

FAMILY STORIES (THANKS TO GARY!!!)

If you have other stories, type them up and send them to John E. at jevdb1@gmail.com

Gary VDB - Nov 1999:

I must tell of a hunting trip with my Dad, my brother Johnny and Uncle Ted Crawford up on Black Mesa, I think it was in 1961. Uncle Ted had brought both his regular tent and his “tee-pee.” John and I were designated to sleep in the tee-pee. It was very cold so Uncle Ted helped us build a fire in the center of the tee-pee, we all sat around the fire and told stories, at bedtime Ted closed the flaps at the top of the tent to hold in the heat, but it also held in the smoke. I tried to adjust the flaps so that it let out more smoke, but without much luck. After getting up in the cold many times we finally just decided to sleep while breathing the smoke. Boy it was a long nite – it is a wonder John and I don’t have “black lung”! After sleeping in the tee-pee all night I now know why the Indians went on rampages and scalped people!! The following day I was hunting near Uncle Ted, Dad and John had gone a different direction, Ted was on the top of a ridge south of Baldy Lake and shot at a large cow elk. I heard him shoot, so went over to him to see if I could help. We tracked the cow downhill for a couple of miles and it finally died about a 200 feet from the road. I stayed with the elk and Ted went and got his famous “International Scout” (he was a International man). He drove south on the road a ways and then up the bank and on up through the quakey trees to within about 50 feet of the elk. He got out all his rope and was still about 6 feet short of being able to hook on to the elk. He then got out his tire chains and hooked them together and around the front leg of the elk. He then pulled the elk down to the road bank, unhooked and then got back onto the road and backed right up to the elk at the exact level of the animal. Wow – what a guy to hunt with – you don’t even have to pack out your game!! Uncle Ted was a intelligent man and did use his head for something besides a hat rack, as we used to say!

From Uncle Ken via email – Nov 1999:

Cousin Ted told us a story today. One Halloween when he was five years old, he went with Charles, Garrett and some neighbor boys to Martin Collins' place to push over their outhouse. But Mrs. Collins, Ella, I think, heard them and came out of the house with a gun and started shooting. She was shooting into the air, but they thought she was shooting at them, so they all started running. They ran through the vegetable garden, which was muddy, and Ted lost one of his boots. He started bawling, and Garrett came back and carried him.

From Uncle Ken via email – Dec 1999:

We got another story from Uncle Ted. When they were living at the place on Fruitland Mesa, Lucie sent Bob to the cellar to get some canned goods. Bob came back in a hurry—real scared. When he opened the cellar door, there was a horse inside. He turned on the light, and that spooked the horse. It had got up on the roof of the cellar, and had fallen through. It was their horse, and a black one. It probably didn’t scare Bob as much as it startled him. Ted said it didn’t break any jars of canned goods, for which they were glad.

From Uncle Ken via email – Feb 2000:

Hugh Busby told the story again about he and Bud shooting the bighorn sheep and bringing it home. He and Bud were about 16 at the time, and didn't realize the consequences of what they had done. Hugh said Earl just about had a heart attack, and he dug a big hole and buried the head. Tracy was more calm about it however, and she dressed out the carcass and put the meat in the locker. The penalty for shooting a bighorn sheep at that time was a fine of \$2000 and jail time for an adult.

Charles told a story about he and Toots and your Dad killing a buck in Escalante Canyon, and they put it in the trunk of the car to bring home. When they pulled out onto highway 50, they were rear-ended by another car. Their car was damaged, but apparently the other car wasn't, and he was at fault. So the boys told the other party not to worry about it, and they took off, because they didn't want a cop to come and find their illegal buck!

From Uncle Ken via email – Feb 2000:

We were discussing all the places Grandpa and Grandma lived and ken wrote: "There are quite a few other places where they lived, as they moved about every two years. One place was below Paonia a ways, down near the river, and Huyser's lived on the opposite side of the river. Another place was in Eckert. While they were going to school there, Marlys caught up with Wesley (same grade in school), as Wes was held back. When they found out on report card day, Wes bawled all the way home."

