

LYLE BOWEN

EARLY LIFE: 1927-1945

LYLE'S PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

Lyle's father, Grant Reese Bowen, was born on October 6, 1899, in Beaver Dam, Box Elder County, Utah, the tenth child of Avilla Susannah Boothe and Cacey Potter Bowen, Jr. When Grant was two years old, his family moved to Idaho. The family camped for a few days on the north side of the Snake River bridge east of Lorenzo, and Uncle Alonzo Johnson's family camped nearby. Grant's father found a property with a big white house for sale about a mile west of the Lyman Road. The house was in the middle of a settled area, and was located just across the road from the dance hall, general store, saloon, and blacksmith shop.

In 1884, Martha Ann and Erastus Jensen homesteaded a large area along the Snake River in Salem, Idaho. "Erastus Jensen built [the Jensen home] on the lot cornerwise from the present day Salem Church. Erastus broad axed all the cotton wood logs on one side to insure a good solid home. It was the first home in Salem to have a shingled roof; all others were dirt. It was finished just in time for Christmas in 1894."¹ Lyle's mother, Guinevere Lucy Jensen, was born six years later, on November 21, 1900.

On June 29, 1910, when Lucy was 9 years old, Erastus died, leaving Martha to run the farm, manage the home, and raise the six children still living at home at the time of her husband's death. "Soon after [Erastus's] death the family built a new home on the next lot. This was the white house with the porch around it."²

Though of course she couldn't have known it at the time, Lucy would raise her own family for many years in this very same spot. In his life history,³ written in 1986, Lyle's father Grant said, "The next winter [1922-1923] we lived in part of the Jensen home. Lucy's mother just insisted we live there with her. Joe (Lucy's brother) was superintendent for the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, so he gave me a job weighing beets at the factory. We got along fine as I paid all the living expenses for Mother Jensen and her two children who were still at home: Alvin and Dessie." By this time, Grant and Lucy had their first baby, Guinevere, born September 8, 1921.

This brief stay turned out to be a trial run of sorts – by the time Lyle was born, Grant and Lucy had bought the Jensen place and were living there with Martha. Grant recalled, "The fall that Guinevere was six years old [1927], we decided to sell our dry farm to Horace Roberts for about the price of the mortgage, and move to the valley where we

could send our children to school. I went to Idaho Falls and decided to buy 160 acres across the road east and north from where the Ammon Store is now. I went back and told Lucy about it. She said her mother had been there that day and wanted us to buy her farm as Dessie and Orin had decided they didn't want it. So when Horace (Lucy's sister's husband) bought the dry farm, we moved to Salem instead of Idaho Falls."

The recollections of Grant and Lucy's children reveal just what a difficult situation they were entering into. The house was small and rundown, the farm was small and not very productive, and there was a mortgage on the house that made it an unwise investment. But Lucy's mother needed help, so the choice was clear. This experience is one of many over the years that illustrates Grant and Lucy's love and respect for one another in their partnership, and in particular Grant's willingness to assist wherever he was needed. Martha – "Mother Jensen" – lived with Grant and Lucy, and they took care of her for the rest of her life. Martha died on February 26, 1948 at age 85.



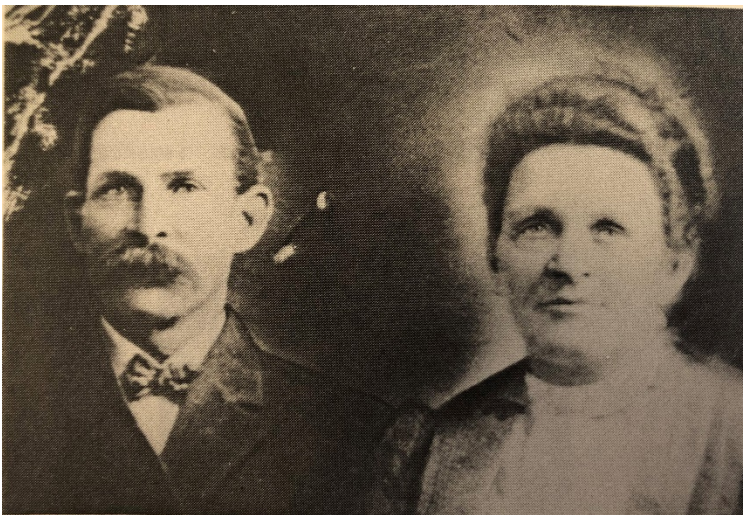
Original Jensen home (circa 1904). L-R: Erastus Jensen, Dessie Jensen, Guinevere Lucy Jensen, Marth Ann Ward Jensen (behind girls), Ida Jensen Harris, Ester Jensen Hilton (with hat)



