

Holman Salway



Holman & Helen Salway

Let's see how my memory is. Some things I'm sure I remember, but others may have been told me at a later date, so many times I may only imagine I can recall them.

The earliest I can remember is believing that a neighbor lady, Mrs. Leishman (a great friend of my mother) was my real mother. She took care of me a lot when one of my younger brothers was born, Rowe, I believe, because I remember more of Morton's arrival. I thought at the time that Mum tried to fool everyone into thinking she was sick, so that she could go to bed and rest just to have a baby.

I seemed to be a great deal of bother to everyone. I apparently had a habit of solo wandering which didn't do any good to anyone. Mum and Dad had a kind of shrill yodel they used to call each other from a distance. Our lot and garden were large, and the pastures as well, so they weren't always in sight of each other. They used to yell kind of a "Waaakee." I could never duplicate it. The family will all remember the call. Whenever I disappeared, Mum used call me and the neighbors used to take up calling for me and looking for me. We had a wonderful area to get lost in - a nice creek with woods and hills to explore. Sometimes it took quite a while to locate me. Sometimes I'd hide, but a lot of the time I would be too far away to hear anyone.

Note: Mum called it the Australian Bushman's call. It sounded "Wa-a-a-a-a K-e-e-e." The "kee" comes after the prolonged call, "waaaak" with explosive force on a high pitch. When done by a man the "kee" would be a falsetto note. H.S.

Mum tried to frighten me by saying there was a big fish in the creek that would get me. Next day they caught me heading toward the creek with a club to kill the fish. Being a nuisance I guess I got my share of the outings. I remember going on a hike with Harold and getting tired. I wound up riding on his backpack. Another time, Mum gave me a note to take to Dad who had a barber shop at the time, across from Dr., Stackpool's Drug Store. The note was written in

French, the language Mum and Dad used when we weren't supposed to understand. I took the note to my sister Eva, who also spoke French. She translated it for me and it said, "Keep Holman with you uptown for awhile 'cause he is-driving me crazy."

One Sunday our barn burned down and Mum said, well, anyway Holman couldn't have done it 'cause he was in Church with us. Rowe said Morton started it by lighting a grasshopper with a match and it jumped into the hay. He told me many years later, that he was throwing matches in, then seeing if he could put the fire out before it got away from him. He lost that one.

Mum's greatest curse to us, the last three boys (she called us her Canadian family) was that we would each be blessed with three sons about as close together as Rowe, Mort and I were. I believe we caused Hope to marry early, she was always saying she was sick of housework and kids. Her first marriage didn't take but the second turned out as well as any I know of. School seemed kind of a nuisance to me. I remember my teachers quite well because they often had reason to chastise me.

One boy I used to be with on and off was a friend who liked to pound on me and chase me home from school. (Seems to me those were the only times I got home from school on time.) One day I had a good idea. Before I went to school, I loaded up a bucket with rocks and pieces of coal and set it by the back gate. So, when he chased me home I ran through the front gate and through to my cache of rocks. As I figured, he'd had his fun for the day. He sauntered slowly around the corner and past the back gate. I caught him with a rock then chased him home, peppering him with rocks and lumps of coal. It was beautiful, he lost his books and his hat in his flight. I don't remember being bothered by him again.

By the time I was fifteen I kind of set a record for running away. I used to land up in Calgary a lot. My eldest brother, Jack, usually had a bed and something for me to eat. One time I wound up in Calgary riding a bike for the Dime Store Messenger Service, for a nickel a trip. I slept on the office floor and lived on buttermilk from a nearby dairy. I did that for about a month. Oddly enough, I still like buttermilk. Some days I made as much as twenty-five cents. (Oh, by the way, buttermilk cost 5 cent for all you could drink.)

Another time I changed my age and name and worked at the Banff Springs Hotel, cleaning up before they opened for the season. When I signed for my first check I used my real name and had a heck of an embarrassing time explaining before I got it. I signed up for a job with the National Reforestation Service when I was seventeen and I was one of the lucky ones chosen. We were issued work clothes and a dress uniform, room and board and one dollar a day. This was very good for the summer of 1939. We cut trees and built roads, etc. That fizzled out, so I went with another boy and cut fence posts. We did that until September when the second world war broke out. We were both stricken with Patriotism and joined the army - besides, were figured it would be easier getting shot at then cutting anymore fence posts with a Swede saw. I guess, although I still have a lot of Gypsy in me, that, that was the end of my childhood, thus the end of this note.

Holman's earthly experience nearly came to an early close when he was about four years old. Dad had been spraying his potatoes with an arsenic preparation called Paris Green. Every gardener used it to kill the Colorado potato beetle which, if left alone, would eat all the leaves from the potato vines and there would be no crop. It was not at all uncommon for buckets of mixed solution or the packets and tins of the powder to be lying around. Holman must have thought the solution was good to drink and drank a goodly amount. He soon became violently sick. He had been playing out by the swings. Mother somehow learned of his condition and the doctor was called. In those days there was no ambulance service and since we did not have a car it was up to the doctor to meet the emergency. He dropped whatever he was doing and raced to our home, literally threw Holman into the back seat and raced over-the rough gravel and dirt roads to the hospital, a distance of about 2 miles. There a stomach pump was used to wash out his stomach. It was not long before a rather excited, though somewhat subdued boy was home again, thrilled over the bouncy ride in the back seat of Dr. Woolf's car.