From John Timothy, Phoenix, Arizona ~ Summer 2004

Hearty greetings to each and all! I wish to share with you a special story about Grandpa Charles VanDenBerg that I recently read in a letter from Mildred Borders (one of our Friends living in Phoenix, Arizona).

Quote - "Now to tell you how your Grandpa saved my father John Wesley Phelps. Before my father professed he had been a hireling preacher with the Crusader movement, so a lot of truths were hard for him to grasp. Hotchkiss, Colorado 1932 was the first Convention he went to. In those days someone had to get up at 4 A.M. and build fires and heat water in big black pots for use in getting the morning meal ready. And also to distribute a 5 gallon can full of hot water for cleansing in the tents, and all we could use was some in a metal wash basin, being very careful how much we used: one 5 gallon bucket to a tent.

One of the Workers asked my father to build the fires, distribute the water, and start the cereal (which was Cracked Wheat that Edith Haglund had roasted each day for breakfast.) My father said he would be glad to but he didn't have a timepiece to wake up by. Those were Depression days and money was hard to come by. Your Grandpa (he was older than my father) had a gold watch and he pulled it out of his pocket and said, 'Here take this.' My father refused to take it because he was afraid something would happen to it. He knew that he would never have the money to replace it and being his first Convention, he was also afraid someone might steal it. But your Grandpa insisted that he use it and it would be all right. Reluctantly, father took it and did his duty.

But having that watch in his possession was a real worry to him. It perplexed father how your Grandpa, being a complete stranger, would trust that watch in his care. Father would take it out and look at it and wonder what kind of man your grandpa was, letting a complete stranger have his gold watch and never asking a thing about it.

My father pondered that one over and over and was so glad when Convention was finished so he could return the watch unharmed to its owner. But as he pondered this, and sitting through Convention, I guess the Holy Spirit spoke to him and told him this was the right way. However, before the Convention was over he took my mother behind a building and told her that he would never attend another, because, he thought, she went and told these preachers all he had ever done. She said she hadn't. Father said, 'You had to, nobody else knows about these things but you.'

But the watch and your Grandpa are really what made him see the light. That was a miracle wasn't it? It is strange how God works, and who he uses to fulfill his purpose.

Later on in life father and mother would talk about that Convention and joyfully laugh. I was only 6 years old then, but I took all that in. We sure thought a lot of your Grandpa and Grandma." - End of quote.

I know you will have enjoyed this as much as I have.

Sincerely, John Timothy

From Uncle Ken Hilton

One time Les went fishing with a bunch of us outside the Golden Gate. He was seasick all day and couldn't fish...just laid on the deck and chewed on heel of French bread. Some time later he said that he was glad to read in Revelation that there would be "No more seas." Jeanie was sick all day that time too, and laid on a bed below in the cabin. She still gets sick on their boat, and doesn't really enjoy going out. Tracy and Wes were along that time too. When Tracy started to get sick, she took her teeth out so she wouldn't lose them overboard. When she got back to our place she couldn't find her teeth, and said to Marlys, "I lost everything, even my teeth." About that time Wes pulled them out of his coat pocket.

From Uncle Ken as told by Cousin Jeanie:

Jeanie told this story - One time Dave took her and some other kids for a ride in his rubber boat on Lake Tahoe. Les was along too, and he got pretty scared because Dave was going so fast. He laid down in the bottom of the boat and yelled, "Davy! Davy! Slow down, you're going to kill us all." If anything, Dave probably opened her up a little more. Those boys really took advantage of their poor old Dad when they had the opportunity, and didn't worry about the consequences. Dave was probably living away from home by then anyway.

From Uncle Ken as told by Uncle Charles and Uncle Ted VDB:

One thing I remember was that Toots liked to buy apples here and take them to Durango and sell them door-to-door. He would stop at the end of a street, and say to Kleo, "Now you take this side of the street, and I'll take the other." Kleo did not like to do this, but every time he

moved on to another block he would repeat the same thing. I think he liked to tease her, because he knew she didn't like to do that.