Martha Ann Ward Jensen & Erastus Jensen



Guinevere Lucy Jensen



Cacey Potter Bowen Jr. & Avilla Susannah Boothe Bowen



Grant Reese Bowen

Shortly after the move to the Jensen place in Salem, Idaho, Lyle Bowen was born on September 20, 1927. Like eight of his ten siblings, he was born at home, and was the fourth of eleven children. Lyle summed up his early years this way: “My boyhood days were happy days and I always stayed close to my angel mother and a wonderful father who taught me truth.”⁴

Situated on Old Salem Road, the house had two bedrooms, with wood and coal stoves for heating and cooking. The family raised sugar beets, potatoes, grain, and alfalfa, and milked 10-12 cows by hand. Lyle remembers, “We worked in the field from daylight until after dark. After milking the cows we would harness the horses and go into the field and play, harrow, level and plant the land. After working in the fields all day, we would bring the cows home, milk them, have supper, go to bed and start all over the next day.”⁵

Lyle said it was in those fields, working beside his father, mother, siblings, and neighbors, that he learned to work hard. That work ethic would stay with him all his life, leading to successful careers in the music business, and later in insurance. No one worked harder than Lyle Bowen, and that helped throughout his life to accomplish superhuman feats in business and beyond.

FAMILY, FRIENDS, HOME

Lyle loved his mother and father, and was devoted to them from his earliest days. He was particularly close to his mother. Lyle said, “From the very first recollection of my life, I remember how much I loved my mother. She was interested in my welfare, as well as in developing my talents.”⁶ He loved being close to his mother as a small boy, and remembers feeling great comfort when he could hold onto the soft part of her arm above her elbow. It seems Lyle may have had some competition for that spot; Lyle’s sister, Kay, said of their mother, “She had such beautiful skin and I remember John sitting close to her and feeling her soft, soft arms.”⁷

His mother was quite proper, and made good use of euphemisms to avoid outright discussion of anything indelicate. She referred to women’s breasts as “dinner,” and didn’t speak about pregnancy or anything related. When she went into labor, and was laboring to deliver a new baby in her bedroom – which happened to share a wall with Lyle’s – Lyle’s father would tell him and his siblings that Dr. Rigby was with their mother because she was going to be sick, and they should be as quiet as they could.

Eventually, Lyle would have 10 brothers and sisters. There were three older than Lyle – Guinevere Bowen Taylor; Barbara Bowen Love; and Grant Morrell Bowen (Morrell) – and seven younger – Norma Bowen Pieper; Doralee Bowen Rydalch; Reed J. Bowen; John Dee Bowen; Suzanne Bowen Critchfield; Lucy Kay Bowen Parkinson (Kay); and Dwight Reese Bowen.

Lyle not only had his numerous siblings and his grandmother in the same house, he also had countless aunts, uncles, and cousins living nearby during his youth. The Jensen home had long been a gathering place for the family, and that continued after Grant and Lucy bought it and moved in. These relatives, especially Lucy's sisters, would visit their mother Martha nearly every day, ensuring a constant stream of people in and out of the house.

All these family members lived within a radius of about three or four miles.⁸ Uncle Joe Jensen (Lucy's brother) and Aunt Ethel Bagley (Lucy's sister) lived across the fence with their children, and Lyle remembered going back and forth across that fence many times as a young boy. Uncle Orin and Aunt Dessie Walters lived two blocks away. Lucy's sister, Ida Harris, and her husband Will lived a bit further south down the Old Salem Road. Uncle Clem Jensen and his wife Edith lived in north Salem down on the river. Uncle Alvin and Aunt Vida Jensen lived nearby, and Lucy's sister, Louie Roberts and her husband Horace lived about two miles away in Sugar City.⁹

His cousins were some of his earliest and some of his best friends. The cousins had a wonderful time entertaining themselves with favorite games like Kick the Can and Run Sheepee Run. The families would get together for Thanksgiving and other holidays at one of the family houses – some of which were quite a bit nicer than Lyle's small home. At Christmas time, Lucy set a chair out for each child in front of the Christmas tree. Each child would tie a long winter sock to the back of his or her chair. "Early on Christmas morning, Mother would get up and start the fire. After it was warm, she would tell us it was time to line up in front of the living room door, youngest first and so on. She would always have something special for each of us."¹⁰

Lyle's family made a living primarily by farming and raising cattle, so while they got by, the family didn't often have any actual cash income. His Uncle Orin Walters had a regular income, and Lyle remembers that the Walters house in particular was where he was able to get a taste of some of the finer things in life. "The first funny paper I ever read in color was at Orin's place – we couldn't afford it. And the first watermelon I ever had was at Orin's place."¹¹

Their humble lodgings boasted only cold running water, but no other plumbing of any kind, and no central heating or electricity. It was a white frame house with a porch that wrapped around part of the south side and part of the east side of the house, with several big white pillars.¹² Before the addition of an indoor bathroom, Lyle and his siblings remember dreading nighttime trips to the outhouse, especially in the winter. To feed the stove for heating and for cooking, the family had to gather firewood, haul it to the house, split it, pile it, and keep the wood box full. In the winter, they took a team of horses with a sleigh and used axes to cut willows and bring them back for firewood. One of Lyle's jobs was bringing the wood into the house and making sure the wood box was filled, and that the reservoir on the stove was full of water.

