

Jewel Solon McGee

Jewel Solon McGee was born March 10, 1914, to Joseph Carr and Pearl Stolworthy McGee, in Kirtland, San Juan County, New Mexico. Jewel was the third child in his family: Melvin, Roscoe, Jewel, Fern, and Kenneth (Kelly). He first lived with his parents in an adobe house behind the Dan Christensen's, known to some as the "old Schrader home."

A few years later, the family moved to Fruitland, New Mexico, to a house on top of, and known as the "coalbank hill." A few yards behind the home were cliffs overlooking the San Juan River. Jewel found that these cliffs were to his advantage. As most small boys, he was full of mischief and often found himself in trouble and about to be punished; to avoid it, he would run to the edge of the cliff and would threaten to jump off if his parents came close with intentions to spank him. His parents, fearful that he just might fall in his threats, would always give in, and coax him away. Jewel continued to use this method as long as they lived there. He and his brothers had lots of fun climbing the cliffs, fishing in the river, and trapping skunks. While living there, his father managed and worked in a coal mine.

The family moved to a farm in Fruitland where they raised corn and hay. A few years later, Jewel's father bought a small farm from Mr. Kline (Sr.). Jewel learned to work by hoeing corn and claims the reason the little fingers on both his hands are crooked are because he kept them wrapped around the hoe handle so much. (Not really.)

Some of Jewel's teachers were Grace B. Wilson, Morris Bauer, Arnold Burton, Hulda Brimhall, Ethel Taylor Collyer, Mr. Jones, John Curtis, and Everett Scott. While in grade school, he remembers Ethel Collyer making him sit under her desk a great deal of the time.

During his high school years, he, along with his brother Roscoe, were hired as janitors for the school. They built the fires in the large pot bellied stoves every morning. They chopped the wood at night after school, so it would be ready. They were paid \$35 a month; Roscoe would take \$20 and Jewel \$15. Times were hard then and they were glad to get what money they could. Jewel and Roscoe also set traps along the swamp area below the Kennedy Hill, and would check them to and from school. They sold the pelts, mostly skunk and muskrat, which added to their earnings.

Jewel played on the first football team at Central High and also made the "first touchdown." His coach was Everett Scott.

His high school days are well remembered, not only for his studies and sports, but some of the pranks that he and his friends would play on the teachers. One of them, and the worst prank, was planned for a Halloween night. Jewel, Dan Christensen, Charlie McGee, Bob Burnham, Ralph Tanner, Cleo Biggs, Russell Foutz, and possibly others, couldn't imagine anything more enjoyable than to put a cow inside the high school building. The high school consisted of one long hall down the center of the building with classrooms on each side. That particular night, the classroom doors were closed, but there was plenty of room in the hall for the cow. The boys put the cow in the hall, and she being frightened and nervous, caused her to run up and down the hall urinating and expelling manure right and left.

When the principle and teachers arrived next morning, they were greeted with a most unpleasant sight. The guilty boys were never found out and punished, although there must have been strong suspicions. (Jewel was not employed as janitor at that time.)

Regardless of the pranks and mischief, Jewel achieved scholastically and graduated in May, 1932. His classmates were Ralph Tanner, Charlie McGee, Russell Foutz, Dan Christensen, Genovieve Whipple (Finch), Zelpha Hatch (Baker), Viola Stock (Bradshaw), Asa Hatch, Lorena Langum, and Minnie Lewis.

After graduation, Jewel worked for Rurl (Chunk) Tanner at the Tsaya Trading Post for about three months. It was while he was working there that Roscoe bought the Red Mesa Trading Post, and needing help sent for Jewel to come and assist him. He worked there from the fall of 1932 to 1936. Jewel and Roscoe batched, and as a sideline Jewel trapped wild animals, selling the pelts, mostly coyote, bobcat, and badger, and again adding to his earnings. The Navajo Indians gave him the name of "coyote hunter."

In 1936, Jewel's Uncle Carlos Stolworthy, owner of the Red Rock Trading Post, asked Jewel to come work for him with an opportunity to buy into the business. With this in mind, Jewel left Red Mesa and went to work at Red Rock, Arizona. He worked with Uncle Carlos and his cousin Troy Washburn, batching for one and a half years.

The same year Jewel went out to the Red Rock Trading Post, a young lady by the name of Leona Christensen was living with the Carlos Stolworthy family and working for her room and board, while finishing her senior year at Central High School, but it wasn't until the next year, 1937, that Jewel became interested in her.

In the spring of 1937, they started dating and on September 19, 1937, they were married at Ignacio, Colorado, where Leona's parents were living. They made their home at the Red Rock Trading Post. Seven children were born to this union; Jewel Lavoy, Patricia Louise, Jeaneen, David Barry, Marva Lynne, Michael Carlos, and Debra Sue.

In 1941, having an interest in the Pehea Trading Post east of Gallup, New Mexico, it became necessary to go and manage the business. It was during the war with Germany and Japan that they lived there. Before the war was over, Jewel received his induction papers to go into the service, so it was necessary to move his family to Kirtland, New Mexico. Jewel had passed his physical prior to induction, however the age limit was lowered; thus he was prevented from going into the armed services, much to the relief of his wife and family.

Jewel again managed Red Rock Trading Post and as Carlos Stolworthy was moving his family to Provo, Utah, he sold his interest to Jewel. His family remained in Kirtland so the children could go to school and he drove back and forth two or three times a week.

In the spring of 1946, he sold his home to Grant Swapp and moved his family to Farmington, New Mexico. Two years later in 1948, he moved to another location in Farmington. He bought the E.A. Taylor home on West Apache Street where there was a small acreage and more suitable for his family.

Jewel loves to farm and raise a garden. He kept his boys busy hoeing weeds, cleaning yards, milking a cow, and caring for chickens. This method supplied the table and also kept his boys out of mischief.

He sold half interest in Red Rock Trading Post to Troy Kennedy, then in 1966 sold out to him. In the meantime he, along with his brothers Melvin, Roscoe, and Kenneth, purchased a cattle ranch south of Farmington. Between the trading post and the ranch, he was kept very busy. Soon after selling

Red Rock, he and his brothers sold their cattle ranch to the Navajo Tribe, as the land was to be used under the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project. The McGee Brothers, by which they became known, bought farm and ranch land up the La Plata.

Melvin was killed in an accident in 1957 and Kenneth died September 1967. Jewel and Roscoe have continued together; however, they sold their commercial herd of cattle and went into raising registered stock; Roscoe raising Herefords and Jewel raising Red Angus.

Jewel enjoys farming, raising hay and takes great pride in his registered Red Angus. He claims they are smarter and easier to handle than other breeds.

Jewel never asked his hired help to do anything that he wouldn't do himself or didn't do with them. He never placed himself above another.

Being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, he has served, and still is, as a Home Teacher, a counselor in the Elders Quorum, then President of the Elders Quorum, Branch clerk to the Alma Branch, a counselor in the Ward M.I.A., and worked on the Scout Committee, and sent two boys on missions: David Barry to the Central British Mission in England, and Michael to the Western Canadian Mission in Canada.

Jewel and his wife still live in the home they purchased twenty-seven years ago on 634 West Apache Street, Farmington, New Mexico.

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