

Iowa Daze Stories from the Children of Clarence and Lucy Barnett

A very significant part of the childhood days of the Barnett children was spent in the state of Iowa during a 15-year period of pastoral ministry for Clarence and Lucy. Reflections about these growing-up days represent an informative and entertaining part of family history. The memoirs of Glenn provide both personal stories and a general perspective on the Iowa period of family history. To these have been added stories provided by Gordon, Beverly and Bob. Others may be added in the future if they surface (and can be passed on). Enjoy.

Reflections on the Iowa Days: 1924-1940 by Glenn Barnett (excerpts from his memoirs)

According to Mother, Gordon (four months old) and I (two years old) slept on the train coach seats on the move West. We arrived at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and then up to Dayton Valley. The parsonage was 1/4 mile from the little white church. One Sunday evening my parents left me asleep on a church pew. When they returned home, Mother was upset and of course hastened back to the darkened church.

I faintly remember when I was 3 or 4 that I played in the sand by the little iron bridge near the church and cemetery. Our neighbors were the Rogers and Ibsons. Georgie Ibson was my favorite chum. My father was elected as the rural school director who hired and paid the teacher, perhaps \$100 per month.

In the summer of 1926, we moved to the Bennezette Church near Bristow, Iowa. My father purchased a 1925 Model T Ford car with side curtains for around \$450. Funds for this purchase were from Grandpa Henry Barnett. In those days, my father's salary was only about \$600 per year, but the country folk at the church would furnish us with food stuffs. Often on Sunday we would find vegetables or pastry on our front porch. One farmer gave us rabbits that he shot. And a garden was necessary in order to feed our family of three or four children at that time.

My father made a rope swing in our boxelder tree. He would push me and sing, "And the old cat died" as the swing became motionless. One day I tried climbing the tree and fell breaking my right arm. My world was "shattered". I wore a cast for at least a month.

One Christmas season when we had a special program at the church, I was put to bed early in the parsonage next door. During the program, I went over to the church in my pajamas and ran down the aisle. People were shocked.

The high point of each year was the week of camp meeting at Charles City, Iowa. At camp I attended "Children's Meetings." Laura Emerson, a red-headed teenager, was my teacher. Our family was the largest so we were given the largest dormitory room. Gordon and I slept on straw ticks under a big tent. We all ate in the dining room. The big treat for us children was ice tea. Mrs. H. Yarrington was the head cook. Each table washed their own dishes. The tabernacle bell rang for chow-time. Camp time was fun time for us kids during the 1920s and early 30s. A trolley car ran beside the back fence of the campground. We would write our names with wire or coins to be smashed by the train. We would also try to drown out gofers as they popped out of their burrows. The back field of the grounds was a softball diamond. I also remember sucking on ice cubes from the ice van, eating fruit from neighbors' orchards, viewing ponies and turkeys on nearby farms, visiting and swimming at the Y or walking and running across the swinging bridge over the Cedar River.

Mother's days at Camp were filled with washing and ironing clothes in the little hexagon-shaped wash house. Washing was done by hand on a scrub board. She was often too tired to attend the Conference sessions or services each day.

We enjoyed a yellow canary named "Dickie" kept in a wire cage. He would sing so well. One day Buddy (Gordon) stood on a chair, opened the wire door to the cage, reached in and gave the bird a big hug, squeezing the life out of poor little Dickie.

One day little Beverly was playing with matches in our back barn-garage. After accidentally igniting the straw, the fire department was called to extinguish the blaze.

In March, 1931, my father received a telegram stating that his father, Henry Barnett, had died. (My father depended very much on the advice and financial aid from his father.) Our father and mother took a train to Buffalo, NY, for the funeral. Mrs. Gear stayed with us five children.

In his will, Grandpa Henry gave our parents his 1930 Model T Ford car. It was light gray with roll-down windows. He requested that the car never exceed 35 miles per hour. My parents drove it back to Iowa after the funeral.

Every August we all returned to Charles City Camp beside the trolley line. One of these years my father borrowed a trailer to haul the cow to Camp to furnish milk for the dining room. When we arrived in the center of Waterloo at a traffic light the trailer tailgate broke and the cow backed out of the trailer. The poor cow was a mess and the spectacle was hilarious --- a car full of kids and a struggling cow in the street behind an old car. We finally got the cow in the trailer and proceeded on to Camp. The milk was an aid to the campers.

