LIFE HISTORY OF MORRILL SPENCER FARR

(as told by M.S. Farr)

My mother and father were married on the 23rd of June, 1909. Dad met mother about five years prior to that time when he was on a camping trip at Jennie's Lake in Jackson Hole. He romanced her for several years and finally she consented to marry him. Mother turned 21 on the 16th day of June, the year they were married. Dad was 24. It was an unfortunate marriage, really, because they were never suited for each other. Mother was always very social and loved to be with people. Dad wasn't social. I think he liked to be with his men friends, but more than that he was interested in fishing, hunting, business and things like that.

Dad had never been religious; nevertheless, they were married in the temple. His sister, my Aunt Leah, asked him, "Why in the world would you go through the temple to marry Jean?". He said, "Well, I would have gone through hell to marry her, so I decided that going through the temple was a little easier than going through hell". I don't think that Dad was ever in church after that.



Morrill Newton Farr at 21



Jean Spencer at 19



Jean and Morrill - 1922

It ended in a divorce. They were divorced in 1935 when I was 25 years old. They had been married for 26 years. Mother was always very supportive of Dad and never spoke ill of him and Dad certainly never spoke poorly of mother. They supported each other even though it must have been rough going in the marriage. I was aware of this, I guess, for years. I remember thinking, when I was 11 or 12 years old, that if mother and father ever divorced, I would throw in my lot with mother. Frances must have been aware of it. Dick was not. He was five years younger than I and it was a great shock to him. Although they always seemed to have a good relationship, I imagine that those early years were very difficult on mother because dad wouldn't go to church. Mother was quite religious. She took all three of her children to church regularly and we were all baptized.

When I was 8 years old, I was baptized on the temple grounds, in the church alongside the tabernacle. In those days we didn't baptize in the ward meeting-houses. My father wasn't at my baptism. I went to church very regularly until I became a deacon at the age of 12. I quit going to church because I was afraid to pass the sacrament. Of course, Dad was never any help. He would say "Spencer, do you want to go to church or do you want to stay home with me?" and so I would always elect to stay home with him.

Mother was always active in the church. Of course, she had always gone alone because Dad would never go with her. My brother and sister and I went a little but we really were not very supportive of her. She had various positions in church. She was Relief Society President. I remember going to church a few times in Berkeley. I remember one Sunday afternoon, George Albert Smith came to visit us. He later became President of the Church. George Albert Smith was, I believe, a first cousin to my father.



Spencer, Age 2

I remember at Christmas when we lived on the farm with Grandmother Farr. We didn't get anything much in our stockings. No real prize. We got a few nuts. We did have a fireplace and hung our stockings up there. We had candles on the tree and popcorn chains and paper chains. We didn't have any presents to speak of. When I finally realized there wasn't a Santa Claus I was quite happy. I wanted a Flexible Flyer sled. That still is a great sled and they still market them. Dad couldn't afford the Flexible Flyer and I got an Icy King. I was glad there wasn't a Santa because I thought I could trade it in for the Flexible Flyer.



At Valentines - the tradition was to knock on the door and leave a valentine on the doorstep. Well, we lived miles away from anyone, and on valentines day there was a knock at the door and I went and opened it and there was a valentine for me. I couldn't imagine where it had come from. After awhile mom would slip out again and there would be a knock on the door and we'd tear out there and another valentine . . . .



Spence age 4 with father Morrill and sister Frances

My Aunt Leah first married Russell Rositer when she was very young - in her early 20's. It didn't last very long. She later married a man by the name of Stringfellow. They called him 'The Judge'. It didn't last long, either. Someone said that he had an alcohol problem. Her third marriage was to Doc Mead. She was happiest with Doc. He was a veterinarian and had a ranch at Battle Mountain. My grandmother Farr lived with them for a time, then grandmother died of a bowel blockage in 1929.

Aunt Leah and Doc Mead went back to Salt Lake after grandmother died and lived in Murray. Doc was very good with horses, but he suffered a fall while riding which broke his back. He never fully recovered from the fall. Aunt Leah never had children. I once asked her if she was ever sorry that she didn't have any children and she said, "When they're young, they're heavy in your arms; and when they're old, they're heavy in your heart." She seemed just as happy that she didn't have children.



