

## Chapter XII

### LEARNING A TRADE



I had spent three years working on the flume. I was now eighteen and could see that I had to do something different if I was ever to amount to anything. I had learned quite a lot about building on the flume and in the last year had spent all my spare time building a new house on the farm. I liked that kind of work so I decided I would go some place and learn the carpenter trade. Aunt Bell came to visit us about that time. She lived in Willows and said she knew a man in the building business that would give me a job as an apprentice carpenter. In the spring of 1908 I went to Willows on the train. The only train I had ever ridden before that was in a box car from Bella Vista to Anderson.

I went to work the next day after I got there on the job Aunt Bell had arranged for me. The builder's name was Charles Neal. He was a large fat man weighing over two hundred pounds. He was good natured and a good man to work for. He agreed to pay me two dollars a day. That was no better than I had been getting on the flume. The only difference was that I only worked nine hours instead of ten. He was building a ten thousand dollar house which was quite a house in those days. The same house today would cost thirty-five thousand dollars. The house still stands and it looks as good as it did the day we finished it. I worked all summer for Mr. Neal but it cost me a good part of what I earned for board and room so I didn't save much money.

I had been taking an International Correspondence School course in carpentry and drafting and figured I knew as much and could do as much work as some of the men I was working with who were getting three dollars per day. I told Mr. Neal I ought to have a raise. He said I should work a full year before I got a raise.

About a week later, I met a man who specialized in roofing large barns with shingles. His name was John Zumwalt. He said he would give me two-fifty per day of nine hours work to nail on shingles. Most of the work was in the country and I would get my board free. That looked pretty good to me so I told Mr. Neal I was quitting at the end of the week. He said he was sorry I was leaving but he didn't offer me any more money. So at the end of the week I thanked him for what he had done for me and left.

The first shingling job I went to work on was a large barn 150 feet long.

Everything went fine the first week and I made fifteen dollars clear money as I didn't have to pay any board.

We slept in the barn we were shingling and on Wednesday of the second week about two o'clock in the morning a hard north wind started to blow. All the loose shingles on the roof came down on us. When morning came the boss said we couldn't work shingling until the wind quit. We went to town and it cost me all I had made that week to live the rest of the week. I wondered then whether I shouldn't have stayed with Mr. Neal. The wind quit so we got to work the next week and I got in a full month of shingling making a net of sixty dollars.

It was the end of October and Mr. Zumwalt didn't have another job just then so I got a job with the Sacramento Valley Irrigation Company. They were called S.V.I. Company. It was an eastern company that had bought up a large lot of land in Glenn County and was building a canal to irrigate the land and then sell it off in small tracts. They were building camps for their men to live in and were hiring carpenters to build the camps. I got \$2.50 a day and board there too, but it was worth that much to have to eat the food we got. They had a man cook who wasn't too clean. The flies were bad that time of year and he cooked plenty of them in the food. There were forty men at the camp and after a meal at least half of them would be sick. One thing they had that we could eat and be sure there were no flies in it was packaged pre-cooked cereal and canned milk. After losing my dinner a few times, I ate nothing but the cereal three times a day. After a week, the men all put in a kick to headquarters and we got a woman cook. I stayed with the job until their buildings were all done. It was just before Christmas and I was getting homesick so decided to go home for awhile. I had saved up a little over a hundred dollars by that time so I felt rich.

Father had gotten the farm in shape by this time so he figured he could make a living on it without working out, so he quit the flume job and they had moved back to the farm. Nell was married and living in Bella Vista, so the family was not so large to support.

Father wanted to build an irrigation ditch to take water out of Cow Creek to irrigate with, so that winter Earl and I surveyed the ditch and started on the digging of it.

The Melton family had moved to the flume house and were boarding the teacher that was teaching at French Creek School. This was a school that was started a mile and a half south of our place to take care of the kids that lived on the flume and three or four other families that had settled in the area. Lawrence was in the 9th grade that winter and he and Pauline were both going to French Creek School. They brought the teacher, Lottie Sutton, home with them to stay over the week-end. That was where I first met her. She says she doesn't think I thought much of her at that time. I took her to one dance at Bella Vista while I was home.