Grandma Martha Ann Ward lived in the two northeast rooms of the white frame home, and Lucy and Grant's family lived in the two southwest rooms as their family grew to six children. Two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a small kitchen were added just before their seventh child, Reed, was born on March 23, 1934.¹³ Their newly expanded home couldn't have come at a better time. When Reed was still a baby, one of the older children brought the measles home from school. All seven children came down with it. "Through tender loving care, they all came through with no ill effects."¹⁴ The family had to quarantine; Lyle remembers there were signs on the outside of the house, warning visitors to stay away.¹⁵

This wasn't the family's first experience with a household infection. Lyle's sister Doralee remembers, "Our whole household came down with the chicken pox and most everyone was covered with them. I was only a little girl and just had one on my tummy. So when anyone stopped in to see how we were all doing, Mother would say, 'Well, they are all covered and not feeling too good except for Doralee and she is busy teasing them.'"¹⁶

In the winter, the house got so cold at night that there was frost on the mopboards. Grant often asked Lyle to get the fire going in the morning to warm up the house, and many decades later, Lyle still remembered the shock as his foot touched the freezing linoleum floor as he climbed out of bed to make up the fire. Lyle shared a bed with Reed and Morrell, which helped keep the boys warm through those cold nights. The middle – with one brother on each side – was the warmest and most coveted spot in the bed. One night, Morrell got home late from a mutual activity. Reed and Lyle were already in bed, and Morrell tried to maneuver his way into that middle spot. Reed got mad and wasn't having it. He pushed Morrell out of the bed and threw a shoe at him, knocking out Morrell's front tooth. Morrell let out a loud yelp, and Lyle couldn't help but laugh when he saw the hole in Morrell's smile. When Grant came to see what all the

commotion was about, Reed got into trouble, and later, Morrell had to get a dental bridge.

Lucy's responsibilities were endless in taking care of her large family – cooking, washing clothes, helping her children with schoolwork, and all the tasks that go along with keeping animals and farming. Lyle remembers that one of Lucy's greatest responsibilities was “encouraging Dad, who farmed an unproductive farm.” They were under great financial pressure most of the time, and it didn't help that Lucy's brothers and sisters – on their daily visits to her home to see their mother – were somewhat critical of her humble lodgings and close quarters. It seems that Lucy and Grant didn't get a lot of credit for buying the rundown farm from “Mother Jensen” and taking care of her for the rest of her life, but that didn't matter to Lyle – his mother and father were his heroes, and he loved and respected them very much.

In spite of their humble circumstances – or perhaps because of them – Lyle's memories of his childhood are happy ones. He recalled ice skating excursions, and skiing behind the horses. “We would either tie the rope to the back of the sleigh when went to haul hay and straw, or we would put the rope on the saddle horn and ride behind a horse that was running as fast as it could. In those days the drifts were high and was real fun getting over the snow.”

Though there wasn't a lot of time for extravagant vacations, the family did occasionally take the time to explore the beautiful region where they lived. Lyle remembers in particular a trip to Yellowstone Park when he was 6 or 7, which turned out to be a little more “up close and personal” than the family bargained for. During their visit, there were so many bears in the area that he and his mother had to hide in the ladies' restroom with several other women until the bears had left the area.

Lyle's brother Morrell – who was about two years older than Lyle – was a constant companion and playmate throughout Lyle's younger years. Morrell was a good brother who took care of young Lyle. On his very first day of school, Lyle got so homesick that he didn't want to stay at school – even though he was only about two miles away from home. He asked for Morrell, who came and sat with him in his class to help make him feel better. With Morrell there with him, Lyle was fine and stayed at school for the rest of the day. The brothers often got into mischief. Their oldest sister Guinevere recalled, “Morrell and Lyle, when they were young, used to lie in the ditch in front of our house and when Sarah Bohi, our neighbor, walked by they would yell at her. She came and told Mother that her two boys were teasing her again.”¹⁷

As they got older, Lyle and Morrell's adventures would occasionally veer into more dangerous territory. An old gravel pit filled with water served as the neighborhood swimming pool in the summer, and even though neither Lyle nor Morrell could swim, that gravel pit pool held a strong fascination for both of them. There was one night in particular when their parents decided to go to a show in Rexburg with the Bagleys. Lyle recalled the experience: "One night Mother and Dad decided to go to the show in Rexburg. They asked my brother Morrell and I not to go up and play on this big raft that was floating around in a large gravel hole. The water was over thirty feet deep and neither Morrell or I could swim. As soon as Mother and Dad left, we got the neighbor boy and went up on the raft and were having a wonderful time. We began playing on the raft, tipping it on one end and then on the other. Morrell fell off and the horrid thought came to my mind that he was gone forever. Suddenly his head came up again. We had happened to be in a part of the gravel pit where there was a high spot. As Morrell bounced up the second time we caught hold of him with one of the oars and pulled him onto the raft. I shall never forget that night when I learned the important lesson that it pays to mind your parents."¹⁸