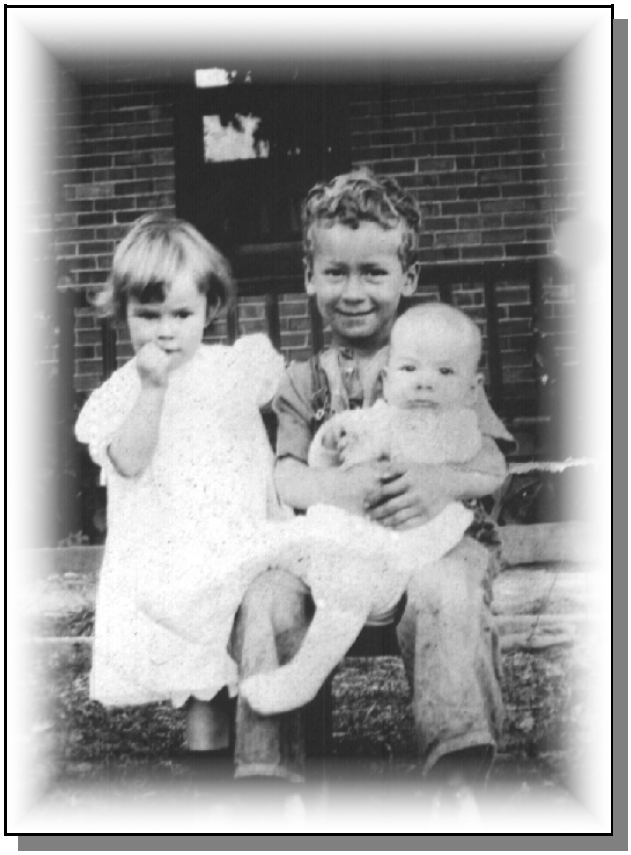
Spence at age 3

My family had a little farm of 2 or 3 acres on Murphy's Lane just east of Highland Drive. (On the west side it's called Murphy's Lane and on the east side it's called Millbrook.) We had a few pigs which we butchered for meat. We also had chickens. We would ride to 33rd South and Highland Drive to pick up laundry in our two wheeled cart with a horse. I got a kick out of the outside privy on the farm. Grandmother Farr had lined the privy with flannel so that it wasn't too cold, as we had to go out there in all kinds of weather. Dad had a motorcycle and he worked for Utah Power & Light at the time.

At Christmastime, I remember lighting candles on the Christmas tree. In those days, if you can imagine, candlelight was the only light you had at night. One Christmas, I leaned over a lower candle to light the candles on top and my clothes caught fire. Fortunately, my Mother and Father were in the kitchen, approximately 30 feet away, washing dishes. When I screamed, they grabbed me and rolled me in a rug. They reacted so quickly, that I don't have any scars.

We moved from the farm to a place on 8th East. It was south of 21st South on the west side of the street. We had a few chickens there and I had a cow. I was responsible for feeding the chickens and caring for the cow. One night I neglected to feed the chickens and my father was very angry at me, and justly so. I also remember vividly the cow gave birth to a calf. It was the first time I'd ever experienced anything like that.

I attended Forest Vale School on 21st South and about 8th East. I was naturally left-handed, but all students were required to write right-handed, so at school, I learned to write right-handed. I vividly remember breaking a pencil and feeling so badly about it that I didn't want to