I was anxious to get back to carpenter work so I left to go back to

Willows some time in March. I got a job this time with a contractor named Kittinger. He paid me \$22 a week the first month I worked. Then the next Saturday when he paid me he gave me \$24. I asked him if he had made a mistake and he said, "No, you are worth as much as any man I have." I worked for him the next four years and I never worked for a better man or better mechanic. He wouldn't take a job unless he could get money enough to do it right. He expected his men to do good work. A joint that nearly fit was not good enough - it had to fit.

This year all carpenter work in Willows was cut down to eight hours per day so the \$24 per week made fifty cents an hour.

Mr. Kittinger took a liking to me and even at times when his work was slack he kept me busy in his shop. When winter came on in 1909 building was so slack I told Mr. Kittinger I would like to go home for Christmas and stay awhile so he said to go ahead.

Mother had told me in her letters that the teacher, Miss Sutton, was boarding with them this year. I wouldn't acknowledge it to myself but I expect that was the main reason I wanted to go home. I hadn't been home very long until I decided that I was in love with the teacher. I was twenty years old by this time and figured it must not be puppy love this time. She acted as though our feelings were mutual. It was pretty hard for her to keep her dignity as a teacher with me around so I didn't stay home long that winter.

Willows had quite a boom that year and Mr. Kittinger had contracts on several nice homes. When I first went to Willows there were two automobiles in town. A lady doctor owned one of them. It was built like a buggy with high wheels with solid rubber tires. It was run on electricity from a battery and could only be run in the daytime as the battery had to be charged at night. The other car was owned by a blacksmith. It had wheels about like heavy bicycle wheels. It was steered by a straight handle and run by a one cylinder gas engine. It made a chug-chug sound going down the street. I don't remember what make either one of them was. I would have given most anything I had to ride in one of them but it was about two years before I got a chance to take my first ride in an automobile.

At that time silent moving pictures were just getting started. During that summer somebody started an outdoor theatre in Willows, I went several times that summer but didn't think too much of the pictures. Most of them were fighting with Indians and with no sound they were not very exciting.

Mr. Kittinger was a fine Christian man and was Assistant Superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School. Through him I got started to attend Sunday School and church. At that time they had a Sunday School class of about fifteen young people about my age. Through it I met a lot of young people, both boys and girls, but I never met any girl that interested me as much as the school teacher at home.

Mr. Clarence Wickes, a banker, was Superintendent of the Sunday

School. In talking to young people, he would always quote Matthew 6:33 and say, "If you young people want to be a success in life, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness." If there was anything I wanted at that time it was success. My idea of success, though, was to make money. Because I figured Mr. Wickes was a success and should know what he was talking about, I took him at his word and began to "seek first the Kingdom of God." I attended Sunday School and church regularly and studied the Bible. I also figured I would do my part to bring about success, so I worked hard at my trade, tried to learn all I could about it, and saved what money I could.

It was about a year later, when I was twenty-one years old, that I found what I was seeking. In those days the Methodist church held regular old-fashioned revival meetings once or twice a year. At this meeting, a man by the name of Jones was doing the preaching. I remember him quoting Psalms 37:4 "Delight thyself also in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." It was during these meetings that I found Christ as my Saviour. I think I had always believed with my head, but I found there is more to it than head belief.

Down through the years I have tried to live up to my part - that is, "delighting myself in the Lord." He has more than lived up to His part of "giving me the desires of my heart." He has had to change my desire at times, but satisfaction comes from getting one's desires even though they are changed to fit God's plan. Looking back over my life I can see that if God had allowed fulfillment of my desire to make money early in life it wouldn't have been best for me. He had to teach me that money won't buy everything we desire.

