seats nearby and behind. Aunt Alice and Aunt Sarah were in the wagon with him.

We had spent the preceding afternoon and evening packing our own grub. Instead of a grub box like Uncle Willy's and Uncle Wilford's, we had a white pine dry goods box from the Co-op. Uncle Willy's grub box was a mellow, polished brown. Its surface was smooth with ancient use. No slivers. Ours was fuzzy and full of slivers. But it was strong and held a lot. A side of bacon, a big one. Dozens of eggs, packed inside Quaker Oats cartons between some of the oats for safe carriage. Jam. Bread. Raisin bread. Always raisin bread for a trip to the mountains. It kept fresh longer. Besides, it was doggone good. Especially with currant preserves. No Viennese bakery ever produced finer pastry, especially for consumption with cool, mountain spring water. Six or seven slices were only a beginner. Durham pickles (mustard, sour-sweet; so Mother could demonstrate to her husband's sisters that she could make the Durham pickles even if she had spent the past five years in Boston). Fruit cake. Of course! Fruit cake held more raisins than raisin bread. Smaller raisins, too. With currant preserves, only raisin bread and butter could hold second place to fruit cake. Even if made with muscat instead of Thompson seedless. Rice pudding. Bean soup, mostly beans, in two-quart jars. Also dried corn. Dried peaches and apricots, and bottled pears. Few vegetables. The old potatoes were too spongy and the new ones in the garden were the size of peanuts. But, canned pork and beans,

canned milk, sugar, and Postum. That was about it. Fresh milk and fresh mutton (the latter on occasion) could be had at Adams' Ranch on the Mammoth. ("Ireland," they called that ranch. It had long-pole fences around it, enclosing lots of green grass.)

We finally boarded the wagon. Aunt Sarah and Aunt Alice wore sunbonnets and gingham dresses and had wool cardigan sweaters for the high altitudes. Uncle Wilford wore bib overalls (Scowcrofts') and a blue chambray shirt. It was the local Deseret costume. Father only in the party wore shirt, tie, and trousers held up by a belt. Pioneer days thus had a link with modern times.

With food and bedding safely aboard, we were off. The big iron-tired wheels crunched softly into the red Parowan sand. We headed past Wm. H. Lyman's on the corner, then turned east past Wm. C. Mitchell's (with the "big ditch" running in front of it), toward the mouth of the canyon.

It didn't seem a slow ride then. One had time for landmarks. There were many of them. The Blue Slide and the Fan to the northeast went out of perspective as the cemetery drifted by on the left. On the right the grey, sagebrushed, pyramid-like hill with the "P" whitewashed on it became more awesome and less gentle as the black lava outcroppings became visible on the right—across the gravel trap and the creek. Every tree, grass blade, the new powerline, and the leaky wooden water-main had a story to tell. Not to mention Squaw Rock, Dry Canyon, and, as we progressed of course, the First and Second Left Hands.

Beyond the Second Left Hand, Main Canyon continues nearly due south for several miles, then disappears into the Summit Mountains below the hole-in-the-rock. The road, however, turned east—past the stone bears on the mountain wall to the left. You left cottonwoods and sagebrush and came to quaking aspens, firs, columbines, and ferns. At this point, Main Canyon could almost be called the Third Left Hand. But nobody ever called it that. It became simply "*the*" canyon. Turning to the left, the road in those days got gradually more steep; but only after one left an old mill—a sawmill—site. It was the old Co-op Mill, I believe, gone in 1919, although an ancient slab pile and a foot or two of sawdust remained.

Here it was cool. There were ferns. The trip up Main Canyon into the sun had been warm. As Old Kit and Old Ted, steaming, pulled us into the old mill site we saw the quaking aspen bowery, full of people it seemed. Three other wagons and outfits were ahead of us. Uncle Willy had a pony team. Old "Dick" and a nondescript mare hauled a covered wagon carrying Aunt Mamie, her daughter Ruth, Cousin Annie Rasmussen, and some of the Robinson children. Another outfit was led by Hans J. Mortensen, Parowan's bishop, filled with his children and wife. The other was Uncle James Robinson's, a well-turned-out wagon hauled by two well-groomed mules. Uncle James was different. He not only owned lots of sheep, but he subscribed to magazines and owned lots of books like we did.

It was lunch time. Fresh watercress had been discovered. Cool water in a galvanized bucket from the spring was available—for drinking from porcelainized tin cups. The teams were unhitched, watered, tethered, and fed. A brief debate occurred whether they should be hobbled and permitted to graze untethered. Tethering won; hobbling lost. They were soon re-hitched.