In the fall and spring, the children could walk to and from school. But in the winter, Lyle and the other neighborhood children would pile into the "school bus" – a covered van with a little stove in it to keep the children warm on their journey, all pulled by a team of horses. His father was often the bus driver, and in Lyle's words, "We had many exciting moments when these sleighs would tip over."

The snow would get so deep that Lyle and his family were able to drive teams of horses over top of the fenceposts, cutting through the fields to reach their destination without having to worry about where the road led.

The children had a weekly bath on Saturday evenings – supplemented with a quick swim in the canal or river if the weather was warm enough. The big cast iron tub made its appearance in the kitchen, filled with water warmed on the stove. Lucy helped scrub all the children clean, and after they were all dried and dressed, the family would often go to Evan's Ice Cream Parlor in Rexburg for a five-cent double-decker ice cream cone.¹⁹



*Back row L-R: Guinevere Lucy Bowen, Grant Reese Bowen holding Norma Bowen, Grandma Jensen, Aunt Ester Hilton; 2nd row: Barbara Bowen holding Doralee Bowen, cousin Joyce Hilton; 1st row: Lyle Bowen, cousin Ivan Hilton
Front: Morrell (L), Lyle (R)*



*Guinevere (L), Barbara (R)
Front: Morrell (L), Lyle (R)*



Lyle Bowen with cousins



FAMILY OF GRANT REESE BOWEN & GUINEVERE LUCY JENSEN
FRONT: SUZANNE KAY DWIGHT R. JOHN DEE REED J.
BACK: DORALEE NORMA LYLE GRANT MORRELL BARBRA GUINEVERE

HARD WORK

“Grant and Lucy taught their children to love work, and they always worked with them – Grant in the fields and Lucy in the home.”²⁰

Life on the farm was not easy, and it was a struggle to make a living. In addition to farming, Lyle’s father, Grant, also worked other odd jobs, including working for the soil conservation district measuring land, buying and selling livestock, and stacking 100-pound bags of sugar at the sugar factory at night. These jobs meant his family was left at times to keep working the farm without him as he tried to make a little money. Though money was tight, Lyle never recalled hearing his parents quarrel about their finances – or anything else, for that matter.

Lucy was incredibly industrious, and it’s hard to imagine how she possibly had enough hours in a day to accomplish all of her many responsibilities. While the home was her primary domain, on more than one occasion, Lucy found herself helping with the outside chores, no matter what her condition was at the time. “One day in March, the water in the ditch in our field broke out and Mother went down to close the gap with a shovel. All the men were over to the Dilly Ranch working. That night Reed was born.”²¹ Lucy set an example of hard work that would be difficult for anyone to match.

She made most – if not all – of the family’s clothing. Guinevere remembered, “She had a treadle sewing machine that she would peddle to make it work and it would hum along like there was no tomorrow. She made all of our clothes, hats, coats, dresses, and nightgowns, just everything. Most of the sewing was done after we had gone to bed at night.”²² Morrell remembered Lucy measuring him one morning before school, and while he was gone, she sewed an entire set of clothes for him out of fabric or hand-me-downs in a care package from their Aunt Doll.²³

Lucy was an excellent cook, and all of her children often recalled how much they enjoyed her pies, biscuits, roasts, fried chicken, and other dishes. To keep her large family fed with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, “Mother canned hundreds of two-quart bottles full of fruits and vegetables every year. We had a little room on the back of our house with shelves along one wall. I loved looking at those shelves every fall filled with peaches, pears, cherries, pickles, beets, jam, corn, huckleberries, and all kinds of good things to eat and know we were going to be well-fed during the long winter months.”²⁴

While there was always plenty of food on the table, candy was very scarce and an incredibly rare treat. In his life history, Lyle said, "I recall when I was in the seventh grade and my friend Max Mortensen had a dime. We went up to the little grocery store just above the school grounds in Sugar City and he bought a dime's worth of candy. I still remember how good that Snickers candy bar was that he gave me."

From a very young age, Lyle joined his family working long, hard days in the fields and around the farm. The only days off were Sundays, and even on Sunday, there were cows that needed milking and other chores that needed doing. Much of the work was done by hand, or with a team of horses, though the family had some machinery like a hay derrick, a grain binder, or a thresher. When Lyle was a small boy, he already had big responsibilities.

