My Life

Bessie Jensen Criddle

Tuesday at 7 pm April 5, 1910, James C and Sylvia L Jensen became the proud parents of me. I was born in a house just south the second ward meeting house on 1sr South, 2nd West at Preston, Idaho. The house is still standing.

June 5, 1910, I was given the name of Bessie, the name was for one of my Mother’s best girlfriends. I was christened in the old second ward church house by my father. When christened, I wore a white silk dress, embroidered white hood and a white wool shawl, one and one, fourth yard square that mother has crocheted.

About the time was one-year-old, Oct, 1911, the folks moved to the house on 252 E 3 S. where we have lived since.

The fall after I was six, I started school with Mary Dolby as my beginning teacher, she starting all the rest of the family out with their schooling. It was a singular coincident that the first day of school the two across the aisle from me each way were cousins. I had just been in the second grade a few weeks when I was put ahead one-half grade, where I remained until graduation from District school. My grade school days were all very pleasant tome; I’m not sure the teachers enjoyed the so much because I was an incessant talker. Mother was constantly being told about my behavior and that if I didn’t stop talking they would have to slap me; of course that made her feel badly but it made little difference to me. I only thought the teacher was especially hard boiled and continued disturbing.

May 2nd, 1924, I graduated from the Preston Public Schools with the largest 8th grade graduating class they had had, 149 students. I tied with one other girl for the next to the highest average Mine being 95 2/3 %

As I entered High School at the middle of the time before my graduation from the 8th grade, I didn’t seem to fit in until I was a Senior. I graduated from the Preston High School, May 28, 1927 the next to the youngest member of the class, Heber Chatterton being a few months younger. Of the class who began in the first grade, only 4 of us, Heber, Dora Boyle, Hanna P, and myself graduated from high school together.

May 15th, 1927 I graduated from the Franklin County Seminary. Having received the Stake Scholarship to the Ricks College at Rexburg, Idaho, I attended school there the next two years, graduating from Normal Department June 1, 1929. My friend and I tied for scholarships girl from there. She won by 4 thousandth of a point bit it was explained to us the next summer that a teacher has mixed our grades up making her get it.

My 8th grade graduation dress was deep rose with white fringe. It was made with a gathered skirt and tacks trimmed in white lave and a bow tie. My high school graduation dress was gold silk all over lace, trimmed with robin egg blue ?. My seminary dress was tan flat crepe made sport style with plaits in the front. My college graduation dress was a pink g? ensemble suit, the trimming on it being the g? accordion pleated.

The year after graduation from Ricks, I taught the fourth and fifth grades at Franklin, Idaho. I lived at home that year, driving or riding on the train back and forth to school. The next two years were spent teaching the sixth grade at Driggs, Idaho.

During all of my grade school classes, Dora Boyle was my favorite chum. After entering High School, we got in with different groups. I chummed with Elda Jensen, Leon Shipley, Jean Fife, and Amy Hansen the most time. Leon is the one I continued to be especially friendly with though. At college, Anna Johnson and I boarded at Mrs. Henry Adams place on 60 South and 2nd West. We had some very good times at one “Poverty Flats” as we called our room. As Della Peral Sorenson, my roommate at Driggs, has naturally been my closest friend (at Driggs). I’ve had many, many friends but they are the outstanding ones. Also at college, Eva Davis and Letha nelson were very close friends.

March 4, 1919, I was baptized in the Logan Temple by William G. North. I was confirmed at that same time by Thomas Morgon. Mr. Noble told me after that he had been a childhood friend of mothers, so I considered it a privilege.

My church activities at home were teaching religion class two years, Junior Seminary one year and Primary Play leader for four years. At Driggs, I have taught the New Testament Class in Sunday School one year and Junior girls in Mutual two years.

All of my childhood days were especially interesting to me. I always found talents to do to keep me busy. I won’t say, “out of mischief” though, because sometimes my business was mischief.

At one time, a neighbor dashed over and told mother she hated to tell her, but thought she should know where I was. Immediately, Mother became alarmed, but was only amused to learn that I was just near the top of a tree. One of my favorite pastimes was climbing to the top of every tree, barn, or house that I came to.

It seems as if I was always scheming to get out of things. One day, Mother wouldn’t put me in the closet when I didn’t help do dishes. I said to her, “Why don’t you put me in the closet? I have my doll in there to play with.” It is needless to say that I was never put into the closet again for punishment.

Peter, my brother, and I always had some great times playing, quarreling, etc. at Mother’s expense. At one time, we had company for dinner and, as one, we pulled faces at each other causing a disturbance at the table. I was sent to the hall and he was sent to the kitchen. The doors were on the same side of the rooms. We opened them at the same time, not knowing the other one was pulled a ? at each other – much to my Mother’s embarrassment and the guests pleasure.

As a child, my chief forms of amusement was to dress up in Mother’s or someone’s clothes and play shows etc.

