

Memories of My Father, Joseph Stirling
by Carlyle Stirling

My father Joseph Stirling was born November 15, 1889 in Leeds, Utah to William and Sarah Ann Leany Stirling. He was the last of 14 children born to this pioneer couple.

His childhood and all of his life was spent in Leeds except for a winter that he attended the Utah State University at Logan, Utah and for six months that he spent in the army during World War I. I can imagine that his childhood was a happy one with much of his time spent swimming, hunting, and being taught the skill of farming by his father and older brothers Will, Tom, and Dave.

This happy childhood was marred by the death of his mother when he was eleven years old. His care then fell to his older sister to who I am sure he was a real challenge.

I am sure that much of his teenage years were spent involved with his brother Tom who ran cattle on the Arizona Strip during that period of time.

One story that I remember him telling of this time was going mustang running with Frank McMullin, Frank Hamilton, and others. The horses that were caught were divided among them. Father got two horses, one was a little mare that he named Kate and rode for many years, the other was a gelding that was never worth anything.

During his twenties, father was very involved in the reorganization of the Leeds Water Co. He served in the organization for many years as President and a member of the board. During this time he also homesteaded 150 acres of land at the foot of Pine Valley Mountain, know as Person Flat. It is now known as Joe's place.

Also during this period of father's life, he was involved in freighting with horses and wagons, hauling store goods from Lund and Modena to the family store in Leeds and wool from the Fort Pierce shearing pens to the railroad at Lund and Modena. One story I remember him telling about the wool hauling was that one of the freighters whom they had to pull up all of the hills and out of the creek bottoms said as they were unloading, "By ____, I think I could have made it with one more bag".

He was involved in taking herds of cattle from Leeds to the railroad at Lund and Modena.

On July 21, 1921, father married Marguerite McMullin. To them were born three sons: Harold, Stanford, and Carlyle. Mother had a son Roscoe by a previous marriage, so we grew up as a family of four boys.

Soon after their marriage, the building that had been used for a store was pulled with teams to a spot near the point of the East Mountain for their home where they lived until a new home was built in town in 1948.

In the late 1920's father and many other farmers in Washington County planted extensive Elberta peach orchards. This was the main source of income for father throughout his life. He became very skilled in peach production, producing large crops of excellent fruit.

In 1929, father had an accident that would affect him for the rest of his life. At this time the Leeds Ward Chapel was being remodeled. Father was carrying me and slipped and fell, running a nail into his left hand. The next day he left to ride for cattle and returned that night in great pain from the puncture wound. Infection set in and he was very ill for a long period of time, it being several years before he regained his strength. This illness left the fingers of his left hand stiff. This made it difficult for him to do many farm activities but never once did I hear him complain or expect help because of this situation.

Father loved hunting. He generally had a shotgun or .22 rifle near as he worked on the farm, killing many varmints and occasionally as the hunting seasons permitted, getting quail or a pheasant for the dinner table. His greatest joy, however, was deer hunting. He knew every trail, rock, and ridge in that area we called the "Hills", this being the area from Silver Reef to the foot of Pine Valley Mountain. He taught each of his boys the skill of deer hunting and names of Mud Spring Flat, The Big Knoll, Big Holler, Three Pine, Horse Valley, John's Holler, and Dan Spring bring back fond memories to all of us.

Much of father's life was involved with horses. I have already mentioned Kate, one horse he often talked of; another was Yank. These were both riding horses and I am sure there were many others. Work horses he talked of were Old Doll, Turk, and Dan. The teams that I remember that he used were Fred & Polly and the team I remember driving was Cub & Queen. He was very skillful in training horses, teaching them to be gentle and good pullers.

I will always remember him as a rather hard-working man. He was honest, optimistic, and cheerful and always looked for the best in all situations.