

NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED

There was a ditch that came down by the Thatcher schoolhouse and it had a straight tall bank on one side of it. The local children liked to dig in this bank. Mother and her siblings were no exception. She tells of one experience she remembers about digging in this bank:

While we were still living in Arizona, Heber and I had dug a cave and made a big fireplace back into the side of that bank, and we wanted to see if the fireplace worked. Matches were a taboo. Mother just wouldn't let us have matches.

So Heber said: "Let's go get some matches and see if it works--you ask Mother if we can have some matches."

"Well, she won't let us have any," I said.

"Maybe she will if you ask her," Heber said.

So I asked Mother. I explained it all to her--what a nice fireplace we had and that we wanted to try it to see if it would work. And--miracles of miracles--she gave us a couple of matches. She was a smart mother. Mother said she didn't know what she would have done if her mother had said no. Maybe she and Heber would have stolen those matches.

And when I asked my mother if the fireplace worked, she said: "Yes it worked just fine, but the thing I remember most is that my mother gave us those matches that we wanted so much!"

And then my mother said to me while I was interviewing her: "How vital it is for parents to know when to say yes."

As Mother was the oldest child in her parents' large family, a lot of responsibility fell upon her. Her brother Heber writes in his personal history of their stay in Mexico, that his "Mother had the babies, and turned them right over to Charlotte." He said that Charlotte brought them up "strictly, but fairly." Later, after my own mom and dad were married, it was always to Charlotte and Ernest that both the Chlarson and the Langford aunts and uncles came when they had problems.

SOUTHWARD, HO!

In 1896, the year Vivian was born, the family moved down to Oaxaca, Mexico. Her Dad bought two and a half acres there. The land they purchased was partially cleared, so they cleared the brush off and put in a garden.

The years in Thatcher and Central were probably the only years of stability in Mother's life before she married my father. Her father was always moving them from place to place while they were in Mexico. Perhaps he was looking for "greener pastures." I never heard my father or mother say they had known each other as young people, but Chlarson child number five, John Otto was born 20 April, 1896, in Colonia Oaxaca, Sonora, Mexico, as was Hyrum "F", number six, born 29 March, 1902. The Langfords were in Oaxaca during those same years.

Mother's brother Hyrum remembered James Harvey Langford, Jr., though. He said when my Grandfather yelled, it could be heard all over Oaxaca.. I can identify with that.

Someone in Schenectady, where Tracy and I lived for seven years, once told me that they could tell the minute I hit the parking lot at the Church. Can we help it if our voices carry? We all should have been opera singers (or hog callers).

Mother said that the only people who made any money in Oaxaca were those who ran cattle. Oaxaca itself was too small in area. But those who had cattle used the surrounding lands to pasture their cattle. James Harvey Langford Jr. ran a grocery store in Oaxaca, and had a small farm across the river. Those who had farms in Oaxaca had them outside the main settlement. While the Chlarsons were there, besides raising produce on their small two and a half acres, Mother's father did carpentry work. Her father was a good carpenter, and made most of the money the family had in Mexico doing carpentry work. Often he would pack up his tools and go back to the states to work to get cash for the family.

CHUACHUPA

In 1902 Heber and Ida moved their family to Chuachupa, Chihuahua, (usually referred to as "Chupe") and so missed the terrible flood that came later and caused the Langfords and everyone else in Oaxaca to move. But their move didn't prosper them. Of their move, Mother said:

Charlie Scott drove our stock up there and we hit Chuachupa in a drought. Everything was burned up. Most of the springs went dry. We had a peculiar formation in Chupe. In the south end of the town was a big spring and for two or three hundred feet around that spring it just teetered when you walked on it. It sounded hollow. The men of the town had brought the spring water into town by digging quite a deep ditch into the spring and running water into the town in this ditch. And that's the only spring that didn't go dry.

The town was maybe a mile and a half long and you could find what we called an underground river all the way through town. [Apparently on the surface, the edge of the underground river was slightly lower than the surrounding terrain] when you went over it with a wagon or a horse you would come to the edge and it would go "perplunk" and then you'd go over it just as if you were going over a bridge. Near that spring, on the part that teetered, if a horse went banging across that, the horse could break through the crust and go into it up to the belly. I always wanted to dig down on that edge and see what was there. Why didn't the men do that?

Our stock would go down in a big cut near the spring to get a drink of water and get bogged down and couldn't get out. They would starve and die. Everyone of Dad's stock died that way that year except one. I couldn't understand my father's reasoning. All the other men drove their stock into the canyon where there was plenty of water and grass, but Dad left all his stock in town. He lost everything he took up there--everything, which was unfortunate, because his intent when he went up to Chuachupa was to go into the dairy business. He was going to make cheese.

And this was not a bad idea because Chupe was way up in the mountains at a high altitude and the season was so short it was difficult to mature a regular crop. But the grasses were good for grazing stock.

Another thing Mother remembers about the Chupe area was the beautiful flowers that grew there.