

A Brief Life Sketch of F. Leland Seely and Grace Seely

Posted by their son Jim Seely on Facebook November 26, 2020

Today, I'm grateful for my wonderful parents, F. Leland Seely and Grace Thompson Seely. I am also grateful for my wonderful siblings (Three sisters and three brothers).

This is their story:

My dad grew up on a ranch in Park Valley (about 80 miles West of Snowville, and near the Utah/Idaho border). He was an honest to goodness cowboy.

My mom was born in England and after her family joined the "Mormon" church, they immigrated to Utah in 1910, when she was eight years old. Her father came from a wealthy family, but left everything behind when he joined the church.

After coming to America, they ended up homesteading a farm on the Raft River in Southern Idaho, near The City of Rocks. After living a life of luxury in England, mom found herself living in abject poverty in a sod hut with a dirt floor. As a young girl, she often lived with neighbor families and worked for her room and board.

After surviving the "Spanish Flu" pandemic of 1918-20, Mom moved to Logan, UT to attend The Brigham Young Academy. When she enrolled, she only had enough money to buy one book and couldn't pay tuition. At the end of the first semester, she was getting straight "A's" and they called her in and told her not to worry about the tuition. They knew she didn't have any money and they put her on scholarship.

When she graduated, she didn't attend the graduation ceremony because she couldn't afford to buy a dress.

At the age of 24, mom then got a job teaching school in Rosette, UT (near Park Valley), in a one room school house. Mom was the only teacher, and she had 38 students ranging from the age of 6 to 18. Also from time to time older students, who had dropped out of school to work, would come back for a class or two. Mom had a problem with some of the older boys because they wanted to date her, but she soon set them straight.

Because the school couldn't afford high wages, her salary also included room and board and the parents of the students hosted the schoolmarm.

When mom was hired, she took a train on the old transcontinental railroad to the city of Kelton, UT (now a ghost town). Kelton was the nearest stop to Park Valley, which was still 20 miles away.

It had been arranged that the postman, who was meeting the train to pick up the mail, would also pick up the new Schoolmarm and take her to where she was going to stay in Park Valley.

My father, who was friends with the postman, told him, "If she's good look'en, bring her to our house. If not, then take her to the neighbors."

When mom got off the train, the postman looked her up and down and said, "I think you will do nicely," and he took her to the Seely's. She had no idea what he was taking about.

That is how they met, but it was two years later before they married. When dad finally got up enough courage to propose, Mom got four more marriage proposals within a two week period.

She finally narrowed it down to dad (Jim) and a guy named Ralph. Dad was a cowboy and had no money and not many prospects of getting any. Ralph had money and prospects.

Trying to decide who to choose, Mom wrote to her parents and they wrote back (I have all three letters).

Grandfather Thompson wrote back and said, "Make it a matter of fasting and prayer, and I'm sure you will make the right decision."

Grandma's response was, "No question about it, marry Ralph. He has money."

When mom decided on my dad (F. Leland Seely - but known as Jim), Grandma Thompson was NOT pleased and told mom "If you marry that little pipsqueak, all you'll ever have is kids." (Dad was only 5' 4" tall).

Mom married him anyway. It took them three days in 1926 to make the journey from Park Valley to the Salt Lake Temple.

After their marriage, mom could no longer teach school (Married women were not allowed to teach back then). So she settled in to being a rancher's wife.

Then after nearly dieing during a miscarriage, she was told by a doctor, that she should never get pregnant again, or it would kill her.

In spite of that warning, mom had seven kids. I am grateful for her courage and for my siblings.

After losing everything in the depression, my parents moved to Brigham City with nothing. After struggling greatly, they eventually prospered. Dad became a prominent citizen and was elected as a County Commissioner, City Councilman, President of the Chamber of Commerce, President of the Lion's Club, and several other organizations.