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My Father, John Riley Shaw,
by Karen Shaw Thomas

Where do you begin to write a story about a man that you loved very much and whom you admired as a child growing up?

Such will be this story of my Father. It is almost unexplainable to put into words the feeling I have for my Father and he for me. While growing up and still to this day, I enjoy being outdoors. I could usually find my Dad out in his workshop. Don't ask me exactly what he did there - - but he would always be working on some project. I just liked being there with him. I can't remember ever having any indepth conversation with him - - it was merely that we understood each other and I loved to watch him work. Everyonce in awhile he'd have me put something in the vice for him to hold while he was cutting it. I was his helper.

I was always proud that my father was a carpenter. I likened my father to doing the same work that Jesus had one while on this earth and I have always felt proud to tell people that my Dad was a carpenter. We got to see alot of progress of barns or houses going up and I only remember him working on the entire project. I can't remember anyone helping him.

Chyrl and I would walk down to the end of the road and wait for him to drive up at the end of a work day. Going through his lunch pail was a thrilling thing for me as a youngster. I really can't explain what made it so important, it just was.

Our Dad chewed tobaco and had quite a big wad of Beechnut chewing tobaco in his cheek alot of the time. I can remember getting into his hiding place for it under the front seat of the car and putting some in my mouth. It really burned my mouth and needless to say, I only did that once.

I would sit in the Model A Ford that he had for hours, hitting the starter button and with the clutch in and then out, would move the car up and down the driveway of the farm in Riverbank, California, teaching myself to drive. Dad would then let me drive the car on the country roads around our home. I was very proficient at driving at age 11. Dad encouraged me to drive and would say to me, "If your Mother ever gets very sick and needs to get to the hospital, you make sure you drive her there if I'm not home." I doubt that Mother even knew that he told me that, but in Dad's way, he loved Mother and did watch out of her well being.

I was proud of Dad being the Branch President in Oakdale, California, during the early 1940's. I had the opportunity to play the piano or lead the singing at Church and it was probably because he chose me to do so. It was a great experience for the young girl that I was at the time.

I can remember having company for dinner and after they'd leave, Dad would lean back on the kitchen chair and say "Can we eat now" and laugh and laugh. He was saying that while company was there, you had to mind your manners and not eat too much, but after they left, bring on the food!!

Dad had a good sense of humor and I can remember him laughing at his own jokes and his face getting redder and redder the more he laughed.

I can also remember his favorite Sunday evening meal would be bread and cold milk, along with onions and cucumbers in vinegar. Mom and Dad also would make barrels of saurkraut.

Dad was a very giving person and would always make certain that Mom fixed food for the hobos that came by our place in California.

Last year, in 1992, I was able to attend the 50th Reunion of the Oakdale, California Ward. I wanted to be there for Dad because he was the fourth Branch President and served from 1944 to 1947. Dad was a good leader during this time and I am so very grateful that I was born to be part of those years and to be his and Mom's daughter.

Karen Shaw Thomas