

Interview of Don T. Meikle

Don T. Meikle, interviewed by his son Ted S. Meikle, on audio tape January 2, 1980.

Ted: This is January 2nd, 1980. I am talking with my dad. I have just been talking with Aunt Mary and, the other day, with Uncle Keith, mainly about Grandad Hines. Now, I'm going to try talking to Dad again and ask him what he knows about him.

You better start by telling the story about how you got stuck in the tree. I've heard it from everybody and it's been a little different version, so I had better get it straight from you. It seems to be a legend.

Dad: Well, as I remember, this old orchard Grandad had above the farm--Grandad had had a stroke but he was still able to walk up there to garden with one hand and the hoe. I was just a little kid, and I would pull the weeds out. Anyway, we would always make trips up in this orchard for apples or fruit. And as I remember it, this tree had limbs that grew straight up in it. They hadn't been pruned and I was up in this tree, trying to get the best apples, and I slipped down between two limbs. Grandad was down in the garden. I was hollering and he heard me and came up. I can't remember how I was caught. I don't think my head was caught but that is the story that they tell, that the head was caught, but I don't remember that. Anyway, he either got his stick or his cane and boosted me up by the seat of my pants to where I got out of it. Of course, when I got out of it I climbed down. When I come home and Grandad told them the story, I can't remember whether I got a licking or not but they warned me not to climb in the trees anymore.

This orchard used to have the best apples in it. They had the big apple that was called--oh I can't remember--anyway they were awful good apples in it, and cherries, and peach trees and apricot trees. Oh there must have been an acre--three quarters of an acre, I guess--all in trees there. It was a real good orchard. The old Hines's Hill then up at the top of it was real steep, and this orchard went up to the steep part, and where it got too steep to irrigate trees, why, it was just waste ground up above there. And anyway, the kids, they used to sleigh down old Hines's Hill. It was real steep up at the top and they'd get a good start to come down it.

As far as me remembering a lot about Grandpa, I can't because I was just a little kid. I do know that I just about lived over there when I was playing. You know, it seemed like I used to go over and play with him more than anyone else. We'd go out and I'd help him weed the garden or we'd sit out by the old granery and kill ear-bugs.

And as I remember, I guess a lot of the English slang I picked up, I think I picked it up from Grandpa; like he always said "up yonder" or "I clumb the tree" or "I ned this or that" instead of need. I never heard him swear. If he got mad at anything, he would call it "the old sooner."

I can remember after he had his stroke--it seemed like he had this one stroke and then he had another little stroke--and after that he couldn't get out and weed the garden anymore and somebody would always have to go over and help him to the bathroom and to bed. I was big enough so he could kind of lean on my shoulder. He would put his arm around my shoulder and I would help him to the bathroom and into bed. That was my job whenever Aunt Hannah wasn't home and Dad couldn't go over. If she ever had to go to Mutual or somewhere at night it seemed like I would have to go over and sit with Grandpa.

He always sat in the south room by the window and always looked out the window. I think his worst thing he had to put up with in life was Alan Erickson. He'd always look out the window and shake his head and say "I can't a bear a lazy man." And Aunt Hannah would always say "Well, quit looking at him if you 'can't a bear' him." Aunt Hannah was quite quick tempered with Grandpa. She used to get mad at him and tell him off quick, you know. But she was real good to him. She practically donated her life to taking care of him. I'm sure she could have married, but she didn't do it. She spent her life an old maid taking care of Grandpa.

I can remember when he died. It seemed like they had ministered to him a week or two before he died. I can remember the night he died. Mother come home and said, "Well, they asked father if he wanted to be administered to, and Hazen Hillyard came over to administer to him, and he says, 'No, I'm ready to die now.' He says, 'I don't think that's necessary.'" And that night he died.

Grandad was always good with kids. He--I don't think that we ever went in the house, if Aunt Hannah didn't have a cookie for us what

that he had a peppermint for us. He always sat in the chair with his vest on and an old black suit, suit pants and this vest, and he always carried two or three peppermints in the vest pocket. He always had a peppermint for us when we went in the house. Aunt Hannah used to be good to us. She always had cookies but if she didn't have cookies, why, Grandpa had a peppermint.

