

Clifford Stratton Sr. at Round Valley High School

Clifford James Stratton, 2 April 2014

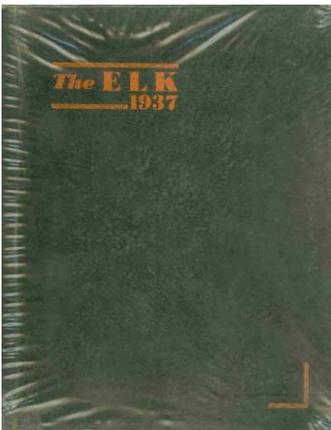


At Mom's funeral (Patricia Frances Black Stratton) last Saturday, I realized that I needed to finish the historical information on our Father, Clifford Stratton Sr., now that they both "belong to the ages." Dad's and Mom's life events are all well documented, except Dad's time in Round Valley. He spent from 1936 to 1939 on the Faculty at Round Valley High School in Springerville, Arizona. He told us many wonderful experiences about his time in Round Valley. It was an important part of his life. So, after the funeral, I spent some time in Round Valley and Greer, to document his life there. Family, please print off this document and save it with his book, so that his significant contributions in Round Valley can also be admired by his future descendants.

A. Round Valley High School.

Two Yearbooks from Round Valley High School portray his academic and sports achievements; *The Elk* from 1937 and 1939. Dad was the Faculty Advisor to the Yearbook Staff both years, so the students included several pictures of him. You can peruse them on www.elks.net, for more information.

1. *The Elk*, 1937:



Yearbook Staff for *The Elk* in 1937. "Mr. Stratton" is top row, middle.

Commercial Club: In 1936, shortly after Dad accepted the Faculty position at R.V.H.S., he established the Commercial Club. Here he is with his club student members in 1937. He is in the middle, towards the top. He taught Typing, Shorthand, and occasionally, Mathematics and Accounting. He loved the challenges found only in applied mathematics. On one occasion he was asked by the government to show, mathematically, the shortest and most economic course they could use to build an electrical transport system, on poles,



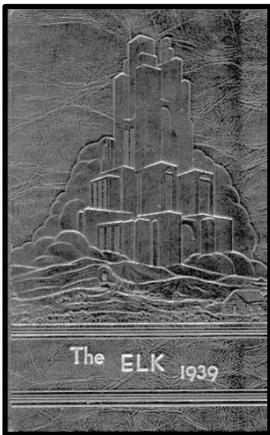
between two towns in the White Mountains, taking into account the mountainous terrain. Would it take more wire to go around certain mountains or over them? He loved those difficult projects, which he was frequently asked to perform. He also loved algebra and theoretical calculus. When I was taking advanced calculus courses in college, I would frequently call him at home and ask for his help finding difficult solutions. He was amazing!! Also, the Accounting Books of his own, personal, finances were a thing of beauty.

Humor. Anyone who knew Dad would tell you that he had a delightful, dry, sense of humor. He loved, occasionally, to really laugh, and, of course, to tease. This was evident in his Yearbooks. From his 1937 Yearbook:

Mr. Stratton: "This is the third time you have looked on Valora's paper.
Della: "Yes Sir, she doesn't write very plain."

From his 1939 Yearbook: "A sign on a student's door read as follows: 'If I am studying when you enter, wake me up.'"

2. *The Elk*, 1939:



Commercial Club, 1939.



***The Elk*, Yearbook Staff, 1939.**
Dad is seen in the top, middle.



“Coach Stratton.” Dad was the football and basketball Coach at Round Valley High School. In this 1939 picture of the basketball team, Dad is top row, right. Dad always had winning seasons in both football and basketball. They won their football Conference his first year.

Officiating. Dad became a football and basketball Official. He took complete charge of every sporting event he officiated. He was fair but stern. As a Coach himself, he freely, but

appropriately, communicated with the opposing Coaches during the game; which was greatly appreciated, and he was respected by them. He was very popular. He was asked to officiate many games in the neighboring conferences, when he wasn't coaching his own team. He frequently officiated the tournament and championship games. He wore the striped shirt as Referee, arrow, or a white shirt as Umpire or Field Judge, picture, 1939. My daughter Marleen, and I, both followed in his footsteps. I enjoyed officiating high school football and basketball games in Reno, Nevada, for many years. Marleen officiated women's Church basketball. We are hoping that some of Dad's great-grandchildren will also follow in his footsteps and enjoy this skill.