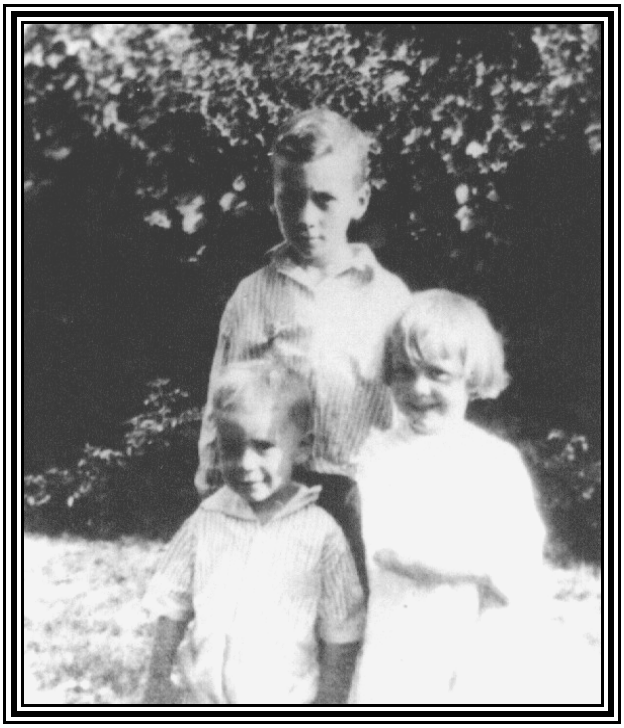


Frances, Spencer (age 4)
and Dick

go back to school. My mother nearly had to walk me back. After breaking that pencil, I didn't think I'd be welcome.

We moved again to E Street and lived there until 1919. I attended the Ensign School, between D and E Streets on 9th Avenue and enjoyed the friendship of Morgan Harley and Hugh Davey.

My father loved to fish and hunt. He would get on the street car that runs down state street and ride down to 33rd or 45th South where the Cottonwood Canyon stream crossed State Street. He would get off and fish there and then he would take the street car back. In 1925, when they decided you couldn't shoot more than 25 ducks, Dad thought it was a horrible situation. Heaven knows what you would ever do with 25 ducks if you shot that many. In those days we didn't think of conservation. When I look back, I think it a crime that we used to shoot so many, not being aware really of what we were doing.



Spence at 6, with Dick and Frances

Our first trip to Holiday Park was in 1919. We were invited to go there by Dick Decker, with whom my father had a good relationship. The cabin we built there was about the seventh cabin there. Nearly everyone at Holiday Park was related and we have all remained close over the years.

The drive to Holiday Park took about four hours and we went every other week. During the Summer we'd go up around the 15th of July and stay until the end of August. My parents would then go back on Labor Day. Dad always brought watermelons. Once, my mother had a bridge game going on in the front room while I was taking a bath in the kitchen. I backed into the hot stove

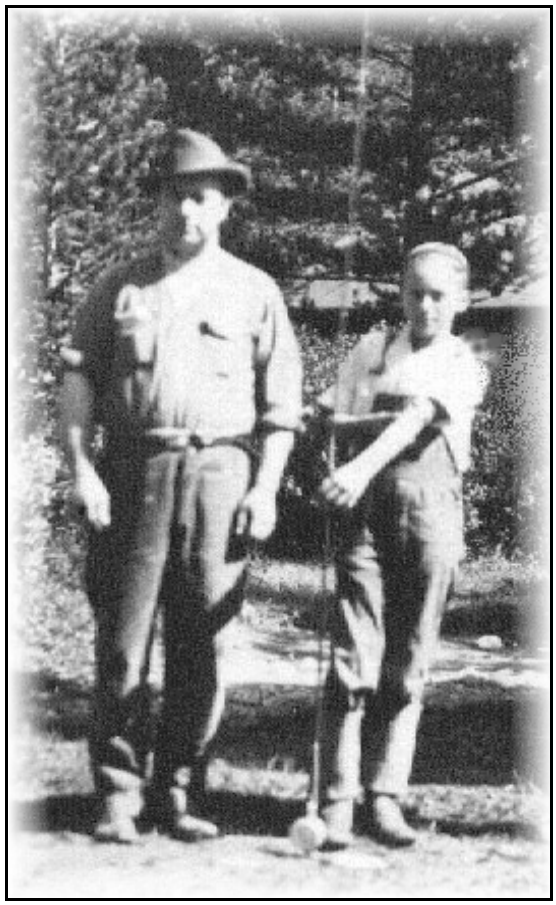
and burned my buttocks. I screamed bloody terror and interrupted the bridge game.

My father and I used to go fishing at Left Fork. Dad could catch a twenty pound basket of fish - 60-70 fish - while I was catching ten. I cleaned all the fish. I have never liked trout, possibly because of all the trout I cleaned and ate as a kid.

