

Life Sketch of Rex Bassett

(In his words, dictated May 1982)

On the 4th of July, 1912, Mom and Dad hooked up the team to the white-topped buggy we had and drove from here (Lago) to Mound Valley to the 4th of July celebration. Two days later I was born. It was probably that buggy ride that did it. I was born in the old house that sat in the field north of our home. I was about 12 years old when we moved to the house on the east side of the valley.



There was a Presbyterian church at the Olorenshaw corner. I went to school there before the church on the corner was built. There were two rooms in the top of the church, and that was where we had classes. I was 8 or 9 (1920-1921) when the old brick schoolhouse was finished on the corner. When I started school, I was so smart that I took the first and second grade together and finished them in one year!

It used to be that every ward (LDS Church House) doubled as a schoolhouse, and the ward houses were spread out all over the valley, one for each little section of the valley. Soon after I started school they began building central schoolhouses and bringing the kids together from the different areas so they wouldn't be so spread out. The wards were quite small – and so were the schools. First through eighth grade went to the old school house, and all eight grades were in two rooms. There was a big gymnasium/dance hall type area in the basement. Dad (Don H.) held dances there for two or three winters.

Our family homesteaded the old house that was north of our home. Grandpa Bassett (Don H.) bought the Elvin Meacham place (east of our home) and we lived there for quite a few years, and still had this place down here. I would drive the milk cows from up there down here after milking in the mornings, and then take them back up to the East place to milk them at night. By the time we turned them out in the morning when we were done milking them, they would be half way down here before I caught up with them.

C.H. Bassett had the big house to the south of us and when Dad got married, he turned this place over to him. He let Willis have the part that is directly south of our place. Harold had 40 acres up on the bench where Jr. Bitton lives. They still have some land up there now. Dad sold the East place to Harris Mickelson and they lived there for several years before they moved over to where they are now.

When this house was built it sat down on the corner where the church and the school were – north of them – across the road. They moved it here later. When this house was built, it was different than it is now. In the late 30's the bathroom and kitchen were built on, the kitchen used to be where the downstairs bedroom is now. When we moved down here, Mom and Dad worked in the General Store for W.H. Bassett off and on for years.

Your Grandma Bassett (Amanda Meacham) was born in the big house where Alan Ruud lives now. Everyone in the valley liked Grandma Bassett, and she liked doing things for others. She was very active in the church until her cancer got so bad she couldn't get around. She was only about 57 when she passed away. She had cancer for about three years and was down for about two with it. She stayed with Lucille in Salt Lake City for a while, and then she decided that she wanted to come home. I met the train in Ogden. At the time we had an old suburban. We put a couch in the back of it so she would be able to lay down for the ride home. Sometimes the pain would be so bad that she would lay in the front room and scream. Frances Bassett would come over and rub and massage her hands until the pain would go away a little bit. She had breast cancer. Doc. Kackley operated and removed one breast. Then she had stringers of it go down her arms and into her spine. It finally ate one of her vertebrae. That is how she finally died.

I went to high school at Thatcher – it was called Central High. We used to have to ride our horses to school. When I was in grade school, the cow barn that was out here used to be down by the school. The kids would ride their horses to school and put them in the barn to keep them warm until it was time to go home.

“Things we used to do to get into trouble? Don't you know that we were good kids?” Well, we used to steal turkeys and chickens for chivarees. There were a lot of places around that had a lot of birds, so we would only take a couple from each place so they wouldn't miss them! Then we would go to where the water comes out of Trout Creek and skin and clean them, and then go somewhere and cook them and have a great party. “What would you have done if someone had done that to you when you had chickens out here?” His reply: “Why do you think I kept them in the chicken coop, had the chicken coop close to the house and had a good watch dog?”

I drove the school bus for a lot years. Willard Bitton had a Chevy 1.5 ton and built a box on it. He came from his place, and dropped the grade school kids off here, and then would take the high school kids to Thatcher. Willard ran the school route for two years, and then sold the bus to me and I drove it for 26 years. I started in 1934. In 1937 I got a Chevy panel truck and put a bench down each side in the back. In 1939 I got the suburban. It was nice because it had glass around it. It had over 100,000 miles on it when Jess Coombs wanted to buy it from me after I had quit using it for the school run. I let him have it and he put another 100,000 miles on it. They don't make them like they used to. When they got the new buses over to Thatcher, I was driving a 40 passenger International.

“How did you meet mom?” To begin with, Butch Swenson went to the Teton Basin a couple of times to see June before they got married and I went with him. She was just a redheaded, snot-nosed kid at the time. Several years after that, she came down here and stayed with Harris and Norma and with Butch and June, then she went to California during the war to work at the aircraft factory. We got acquainted about that time, and when she was here, we would always do things together. When she came back from California, she lived with Butch and June again. Toots Swenson tried to get me to throw Mom over and marry her while Beth was in California. I just didn't want to do that. One night I took her (Mom) home (over to Butch and June's) and said: “Beth, would you marry me?” She said, “yes, yes” without any hesitation at all. She had written me from California all the time, and that kept me on my toes a little bit. I think she had been waiting for quite a while for me to ask her. She was never serious in her letters. She stayed with Bill and Virginia for a while. One day I went to

Pocatello and got an engagement ring and a wedding band. I reached in my pocket one night while we were on a date and pulled out this engagement ring and said: "Hold your finger out," and I just put it on. She wasn't surprised at all. She wanted to get married.

For quite a few years I was having too much fun to settle down. There were too many different girls to date. When asked what made him decide to settle down – he said: "By the time you get to be about 30 years old, you need to decide on something."

Our friends chivareed us. They told us we had to put on a dance for them. We hired an orchestra and put on a dance in the basement of the old school house. Some people brought wedding gifts for us at that time.

The reason why we waited so long to have Clinton (three years) after we were married was because Norma and Harris (Mickelson) were over here having kids one right after the other. When we got married, Harris said: "Well, just wait on old Rex Bassett and see how quick we are together." We made up our minds right then to wait for a while. We got married in May of 1945 and Clinton wasn't born until the 17 of January 1948. Sandra came three years after that and Korine six years after Sandi.

I rode for the sheriff's posse from 1948 to the late 50's. I started out riding Tony, then got Spice later.

I remember one summer Clinton was standing on the bridge watching the water when it was coming down fast and boiling through under the bridge. He was standing on the bridge putting his hand down and feeling the water come down off the trough. I slipped up behind him and pushed him in head first and pulled him right out. It cured him of the water for a while, but not for long. It wasn't much later that mom went outside looking for him and found that he and the dog had dug a hole under the fence and went under to go play in the water.