Here is Charles' story about your Dad (John). You would remember very well that your Dad liked to make wine. Charles said he used every kind of fruit and berry that was available. He would sell his product at dances. Charles said one time he went to a dance at the Clearfork school, just to watch what was going on. When he got up near the front porch, he saw a fellow laying "flat out" on the porch, and when he got closer, he realized it was your Dad. He had passed out from drinking his own wine, and was sick for three days. During that time the two brother workers, Frank and Will Wilke came for a visit, and Mama VDB had to make up a story as to why your Dad was sick. The last time Charles saw Leonard Huyser, Leonard told him that your Dad taught him how to make wine, and together they "boot legged" it. Charles said Papa VDB was involved with it too. Maybe he got a certain percentage of the profits. After their house burned, Charles and your Dad stayed on at the Clearfork place, camping out, and taking care of the livestock, and whatever crops they had. The rest of the family moved to Paonia, on a farm that Everett Deutsch owned, west of town, and on the north side of the river. Huysers lived just opposite on the other side of the river. The family went to Huysers for meeting, crossing the river in a wagon. During the time that your Dad and Charles camped out at the Clearfork place, your Dad had a barrel of wine hidden in the gully below where the house had been. Apparently it was on a neighbors property, as this neighbor told your Dad he would have to move it. So he moved it further down the gully, which put it back on their property. Your Dad used to have some of his wine "working" in the house, either behind the kitchen stove or in the attic. People who came to visit would sometimes be puzzled by the bubbling sound they were hearing. One time some of the brew in the attic bubbled over and made a stain on the ceiling. Ted added this little bit. One time Wesley showed some of his friends where your Dad had five gallons of wine stashed down in the gully. On a Saturday night the friend took some other fellows there and they stole it.

I'll tell this one on myself. When we came back here on a visit, we of course always stayed with Mama VDB. This one time a bunch of us were visiting there in the evening; this was after Papa VDB had died. Your folks were there, and Debbie was with us. Your Dad had brought several jugs of his "specialties" for us to sample. I had tried several different kinds, and was starting to unscrew the cap from another one, when Debbie said, "Uncle Kenny, the cap is already off!"

From Aunt Marlys & Uncle Ken as told by Uncle Charles:

You have probably heard the "Legend of the Aluminum Shoes," I'm sure your Dad (John) must have talked about them. Les makes quite a story about them. I don't know who it was who first bought the pair of aluminum shoes. Perhaps your Granddad thought that would be the answer to the shoe problem with seven boys to pass them down from one to the next. Charles said the shoes had aluminum soles that extended up about two inches all around, and the rest was leather. They also had leather inserts in the soles and maybe the heels, for traction. They apparently lasted for years, but eventually wound up on the trash pile near the house, and the

leather rotted off. I heard Les say once that he could kick the toes of the shoes into the side of a haystack and walk right up! I think everyone in California and Arizona have heard the “Legend”, as John (of Les) used it in his sermons. If you could get Les to tell the complete story, it would probably be more interesting. Charles thinks that whenever Les goes to the old “Home Place”, which he did this summer, he asks if they ever found the remains of the shoes. Jim and Connie Ayers live there now.

From Uncle Les - Sep 1999 as he told it to Aunt Helen – The Story of the Aluminum Shoes:

Father & Mother went to a little store and they bought John (Gary’s dad), a pair of Aluminum Shoes. They bought Aunt Tracy a pair of “Needle Point” shoes. Les remembers Uncle Toots saying: “wonder what would hurt the worst; to be kicked by John’s Aluminum Shoes or Tracy’s Needle Point Shoes?”

Well John couldn’t wear the shoes out. He passed them down to Toots. Toots couldn’t wear them out either, & he passed them down to Les. Les didn’t wear them out either and passed them down to Uncle Garrett. At that time, one of the shoes cracked. So they had run their course!

Les remember he used to use them, climbing the side of the barn. It was a log barn, and he could stick his toes between the logs, and could stand with ease on the side of the barn, looking over the valley below.

Lester believes the shoes eventually were destroyed. Les told this story to Mrs. Jim Ayer’s and she said “If we ever find them, we’ll let you know.” (Jim Ayer and his wife now live on that property where this story took place – it was the old Feek Place where Grandpa and Grandma VDB lived near Crawford). Les said when we were there this summer, she told him she never found the shoes. After 60 years or more they had likely disintegrated. Les and Helens son John, after hearing the story had quite a sermon on those shoes, in all the places where he has labored, he preaches that sermon. One scripture that he uses, is when the Children of Israel were spoken to by God through Moses. Duet. 29:5 – “I have led you forty years in the wilderness! Your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and THY SHOE IS NOT WAXEN OLD UPON THY FOOT.”