My mother took Dick and Olive Decker to pick raspberries at Dry Creek one day. Dick went up quite a steep hill to get some raspberries and he dislodged a stone, about two feet in diameter, which came rolling down at them. Mother saw it coming and grabbed Olive and hugged her tightly to her. The stone tumbled by so close, it bruised Olive's cheek and knocked her glasses off. It was a very close call, but all in all, we have had very few accidents up in Holiday Park.



Frances, Spencer (Age 6) and Richard Farr



Morrill and Spence (age 10)
fishing for trout

The cabin at Holiday Park was built in the marshes. Every year I would have to get slate and rocks from Dry Creek and crawl under the middle of the cabin and use the rocks to prop it up. I was propping it up one day and mother said, "Spencer, if that cabin dropped on you I don't know what I'd do, I think I'd have to go get the 38 and kill you, to put you out of your misery." About a week later Mother and I were making up the folding bed in the kitchen and the bed sprung up and caught her in it. I said, "Quick mother, where's the gun?"

Mother was afraid of being alone at the cabin and once when I left her to go fishing, she got the pistol out. It was a .38 Smith & Wesson. She was trying to see how it worked and she held it out in front of her and

accidentally squeezed off a shot. It scared her so badly that she never touched the pistol again.

The cabin we'd built in 1920 collapsed from the snow load in 1921. In June of that year, Dad threw a block and tackle into the car and we went up to see the cabin. The water was very high. We inspected the cabin and then started off towards home late that afternoon. The little stream just below the pole bridge, was so full that it was overflowing. Dad rolled the car up to the bridge and just as he touched it with the car, it started floating downstream. The car went in the water up to the hood. Mother was still in the car with Frances and Dick. Bob Williams and I had been walking behind. Fortunately, we had the block and tackle and were able to pull the car out, but we couldn't get across the stream. We stayed there that night and then dad and some of the other men built a new bridge. We returned home the following day. Our stays at Holiday Park were very enjoyable. It was an important part of our lives.



Holiday Park Cabin - Snow damage 1921



Old Holiday Park cabin 1960
with Spence Farr's cabin in background

In 1922 Dick, Frances and I got small pox. It never bothered mom and dad. We believe Millie Workman, a girl in the neighborhood who used to go to Holiday Park with us to help mother out occasionally, may have contracted it and passed it on to us. We were quarantined for about three weeks. We were never seriously ill and had only one or two pox on us. Dad wasn't allowed to come in

the house for that three week period. Once or twice he came by at night and we went out to talk to him. We really had a lot of fun together those three weeks with just the three children and mother.

We used to play tops on the front porch. When I looked at the front porch about forty or fifty years later, the top marks were still there.



This photograph was taken at Holiday Park, August 13, 1922 on the West side of the Farr cabin. The cabin was built in 1920 and rebuilt in July 1922 after it was caved in by snow in the Winter of 1921. LtoR: Morrill Newton Farr (father) - 37 yrs old, Morrill Spencer Farr - 12 yrs old, Helen Spencer Williams, Robert Spencer Williams, James Spencer West, Clarissa Young Spencer (grandmother), Richard Spencer Farr (brother) - 7 yrs old, Frances Farr (sister) - 9 yrs old, John D. Spencer (grandfather), Rehan Spencer West, Jock Norman West, Jean Spencer Farr (mother) - 34 yrs old.

In 1924 I had my first run in with a bully. Holly Service had borrowed a book from a friend, but it was my book. I asked Holly to return it to me and he said he wouldn't. He was the bully of our Jr. High School. I was 14 years old and my dad said I had to get the book back even if I had to fight him. He told me what I had to do. After school, I began walking home with Holly and Wendell Smith. I said, "Holly I want that book and I'm gonna fight ya." He said, "You can't have it." He drew a line and said, "Step across this line and we'll fight." I stepped across. I knocked Holly down and I think I sprained my thumb, but I got the book back. Holly was never a worry to me after that. If you have a problem and you step up to it, you can handle it.



