

Grandpa Hendrik Winkel Sr. and the Automobile Accident July 31, 1945

By Verlene Winkel Tanner

I was eleven years old when the following story happened.

Aunt Pauline Winkel came to Redmond, Oregon to pick up my brother and me to take us to see relatives in Utah. We visited in Gunnison with Uncle Luris and Aunt Dena Allen and family. We spent time in Richfield with grandparents Henry and Everdina Winkel and in Kingston, Utah with grandparents, William and Lavina Luke.

The Sunday before we were to return to Oregon, a friend of my grandpa and grandma Winkel's, originally from Holland, came from Salt Lake City to visit. After lunch, grandpa and this friend were talking about how stiffnecked the people from their native land had been concerning the gospel. They started to talk about going to teach the gospel to those people in the spirit world as missionary companions. I started to listen because I had the notion that when you died, everyone would know that the Mormon Church was true. So this was new doctrine to me.

We stayed in Gunnison the night before we left for Oregon. Uncle Luris planned to go to Salt Lake with us to attend the funeral of Uncle Melvin Hallen's mother. He was to return back to Gunnison to be with the rest of the family while Aunt Dena and their smallest child, Toni went with us to Oregon.

Cleve sat in the front seat by the door because he got car sick on the way to Utah on the bus and threw-up on the back of a man in front of him. We were sitting in the back of the bus because I wanted us to all sit together. I had never ridden on a bus before.

We rode in Grandpa's new black sedan. I sat in the back behind Cleve and Uncle Luris sat behind Grandpa, who was driving.

We were traveling on a straight highway when we had a blow-out not too far from Levan, Utah. The tires were wartime retreads. Grandpa was having a hard time controlling the steering wheel. There wasn't any power steering then. Aunt Dena shouted at Uncle Luris to help Grandpa, so Luris stood up and reached over Grandpa's shoulders. At this time, I stood up to look through the rear window to see what we had run over. It felt like big rocks, however it was just the blow-out.

The next thing I remember I was dazed when regaining consciousness and climbed through the windshield that was completely broken out. The car had rolled over two and a half times landing on the drivers side. Cleve, somehow had landed with his hand on the car door, outside of the car. He looked down at us and he thought we were all dead.

As the others came to and started to get out of the car, someone queried where grandpa was. I looked around and found him quite a ways from the car. He was moaning and it frightened me to see because his forehead had been scalped with the skin lying to the top of his head. I yelled out to the others that I had found him. As Uncle Luris performed artificial respiration on Grandpa, I went back behind the upturned car and started to pray for Grandpa.

An ambulance picked up grandpa and took him and grandma to Nephi to the hospital. None of the rest of us wre badly hurt.

Later that day in the early evening while we were back in Gunnison, Uncle Luris received a telephone call. After the call, he went over to Aunt Dena who was sitting in a big overstuffed chair with a glass in her hand. He got down on one knee and he took her hand in his and quietly told her that her father had just passed away. The empty glass in her hand fell to the floor.

About an hour later, Grandpa Winkel's friend from Holland passed away in Salt Lake City from a heart attack. We would like to believe they were called to the spirit world to fulfill their desires of being missionary companions.

There had been a glass jar of grape juice in the back window of the car that was to Toni. That jar broke somehow and my hair was full of grape juice, glass and cuts. My head was so sore I wouldn't let anyone comb it until my mother came from Oregon for the funeral. I can still feel the the tears as she tried to untangle the bloody knots in my hair mixed with grape juice, telling me I needed to look nice for the funeral.

Grandpa Winkel died on July 31, 1945 and was buried in Richfield, Utah on August 3, 1945.