

REED SHELLEY THOMPSON  
By his daughter, Lana Marsden

Reed Shelley Thompson was born August 26, 1914, to Vera Shelley and Russell Thompson in his grandparents' home in American Fork, Utah. He lived in this same house his entire childhood and youth with the exception of four years in Bingham. This home is the white house to the west of Anderson Mortuary. As a very young child, Dad recalled many trains passing on the tracks just across the street from his home.

Dad was the oldest of ten children so he became acquainted at a very young age with hard work, which brought with it some real adventures. The year Dad was fifteen he had two memorable experiences. One day he drove the truck to Clear Creek with a load of potatoes and started back with a load of transformers. The axle broke on the truck and it was flipped over a 30 foot embankment and rolled over several times. Dad came out with bruises, broken ribs, and a big bump on his chest that he had for the rest of his life. The winter of that same year, Grandpa bought four head of big work horses. Dad caught a ride up to Price Canyon to go for the horses. He walked the last 19 miles to Clear Creek with snow often up to his chest. He rode one of the horses out and brought the other three along. It took him three days to get to Orem. These kinds of experiences seemed to be all in a day's work for my Dad. We are grateful Dad lived to tell us these stories.

Dad met my mom, Ruth West, at a Poultry Day celebration. I would like to read Dad's own account of this meeting and courtship. "She was with a group of my friends and my cousin, Val. Val asked me if I would take them home because I was the only one of the bunch that had a truck. They all piled in the back of my truck and I took them over to Pleasant Grove. I went down Mary Pulley's hill and just about lost them all. They were all screaming and told me that they hated me. After Strawberry Day, in 1932, I started going with Ruth more often. She said she still hated me because I was a little squirt. She said she didn't like little squirts, but she changed her mind!"

Mom and Dad were married December 14, 1934. Together they provided a warm, loving home for their six living children: Pearl, James, Alan, Lana, Blaine, and Mark. Dad began his married life working at Geneva Steel; first on its construction, then also as an ambulance driver and fireman. In May 1935, Dad joined the American Fork Volunteer Fire Department. He was an active member of the Fire Department for 45 years and served as assistant chief for 10 years. I remember how proud I felt as a child when my Dad would bring Santa to my elementary school in his fire truck and give bags of goodies to all the kids when they talked to Santa.

In 1956, American Fork City bought a new fire truck. They sent Glen Chadwick and my dad to pick it up in Los Angeles. They took their wives along. When they got there, someone was testing the truck before they left with it and broke a gear. This caused a few days delay. They did Christmas shopping, sight-seeing, visited China Town and Knott's Berry Farm and really had a great time. This was the first and only vacation my mom and dad ever had. They called it their second honeymoon.

In 1943, Dad stopped working at Geneva and bought a farm in Highland. He really jumped into farming with both feet, and he really got his feet wet, literally. Water and farming are inseparable. Dad had a great respect for the value of water and its power. As a young boy, Dad was walking by the mill pond in Lehi. A group of older boys picked him up and threw him way out into the middle of the pond. Dad says he didn't know how to swim and he doesn't know to this day how he ever got out. It left him with a great fear and respect for water. As Mark worked with Dad on fires, Dad said to him more than once: "With good equipment men can control any fire, but only God and gravity can control water." Dad understood how vital irrigation water was to the members of a farming community. He served on many water boards and was Water Master in Highland for 30 years. He made out thousands of water notices for hundreds of people each year. Dad was always irrigating. We are almost certain that he even slept with his irrigation boots on. Dad owned and leased hundreds of acres of land and somewhere there was always a water turn. He would get so tired after watering several nights with very little sleep, that he

would turn the water down the rows and then go and lay at the bottom of the rows and fall asleep. When the water reached him and awakened him, he would know it was time to get up and change the water. Dad worked hard to keep the irrigation ditches clear and clean of debris. As he did this he soon learned that it was impossible to keep the water free of wastes and even dead animals. Seeing this and realizing that some people relied on this water for their homes, and even for drinking, Dad began to campaign to replace unreliable personal wells and ditch water with a pure, reliable, culinary system. In 1957, he helped set up a non-profit, user-owned water company, went to Salt Lake and filed for a deep well permit, borrowed \$120,000 to dig the well and lay the pipe. This daring venture began operation with 69 connections in 1959.