Spence & Frances with Bike

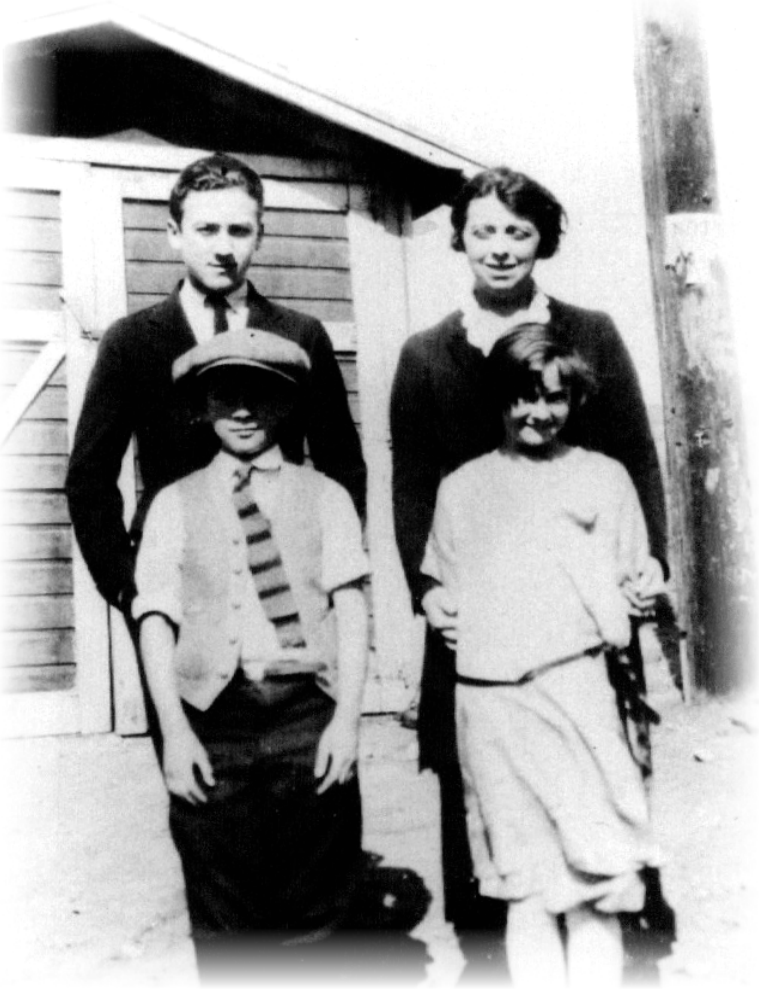
I remember dad as being very strong. He used to carry blocks of ice when he was a kid. He had strong legs and he could do that Cossack dance. Dick could do it as well. After we started our business in 1937, there was a young man by the name of Ed Darget who kept sparring around with dad one day. Dad said, “Don't bother me”. He kept on bothering him. Dad reached over and picked him up by the lapels of his coat and just shook him. He never bothered my Dad again. Ed said, “Boy, that father of yours is really something, isn't he?”

Around 1923 or 1924 dad was working for Howell Electric Motor. The general sales manager was a fellow by the name of Charlie Norton. He came out to visit us and he asked my father, "Why don't you go into business for yourself and let Spencer watch your money?" That was interesting. Apparently, even at that age, whatever I was - 13 or 14 - Mr. Norton knew that I knew how to take care of money. Heaven knows Dad never knew how. His father never knew how to take care of money, either. I never knew anyone in the Farr family or the Spencer family that was ever able to do it. I am sure that both Dad and Grandpa J.D. Spencer made money; but they were never able to keep it. They never could take care of it.



Spencer at 13

In December 1924 or January 1925, I was ice skating at Liberty Park, playing tag with Chet Pratt and stepped in a crack in the ice and went down on both knees. As I recall, it was very painful. Later I learned I had broken the cartilage in my left knee. The doctors at the Salt Lake clinic didn't know what was wrong, and put my knee in a cast for eight weeks. When I was no better, they put it back on for another six weeks. In that fourteen week