From Leila and Russ from their visit to Washington State in Oct 1999:

While Grandma VDB was visiting all her relatives in Bayfield, they went up to Williams Reservoir to go fishing (Marlys, Ken and their daughters were also on this trip). Grandma stayed at Wes’s home while the others were fishing. She decided to cook some dinner – and when the others returned they noticed that Grandma no eyebrows or eyelashes and that her hair was scorched. It seems her gas cook stove back in Paonia had a pilot light – the one at Wes’s did not and she had let the burner go for a while before lighting it with a match!! While fishing Uncle Wes would get a fish on his line and asked Jeanie if she wanted to fish – she always caught one right a way – never realizing that Wes had already had it on the line.

Uncle Wes was playing some of his rodeo tapes and someone wanted to see that man being bucked off the horse again – so Wes was playing the movie tape backwards, just as Grandma was walking into the room – she just stared at the movie in disbelief – she just could not believe that someone could get back on a horse that way!! Everyone including Grandma had a good laugh,

Uncle Wes was in a beer tavern in Hotchkiss and his friend that had rode with him wanted to borrow Wes's car. Wes said OK and gave him the keys. Later after having a "few" more beers, he went out to look for his car and could not find it. He called the town marshal and reported it stolen. He caught a ride home with someone else. Later in the night his friend returned the car, so in the morning Wes did not think anything more about it and was driving in Hotchkiss when the marshal pulled him over and was questioning him as to why he was driving a "stolen" car. When Grandpa and Grandma VDB lived in North Delta and Leila & Marlys were young girls, Grandpa hired them to hoe his corn. Later when they were done – Grandpa paid Leila a \$1.00 and Marlys .50 cents (Guess he used his own method to calculate how much each was to be paid). Later Leila went into Delta and used her money to have her photo taken at one of those little booths. The photo was in the new "color-tinted" style. Leila thought she looked just beautiful in the photo – in her words "a little like a movie star!" She went back to Grandma's house and showed her the photo – Grandma said: "Who is it?" It is easy for Leila to laugh at it now – but I am sure she was a little hurt then.

From Uncle Ken via email - Oct 1999:

Enjoyed the Ford joke. In the olden days there were lots of jokes about Fords, and other cars as well. The Chevrolet was nicknamed "Shove it or leave it." There were lots of jokes about the Model T. It was called the "Tin Lizzie." One joke was, "What time is it when two Fords pass on the Road? Tin past Tin." When the Model A came out, someone wrote a song called, "Ford Made a Lady Out Of Lizzie." Then there is the song that says in part, "What a thrill to take the wheel, of my merry Oldsmobile."

From Cousin Ted: *This could be true, maybe so maybe not and I don't remember who told me but it goes like this.*

While living on the Clearfork place when your dad and mine were growing up. About three in the morning there was a loud commotion out in the chicken house. Grandpa suspecting that it was a skunk as it usually was because there were a lot of them a round, got up, grabbed the shot gun and headed out to the chicken house to kill the skunk in his long handled underwear. He approached the door very quietly on his tiptoes hoping to get a shot at the skunk without it knowing he was there. Opening the door without making it squeak and stepping in as carefully as possible, he stood there looking around in the dark for the skunk. About that time their dog, "Old Rover" touched grandpa with his cold nose in that long slit in the back of his underwear. That scared grandpa so bad the he jumbled and pulled the trigger of the shotgun, killing a few of the chickens.