Aunt Hannah--that lot there, I think, was probably one of the best garden spots in Smithfield--and aside from sewing (she used to sew for people) and aside from that, when she wasn't sewing she was out weeding the garden and raising cantelope and tomatoes and raspberries. And she would sell them. People would come there and buy them. She just spent her whole life working, either sewing or working in the garden. Her head shook. It just shook--it seemed to me like terrible--because, Mother said, because she sat at the machine and sewed all the time. She made dresses for people. She was a real good sewer.

As I remember Grandad's place, it seems to me like it was always painted a white house. It had a fence around it. That was the custom then to have a fence all the way around your lot to fence the people's cows out, because there would always be stray animals going up and down the road. They always had front gates and back gates and when you went through those gates there was a spring to shut them again. And if any stray animals come up the road, why, the gates would keep them out of your yard. People were always driving cows. They was always driving cows up the road or down the road or to the field and back or driving them home to milk them and driving them out to the pasture at night or to the fields to graze. A lot of people would take them easy up and down the road so they could eat the sides of the road and keep the grass cleaned off from the roads. The roads didn't even have much gravel on then. In the spring of the year the old hard steel-tired wagons would sink in a lot of times up to the reaches. It would take a good team to pull the wagons up and down the roads.

. . . Ask me some more questions.

Ted: I had just talked with Aunt Mary today and she had mentioned that dugout that your grandad Hines had. It was before you were born. You said you knew about where it was, or something about that. Why don't you tell about that.

Dad: Well, Dad showed me where that dugout was. It was over--about a block up in our field and right over against a clay knoll. They built it in along that clay knoll because they could kind of dig into the hill to have heat from the hill, see, so they could make it as warm as possible in the winter, if they had to stay there in the winter. They might have lived there one winter, but I don't think--I think then they had to live on these homesteads three months out of the year or four. And I think when they lived up there it was probably early in the spring, maybe, when they was putting the crops in, or in the summer.

The old Heaps dugout was the same way. They dug right back in the hill in the soft clay soil. They didn't make a log cabin. It was logs; maybe it was logged up, but it was dug right into the hill and the roof was dirt. I've heard stories George Heaps told about living there. He said he would wake up in the morning and there would be blowsnakes hanging up on the ceiling crawling through the logs. That's how they had to build then to keep warm in them. A lot of them old people lived in them maybe the year round. And that dugout Heaps had--its on this ground we own now--they carried their water for about a block and a half. That's right up in Little Valley. They carried the water up from the head of that hollow [on the south side of Crow Mountain] right down to where you come around that hill. I can remember Heaps and McCrackens having a feud, that the dugout was on McCracken's ground, but I don't know how it ever came out. I just don't know. I've heard that story from Orrie and Ox. McCrackens figured that the dugout was on their ground and vice versa. But that's how they built them places. The same with the Coleman's down on the river. They built a dugout; they didn't build a log cabin. It was something they could keep warm in.

Ted: Tell about what your dad did here as Justice of the Peace and some of that stuff.

Dad: Well, as I remember of Dad being the Judge here in town, I can remember he was Judge one time, oh, I don't know, for ten or twelve years. And then Mother complained about it; she didn't like people coming to the house. The cop instead of giving a ticket--I don't know if they could even write a ticket out then--they would always catch them and bring them up to the Judge. They'd bring them right up there and he would--they would go in the front room then--we called it the parlor--and fine them or give

them a talkin' to or whatever. Usually it was just a talkin' to. I don't think they fined anybody an awful lot of money or put them in jail long, because they would have to feed them. But I can remember that Dad the first time he was Judge that it was fifteen dollars a month he got, or every two or three months. It was not very much money. But I know he was Judge, and then he quit it, and then they come after him, oh, in two or three years. They couldn't get anybody to do it I guess or--anyway they come after Dad and he was Judge again for, oh, eight or ten years.

They had a court house and they had a jail. The courthouse was a little red brick building and the jailhouse was white brick about ten by ten. I guess they'd lock people up in it but I can't remember that. The jailhouse was built down by the canal above the old U.I.C. depot and so was the courthouse. But as far as me knowing what went on when Dad was Judge, why, us kids was just kept out of the room when somebody would come up to see him.