Dad raised animals, mostly cattle and would take truckloads of them to Granite Meat in Salt Lake City. Mother assigned Pearl and later, myself to keep Dad awake on those trips. Dad went so long and hard with so little sleep, that when he got behind the wheel, he would fall to sleep instantly. We didn't want to injure Dad's dignity by letting him know that we knew he could fall asleep at the wheel, so we just talked to him. I think we have this experience to thank for our ability to talk incessantly.

Many people will remember Dad as a bus driver. He worked for Alpine School District for 25 years as the world's best bus driver. He was always so patient, kind, and fun-loving that the kids on the bus really loved him. He knew every student at every stop and if someone didn't get on he'd ask if anyone knew if this person would be coming. If he knew someone was still coming, he'd just wait. When we asked him how he could do that day after day, he said, "If I leave someone, then somebody's mother will have to get the baby dressed, gather up her preschooler's and drive clear down to school to take one kid. The school district pays me to do that job, and I can wait a few minutes to do it right." Dad instilled a great confidence in the kids on his bus. They all seemed to know that if Dad was at the wheel nothing could go wrong. I remember one night I was with a group that he drove up American Fork Canyon. When it was time to return home, it was well after dark. On the trip down the canyon the bus lost its headlights. No one was alarmed because Dad was at the wheel. One message just received in a sympathy card describes these feelings so well. "When I read in the newspaper of your father's death I was flooded with memories. Memories of that yellow school bus. As a child, I thought he was the most important person. I felt that I was so important because I knew him. When I saw him anywhere he was my bus driver. He was always kind and tolerant. Always smiling! Such a gentle loving man. He was always a great way to begin and end a hard day at school."

On October 7, 1960, Dad lost his sweetheart and we lost our sweet Mom to a battle with a rheumatic heart condition. I don't think any of us will ever know the suffering Dad experienced as he tried to care for the four of us at home, support Jim in the mission field, and keep up with all the many responsibilities that were his, while mourning his great loss.

In October of 1962, Dad married Genevieve Matthews. Each had six children, but now they both had twelve. The most remarkable discovery was to find that they had triplets as well. Genevieve's twin boys, and Dad's oldest daughter, were all born on the same day in the same year, Vern, Verl, and Pearl. As the 12 children of this sweet union, we are so grateful for the 28 years our parents were able to share. They had wonderful experiences together and loved and cared for each other so much. Dad not only doubled the size of his family, but doubled the time and attention from a loving caring family. The Matthews added so much to Dad's life and enjoyment of life. We are very grateful.

Genevieve and her children accomplished something most remarkable with Dad. They were able to get him to take off his irrigation boots and go on vacations. Vern tells of the great camping and fishing trips that they and the grandkids took with Grandma and Grandpa, especially to Flaming Gorge. They share fond memories of those times spent together. Not only did Dad learn to camp and fish, but he was able to get away on occasion in their motorhome, and even go boating. We are grateful that Dad could finally experience some moments of relaxation and recreation.

Dad was always a terrific tease! I remember as a little girl, if I didn't jump right out of bed when Dad called in the morning, he would pull the covers off my feet and tickle them without mercy. He knew I was so ticklish, and loved to torment me. As we got too old to tickle, Dad still found ways to really tease us. My husband and I both teach school. Pearl's husband and some of her children are also teachers. Dad knew he could really get to us if he started in on "the over-paid school teachers." I remember a few lively discussions on that topic. But in these debates there was one thing we forgot to tell Dad. "Dad, you were a teacher too! One of the best teachers anyone could ever have. And no one could ever pay you enough for the lessons you taught. Most of these lessons were taught without ever saying a word!"

