

Solving a Puzzle

By Pete Clark

I have always been fascinated with the summer of 1957. Sometimes I can be a bit slow in the upper story and it has taken me sixty-two years to find the roots of this fixation.

Soon after school let out in May of fifty-seven I snagged a job as a Jug Hustler for Lawson Geophysical. When I joined the crew it was working west of Boysen Lake, where I began learning the art and craft of laying out cables and seismometers. Being low man on the totem pole, I got to open and close all of the gates we had to pass through. After opening the first gate I noticed the guys in the truck were pointing down at the road in front of me. I looked down and there was a snake between my feet. Although I was never a track star, I made a standing broad jump of eight feet and landed on the cow catcher welded to the front of the truck.

After two weeks on the job I was told to accompany a driller to Richfield, Utah. We were to plug an artesian well that had developed due to the drilling of a shot point the previous year.

I was to drive a corn binder water truck. The International Harvester vehicle had a two speed axle and my driver's license was about two months old. I knew nothing about two speed axles and ground a lot of gears before I figured out double clutching. It took two weeks to plug that well with concrete mixed with Cal seal for quick drying. Due to an emergency while pumping concrete down the hole, I had concrete set up on the web of my right thumb.

When we finished at Richfield we did not return to Shoshoni: we went to Kemmerer, Wyoming. The crew had moved and the real adventure had begun. When I checked in with the Lawson office the crew had gotten in from the field. One member of the crew was a friend from Shoshoni. He told me I might be able to rent a room where he was staying. We walked across town and up a hill to a white two story house in a quiet neighborhood. The lady told me she had a room I could rent for \$8.00 per week and she would change the linens and do my laundry. There was a refrigerator and shower in the basement.

I soon learned to be more careful with my money when it came to food, drink and socializing, while still having a great time. I was successful at hoarding my hard earned cash even though my wages were low. At the end of every week, I would take my left over money to the post office and buy a postal money order for that amount. I kept the money order stubs separate in a safe place in case of loss or theft.

All of the above explains why the summer of Fifty-Seven is so memorable. I was sixteen, and for the first time, I was living on my own, solving problems and dependent on no one.