From Cousin Ted: *This isn't a joke as it is an actual fact. Thought you might get a kick out of it.*

For some reason or other Mom decided that us boys needed to be circumcised. Les had that done at birth but Bud, George and I were taken to Delta and old Mrs. Messenger went along. Mom & Dad's Doctor was a Chiropractor named Dr. Kemp who had no license to operate but he did it anyway. After he cut the extra skin off he wrapped each of our peeny weenies in some bandages that were pretty tight. We lived on Fruitland Mesa in that old tin shack and had no inside toilet. For the next few days I can remember that early in the mornings when Mom would get us up, we would all go out on the porch, stand side by side and pee. During the time the bandage were on we could pee an extraordinary long ways (it seems like about 15 feet as I remember it) so we competed against each other to see who could pee the farthest. I didn't like it that Mrs.. Messenger went along because I didn't want anyone to know I had been circumcised. (Well – now we all know)!

From Aunt Marlys & Uncle Ken:

Here is another story. One time Ted Crawford wanted to show us some real fishing. He was going to take us to a beaver pond he knew of where he had planted some trout some time before. He used to get fingerlings from the Department of Wildlife, and transport them in milk cans on his burros. So this one day he and Ruby, Lee Ann, Jeanie, Marlys and I went up toward Kebler Pass. We stopped somewhere beyond Lost Lake, parked the Scout, and started walking. I think we had our lunch and water as well as our fishing gear. To make a long story short, Ted couldn't find the pond he had in mind. We would walk for a while in the direction that he thought it was, and then he would say, "Now I know where it is. It's right over there." This happened several times without finding the pond. I think we did eventually find a place to fish, but didn't catch any "big ones."

That is the second incident of the three that I wanted to tell you about. The third incident is about the time a bunch of us went in to Curecanti Creek. All of us but Ted walked in from Black Mesa, But Ted went on the highway to Crystal Creek, and followed the dirt road along the creek for seven miles to the end of the road. He had that old International pickup you referred to, and hauled his burro, Casper, and a lot of the camping gear we were to use. You may remember some or all of this story, but I'll repeat some of it. As they were following the trail along the creek Casper lost his footing and fell down. When Ted was trying to loosen the ropes to get the gear off, the burro bit him quite severely on one of his arms. He finally got him unloaded and turned him loose with his lead rope dragging. He said later he didn't care if he ever saw him again. After Casper was released, Ted found that a broken tree limb had been poking him in the side, and he apparently thought it was something Ted was doing to him. That evening after we had set up a temporary camp, and it was getting quite late, Ted still hadn't arrived, so Morrie and Rich started out to look for him. Because of his injury, Morrie took him to the doctor and Rich walked back to the camp. The next day, Morrie, Rich and I made a couple of trips down and back and packed in what supplies we needed. Ted didn't come

up again...he had had enough. Some years later when we were together, Ted and I were hashing over these times that hadn't turned out so well. That is when Ted said to me, "One of us has got to be a Jinx."

A DAY AT BEAVER RESERVOIR -- BY RUBY CRAWFORD -- PROVIDED BY MARLYS & KEN HILTON

The day started out well. We had planned to go to Beaver Reservoir on Saturday, when Ted could go along and take the Scout, our little mountain wagon. The party consisted of Ted, Ruby, Richard and Lee Ann Crawford, Kenny, Marlys and Jeanie Hilton, and Debbie VanDenBerg. When we got to my mother's place to pick them up, Ted and Lucie VanDenBerg had come over from Denver, and had decided to go along.

By this time there were too many to go in the Scout, so Ted VDB offered to take his car. We were a little fearful of taking Jeanie, because she had been ill all week with dysentery. We thought it wouldn't be too hard a trip, so took her along. We started out, with Ted, Lucie, Marlys and myself in Ted's car, and all the others in the Scout. I noticed that Ted let Richard drive, so thought that they would never get there. We started first and got to our destination soon, enjoying the scenery on the way that Marlys had never seen before. We got there in fine shape, except for a few mud holes along the way. Ted remarked on the way that if it started raining, we would have to get out of there fast. We didn't know how fast he meant until later in the day. We waited on the bank of the reservoir for about a half an hour, with me complaining that Richard was such a slow driver, and it was hard to tell when they would show up. Here they came, sailing by, not even seeing us, with Ted driving. We started walking, which was a pleasure because the scenery was so nice. We hadn't walked far when they turned around and picked us up. We found out that their delay was that they had driven slow because they thought we had stopped at Mrs. Fisk's and were behind them.