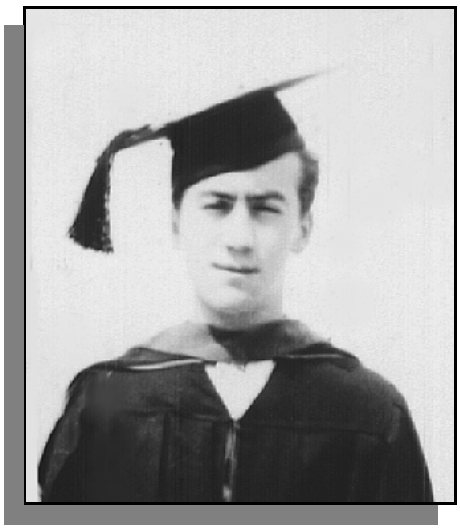


Spencer (15), BaBa, Dick
and Frances - 1925

period I lost an awful lot of the muscle in that leg. When we moved to Berkeley in late 1926, we went to a doctor there who knew immediately what the problem was. He operated on the knee and took the cartilage out. But he didn't say anything about physical therapy. I must have been 50 years old before a doctor warned me that if I didn't start exercising the leg I would lose the use of it. I started then, and have been exercising religiously since that time. It has interfered with activities. I played golf, but I was not able to play tennis; and track was completely out of the question.

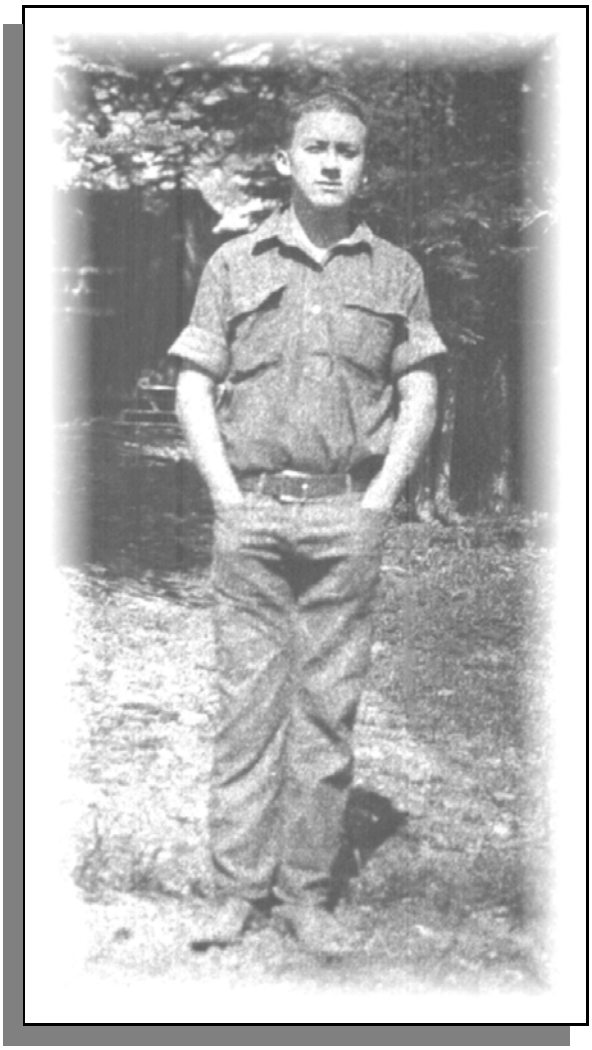
I went to East High School when I was 15 in 1925. I thought it would be good to go out for football, so I did. I was in one play, but was afraid to tackle. I really didn't like contact sports. I was never any good at it. I did enjoy track, however. I went out for track and won the half mile, which made me very happy. When I got into long distance running later on in the summer, my knees started to swell and that was the end of my track career.

I finished High School in Berkeley, California. Because we arrived in the fall of 1926, I was late in starting school because it started earlier than Utah. It took me a year and a half to get through school instead of just the year it would have taken had I started at the beginning of the semester. After graduation, I worked for several months before we moved back to Utah in 1928.



Spencer Farr
High School Graduation

In the summer of 1929 I went to Yellowstone Park to work at the Canyon Hotel. I got the job through my uncle, Dan Spencer, who had something to do with Union Pacific. I met several people there. The one I got best acquainted with was Dick Forsythe with whom we have kept in contact over the years. He now lives up in San Francisco. It was a very enjoyable