During 1910 and 1911 I corresponded with Miss Sutton regularly but didn't see her very often as traveling in those days was slow and expensive. Her folks moved from Anderson to Orland in 1911 but she taught the summer school in Round Mountain that year so she wasn't home until school was out in the fall. Orland being only fifteen miles from Willows, I managed to get to Orland to see her every weekend after she got home. It was at this time that we decided to get married that winter.

I bought a lot with an old building on it for four hundred dollars, and spent all my evenings or other spare time working the building over so we would have a place to live when we were married. About Christmas time, we agreed to set the date of our wedding on February 10, 1912.

Mr. Kittinger had lots of work that winter but I got off for a week. We were married Saturday afternoon in Orland at the home of Lottie's folks. Rev. Sprague of the Baptist Church where Lottie attended, performed the ceremony. A Mr. and Mrs. Allen, friends of Lottie, acted as witnesses. The only other persons present were members of her family.

We were both twenty-two years old, and when we pooled our capital we had about five hundred dollars plus about six-hundred dollars invested

in a place to live. We had to spend some of our money for enough furniture to get started house keeping.

After the marriage ceremony we took the afternoon train to Redding and spent the first night of our marriage at the Golden Eagle Hotel. The next day we went to the Wilsey ranch and stayed until Saturday when we took the train back to Willows and a new kind of life.

So many things happened that first year of married life that it slipped by in a hurry. The Methodists were building a new church and I took an active part in that. We took an active part in church work - Lottie singing in the choir and I a member of the Board of Stewards and teaching a class of boys in Sunday School. California had given women the right to vote and we cast our first vote for President. This was the year Theodore Roosevelt didn't get the Republican nomination for President so he started a new party called the Progressive Party or Bull Moose Party. Hiram Johnson who had been a good governor of California was a candidate for Vice President on the Progressive ticket with Roosevelt. We voted for them, but because of the split in the Republican vote, Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic candidate was elected.

This was also the time when there was a fight on to get rid of the saloons under a local option law. The fight grew so hot that Mr. Wickes and a newspaper man named Morse, who led the anti-saloon forces, were allowed to carry guns to protect themselves. The first vote was only to regulate the saloons. They had to close on Sundays, close at midnight on weekdays, have plain glass in their doors, etc. This ordinance was passed and the saloon keepers didn't even make a pretense of living up to it so another election was called within a year or two. This time, prominent men who had been for the saloons, were now for closing them, so saloons in Willows were done away with before national prohibition was put into effect.

On January 29th, just fourteen days before the end of the first year of our marriage our first daughter was born. We named her Charlotte Eliza after her mother and grandmother.

During 1913 the building boom in Willows had died down some. Though I kept busy most of the time, I decided that if we were going to raise a family, I should get into something where the job wouldn't always be running out like it was in carpenter work. I took an examination for a job at the Post Office. I soon got an appointment as a mail carrier. Willows at that time had two carriers. I carried the mail three years and then was transferred into the office where I worked until February 1920. When I went to work for the Post Office Department in 1913 the salary of clerks and carriers was \$800 per year. A lot of our friends thought I was crazy to take a job at \$66 per month when I was making \$100 per month at carpenter work. I have never been sorry that I changed jobs. I did enough carpenter work on the side to make about the same income as before, and I knew I had a life's job if I wanted it. I got a raise of \$25.00 per month each year until I got up to the

top salary of \$125.00 per month at that time. I liked my job so well and was so well satisfied that I thought I would spend the rest of my working days as a Post Office Clerk. During that time though we had three more daughters born to us. Our friends felt sorry for us because we had four daughters so close together. Maybe we felt sorry for ourselves at the time, but now in our old age the four girls and their families are worth to us many times what it cost us in money and effort to raise them.

In 1914 World War 1 started in Europe. We didn't get into it until 1917 but during that time prices had been going up. When we entered the war there were no price controls and prices really did go up. We paid \$4.50 and \$5.00 for shoes for the girls. Bed sheets were \$2.50 each, potatoes were \$7.50 per hundred pound sack, sugar was \$28.00 per hundred - but you couldn't buy a hundred pounds if you had the money. How could a family of six live on \$125.00 per month and pay those prices. Well, we couldn't.