He and his brother Morrell were frequent companions in the fields, under the watchful and concerned gaze of their mother. He recalls being so small when he was trying to harness the horses, he had to climb up on the corral gate to be able to reach the horse's head and finish the job. When it came time to unharness the horses at the end of the day, Lyle recalls the water master coming along at the right moment in the late afternoon, and unharnessing the horses for him. He and Morrell were working in the fields when they were small enough to share the (tiny) seat of the horse-drawn mower. With characteristic enthusiasm, Lyle remembered the names of some of his favorite teams of horses: Dan and Gov, Chief and Tom, Babe and Ginger, and Snip and Cap. He also helped butcher different animals on the farm for the family to eat.

Lucy worried her children would get hurt as they were performing their various chores around the farm – and for good reason. Lyle recalled, "Morrell and I had several runaways with the high-spirited horses we drove. I had a run-away with the manure spreader, also a hay rake, and an accident with a horse drawn hay mower. Morrell had a run-away with a hay rake."

Another time, Lyle was working with a friend, Doyle Walters, to break a particularly mean horse for a neighbor. They had the horse harnessed to a two-wheel hay rake, with Lyle sitting on the small seat and Doyle sitting at his feet.

Things went smoothly at first, but as they took the horse and the hay rake through a ditch to get to the next field, one of the shafts from the harness bumped the horse's backside, and she took off running, breaking the harness and flinging Lyle and Doyle into the ditch. Lyle recalled²⁵, "She just went flying down the [hill], leaving me in the

ditch there with Doyle. I don't even remember that. He said he would start taking me up to the house, and I'd just keep falling down. He'd have to help me stand up."

He also has memories of working in the fields with his oldest sister Guinevere. He recalls a particularly hot and humid summer day he and Guinevere were following the horse-drawn mowing machine as it cut peas. One of Lyle's greatest pleasures at that time was swimming in the canal in his birthday suit after a long, hot day working the fields.

At harvest time, all of the neighbors would get together with their wagons and teams of horses to work together to bring in the crops. As a small boy, Lyle was often given the job of riding the "derrick horse," which assisted in lifting hay onto the haystack. His neighbors would pay him a dollar a day to ride the derrick horse for them, and Lyle was very proud to be a wage earner.

During the harvest season, the neighbors would go from one farm to the next, working to help one another bring in the crops. The farmer whose land was being worked that day was responsible for feeding the laborers. Lyle remembers, "At noon and at the close of day, we would all go into the farmer's house and have a sumptuous meal – large plates of meat, freshly picked garden tomatoes, new potatoes, apple pie, and many other highly delectable dishes."²⁶

Lyle recalls working alongside some of his best friends – Max Mortensen, Ivan Hope, Charlie Mortensen, Ronald Mortensen, Roy Rowberry, Wayne Ricks, Val Dalling, Cline Strong, and Ralph Archibald – as well as several cousins in those days. The work didn't stop until everyone's harvest was brought in and finished, and Lyle remembers, "We often topped beets in the snow because our neighbors had not finished their harvest and needed our help."

But most important for young Lyle, the work was done together, as a family and as a community. During those early days in the fields, Lyle developed a sense of community and a love for his neighbors that he carried with him throughout his life, no matter how many times he moved to a new place or found himself in a new community.

Whether he was mowing hay with a horse-drawn mower, or riding the derrick horse, or any of the hundreds of other jobs required to scratch out a living on the farm, Lyle was surrounded by friends and family who worked hard alongside him and set an example for him.

Another constant responsibility was milking the cows, every morning and every night. The family would get up early, the boys trudging to the barn to milk the cows in the pre-dawn light, and then let the cows out to the pasture. In the evening, “cow time” was 5:00pm, Lyle said – time to climb onto your horse and bring the cows home from the pasture and get them settled in before milking them again. The milk went into large containers with lids, and the boys sat the milk containers out where it was cool before heading into the house for supper.

The Bagleys – Lyle’s cousins who lived across the fence – had a big spotted dog named Old Badge. Old Badge, it seemed, had a taste for fresh milk. He figured out how to knock the lids off of those containers to get into the milk. Lyle could sometimes hear him at work during the night, and eventually got fed up. One night, when he heard Old Badge getting into the milk containers in the middle of the night, Lyle got up and got the .22 rifle to go scare the dog. As he was getting the gun, it went off and shot a hole into the ceiling. A big patch of plaster dropped to the floor, and Lyle stood for a moment staring at it and holding his breath. Lucy was certain that someone was dead, and was relieved to discover it was just a late night attempt to stop the canine milk thief.²⁷

Of course, there were times that were frustrating enough that even Lyle would briefly lose his cool. He remembers a night when he was probably 13 or 14 years old, bringing home the cows at the end of the day. There was a calf that was well past the time he should have been weaned, but was still nursing from his mother. He broke loose from the herd, and went charging away. Lyle was so disgusted he picked up a rock and threw it at the calf and hit him in the eye. His eye rolled right down his cheek, and he was blind in that eye from that point on. Lyle felt so guilty, and renewed his determination to keep his temper in check at all times.