Humor. Dad told of the occasion when one of his football players came into Typing Class and complained, “Coach Stratton, I can't type today. I hurt my finger in the game on Saturday and I can't move it any more than this;” slightly and rigidly moving his right, index finger. Dad asked him, “How far could you move it, before you hurt it?” The gullible player said, “Oh, all the way down to here;” moving his finger down to his wrist. Dad just looked at him and smiled. The football star, startled and humbled, joined his class, to the amusement of his peers.

Social Life. Dad had to be careful not to socialize with the female students, so he mostly dated the other, single, Faculty, women, and the more mature women in Round Valley. There was Miss Stone, Miss Pace, Miss Holling, Miss Larson, and Miss Harris who were faculty at R.V.H.S. during his tenure there. Several were young and friendly, and Dad enjoyed being in their presence.

Dating Faculty. When my wife and I served our L.D.S. Senior Mission to the Curriculum Department in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2007, I had a pleasant experience. I was eating lunch with my colleagues in the Church Cafeteria, downstairs in the Church Office Building. Another Missionary, a Sister about my age, came to our table and introduced herself to me. She was excited. She said, “I heard that there was an ‘Elder Cliff Stratton’ serving, and I just had to come and personally meet you.” She asked, “Are you related to the Cliff Stratton who taught at Round Valley High School, when he was single.” I answered positively, “That was my Father.” She said that her Mother was on the Round Valley High School Faculty at the same time as Dad, and that they developed a very special, social, relationship.

She was young, very cute, and found comfort and social security, going with Dad to school dances, plays, musicals, and sporting events, as Faculty. She was regularly corresponding with a young man who was then serving a full-time mission for the L.D.S. Church in Argentina. She explained that during her teenage years, her Mother frequently referenced some of the attributes of the special, personally rewarding, relationship she had with Dad when she was young. Her Mother said that, "She should find someone like that to marry." I was pleasantly surprised and pleased for the compliment to Dad. My encounter with this Sister was a long time ago, and very brief, so I can't say with certainty the maiden name of her Mother. I believe she said Jeanne Larson, but I can't be positive. When her Missionary returned to the States, they were married in the Temple and had a wonderful family. The Sister I met, was one of their daughters.



3. Carole, *The Meteor*, 1961.



My Sister, Carole Stratton, followed in her Father's footsteps and was the Editor of *The Meteor*, the yearbook for Winslow High School, her senior year, 1961. There is a copy at the High School, and I have one, I was a sophomore that year, if anyone wants to see it. Carole did an excellent job. She was held in such high esteem by her Yearbook Staff that, unbeknownst to her, they put in several pictures of her, as a tribute for her hard work and friendship. She found out about it when she saw the Editor's Proof Copy. She was very embarrassed. In this picture, Carole is in the ad for the Winslow Photo, arrow.

B. Round Valley and Greer, 1936-1939.

1. *Springerville vs. Eagar.*

Dad explained to us that a cultural, economic, and social, dichotomy existed between the populations of Springerville and Eagar. Springerville was originally founded by ranchers, who took over from the original Spanish population. (Dad always liked history, so a brief, but accurate, history of early Springerville/Eagar is included in his 1939 Yearbook; see www.elks.net . Later, Family History and Temple work were high priorities in his life.) When the Mormon Pioneers were sent in to establish Eagar in the mid-1870's, two, very different and distinct, cultures learned to co-exist together. Dad said that he regularly attended, and occasionally was in charge of, school events, like plays, musicals, football and basketball games, etc., at the high school. Those were the main cultural events for the non-L.D.S. population. He went on summer round-ups, branded and neutered steers, etc., with the old, Springerville families. Some of his closest friends were the ranchers in Springerville. He treasured their friendship. At the same time, he also attended Church, firesides, dances, and L.D.S. cultural events in Eagar. His Father was Bishop in Hinckley, Utah, at the time, and frequently enquired of him about this dichotomy. So, on one hand, he was occasionally in serious, physical confrontations with his peers in Springerville (2 fist fights), which was a rough, cowboy town at the

time. At the same time, on the other hand, he escorted L.D.S. women to Church, Church dances and L.D.S. cultural events and enjoyed the L.D.S. environment. Dad, although raised in sheltered Utah, found the Round Valley environment very pleasant and very amenable to his personality. He always spoke very highly of both populations, with great respect and regard for his friends.