Spencer - approx. 1929

Summer. I worked as a houseman and supplied linens to the housemaids. I was through work by noon each day and most days I would go fishing on the Yellowstone River. Sometimes I would take some of the hotel guests, if they wanted to fish. I also sold Salt Lake Tribune newspapers at the Canyon Junction. The first time I was down there I had some cookies in my pocket and when the bears came up to me, I decided I had better get rid of the cookies in a hurry. At times, when I went fishing, I would come back through the Canyon Junction carrying a string of fish. Once a bear raised up on his hind feet and came towards me. I threw the whole string of fish to the side. After that, I learned that if I would just throw one or two, it would divert their attention. Ordinarily, when I went fishing, I would get a ride up the Yellowstone River towards Yellowstone Lake. Sometimes it would take a little while to bum a ride, but on the way back when I had a string of fish, I didn't need to ask for a ride; people would always stop and I was able to give the fish to them. In those days the hotel used to take all of their garbage and put it out in a bear dump. It was our job, every afternoon, to take it out with a team of horses. The small black bears would jump up on the wagon and start eating the garbage. Later, the hotel guests would come out to see the bears. A ranger would stay nearby with a gun for protection. When the grizzly bears arrived, the small black bears left in a hurry.

I would sell newspapers up at the bear zone, too. When I got the Sunday papers, I found that if I took the funnies and put them on the outside of the paper, they would sell a lot faster. I made, perhaps, a hundred dollars that year between selling papers and taking people fishing. I got acquainted with some of the people that worked in the kitchen. Once in a while we were able to get some steaks and have a barbecue. There really wasn't much of a social life except for getting together at night occasionally and having a barbecue. There weren't any dances or anything like that.

I left Yellowstone about the 28th of August and I took Don Hills and Dick Lambourn on a pack trip out of Holiday Park up to the Granddaddy Lakes. I wanted to get an invitation to join the Sigma Chi fraternity, and they were both Sigma Chi's, so I thought this would be a good way to get my foot in the door. We had a pack horse and a couple of other horses. We started out at Holiday Park and after a day or two, we left and went up to the Granddaddy. We were there just one night. We fished late

afternoon and put some fish over a log. The next morning they were frozen stiff. A storm had come in and left 3 or 4 inches of snow on the ground. We were a little apprehensive, so we packed up and headed back to Holiday Park. As we came to Mirror Lake and started down the left fork of the Weber, it started to rain. It rained all the way down, which was probably about a six hour ride. Believe me, that was very uncomfortable in the rain in a wet saddle. We stayed two or three days at Holiday Park, but discovered that three people together finally begin to argue. It was a good thing when we finally left.



Spencer at 20

I enrolled in engineering courses at the University of Utah. I was in the ROTC and I did get an invitation to join the Sigma Chi fraternity that fall. I enjoyed the fraternity very much. It helped me socially and gave me a lot of self confidence. Prior to that I was really quite shy. The initiation was really kind of a pain. As I look back on it now, it was really quite useless. It caused me to miss the basics in calculus and chemistry. I just managed to squeak by on both of those courses and really never understood either one of them. With so much hazing I really didn't have a chance to study. When I left there in 1930, we moved to Los Angeles and I enrolled at the University of Southern California. I didn't have all of those distractions and I started to get some good grades. I finished two years of college there and my grades were very good. The only thing I got a 'D' in was economics, which is interesting because that has been my line of endeavor ever since.

When we moved to Los Angeles, my allowance of $25.00 per month was cut off because Dad just didn't have any money. That $25.00 had been enough money to support me and give me a little money for dates. We were absolutely broke. I didn't get an invitation to join the Sigma Chi at USC, which was a good thing because I couldn't afford it anyway and I didn't particularly like the members. The fraternity consisted of mostly football players. I wasn't interested in them. There were only about 15 people in my engineering class when we graduated. Today I don't know the whereabouts of any of them. I was only friendly with two or three during that period of time and when we got out of school our paths went different ways. I have not been back to USC since that time. I feel closer to the University of Utah and BYU than I do to USC. I would have attended UCLA except that their engineering course was equivalent to a junior college. USC was a private school and I had to borrow money. I went to Dr. Von Kleinschmidt and told him my need, and he made the money available. After I graduated in 1932, I wasn't able to pay him back right away because things were so tough, but I

eventually paid him back in 1935 or 1936. That is quite contrary to what the kids are doing today and the way so many of them are flaking out on their loans.