Lyle found pleasure in the little things. “It was always so delightful to have the wood stove giving off radiant heat on a cold winter night. One of my favorite pastimes after chores were done, was to come in and sit between the stove and the old box and read stories such as Silver Chief, Dog of the North and other favorites.”

Outside of his many siblings and cousins, Lyle’s best friend when he was a young boy was Max Mortensen. The Bowen and Mortensen families were very close – for a decade, Max’s dad Orval was the bishop of the Salem Ward, and Lyle’s dad was his first counselor.²⁸

Just to the east of the Salem church was a community center that had a stage where they would put on little plays and performances, or hold dances, family reunions, or other large gatherings.



Lyle with Chief and Tom



John and Morrell with Chief and Tom



John (standing), Suzanne, Grant, and Dwight



Potato harvest on the Bowen farm – Dwight driving the tractor, Grant wearing hat, Kay and Suzanne at back

MUSIC

Music was a part of Lyle's life from the beginning. One of his earliest memories is milking cows with his brothers while his father sang to them – the boys and the cows! Lyle memorized the songs his father sang, and soon began singing to the cows himself, a practice he continued until he left the farm as a young husband. Lyle recalls those days with his usual good humor:

“During the course of my cow-born singing career, I can recall one dog that would join in on the chorus occasionally. I never could tell whether his mournful howls were in appreciation or sympathy. The neighbors claim they could hear me singing over a mile away on a quiet summer evening.”²⁹

Lucy's father, Erastus, was said to be very musically talented. He could play the harmonica and accordion, and loved to sing. Their home was often filled with music.³⁰ Lucy kept up the family tradition. “Singing was a natural part of Lucy's life. When she was a young woman, she sang at many different functions, church and civic, around the valley.”³¹

Music was important to Grant and Lucy, and they made it part of their children's lives. Their home had a high-backed piano in the living room, and the children were encouraged to learn to play and sing. Lyle's brother John remembers her sitting next to him on the piano bench, helping him practice.³² Lyle's sister Kay recalled, “Mother and Dad had beautiful singing voices and I loved to sit by them in church and listen to them sing. Dad always sang around the barn and in the fields, especially when he was turning water.... Music made our work seem lighter and time just flew right on by.”³³

His childhood friend, Max Mortensen, recalled, “It isn't every boy that bellows it out in Church as a little fellow like Lyle did, when he was a young boy. That was a unique thing, and incidentally, if you ever went down to the old homestead down there, when Grant and they were milking the cows you could hear Lyle singing through the barns. He'd milk those cows this way and that was a unique quality of Lyle. He loves to sing, and you know he's a great singer.”³⁴

His mother also encouraged him to sing starting at a very young age, and delighted in sharing his talent with the neighbors and visitors who came by. Aunt Doll had given the family a piano, which sat in their living room, and she would often play piano for Lyle while he sang for the living room audience. At the age of about five, Lyle sang in a Relief Society meeting at the Old Salem Church. Aunt Ester played piano, while Lyle

sang “In the Hills of Idaho.” He was a little nervous, so his mother stood next to him and held his hand so he wouldn’t be afraid. Lyle recalled, “At a very young age.... I recall my Aunt Ester Hilton playing the piano for me. While mother held my hand, I would stand by her knee in Relief Society and sing.”

Lyle liked to perform, and looked for opportunities wherever he could. His Uncle Will Harris, Ida’s husband, was a good musician, and put together a performing group. Lyle joined the group when he was about 12 years old, and enjoyed performing with them.



Lyle with high school schoolmate and teachers

FAITH, CHURCH, AND WARD FAMILY

Lyle developed a testimony of Jesus Christ at a young age, and was uncommonly sensitive to spiritual matters. “I never recall when I did not have a testimony. I think the Lord blessed me with a conviction of the truth from the cradle. I knew the church was true and I knew what my father told me was true. I listened intently to my bishops, like Bishop David Archibald and Bishop Orval P. Mortensen. These men, as well as my father, had a profound influence on my life.” Grant served as second counselor to Bishop Archibald for about six years, and during that time, Orval Mortensen served as first counselor. When Bishop Archibald was released, Orval was called as bishop, and Grant served as his first counselor for about 10 years, with Fay Wasden serving as second counselor³⁵. The ward was very close-knit and a big part of the community. Lyle recalled a song³⁶ the members of the ward would sing at that time, to the tune of “Yankee Doodle Dandy”:

*I love Salem, so do you
It's a mutual feeling
Other things may go sky-high
But ward love has no ceiling*

*The bishopric are jolly men
Orval, Grant, and Fay
They keep our ward tops in the Stake
We try to do what they say*

*I love Salem, so do you
It's a mutual feeling
Other things may go sky-high
But ward love has no ceiling*

The old Salem Church, where the ward met for many years, was a bit of a mystery to the younger members of the ward. The building had an attic, which was unusual at the time. Lyle and his cousins and friends thought it was a great adventure to climb the staircase leading to the peak of the building. Occasionally there was a Sunday School class held in the attic, which was a great hit among the youth of the ward.

