

# Memories of My Parents, Verlon and Edith Southwick

by

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My earliest memory of my parents was when my father, Verlon Southwick, worked in a family lumber business called *William Southwick & Sons*. Dad, his brothers, and my grandpa William I. worked together to cut timber, haul logs, saw logs into lumber, and sell lumber. They went to the tree-covered Monte Christo mountains, east of Ogden, Utah to cut timber. I remember going with my Dad into the mountains, where we stayed in rough cabins while the men cut, trimmed, and loaded logs onto trucks. My mother, Edith, went with us sometimes. It was a beautiful place, full of evergreen trees, quaking aspens, and elder berry bushes. I remember brilliantly colored humming birds. I remember some logging roads turning into deep, powdery dust that was fun to walk through with bare feet.



Rough cabin in the Monte Christo forest where Southwicks logged timber

Dad and the other men would cut down big trees by making a notch in the tree trunk, near the ground. Then another cut from the other side would cause the tree to tip and fall. The men would always yell “timber!!!” so anyone around the tree would look out and not be hit as the tree crashed to the ground. Next they would cut the limbs off the tree to expose the log. They would use a Caterpillar tractor to pull logs to a loading place. After cutting the log into appropriate lengths, they would use a special machine to lift logs onto trucks. Then the trucks would head down the mountain toward their Ogden sawmill. Sometimes Dad would take me with him to get a load of logs for the mill. Mom would send a sack lunch with us. I remember her sending Kool-Aid in a ketchup bottle instead of real soda pop because it was too expensive for the family budget.



Rock cellar in Ogden

We lived near the Ogden sawmill. It was a basement house, which Dad planned to improve into a better home by building on the upper part some day. Dad built a rock cellar into the hillside near the house where Mom would store foods and preserves that she made. The rock cellar is still there at our old home site in Ogden. Dad and I would walk to the sawmill, where he would work with the other men to cut logs

into lumber. There was a huge circular saw that made a whining noise as it spun around. One man would run the carriage rig, which ran back and forth near the saw on rails. A log would be rolled onto the carriage, clamped in place, and carried toward the spinning saw. A second man would adjust the log on the carriage so that a board was sliced off from the log at just the right thickness. The boards were



Ogden sawmill - Verlon (in dark coat) runs the carriage past the spinning saw, while his brother Earl sets the lumber thickness

dropped off onto a roller bed and guided to where other men would trim and stack the lumber for sale. There was a large pile of sawdust by the mill. I remember playing in the sawdust. It had the nice smell of pine trees, but it was real scratchy when it got inside of your clothes.

When *William Southwick & Sons* decided to look for a better place to do business, Dad took our family with them, first to John Day, Oregon and then to Willits, California. Although they built the sawmill in Willits, Dad made our home in Ukiah, which was about 25 miles away. Dad would often let me go to the sawmill on Saturday or during summer days when school was out. I was getting big enough that I could do some



L to R – Cousins Neal Southwick, Bruce Southwick, and Roger Southwick

work at the sawmill, but mostly I remember playing with my cousins Neal,

Bruce, and Roger who lived just a little way uphill from the sawmill. The sawmill was next to a shallow pond. Logs were dumped from trucks into the pond and then floated into the sawmill to be cut into lumber. I remember walking on logs in the pond and how difficult it was to keep from falling in the water if the log started rolling around in the water.



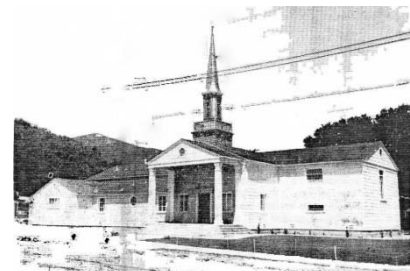
Southwick sawmill north of Willits California. Harold's house and sheds are in the foreground

Dad and Mom were faithful in their religion. It wasn't long after we moved to Ukiah that Dad was called to be the LDS Branch President. He was put in charge of building the first LDS chapel in Ukiah. I remember going with my Dad and his brothers to help construct the chapel. I remember being taught how to nail down tongue-and-groove flooring. Dad later served on the high council when the Prophet, George Albert Smith,



Alona and Sandra play on our Ukiah swing set

came to instruct the saints in our Santa Rosa stake. I remember Dad gathering us around for a family home evening after stake conference. He reminded us of the Prophet's council to have family prayer both night and morning. So we started praying as a family twice per day, instead of just once as before. We also started reading the scriptures together. I remember asking for permission to underline meaningful scriptures in my new copy of the Book of Mormon. I still have that copy and see 2 Nephi 3:2 underlined in pencil. Mom's musical talents brought added spirituality to our home and community. She could play the violin with uplifting emotion. She often played piano at church and was part of the "Singing Mothers," who performed locally. Dad built a nice fence around our Ukiah home and a swing set, using lumber from the sawmill.