One day at school my teacher told me to put a bucket of water in the furnace humidifier. Not knowing better, I took the bucket and tossed the water into the fire. Smoke filled the building. The teacher, Mrs. Downs, bawled me out and I learned the proper place for the H₂O.

While at Emmanuel in 1933 my father pitched a tent for revival meetings across the street from our house on the school grounds. (We had no problem with the separation of church and state back then). Rev. O.G. Wilson was the evangelist. Dorothy Dunbar (Crestinger) was the song evangelist. A young farmer (29 years old) named Raymond Stephens, was gloriously converted during the revival. Raymond's life was changed and he was called to preach. Later, in 1936, he went to Miltonvale Wesleyan College to prepare for the ministry. I began my freshman year at M.W.C. in the Academy (High School) that year. The next year (1937), Gordon went with me to Miltonvale to begin his high school work.

Grandma Barnett (Della) came out to Albaton in 1935, to live with us for a while. I slept with her for several months because of our limited room in the small parsonage. Grandma was 78. She would sip water from her "shouper" very slowly. In the fall, Uncle Wallace and family drove to Albaton to visit us and take Grandma back to Lockport. We missed her and never saw her again. She died five years later in 1939.

In the summer of 1937, we made our last move in Iowa in order to serve the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the town of Rudd. Our cousin, Harry Miller, visited us when we lived there. Gordon and Harry rode in the moving van from Albaton to the little parsonage in Rudd.

We returned to Rudd in the spring of 1938. Our father made a contract with farmer Lyle Kuhlmeier for summer jobs for Gordon and me. We would work on his farm during the summer and get paid "for what we were worth". This farm was seven miles east of Rudd on a dirt road. We worked from 5 a.m. till after dark, milking eleven cows, slopping hogs, feeding chickens, hoeing corn, etc. Rosie, the wife, fed us very little. We were homesick for our home and Mom's cooking. On Sunday we stayed home with our family. I worked one month (July) and got \$30. Gordon worked about two weeks more. During my work month, I drove a tractor through Rudd to a farm. I knew little how to operate it. We children played different musical instruments at church --- Gordon, trombone; Lucille, cornet; Beverly, clarinet and I the fiddle (violin). Our father used us at Rudd and also at a pioneer work in the nearby town of Rockford where he also pastored. The children, Lucille through Dean, attended the Rudd schools.

Gordon and I returned to Miltonvale Academy in 1938-1939 and graduated together in May, 1940. I was the Salutatorian of my class of 30-40 graduates. Beverly Wilson was the Valedictorian. I wrote a speech to be delivered on May 10, 1940, at the Class Exercises but I didn't memorize that short speech very well. My prompter (Miss Taylor) tried to help me, but I did quite poorly and was very embarrassed. My parents did not make it to the program. Our

class motif was a ship assail on life's sea. Dick Kindschi said to Bev Wilson, "Let's throw him overboard" off the ship. I was mortified. Miss Eastham, my English teacher, gave me \$1 as a gift the following day. Rev. E. W. Black, pastor of the Houghton College church, was the speaker for our commencement exercises which were held in the Kansas Conference Tabernacle adjacent to the campus. My parents were present for this event. I was proud of my diploma.

Gordon and I returned to Rudd in June 1940 to help pack for the move of the family to Houghton, New York. Before leaving the area, we paid our farewell visit to the Raymond Barnett farm at Bennezette with a big supper. We children played our musical instruments. Father enjoyed his ministry in Iowa and hated to move East, but Mother insisted that this was God's will so the children could attend Houghton College.

DRIVING FROM IOWA TO HOUGHTON NY (Gordon)

We departed Iowa in June 1940. We were ten people in an old Chevy. Besides dad, I had the only other driver's license. I was 16 at that time.

When I was 15, I was in Zumbro Falls, MN. I went into a drug store and purchased a LIFETIME drivers license for 35 cents. They typed it on a piece of cardboard. There was no photo. They asked me no questions about driving. I held it for 16 years and exchanged it for a Hawaiian driver's license.

Each of the four older children was assigned a younger child to guard for the trip, Glenn had Allan, I had Dean, Lucille had David and Bev had Bob. When we had a bathroom stop we made sure that our younger sibling went to the bathroom and dot back in the auto.

We had no air-conditioned, therefore our windows were open all the time. Once I was in the left back seat behind Dad, the driver. I had Dean on my lap. Dad cleared his throat and spit a large oyster out of his window. The wind brought it back into my window and onto my face. Such were the times living in the family of ten.