I would like to share with you just a few of the many things our father taught us. First of all he gave us a great sense of "family." We never went on family vacations. There was lots of hard work and no real family outings. But we loved being at home with Mom and Dad. We felt loved, accepted, and secure in our home and family. We spent some wonderful times on the farm as children. It was just lots of fun being with members of our family. Mark especially loved being with his Dad. As a little boy he would beg to go with Dad on the tractor. He says, "I would ride until sleep overtook me which was usually not very long. I would wake up in the house and bolt for the field again." When Dad was on the school bus, there was Mark, sitting on the heater by his side. Long before he was old enough to go to school he had logged hundreds of hours on the school bus. It really didn't matter what we were doing. If it was with the family it was fun.

Dad taught us a love and compassion for all living things. Many injured animals or those little runts would find their way into our home. Dad would put a little helpless form in our arms and teach us to feed it first with a dropper and later a baby bottle. These saved souls would become our pets. My brother, Alan, learned this lesson especially well. He loved the animals so much. I remember one little calf in particular. Alan named him Oscar. I spent many days sitting under the clothes line with Oscar tied to the pole, listening to Alan read his favorite stories to Oscar and me. I'm sure Oscar really understood every word, because he certainly sat quietly and listened. He became known as "Oscar, the educated calf." This love and caring did not stop with animals. Dad brought many people into our home especially in the winter. He would find a car that had slid off the road and he would bring the people in to warm up, and have something to eat, while he pulled them out of the drift. If the weather was too bad, they might even spend the night.

Dad taught us all about trust. Dad could be trusted because he was a man of his word. I remember as a young girl I wanted to make flannel board stories to tell my little brothers. I saved my money and went to town one day after school to buy the flannel. When it was rung up I was a few cents short. I told the clerk to save the flannel for me, and I would come in with the rest of the money the next day, and pick it up. She said, "Oh, you can take the flannel now. You're Reed Thompson's daughter. I know you'll bring the money in." What a legacy of trust! We also knew that we could trust Dad to keep us safe and make everything okay. One time when Blaine was just about 4, Dad had just changed the light bulb on the tall, tall pole in our yard. The ladder was still leaning against the pole. I went outside and saw my little brother at the very top of the pole, his arms wrapped around it, and scared to move. He just said, "Get Daddy!", and hugged that pole with all his might, certain that as soon as Dad came everything would be all right. And, of course, it was. I don't know how many times we heard Dad say, "Don't worry, everything will be okay." And when he said it we believed him, and things were okay.

Dad was a master teacher of patience, tolerance, and endurance. We can never remember him complaining. Mark says, "Dad and I expanded the Highland Water System in the early 1970's mostly with the old farm hand loader he had used for years raising peas. He was patient. I complained. We both sweat and bled. He was patient. I complained. He would skin my knuckles and I ripped his leg half-off with the back hoe. He was patient. I complained. We farmed and raised livestock. I worked hard. Dad worked harder. He was patient. I complained. The equipment was bad and again I complained. Dad was

patient, but he did say it was much better than what he used as a boy. 'You have never had to get up and feed it before you could use it.'"

Dad's real test with endurance and patience was his own physical health. Dad taught us so much as we watched him deal with this. For over 20 years Dad suffered pain and bodily decline as rheumatoid arthritis invaded his body. As his joints grew weaker, his will grew stronger. He refused to let this stop him or slow him down. He continued to work hard and find a way to do all things and be useful to everyone. He never asked for help and never complained. Those last six weeks in intensive care, Dad suffered pain and much more. But he never stopped trying and he never complained. So many of the nurses that served Dad marveled to us of his endurance and gentle kindness to them in his own suffering.

On February 14, 1991 Dad found relief from his suffering and left in peace and calmness. We sorrowed at the separation from this great man, but could not help but rejoice for our Mom, Ruth, who could spend Valentine's Day with her sweetheart after waiting thirty years.

For all the family I say, "Daddy, we love you! Thanks for all you taught us. May our lives reflect your teachings."