The spring of 1932, I signed a contract to teach the fourth and fifth grades at Cambridge, Idaho, 2 1/1 miles northeast of Downey. My work there for the two years has been very enjoyable. The first year, my roommate was Norma Johnson. We spent much of our time at Wallace and Glady’s Jensen’s . He was my Principle. Mary Penrose was my roommate the second year – and I really believe that I enjoyed my 2nd year better because I see, to fit in more. My church activities in Cambridge consisted of teaching primary and mutual both years – then Sunday School the second year.

Through out all my life, my dearest and closest chum has been my sister Anna. We had an especially enjoyable time attending the ten week’s summer school at Rexburg in 1933.

As for boyfriends, the outstanding one’s are Dan Jensen, who took me out to spite Anna. Chick (Henry) Hodges, a very nice boy, but not just what I cared for. Stanley Larson, a very nice boy, but I didn’t care for his mother. Alvin Burnside is the one I started “going with” Feb. 25th, 1931. I have gone with many other boys but didn’t think anything much them. (written up to April 1934.)

On April 20th, 1934, when I was called to Idaho Falls, Idaho just before Alvin passed away, it seemed a terrible blow tome. The following summer, Anna had ruptured appendix and we were afraid we were going to lose her too. Although I was very lonely with Alvin’s passing, I knew that I had to go forward and live the best I could.

I taught one more winter on Cambridge, then two winters in Preston. I did enjoy my teaching so much in Preston, being a larger system, and just plenty of work. It was so nice to be with the family again though. While teaching in Preston, I enjoyed working on Franklin Stake Sunday School Board the two years. I was business and professional. Women’s President the year of 1936, which was an honor and also an advantage for personal development. I had charge of the District Convention with was held in Preston that spring. It was a complete success as to details and attendance.

The summer of 1937 brought many changes to our family. May 13, on her 25th birthday anniversary, Anna was married to Robert (Bob) Burnside (a cousin of Alvin’s). June 1, 1937 in the Salt Lake Temple, I became the wife of James A. Criddle. Besides getting a husband who, to me, is perfection in every way, I gained a ready-made family of 3 boys. James’s first wife having died the year previous. Although I started married life with the added responsibility of a family, I have never regretted it. All have pitched in to help and I think we’re going to make a success of it. James has been so sweet and considerate with me, although we’ve had a differences of opinion, we have never had “words.” If all women loved their husband as much as I do mine, and all husbands loved their wives as much as James shows that he loves me, all marital difficulties would be over.

In July of 1937, Mother and Father purchased the Hotel La Moyne at Burley, Idaho and moved out there. To date, mine and James’ family consist of Connie Jensen, born Feb. 27, 1938, and Carol Jensen, born December 4th, 1939. Both are sweet little girls and a real pleasure to be around.

My home, and family, responsibilities found me to decline several jobs. I have taught the social science call continually in the Cambridge Ward since I was married. 1940-41, I taught the Gleaners and Mia Maids in mutual, and 1941-42 I am teaching primary.

In 1938, I joined the Downey Study Club. Now elected Vice President of it in 1940. (written up to Jan. 21st, 1942.)

I’m not even mentioning the War and state of the world. Perhaps next time I write things will be better. Jean Jensen, our third daughter, was born October 17, 1943. Not being able to hire a girl, James did all the washings and all – showing his excellent efficiencies.

The year 1944 was quite eventful of us. On May 19, 1944, Dale went into the armed forces. He took his training for the armored division at Fort Knox, KY, had lovely 2 weeks furlough with is in October and sailed from the U.S. for France in January 1st, 1945.

As Connie was old enough to attend school, and we were told the school wouldn’t come up after the children, we purchased the John Hyde home, furnished, in town and moved down October 1, 1944. It is a beautiful home, and so convenient. We were very busy all winter painting, papering, and making changes – James showing his versatility by being such an excellent carpenter.

I am happy over our home in town, but the farm is (and I believe always will be) home; a place where I was so happy. I miss the people of the Cambridge ward as we seemed to fit in so nicely there. The ward gave us a grand party when we left and the last fast meeting, we were there was turned into a testimonial for us. Bishop Brim has told us that we have a standing invitation to any parties in the Cambridge Ward.

November 12, 1944, another honor came to James as he was called to be 2nd counselor in the Stake Presidency. I feel that President Hansen chose right man for the job.

June 15, 1942, I was chosen to work on the Primary Stake Board, as Teacher Training leader. Then, August 23rd, 1942, I went in as 2nd Counselor to Emma Brim, retaining my other job too. It has been a real pleasure to work with Emma and Zina hatch, the 1st Counselor. (written to March 23rd, 1945.)

In 1956, I find that I have been neglecting to keep up on my journal history. In trying to catch up on it, I find that “my family” and their doings are my history now. Dale completed his time in the service, spending 9 months in Europe, near the front lines. He filled a mission to California, graduated from the BYU, taught one year at the High school in Shelly, then decided to work with his father on the farm. He married Kathleen Bowman from ?, Mexico and they have five sons and a darling daughter. Melvin enlisted in the Navy, just after graduation from High School. He served 2 years. His work was mainly transporting the troops home as it was “V.J” Day 2 months after he went in. He left for this mission to the Western states the same day Dale did. He married Shelly Christiansen of Downey. They have 2 sons and 2 daughters. He bought a farm in Eden, Wyoming, but it didn’t work out so after selling insurance for a year in Ogden, he moved to Grand Junction, Colorado as District Manager for a Food Supply Co.