My first job after graduating from school in 1932 was a disaster. I talked myself into a job doing drafting for a firm that did metal working and metal construction. I was competing with a man from Cal Tech. Really, he should have had the job from the first because he had 2 or 3 years experience and I was just fresh out of college. I lasted about 10 days and then I was fired because I just couldn't handle it. I wasn't competent. I am sure they gave it to the man from Cal Tech. It set me back a bit. When you graduate from college you think you are pretty damn smart. I figured I was a finished product. I had graduated as a mechanical engineer, but I sure couldn't perform in the field.

I actually never really followed engineering. I have been mostly in the financial and administration end rather than engineering. The only engineering I ever did was making the drawings on the evaporative coolers after we started our business in 1937. It was hard keeping up with Dad. He made so many changes that before I'd get a complete drawing done there was a change on it.



Dick, Morrill and Spence - 1946

After I lost that first job in 1932 I tried to sell refrigerators door to door. I thought I was doing great if someone would even smile at me. I didn't sell a damn thing.

Finally, I went around to construction jobs and sat around to see if they needed a laborer. I can remember getting a job just once, on a viaduct on Venice Boulevard, near where Sears Roebuck is now. By the time I got the job I had the flu and I was so sick I could hardly work. I can remember making $5 that day. I took it home and we were able to buy a lamb roast. My dad told me I was crazy to do that; I would be better off to go out and look for a job, so I did. I finally found a job doing some construction work over at Swift & Company. I did construction work digging ditches. After that was finished, I got a job with Swift & Company firing boilers and worked a ten hour day. I remember

going to work at 10:00 at night and finishing about 6:00 in the morning. I made $65 a month. That $65 was the main stay for our family. Dad was selling Howell motors and working on commission. He was lucky if he made $35 a month, so $100 a month was what the five of us had to live on.

After Swift & Company I got a job at Pacific Coast Steel. I was supposed to be an assistant to the plant foreman, but I was just a gopher. I worked there for about a year until the fall of 1934 when I went back to Howell, Michigan in October of 1934 to learn about Howell Electric Motors. I worked in the factory and learned how to wind rotaries. I went out once or twice on a sales and service call with the sales manager. I left Howell in the Summer of 1935 and returned to Los Angeles about the first of July. My mother came to meet me and we picked up a 1935 Ford for Gardner Farr, who was an adopted brother of Dads, and drove it out to him.



Dick, Frances and Spence with their Aunt Leah approximately 1960

Shortly before dad died in 1949, we asked him to make a will. He said no, he didn't want to make a will, he just wanted us to take care of Mother, Aunt Leah, Frances, Aldean (our stepmother) and his adopted brother Gardner. We finally prevailed and persuaded him to make a will because we didn't want that responsibility. When he died the company was worth $360,000. We had an agreement with a three way split, so we owed $120,000. We had a very low rate of interest of about 2% and finally paid it off, at $425 a month, about 11 years later in 1960. Aldean received 50% of it, Frances, 25% and Gardner was supposed to get 15%, but Dad finally realized that he was doing him no favor, so he didn't give him anything. As I recall we kept the other 25%, presumably Gardner's share of 15% and Baba's share of the balance of that.

Dad was always such an optimist. He had told Ben Rich that the company was worth $1,000,000. That was one of Dad's problems. He was always going to make it next year, always going to be great. Because of that, Uncle Ben thought that we were taking advantage of the estate and convinced Aunt Leah and Aldean that we were also taking advantage of them. Aldean finally got tired of it and said that she didn't think we were. Ben asked us, "How do I know that you can pay it off?" We said we didn't have any idea; that we couldn't guarantee that we could. All that we could do was pay it out of our earnings. So we were grateful to Aldean that she finally agreed not to contest, because $360,000 was really all the company was worth. The $425 a month we paid was quite a payment for us to make in those days.

In 1960, I went to see Aunt Leah who was then living with her niece, June. We were paying her money, but her share had run out. I went to see her and told her that we wanted to continue to pay her what we had been paying. She was very grateful. She had been worried and afraid that she was going to have to continue to live with June. That was unpleasant to her, to depend on June for her support. While

she had been very resistant prior to this time, (if we ever sent her anything extra she would just turn around and send it back to us) she was very thrilled and grateful. Of course, we were happy that we could do it. It wasn't that much money, but when she died she had managed to save money that came back to us. It was unbelievable.