2. Dating.



Dad explained that his dating activities with young women in Springerville/Eagar, was ordinary for the time. Frequently he and a date would go on picnics with one or two other couples. They would drive up the Little Colorado River, which was just a stream, picture, or go all the way to Greer. The girls would let the men out of the car and then drive about a mile and a half downstream. The men would catch a mess of fish, mostly native rainbow trout and brookies, as they

worked their way to the picnic spot. When they arrived, the girls had the salads and desserts all ready. The men cooked the fish on an open fire and they had a very pleasant picnic together. A great, social environment. They only used natural bait. Grasshoppers in the grass fields, slugs on the bottom of small rocks in the stream, and of course, worms. They purchased their fishing tackle at the Wiltbanks Store in Greer; the foundation still remains, as seen in this picture.



If they were cooking a small brookie, picture, Dad said that they cooked it like a hot dog. After it was cleaned, they put it on a stick and cooked it over the open fire. He and I did this frequently, when I was growing up. Don't try this unless you know what you're doing. The fish has to be cooked so well that all of the bones are very brittle. Otherwise, bones can get caught in your mouth and throat. That can be serious. So be careful.

3. Fishing.

A lot of Dad's friends in Round Valley would take water-dogs from the cattle tanks and go



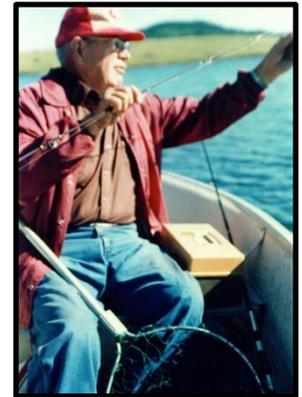
to Clear Creek near Winslow or to Blue Ridge Reservoir and catch large bass. The lunkers congregated near the large rocks on the shoreline. Bass are great fighters and, I think, they taste great. A nice, oily, white meat. But Dad's fish of choice was always trout. In the picture, I am with my daughter, Marleen, and my Nephew, Joe. Notice our fluorescent green, "Greer" caps; our lucky fishing hats. 'Leen said that the reason why we caught so many fish was because when it got dark, all of the fish swam towards the bright, fluorescent hats, and took our bait!

There was a lake in the White Mountains that had a lot of graylings. A very ancient, weird looking, strange, fish, picture. I asked Dad if we could go fishing there and he declined, saying, "I don't want to catch any dinosaur fish!" And that was the end of the conversation. I took the boat and went by myself and caught a few graylings. They really did look primitive, but I thought they tasted fine; a dense, dry meat.



One year they had stocked a lot of brown trout in Tunnel. On our vacation that year, we caught and ate a lot of brownies using large, bright yellow, glittery, flies that we made ourselves and trolled behind the boat going pretty fast. Picture, Mom and Alexandria with brownies. They have a very unique, moist, textured, taste. Very delicious, especially when cooked over an open camp fire. I agree with Dad, trout are the best. The right picture shows Dad fishing in his favorite fishing hole on Big Lake. For some reason, year after year, we always caught a lot of large brookies in this spot.

About 40 yards off of the tip of the second peninsula; the one with the barbed wire fence going perpendicular into the lake. We used worms, grasshoppers and gold Powerbait with sparkles, fishing just off the bottom. The brookies don't strike, they just nibble, so you have to be very good and alert, to catch them. I think that is why Dad liked to fish for them. When we saw dark, storm, clouds coming over the mountain in the background, we had to head for the truck and wait out the afternoon, monsoon, rain storm.



On one occasion Dad and I went to fish at Rainbow Lake, in the White Mountains. We took a herpetologist friend with us. He warned us about rattle snakes. It was that time of year when they were shedding their skins and their rattles were not working to warn you if you were getting too close. He said it was an unusually prolific year for rattle snakes, and he would show us how many rattle snakes there were in the dam at Rainbow Lake. I wasn't sure if I believed him or not. We had fished there many times and had never seen a snake. He took the mirror off of the truck visor and reflected the bright, magnified, sun into the dark cracks and crevices between the rocks in the dam. In about 15 minutes, he had driven out 4 rattle snakes. And they were very angry! You should have seen the other fishermen scatter! The word quickly spread in town, what we had done, and we had the entire dam all to ourselves the rest of the day, with only a few curious on-lookers, occasionally driving by. We caught limits of rainbows and a tub full of perch and blue gill. I even caught some nice rainbows, 18 – 22", playing them and bringing them in by hand, after my reel broke. A memorable experience! Yes, Dad was a fisherman!