MOTHER BARNETT'S STORY (Gordon)

Mother Barnett told the story to my wife, Elida, about me when I was about three years old. She had taken me to a country store. It was winter and I was snowsuit. As she held me I looked around the store and pointed to every woman there and said, "Pretty, pretty and pretty."

Elida, my wife at my age 89, said to mother, "Mother, he has not stopped."

I THOUGHT THAT BOB WAS DEAD (Gordon)

At our Albaton home, we had a storm cellar with a large tree above it. We boys built a tree house in the tree. We built steps like ladder steps up the side of the tree.

One day, when mom and dad were gone. I was assigned the job as babysitter during their absence little Bob was climbing up the stairs to the tree house. He slipped and fell. As he was falling he hit his head on one of the steps which cut a gash on his head. I looked at Bob who was unconscious and was bleeding. I thought that he was dead.

He awoke as I carried him into the house. I cleaned him up and we waited for dad and mom to arrive. He was normal after thereafter.

A COUNTRY SCHOOL (Gordon)

When we lived at Albaton Iowa which was 25 miles south of Sioux City, we attended a country school. We had to walk $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to school. The teacher taught all eight grades.

She had to build the fire in the large potbellied stove, take out the ashes, sweep the floor, clean the blackboards, clean the windows and all other jobs necessary. Her name was Dorothea Crane and she was paid \$60 per month.

She asked me to come early, unlock the school, build the fire, stoke the fire all day and carry out the ashes. And for that she would pay me 5 cents per day or \$1 per month. I gladly took the opportunity.

During the winter walking through deep snow the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile was a chore, but I did enjoy it.

I CHEATED AND WAS CAUGHT (Gordon)

At the same school with Dorothea Crane as teacher, I was given a spelling test. One of my words was ALUMINUM. I wrote it on a small piece of paper and hid it in my hand. When the word was given to me to spell, I copied it from the paper. Ms. Crane saw me and I immediately put it in my mouth and swallowed it.

She accused me of cheating. We were in a one room classroom. I had four brothers and one sister in that room. All had heard her accusation. When we arrived home that afternoon, my parents heard the story five times. My father was the local pastor. How could a child of his do such a thing? Dad did not spare the rod. I learned my lesson.

A TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY SAVES THE TOWN'S FIRE TRUCK & STATION

From page 365 of Bev's book *For God and Country: Memoirs of a Military Chaplain*

As an Iowa lad about ten years old, I discovered one day that the town water pump section of the fire hall was ablaze. The new 1938 fire truck was on the other side of a wall separating the pump section from the fire hall. I ran out onto the main street of the town and yelled with all my might, "FIRE, FIRE, THE FIRE HALL IS ON FIRE!" Not a soul heard the frantic yells from this little kid! So, what did I do to get their attention? I ran into the fire hall and jumped into the fire truck cab and began to mash the siren switch up and down causing the wail of the siren to blast out. It could be heard all over town and in not more than a minute some men burst into the hall. They yelled at me, "Hey kid, get out of the truck!" I quieted the siren, and pointed to the wall, yelling: "The pump room is on fire!" In disbelief, they felt the wall and found it hot which convinced them the building was indeed on fire. They knew they had to get the truck out of the building quickly and, in their haste to start the truck, they flooded the engine. As a result, they ended up pushing the fire truck out the big doors and onto the ramp so as to use it to fight the fire! Not one word of thanks was heard for this feat of a 10 year old !

STORIES FROM BOB

Dad pastored a Wesleyan church next to a cemetery at Albaton, IA. David and I would pick up some of the Gumbo (the clay from the road) work it with our hands until it was pliable. We would then take it to the cemetery and throw it against the monument lettering, let it remain for a while and then remove the clay noticing the backward lettering that remained on the clay. We did this until mother found out about it. It stopped immediately.

For a shower, since we had no plumbing in the house, we took a large metal can, punched holes in the bottom and rigged it up about 7 feet high onto two boards that were located in a room that was located in the back of the church near the dynamo room that produced electricity for the church. One of us would climb up to the board holding the metal can with a bucket of water. The water was poured into the large porous can while the others down below would lather up and rinse off with our ready-made shower. I still don't remember how Lucille took a shower. Maybe a blindfold was involved!!!!

The iceman would come every so often and bring ice for our ice box. We had a card that fit into our large window with 25, 50, 75, and 100 written on each of the 4 sides. Whichever number was on top told the ice man how much ice to bring into our ice box. This number changed from time to time depending how much ice we needed. Cool idea !