Ted: Either you or Keith told me about the time they caught a bunch of kids in the pool hall, and took them up to see the Judge. In fact, I think one of your brothers was one of them. Was that Keith that told me that or was that you?

Dad: No, they used to catch Keith or Jack in the Pool Hall, it seemed like, every week! I can remember they caught Keith in there--I think it was either Keith or Jack--I think it was Keith, though. I don't know whether Dad was Judge then. But they was going to fine him, and Dad said, "Well, if you do, why, then I will do something with the man that runs the place, because they knew Keith wasn't of age." He said "You shouldn't fine the kids. You should fine the person that runs the Pool Hall." I can remember Dad putting up a fuss over it, and anyway, they didn't fine him.

Dad was pretty well up on the law, as far as the laws went then. In fact, I have heard Aunt Amy and several of them comment that Dad should have been a lawyer instead of a farmer. He'd have made a good lawyer.

Ted: You told a story about an attorney that came up from Logan, and he put him in his place.

Dad: Ya, I can't remember who told me that--whether it was Dad or who it was. This attorney came up to defend somebody, and he just kept a laughing at these little hick town courts. Dad let him go for a few minutes. Then he told him that if he made one more crack or one

more comment, or disturbed the court one more time, he would lock him up. He says "I'll lock you up in that jail and I will leave you there until we have court again." He says he made a believer out of this attorney. I can't remember whether it was Dad that told me that story, or who it was who told me how he straightened this attorney out, this attorney laughing about these little hick town courts.

Ted: Aunt Mary said they used to take Grandpa Hines in the car and take him down to Logan. Did you ever go with your parents to Logan in the car with your grandad or anything like that?

Dad: Not very often. Kids, it seemed like in them times was supposed to be seen and not heard, and stay home. I can remember going for peaches a time or two, driving over to Brigham City for peaches. I know they took Grandad for rides. Often Dad would. Dad was real good to him. He always went over and cut his hair. He would always say, "Well, I've got to go over and shear Father." He always cut his hair and kept him trimmed up good--and cut his beard. I can never remember, but I know they took him for rides quite often in the old Model T, but I can't remember going along with them.

Ted: What kind of a beard did your grandfather have? Was it a full beard?

Dad: Ya, a full, white beard. It hanged down, oh, two or three inches. I can remember him sitting there stroking that beard.

Ted: What would you talk about when you went over all the time when you were a kid?

Dad: Oh, I can't remember that. We used to talk about anything. I can't remember the conversations.

Ted: I can't think of anything else to ask you right now. Did Aunt Hannah and your mother get along quite well? How did your mother and her sister do?

Dad: Ya, Mother and Aunt Hannah got along real good. Aunt Hannah was a real good person. It seemed like Mother was either running over there for tea, or Aunt Hannah was coming over home for tea. They got along real good. But when Aunt Hannah started to get sick, she got quite irritable and quite nervous and quick-tempered, but boy, I think that she was a real good person. She hardly ever would get mad. The only time you would ever hear her get mad, she would get mad at Grandpa and tell him off, for not doing this or that. They always got along good.

Ted: I guess Grandpa always appreciated having her there. Was that his idea or her idea, or what?

Dad: Well, I don't know. I think it was just a matter of circumstances. In fact, I was too young to think about things like that.

Ted: Do you remember your father's Mother?

Dad: No, I can't remember her at all. I can't remember Grandma Meikle at all. The only thing I've heard about her is she was a real pretty lady. She was real good looking, and quite a fancy lady.

Ted: Do you remember when they built that silo?

Dad: No, I can't remember that. I could have been a little kid, but.... Jack and Keith, I think, both of them helped turn the wheelbarrow, when they built that. They had to turn the wheelbarrow--or the, not the wheelbarrow, but the mixer--by hand. They told me that they both helped do that. They had a derrick, and they pulled the cement up in a big bucket--I think it was just a ten-gallon bucket--and dumped in in the--I think they would put up a lift a day, four feet a day.

Ted: I can't think of any other questions.