Our extended family has many, sweet, memories of camping, swimming, horseback riding, hunting and fishing in Springerville and Greer. Many years ago, Dad and my Nephew, Will, in his lucky fishing hat, picture,



challenged me to a fishing contest on the Little Colorado River as it meandered through the Greer Valley; picture. They said they could catch twice as many fish as me. They did, plus 2 more. I ate “humble pie” during the rest of that family reunion. (In the top right of the Greer picture, arrow, is where Dad and Mom wanted to purchase property and build a nice log cabin for us in the summertime. They changed their mind at the last minute. That was a good thing because a few years later a forest fire raged over that area and it would have destroyed our cabin.)

A few times Dad took some of the older kids to fish a stream in a wilderness area in the White Mountains, about an hour drive from Springerville. It took about 5 hours to hike and fish the untamed river in the very deep canyon. There were no trails. It was very primitive. It always seemed to rain on us, but we always caught some large trout in this stream, so, it was one of our favorite fishing rivers. Dad usually took a pistol along with us, just in case of danger. Picture, Carole and Dad with a catch from the “Wilderness Area.”



One summer three of our teenage girls, Marleen, Rachel and Carrie, asked to use the boat to go fishing on Tunnel, picture. When they left camp, we all thought it was kind of strange that they were all wearing shorts and tank tops, and they threw in only one fishing pole. Greer can be chilly, even in the summer time. When they got back several hours later, they asked me to take care of the two fish they had caught. They said, “We didn’t mean to catch any fish, but two hopped on our line anyway.” They had been out cruising the lake, sunbathing.

Marlisha, Debra and Margot soon joined them on other “sunbathing trips;” they dropped the “fishing” ruse. They all left Benny Creek that year with beautiful sun tans.



The Stratton “Sun Bathing Beauties:” ‘Leen, Rachel, Carrie, ‘Lisha, Debra, Margot.



When she was very young, my Niece, Carrie, told me she didn't know how to fish. So, like the dutiful Uncle I was, I took her to one of my favorite fishing holes in Greer, picture. Obviously, she was pulling my leg. They had just stocked the creek. She caught 8 rainbows in less than 15 minutes. I didn't catch anything. All I had time to do was help her with her fish and bait. A great experience for an Uncle!

4. A side note. We can't leave Greer without telling you about the near disaster on Bunch, in about 1929. When Mom, Patricia Frances Black, was a teenager, her parents took the family up to the Benny Creek Camp Ground in Greer on a vacation. The same place where we always went as a family, later, when us kids were growing up. Grandpa Black and two other men were fishing in a boat, about 40 yards off the bank at Bunch Lake; the exact place seen in the picture, arrow. The boat tipped over. Grandpa couldn't swim and his foot was caught under the seat, so he went under the water. Grandma knew that Grandpa couldn't swim, so she dove in with her clothes on, from the bank, swam to the boat, went under the water to free his foot, and brought him back to shore. She then did CPR on him, and saved his life.



C. Round Valley High School, then and now.



1. The Round Valley High School. This is a picture of the Round Valley High School when Dad was there in 1936-1939.



R.V.H.S. is a Museum today, 2014. I am standing in the same hallway Dad used to walk down when he went to the Main Office, to my left.





The recently constructed, 1980's, Round Valley High School in 2014.

2. Football.



Cliff Stratton at Dixie College, Utah. He attended college on academic and sports scholarships. He was Valedictorian of his high school class and graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Arizona State Teachers College. Today, 2014, Arizona State Teachers College is Northern Arizona University, in Flagstaff. He played in the backfield. He loved to run the ball and the adrenalin rush of making a touchdown.



The parade through Springerville before a big game in 1939, dragging a mock-up of the opposing team's mascot. (Note the movie theater on the right, arrow, where Dad went on dates. During our vacations in the 1950s and 1960s we went there on Saturday nights for a family movie. It's called the El Rio today. It has been the local hang-out spot for the teenagers for at least four decades.)