Lyle wanted very much to be a good boy – and was determined to be as faithful as he could be. His mother was a critical influence on his faith from the very beginning. In his autobiography, Lyle recalled, “Mother always stressed the importance of having a clean

body and wholesome thoughts and to choose carefully your companions. She would always say, 'Your mind is a sacred enclosure into which nothing can enter without your permission.'"

Lyle recalls his mother making sure that at least Lyle and his brothers got to church on time each Sunday, even finishing some of the lighter chores herself so the children could be on time. The boys would run to the Old Salem Church where the Bowen family attended their worship services. The church's two big potbelly stoves were not quite powerful enough to heat the whole building, and some of the classrooms were quite cold during the winter. Lyle and his classmates would be sitting in class with their feet up on the benches to try to keep warm. And yet Lyle remembers those days as "happy times."

Faith was part of everything the family did, and especially when tragedy struck. Lyle's father Grant was blessed with the gift of healing, and he used that gift many times throughout his life. When Lyle was about four or five years old, Grant used that gift to preserve Lyle's life.

Lyle recounts the experience in his life history: "It was during the great depression of the early 30s and Dad and Mother and Morrell and I climbed into the old Chevrolet car and headed for Sugar City, where Dad had a few dollars in the bank. We arrived there and learned that the banks in the country had gone broke and were in financial difficulty. We got back into the old Chevy and started for Rexburg. As we rounded the corner just out of Sugar City, I reached over and attempted to close the back door that was slightly open. The old-style cars had the back doors mounted so, that when they opened, the wind would catch them. I was holding on to the handle and the door pulled me out and I landed on my head on the oiled road. The car was going about 40 miles an hour, so I just lay there on the highway. Dad told me later that he picked me up in his arms and said, 'O Lord, my God, please do not let him die.' I remember we were in Dr. Rigby's office before I came to. Mother was holding me tightly in her arms. Mother was trying to revive me by giving me a drink of root beer. I was about 4 years old, when this happened. I had a lump on my neck for many years. I was brought back to life through the power of the Priesthood from a righteous father and a mother that loved me more than life itself."

In his own history, Grant relates the story from his perspective as a young father facing the effects of the Great Depression and trying to keep caring for his family. "As his little body hit the paved road, it bounced up the road like a rubber ball. I stopped the car and

went running back and picked him. He seemed to be perfectly lifeless. I cried, 'My Lord, my God!' As I said this, he opened his eyes and looked at me. I knew then that he would live. I thank the Lord that He heard my prayer and had respect for the priesthood. Had He not, Lyle would not have lived."

Another story Lyle often told illustrates how important it was to him to be a witness of Jesus Christ at all times.

"I recall that several days prior to my baptism I had prayed to my Heavenly Father that I would be able to quit swearing. It was always quite a temptation on the farm where you were always working with animals to get in that habit. However, I never did take the name of the Lord in vain. I was bringing the cows home from the pasture to milk one evening and suddenly a young calf darted into the underbrush trying to get away from the herd. I quickly followed him on my pony and as I got into the heavy underbrush, a willow whipped me across the face and I let out a swear word in my disgust and anger. Then I remembered that I had asked the Lord to help me quit swearing before I was baptized. I remember getting off my horse and getting down there in the willows and asking the Lord to help me quit swearing and I promised him that I would never swear again. I have kept that promise to the Lord to this day."

Lyle's children and grandchildren can attest to this, and in fact, in his effort to keep his language clean, he developed a funny habit. Dana's children remember growing up hearing him say, "Oh, berries," and not realizing until much later that his exclamation of choice was rather unique.

Lyle was baptized on September 20, 1935 by his father in the old consolidated canal in Salem, Idaho. His mother and other family members were in attendance as Lyle and Grant walked into the cold water. Lyle recalled, "It was a glorious experience even though the water was very chilly."

Over the next few years, his testimony grew, and he looked forward to receiving the priesthood. Sacrament meeting was held in the evening in those times, and Lyle remembered walking to church after milking to get to sacrament meeting, to be ordained a deacon. He was ordained on the evening of October 29, 1938. He remembered cleaning the old leather stool that the priests used to kneel on when they blessed the sacrament, and being so pleased to have a priesthood responsibility. As he walked home from the church that beautiful autumn evening, he looked up at the beautiful sky, and he received a witness that the gospel was true. In an interview³⁷ more

than 80 years later, Lyle recounted his experience, saying, “I was coming home from sacrament meeting, and the beautiful sky – I can still see it. I said, ‘Heavenly Father, thanks for giving me that testimony.’ And I’ve never forgotten it, it just grows stronger. God has blessed me.”