Max enlisted in the Navy before his 18th birthday. He spent 3 years as a “sonar man”. He married Carolyn Reed from Ogden and has one son. He is going to a trade school in Salt Lake for radio and T.V. now.

Connie, at 18, is wearing a diamond. Carl (Erol) Thomas from Molad still has 2 more years with the Air Force. She has been a conscientious, good student all through school. In 1954, she was cited in the paper, church section, etc. for 8 years 100% attendance at Sunday school, M.I.A., and missing one Sacrament meeting. She had opportunities for piano lessons, but only completed the 3rd grade. She has been in a singing group for 10 years, sings alto week and can conduct singing nicely. She takes reading lessons and won 1st prize at the 1955 March Valley talent show. She won the State Farm Bureau talent find in 1955, so had an expense paid trip to Chicago. I went with her; James paid my way. He enjoyed the trip so.

Carol, our straight A girl is quick to learn and studies hard. In the 8th grade, she didn’t miss one spelling word the entire year. Carol plays the piano very well. She plays the oboe in band – since 5th grade. At 16, she is Stake Sunday School organist.

Jean at 12 is developing into a young lady very fast. She is a good conscientious student too. She has taken tap dance lessons, is taking piano and we also bought her a flute for the band. She makes Keith and Clyde two the line.

Keith, born Jan. 13, 1947, is a typical 9-year-old boy. Clyde, born August 18th, 1952 is a daddy’s boy. He enjoys both the younger boys so. In May, before Clyde was born, I fell – so spent 5 days in the hospital, but we did see the baby. Then, when he came, the cord was wrapped around his neck twice. The dr. said, “The Lord must have wanted you to have this baby.”

We have encouraged the children to participate in all church, 4 H, and other good movements. And their accomplishments make us so proud.

On April 17, 1949, James was sustained as President of the ? Stake. I am so proud of him and his work. The Lord has certainly blessed and magnified him in his calling. It is such a priviledge for us as a family to have the General Authorities come into our home.

In 1947, we extended our farm and bought some land in Preston, as it wasn’t as advertised, we were able to trade it for a 930 acre farm on the west side known as the Shriver’s place. Then this January we are buying 240 acres in Cherry Creek. James never buy snay land until he has figured it all out on paper.

In 1952, James put ip the money for Lynne and Glenn P? to buy a farm in ? County. It became necessary for us to take it over; not liking the location he sold it Alten Smith. James and I have had some wonderful trips. In 1950, when Dale was married, we went to Mesa, Arizona for the wedding, then on to Mexico for the reception. That fall, we went back east for a new car and visited Niagara, Palmyra, Washington DC, Nauvoo and Carthage on the way home.

In 1951, we took the children and visited in the northwest. We visited Boise, Le Moyne in March, Grand Coulee Dam, Peter in Starwood, ? in Olympia,, Lowell in Portland and Sadie in Baker. It was a lovely trip. In 1955, James, Clyde, mother and I made the same trip to Portland – as Sadie passed away August 8, 1955. We went down the coast, trough the woods and to San Francisco. In 1953, we took the family to Yellowstone Park. In 1954, with the family, we visited Craters of the Moon, Selma, and Sun Valley. October that year, James and I, with his sister ? and husband Roy, visited Canada. James and I took Clyde to Grand Junction, Colorado to see Melvin and family just before Thanksgiving in 1955.

Since James went in as Stake President, we have attended General Conference in Salt Lake in both spring and fall. (I missed the 2 after Clyde was born.)

June 18th, 1952m mother and father Jensen celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. It was a wonderful time with all the family at home. They are both showing their age rapidly now. Mother suffered a slight stoke October 1954 and father in Jan. 1956. I am grateful to have had such wonderful parents – and hope that I can always live that they will be proud of me.

I am still in the Stake Primary Presidency. Since Clyde was born, I haven’t taught in the ward. I even served 2 years as counselor in the ward presidency. I have taught the teacher’s training class in Sunday School for the past 2 years – and really enjoyed it.

On July 15, 1954, we had a freak wind storm which blew the beautiful, big pine tree over onto our home. It carried the 1000 ? granary over buildings to the next lot and the floor of that bin 2 clocks away. The barn was completely demolished and the 2 longer grain bins moved off their foundation – he figures that it was $1000 loss for us.

I have always enjoyed sewing and have made so much for me and the children. I like to zip things up in a hurry. I don’t feel that it is a savings if the material and time cost as much as a ready-made article. I always like to make over and make use of things as that gives me a great deal of satisfaction.

As long as I keep up the Jensen family history each year, I don’t plan to add more to this. Feb. 10, 1956.