The remainder of the afternoon was hard work for the teams and occasionally for the teamsters. Passengers walked up Bear-Pit hill. Uncle Wilford spoke with unusual vigor to Old Ted and even lashed his flank with the reins. The automobile road today goes right past the bear pits, or at least—used to. The road then went up the left side of the canyon, through a steep incline that finally led through darkened forest (it seemed), to Jinny Beck Flat.

It was six o'clock when we reached Jinny Beck. Camp was made in the aspens on the right side of the road. Brian Head loomed and lorded over us on the left. Immediately below the jagged cliff and below the timber, was another deserted saw-mill. This time the building, a long, open shed, was still standing. Of course, the machinery was gone—all except an old, rusty, black boiler. Debate again: hobbling or tethering. Uncle James tethered his mules and gave them half a bale of hay in a clump of aspens. The rest were hobbled. Old Kit wore a bell. It tinkled as she took clumsy horse-dancer's steps with her forefeet. It clanged and glicked when, hobbled, she lunged and took a leap forward with both feet. In my mind today I can hear the bells of hobbled horses and see them take tiny

steps, necks down, teeth showing green grass stains, mouths dripping saliva, and tongues whipping in the grass.

There was work making camp for the night. Wagons to unload. A few slept in the wagon boxes. Father was strong for sleeping on the ground, "under the stars." I've forgotten the details of the evening meal but not the crisp mountain air, the walk through the dark, deserted mill after the meal, the rustle of the aspen leaves, the bright, bright stars in the luminous sky, the real milky milky way, and the coldness of the top quilt under my chin.

It was daylight when I awoke. Fires were already made. Men were hunting the horses. Bacon was crackling in pans on an open fire. Eggs were soon swimming in grease, their whites turning curly brown. And the Postum was boiling over on the coals, making ash fly into the frying pans and making steam with a sizzle.

After breakfast, harnessing and hitching up, we followed the way through the flat (more sagebrush than grass at our campsite end) and finally into the trees leading to the final climb. The Mammoth Hill. I walked with the other passengers as before, marveling at the softness of the dirt in the road beneath my feet when we finally came to the last pitch—in contrast with the hard rocks and shale lower down its course. Not having the benefits of a geology course at that time, I could only take off shoes and paddle along, with wild flowers on each side the road. The soft, clean, almost spongy mountain dirt gave wings, it seemed almost, to the feet.

But not for long. We were soon on top. The main road seemed to fade out. There was a variety of wagon tracks, some deep-cut, running off in a variety of directions. We were on the high, grassy plateau, with clumps of evergreens here and there, with Brian Head above, timberline on our left and to the rear. We followed a flint-strewn wagon track toward a wide stretch of blue sky trailing off into the distance.

Beyond must lie the Breaks! Too awesome to run ahead and see. We had been warned of the wind and the dangerous edge, the slick clays and sandstones. Besides I had to stop and put on shoes. The flint was hard, too frequent, and too numerous.

We came to a place where the ground seemed to break away beneath our feet. The sky stretched wider in all directions.

There were small evergreen brush and trees on each side, like a picture frame. The wagons stopped. Brakes were fixed. Their rope halyards were criss-crossed and half hitched through the spokes of the front wheel. If the horses moved, the harder they pulled the harder the brake-blocks would be applied. Still, men or boys stayed with the teams. Children of tender years clasped hands to their parents'—including mine. We walked slowly to the bright edge of the world.

Boston Common, the statues on Commonwealth Avenue, B. F. Keith's, Jordan Marsh at Christmas time, Bunker Hill Monument, the Boston Pops, Dr. Muck, the French Blue Devils marching with General Joffre and Woodrow Wilson—nothing in my experience could touch it. A gentle breeze blew. The sun was warm. The air, though dry, was cool. Not a city sound, nor any man-made sound for that matter, could be heard. Only the sougling of the breeze in the nearby pines and junipers. The pink and white cliffs, with yellow here and there, seemed to stretch endlessly below us and on either side. Then they would blend and fade into the Cedar Mountains beyond Blowhard at the far left. Blowhard is called Sunset Point today. But it's still Blowhard. Nearer to my feet the Breaks ran down endless, dry ravines and stream beds toward dim blues, then the dimmer blues, then the faded blues, then the barely, barely gray-blue mountains of the desert far beyond Lund and the railroad, toward Nevada. Looking down and straight ahead, one occasionally caught a slight sign, nearly a moan, as the wind circulated through the depths, to disappear into some rising thermal elevator. Otherwise, all was still, as we were still. Here was beauty, here was goodness, here was truth. The truth and the peace of God. A pioneer, aged eight, had arrived at Cedar Breaks. This too, Brother Brigham, was the place!