I was classed as 4A because of the girls so I didn't have to go to war. If the war had lasted another year, I would have perhaps had to go. In the Post Office job I got fifteen days paid vacation each year. I worked at carpenter work each year during my vacation. During the years I had gotten well acquainted with Bill Zumwalt, the son of John Zumwalt I had worked for several years before. Bill was now in the building business. He drew most of his own plans and needed a draftsman. I took the job and did his drawing at night. When he was in a hurry on a job I would work all night. Lottie would get up and get me something to eat at midnight and get up and get me off to work at the office in the morning. I also milked two cows night and morning for a neighbor for which I received \$7.50 per month. We bought a piano for \$300.00 and payments on it were \$7.50 per month so it took the milk money to keep up the payments. When we got the piano paid for, we resolved that we would never buy anything on credit again. We have kept our resolution pretty much down through the years.

During the summer of 1918, we managed to raise \$300.00 and pay cash for our first automobile. It was a 1916 Model T Ford.

In the fall of 1918, about a month before the war was over, the flu bug hit the country. It was the kind of flu that killed people right and left. At that time Willows had only lost two or three men in the war but twenty died from the flu. The employees of the Orland Post Office nearly all had the flu. Our office had escaped it so far. I was secretary of the local Civil Service Commission and was sent to Orland to give an examination. While there I guess I picked up the flu bug. A few days later I came down with the flu. A lot of people in Willows had it by this time and the women of the town had organized through the Red Cross to help take care of the sick. Inside of a week, Lottie and the four girls were all sick with the flu too. If it hadn't been for the good care of the ladies and the skill of the good lady doctor we had, I guess we would have all died. After the doctor had made her rounds, she would come back to our house and stay most of the night. She told us later

that she never expected to save the two youngest girls they were so sick.

I was off work for a month and at that time postal employees got no sick leave. We managed to buy our groceries but it took us some time to catch up on doctor and drug bills. That was the first time I felt postal employees were not getting a square deal. The war ended in November, 1918, but prices remained high and it became harder to live on \$125.00 per month.

On June 1, 1919, our first and only son was born. We named him Clarence after our friend Clarence Wickes who served as a YMCA Secretary in France during the war and was on his way home about this time.

Father had been wanting me to move back to the ranch and help him run it. After thinking about it for a year, we decided the ranch would be the best place to raise a family. So, in February of 1920, I quit the Post Office and we sold our home in Willows and moved to the ranch, where I was raised. Soon after we moved to the ranch, Father had a light heart attack. The doctor told him he had a tobacco heart and if he didn't quit smoking he wouldn't live over a year. He quit smoking about a month then he said the doctor didn't know what he was talking about and went back to smoking. In January of 1921 he had another heart attack that ended his life.

After Father's death we bought the farm from Mother. The twenty-six years spent on the farm with its failures and successes, its hard work and pleasures, and its heartaches and joys, would make a story itself. Any one of our daughters could do a better job of writing such a story than I could so I will leave that to them.

In ending this autobiography I would like to mention a few of the outstanding events of our lives since 1921. We helped organize Millville Grange in January of 1930. I was elected Master and served four years. During that time we built a Grange hall and built up a membership of over 300. Millville Grange is still the largest and most active Grange in Shasta County. I was elected and served three years as Pomona Master. This is the county-wide Grange.

I was appointed as a member of the Shasta County Fair Board by Governor Olson. After serving nine years, I asked Governor Warren to relieve me of the job.

After we moved to Redding I joined the Gideons International. For over 20 years I was active in placing Bibles in hotels, motels, hospitals and schools.

Because of some of the farming mistakes and failures, Lottie had to teach school seven years. I have never been proud of that.

We had gotten the farm to paying pretty good before the depression started in the last of 1929 and in spite of the fact that we sold eggs from our 2000 hens as low as 12 cents per dozen and sold fat hogs as low as 4 cents per pound delivered in San Francisco, we kept two homes going - one on the ranch and the other in Chico so the girls could go to school there.