Coach Stratton at Round Valley High School in 1938 or 1939, happy after a hard fought win over St. Johns.

3. The football field. The football field where Dad was Coach has changed since Dad was there. As you can see from this 8 mm film of one of Dad's games, the football field was some distance from the "R.V.H.S." white letters on the mountain. The letters are still on the same mountain today, picture. The football field was located in the area where the Administration Parking Lot and Auditorium are today, 2014, picture.



D. Religion. I want to conclude Dad's tribute at Round Valley and Greer with some comments on Dad's relationship to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I occasionally asked my Father, why we attended the Mormon Church, in Winslow. He always gave me the same answer, "It is our family's church. Many of your Mormon Pioneer ancestors suffered unbelievable hardships when they were persecuted and driven by mobs in England and in the eastern United States, before coming west. They paid a very high price so we could belong to this church. It is our family's church." That wasn't good enough for me. That meant any church could have been our "family's church." I pressed him for more. Finally, he said, quietly and confidentially, that he had read the Book of Mormon, as a youth, and had received a personal, yet powerful, witness, that it was true. But the experience was very personal and sacred to him. That's why he never talked about it. My Mother, raised a devout Presbyterian, and with a strong Catholic background, joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when I was a child. When I asked her why we attended the Mormon Church, she said that at the request of a dear, girlfriend, she prayerfully read the Book of Mormon, along with some other Mormon books, and the Holy Ghost strongly and undeniably witnessed to her that it was all true. (Her conversion testimony is available to family on the *Legacy Collection*, Disk F.) She became very sober and tender whenever she related her experience to me. So, I knew that it was special.

Being the only L.D.S. person on my high school football and basketball teams, I took a lot of flak about my religion. On every away game, when we went to eat, they always had 14 glasses of iced tea and one lemonade. Guess who the lemonade was for! (My senior year our basketball coach was a Christian, and he often surprised me and the rest of the team, asking me to say a team prayer before difficult games. So, I really stood out. By the way, we took third in State that year.) One day my freshman year, my seminary teacher said, "Everything depends on the Book of Mormon. If it's true, then it's all true; living prophets, no smoking, no tea, no tobacco, no alcohol, being chaste, having meaningful, secret, daily, prayers...the whole thing is true. But, if the Book of Mormon is false, it's all a lie...and we owe the Mormon Church no allegiance." The stark realization of what he had just said, hit me hard. That was all I could think about. A couple of months later, when we went to Greer, I took a Book of Mormon with me. I was determined to find out for myself. For the first three days, while my sisters and parents were out horseback riding, fishing, swimming, hiking, shooting...I prayerfully read the Book of Mormon, all day long. I only took breaks to eat. I joined my family at the camp fire when it was too dark to read. It wasn't easy to do, because it's scripture and I wasn't a very good reader. But I was determined. After three days I had read most of the book. The feelings I had were so powerful



and so undeniable and so strong, that I knew, deep down inside, beyond any doubt, that the Book of Mormon was true. I had just experienced the same remarkable event as my parents, with the same outcome. That experience

changed my life. I served a mission to Wales, married in the Mesa Arizona Temple and have raised my family in the Mormon Church. I never looked back. It changed my life. That remarkable experience took place in Greer, in the small grove of aspen trees overlooking Benny Creek, just over the edge, immediately behind me in the picture.

E. Conclusion.



Now the life histories of our parents, Clifford Stratton Sr. and Patricia Frances Black are complete. Dad's ancestry is in *Mormon Pioneer Ancestry of Clifford Stratton Sr.* Available on the L.D.S. cloud or from Amazon.com. His early life in Hinckley, Utah, his marriage and life experiences as a father and provider, are well documented in the *Cliff & Pat Stratton Legacy Collection*, given to family at Mom's funeral last week. And, now, finally, his experiences in Round Valley are documented. Mom's ancestry is in *Early Tucson: The History and Genealogy of Atanacia Santa Cruz Bojorquez Hughes*. Also on the L.D.S.

Cloud or from Amazon. Mom's early life, her marriage to Cliff, and their life experiences raising our family, are on the *Legacy Collection*. Now, my work is done. My parents' incredible lives are well documented. We can all learn from their experiences. Picture, Pat, Cliff, Cliff J and Carole.