We drove on over to the south of the reservoir, and enjoyed a wiener roast and corn roasted in the fire, and other things that go with a picnic, also apple crisp for dessert.

After lunch the little girls decided to stay on the bank and play while we, Marlys, Lucie, Debbie and I went for a walk. The men went fishing. We had a very nice walk. More wonderful than we thought possible in fact. There were berries of all kinds growing and mushrooms galore. We decided to walk until 3:30, then go back. It started to sprinkle, however, so we went back reluctantly. Lucie was the first one to camp, and Ted was ready to go because of the rain. Kenny had gone down the creek without our knowing it. We decided to leave, too, and pick some berries on the way home. The rain was falling heavier by this time, so Ted VDB left. We scanned the shore, but no sign of Kenny. Just then Richard was certain he saw a man with a brown shirt run and get into the car with Ted, and we saw his brake lights go on, so we were sure that it was Kenny, and thought very little more about it. We went on down the road about three miles. The rain had subsided, so we stopped to pick some service berries. We picked a two gallon cream pail full and were on our way. We sang songs and had a wonderful time the rest of the way home. When we got to headquarters, as we jokingly called my mother's place, we thought they were kidding when they said that Kenny was not with them, that we had left him at the reservoir! When it finally became a realization, Ted C., Richard, Debbie, Marlys and I hurriedly climbed back into the Scout and started back. It started raining again a few miles up Minnesota Creek. Ted took the wheel. The road got more and more slick. We stopped and Ted found an old pair of chains that were practically beyond repair. He finally managed to put them

together enough so that we could go on. Ted remarked then that we would probably make it the rest of the way if we wouldn't find a car crosswise of the road or something.

That very thing happened a little farther on. Here was a white pickup with one wheel in the bar-pit headed up the hill, so there was no way that we could pull it out, and there wasn't room to go around it, so we were stuck. Debbie, Marlys and I decided to walk on up the road to ease the tension. We thought too, that Kenny may have decided by this time to start walking the eighteen miles to Paonia, and that we might meet him on the road. Richard wanted to go back to a shack back the road a ways and try to call the caretaker at the reservoir to tell Kenny that we hadn't forgotten him, and our predicament. We girls left them with that being the plan.

We hadn't gone far when it started raining harder than ever. We walked to Lick Creek, which is approximately four miles this side of the reservoir. We saw that it was dry under a tree there, and thought it was foolish to go on any farther. There was some dry birch limbs above us on the bank, and since I had some matches, we built a fire. We had quite a time starting it at first, but Debbie suggested lighting a hanky I had in my pocket, and it started right off.

I started worrying about our cow at home who had only been fresh a couple of weeks, and about the folks at home wondering why we didn't get back. We were cozy by the fire, though, and secretly we were enjoying the adventure, and the fun we would have looking back on it. About that time we saw Kenny coming down the road, soaking wet, but all smiles at the sight of Marlys, his wife. He couldn't quite figure it all out though, we being there without a vehicle or anything. That wasn't important though, as long as we were there. He told us that he had walked down to the bridge twice where we had picked the service berries. Back at the reservoir two camps had offered to give him a bed for the night, but he felt that we would be back after him all right. It was a good thing he wasn't the type to get panicky, but would calmly try to figure the situation out, which wasn't easy. As we were listening to his side of the story a Travel-All came along and I recognized the woman as one I had visited with in the laundry several times. They offered to give us a ride back to where the pickup was stuck, so we accepted. A Volkswagen came along and traveled with us.

When we got down to where Ted and Richard were, we got in the Scout. The Travel-all went on ahead with the Volkswagen following, and then we in the Scout. It was quite a show in itself to watch them slide back to town. We met Ted and Lucie coming to meet us, because they had got worried over our delay. Everyone was glad to see us all back home. Jeanie asked Richard, "Where's Daddy?", and he answered, snapping his fingers, "I knew we forgot something." Everyone got a laugh out of that.

We drug out the picnic box from lunch, which seemed a long time ago now, but it tasted pretty good anyway.

I would like to say that this is the end of the story, but I can't. Several days later there was an awful stink in the Scout. Ted searched until he found it in the glove compartment, the two fish Kenny had caught during his escapade. I am the one who put them there, not giving them another thought.