Ukiah, California LDS Chapel - 1949



Wanless & Mark on horseback at Rowland, Nevada ranch's home place - 1952

Dad had always wanted to have his own farm or ranch. In 1952 he partnered with his cousin Elmer to buy a ranch in Rowland, Nevada. Elmer put up most of the money and Dad provided the initial labor to take over the ranch. Even though the ranch was very remote, Mom had her dear friend Grace Stowell living on a ranch just a few miles downriver. They were a Mormon family too, so we had church meetings every Sunday in one of our homes. Mom and Grace filled our

hearts with music; Mom with her violin and Grace at the piano, as they had done in their youth in Ogden before they each got married. Dad loved ranching. He said he felt finally free when he could saddle up his horse, leave his wallet and drivers license at home, and ride the range. He taught me how to saddle a horse and how to put a horse in a harness for haying work. He helped arrange for us kids to go to a one-room school that they fixed up across the river. Mrs. Early was our only teacher. But the ranch failed economically when the cattle prices dropped way below what we had paid for them just a few months before. Dad and Mom struggled with the decision of what to do next.



Young musical friends in Ogden - Grace Jensen (Stowell) – piano, and Edith Bush (Southwick) - violin

Dad went on a trip to Logan, Utah to find work. He found a nice little 1 ½ acre place on 9<sup>th</sup> North above a canal, which he arranged to buy. He didn't find a very good job, but it was enough for the family to move to Logan. I remember helping Dad fix up and clean up the chicken coop and barn. Soon we had chickens, a Jersey cow, sheep, pigs, and horses. We planted a big garden each



Verlon Southwick family at dinner in their Logan, Utah home - Clockwise: Aaron in high chair, Verlon, Alona, Sandra, Mark, Marcia, and Edith - 1961

year. I helped Dad harvest wheat from the “Big Hill” in Ogden Valley, which was part of what Dad got in settlement of the Rowland ranch enterprise. We sold wheat, but took some of it home to Logan where it was my job to grind it into flour, which Mom used to make whole wheat bread. I remember how Dad and Mom would sometimes look at our family gathered around the dinner table and remark that everything for that meal was something we had raised ourselves: bread, butter, milk, meat, eggs, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, bottled fruit, pickles, jams, jellies, etc. Dad was also a deer hunter, so we often had venison as part of the meat in our freezer.

Dad continued to love horses. He and Mom often went with other couples from the neighborhood on horseback rides up in the mountains. Dad and I were charter members of the “Cache County Sheriff’s Posse.” We rode in parades together. Dad became manager of the Logan Deseret Industries. When he took it over, it was located in a dingy old multi-story building. It was full of discarded stuff. I remember one tall storage space that was almost full of shoes. Dad’s organizational abilities soon had it cleaned up, but it was still too small, so he arranged to move the whole operation to a big building on south Main Street in Logan, where it flourished.



Heavy load of firewood on red Studebaker pickup. Steve and Sandra standing on top. Baby Aaron climbing on side and Verlon looking on.

About this time, I left home to go on a mission to Germany. While I was gone, Dad and Mom built a new home in Hyde Park, Utah. It had a nice fireplace, a wood burning kitchen stove, and a large wood shed in the carport. When I got home from my mission, annual wood cutting trips had become a family tradition. Pickup loads of wood were needed to fill Dad and Mom's wood shed. Dad's long experience at Deseret Industries opened up an opportunity for him to get specialized training as a sheltered workshop manager at the University of San Francisco in California. After training he was offered a job to start a sheltered workshop for Goodwill Industries in Grants Pass, Oregon. He built the Grants Pass facility from scratch into a successful operation. Then he got a call from the Church to come to Ogden to run the Deseret Industries there. So, he moved his family to Washington Terrace, Utah and took over as manager of the Ogden Deseret Industries.

Dad also became a real estate agent. He specialized in farms and ranches, which took him out into the countryside. He still harbored the desire to own a farm or ranch, so when he visited his brother Dale's farm in Dietrich, Idaho, he looked at real estate not only as property to sell, but as something he might acquire for himself. Indeed he found a little 120 acre farm that was quite run down and decided to buy it. He and daughter Marci moved to Dietrich first to get the place cleaned up and livable for Mom. The next years were spent doing constant improvement on their farm, but the financial rewards were minimal. It wasn't long before their children started moving to Dietrich too. Eventually they had all but their two oldest daughters living near them in Dietrich.



Verlon & Edith's farm in Dietrich, Idaho during the winter, showing drifted snow



Verlon and Edith Southwick pose in front of a painting on their Nauvoo mission, 1984 - 85

Dad looked forward to serving a mission with Mom. Finally they made arrangements to leave the Dietrich farm in Marci & Lynn Stimpson's hands while they went to Nauvoo to serve a mission for their Church. Dad met and talked with people on the Nauvoo temple lot, while Mom gave tours of the nearby Clark Store where they had a little upstairs apartment. Dad was enthusiastic about Nauvoo and even wrote a letter to the First Presidency stating that he felt the time was coming soon when the Nauvoo Temple should be rebuilt.

Dad and Mom came back from their mission. They rented their farm to local farmers. They enjoyed having family come for family home evenings, picnics in the "valley" of the farm, and a traditional "birthday party" for baby Jesus on Christmas Eve. They loved their family.

[Verlon Southwick, born July 22, 1916 at Liberty, Utah and died April 10, 1995 at Boise, Idaho, married Edith Martha Bush on July 19, 1939 at Logan, Utah. She was born June 27, 1916 at Victor, Idaho and died March 6, 1998 at Dietrich, Idaho.]