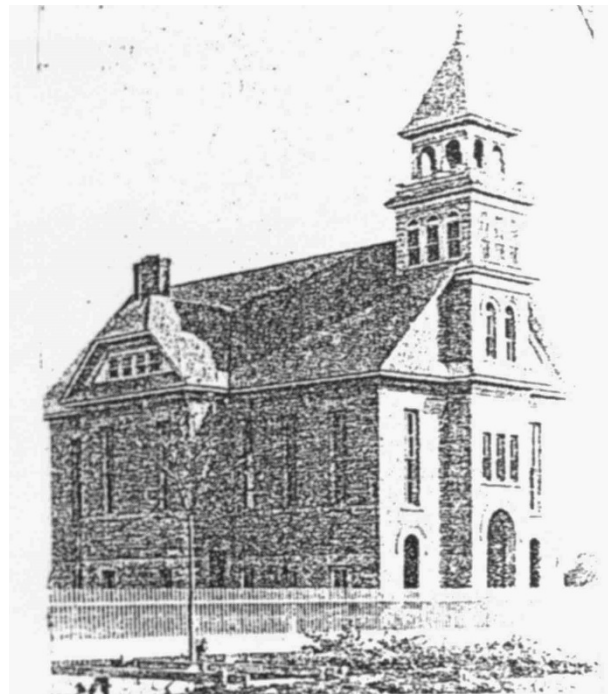
In his written history³⁸, Lyle said of the experience, “I had a manifestation of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I can go to that very spot today and will always remember that special witness.”

The Salem Ward continued to be a key feature in Lyle’s life. When he was a teenager, he remembers the Bishop coming into priesthood meeting and announcing that ward members Garen Fulmer, Howard Bohi, and Carol Johnson had died. They had been drinking and crashed their car into a pond and were drowned. When they pulled the car out of the pond, Carol was hanging out the back window. That experience left a lasting impression on Lyle. “Their lives were all taken, and it was a sorrowful thing. They were all good friends of ours, and they were on the wrong track.”³⁹ In the weeks and months following the tragedy, Lyle and the other members of the ward received strong counsel from the bishopric and other ward leaders to avoid drinking and smoking.



FOURTH SALEM CHURCH

Ward members started hauling rock for this church about 1895. Peter Stephensen and O. F. Ursenbach were the painters, Olaus Aasa was the finish carpenter, and Edward Person was over rock and masonry. The cost of the building was \$18,000. The building was completed in 1906 dedicated in 1907.



New Salem Chapel dedicated in 1906.

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- ¹ “Memories of our Mother, Guinevere Lucy Jensen Bowen,” 2003, compiled by her daughters, Lucy Kay Bowen Parkinson and Suzanne Bowen Critchfield (hereafter “Memories,” 2003)
- ² “Memories,” 2003, p. 184
- ³ “The Family of Grant Reese Bowen – Book IX of The Family of Cacey Potter Bowen, Jr.,” compiled in 1986, edited by Barbara Bowen Love (hereafter “GRB Family”)
- ⁴ Lyle Bowen autobiography
- ⁵ Lyle Bowen autobiography
- ⁶ Interview 12/8/2019
- ⁷ “Memories,” 2003 p. 507
- ⁸ Interview 11/17/2019
- ⁹ Interview 8/19/2019 part 1
- ¹⁰ “Memories,” 2003 p 507
- ¹¹ Interview 11/17/2019
- ¹² “Memories,” 2003 p. 343
- ¹³ “Memories,” 2003, p 229
- ¹⁴ “Memories,” 2003, p 16
- ¹⁵ Bowen tapes
- ¹⁶ “Memories,” 2003, p 344
- ¹⁷ “Memories,” 2003, p 185
- ¹⁸ Lyle Bowen autobiography
- ¹⁹ “Memories,” 2003, p. 128
- ²⁰ “Memories,” 2003, p 16
- ²¹ “Memories,” 2003, p 187
- ²² “Memories,” 2003, p 449
- ²³ “Memories,” 2003, p 253
- ²⁴ “Memories,” 2003, p 503
- ²⁵ Interview 7/13/2020 “Recording 1”
- ²⁶ Lyle Bowen history
- ²⁷ “Memories,” 2003, pg 288
- ²⁸ Interview 11/17/2019
- ²⁹ Lyle Bowen history
- ³⁰ “Memories,” 2003, p 24
- ³¹ “Memories,” 2003, p 228
- ³² “Memories,” 2003, p 398
- ³³ “Memories,” 2003, p 505
- ³⁴ Man of the Year program
- ³⁵ “GRB Family,” p.12
- ³⁶ Interview 11/17/2019
- ³⁷ Interview 7/13/2020
- ³⁸ Lyle Bowen autobiography
- ³⁹ Interview 11/17/2019