Our son went into the army in 1942. He took officer's training in Fort

Benning, Ga., and went to the Philippines as a First Lieutenant. From wounds received and disease contracted in Mindanou he was sent home to die. Death came in March 1946.

After the son's death, we sold the farm and moved to Redding. In 1948 we started Kiddieland in Lake Redding Park under a contract with the city. We ran the business thirteen years and had \$30,000.00 invested in it. Because of the success of the business and other investments, we felt able and decided to make a gift of Kiddieland to the YMCA and retired in 1961.

Our philosophy of life has been not so much to see how much we could get out of the communities where we have lived as to see what we could contribute toward their betterment.

Our hope is that Kiddieland will continue to run long after we are gone, supplying good clean entertainment and making the kiddies of Redding and Shasta County happy.

I had always been interested in politics since I was a young man. In 1953 I decided to run for County Supervisor in the Redding District. There were four of us in the race in the primary election. I came out second with the first man 500 votes ahead of me. Lottie suggested that I should not spend any more money or effort on the election as I didn't have a chance to win. Some of our friends thought differently. With their help and a lot of work. I beat the other man in the run-off by over a thousand votes. I served from 1954 to 1958. There was some satisfaction in the job as we got some important changes and improvements made in county government during those years. The discouraging thing about the job was that regardless of what stand you took on important issues, you couldn't please a lot of people.

The only mistake I made in politics was running for a second term. I was beaten by a small majority but I would have felt better if I had quit while I was a winner.

During the years we ran Kiddieland and the four years I was supervisor, we made a lot of friends. There is an old saying "He who has a thousand friends hasn't a friend to spare, but he who has an enemy will find him everywhere."

In 1962 we celebrated our 50th Wedding Anniversary at the Grange Hall at Palo Cedro. The four daughters made all the arrangements for the party. There were over 250 friends and relatives present to congratulate us.

We now in 1965 have nine grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and one adopted great grand-child.

In looking back over our lives we have perhaps had our share of sorrow, I remember of hearing a minister say one time that if you live long enough you will help bury some of your relatives. Besides both Lottie's and my parents Lottie has lost three brothers and one sister and I have lost three brothers. Then besides the son we lost in the war we have lost two sons-in-law, one in a truck accident and one by a heart attack. But God has been good to us and blessed us in so many ways that we have a lot to be thankful for.



When we were on the farm we used to say the most important crop we were raising was our four girls and a boy.

When we first went to the farm we started a Sunday school in the community and ran it for years. Later two of the girls kept it going. One of them still lives in the community and is still Superintendant of the Sunday School. As this is written the first of 1965, her son has been elected Superintendant making a third generation to keep it going. Another grandson is studying for the ministry. Another is studying to be a lawyer. One granddaughter is a registered nurse and another is studying to be a nurse.

As we come to the evening of our lives and see our daughters and grandchildren active in Christian work and the great-grandchildren being raised in the same way it makes us think that perhaps the greatest heritage we will leave them will be our Christian faith.



1st. Lieut. Clarence Wilsey and wife Ann. Taken before he left for combat on the Philippine Islands.

As this autobiography was written in 1965 and was not published until 1969, I believe a few items should be brought up to date. Lottie, my beloved wife and mother of our five children, went to be with the Lord on December 9, 1966.

At the present time there are 15 great-grandchildren.

Of the 5 grandsons, two finished college and are successful business men. Another spent four years in the army and has a good position with Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle, Washington. One has had 4 years in college and after serving two years with VISTA he is now with the army in Vietnam. The fifth grand-son attended a Baptist Theological Seminary and received his Master of Divinity Degree, and presently is pastor of a Baptist church in Auburn, California.

Of the four granddaughters, two are registered nurses working at their profession. The other two are housewives, one with three children and the other has four.

Since the autobiography was written four Astronauts have landed on the moon and have returned to earth safely.