

Memoirs of Joshua Chapman

I am dead in the middle. At least as dead in the middle as you can be in a group of six. That is to say I am number four of six children not including three more that came later but we're not talking about them yet.

I was born in 1979 less than six months before the turn of the decade. But I still maintain that I was born in the 70s. I have two older brothers and one older sister and two younger sisters followed by three more younger brothers but they came later. Some of my earliest recollections are when my youngest sister was born on Christmas Eve and came home in a Christmas stocking which I thought was really cool I kept begging my mom to put her back into the stocking because I liked it so much but I don't think she ever did, maybe just once just to get me to quit asking. We grew up in the suburb of Sugar House in Salt Lake City which back then was kind of the ghetto. The houses were old, decrepit, worn out, and broken down. Sometime before I was born my parents bought our house at 1457 south 900 East which at the time was a very small 2 bedroom 1 bathroom no kitchen house. My mom said they originally bought it for \$10,500. My dad being the energetic young person that he was decided to take on a full remodeling project which would last for 20 years. Really it never ended. Even after it was finished there have been multiple remodeling phases since. In 2020 it underwent a final renovation in preparation to sell it, and it finally sold in April 2021.

The house that I grew up in generally had no finished interior walls, no interior doors, no privacy, no locks and no keys.

We also had no money, no TV, no food, and nothing else that was brand new.

We were endlessly receiving handouts from people who could recognize our needy situation but didn't want to abuse my fathers pride.

The earliest stove/oven we had I only barely remember. It was an extra wide oven stove combo probably from the '50's. It was wider than the common form factor ovens of today. I remember when someone donated a nice new 20 year old stove to the Chapman family. Ugly brown

porcelain coated heavy metal stove. But at least it worked.



Another time someone gave us a rocking chair which had a steel wheel base which the fellow who delivered it called a "steering wheel". We could rock back and forth and spin. A child's dream chair. I have a picture of myself and my older sister asleep in that chair. There was a Christmas when a lady in our ward (named Sandy) brought a huge garbage bag full of carefully wrapped Christmas presents to our house. She said Santa had delivered them to her house by mistake and she wanted to make sure we got them. (Marion Rapp used to do this too.) I don't remember what everyone else got but I got a really big plastic army Jeep. We used to kick it off the top of the stairs and watch it fall like an epic A-Team stunt. I'm sure that didn't do the jeep any good, and if we had had drywall it would have been wrecked by all that car crashing, but of course there was no drywall, so no harm no foul.

There was another lady named Merrie Honsvick who lived a few doors down to the south. One time she made a bunch of Mr. T dolls in the style of Cabbage Patch kids dolls. She did a good job with them. I know I had that doll for a lot of years before I finally gave up on it...

Speaking of that, I don't know what happened to it. I have lots of things which over the years have left my life and I don't know what happened to them. I just know I have so much stuff now it's often impossible to find what I'm looking for.

Do It Yourself

"If you want a job done right, You have to do it yourself!"

This is not "true," but we thought it was. Or maybe we just didn't have any money to hire someone else to do it for us.

We had a crappy broken down bike that was to be mine. It was once my older brother's, but it was now in bad shape and needed parts. I think Kenny had taken parts off for some other project bike. Dad took me to the store (probably Grand Central which later became a Kmart, and later a Deseret Industries thrift store on the corner of 700 East and 2100 South) to buy the parts we needed to make the bike work. I don't remember everything we bought other than a new seat and some black and white pinstriping which I had no idea how to use. I don't think we even got the seat installed in that bike. I don't think Dad helped me with anything after that. I don't know if we ever even got it to work. I did try applying that pinstriping to the back of the frame but I didn't like the result, mostly because it was dumb, just a straight strip on the only spot I could find to put it.

I remember being so in love with the idea of riding a bike before I knew how to ride. In my heart of hearts, I was a show off and I thought that I would look to the people driving by in their cars like I'm riding the bike if I ran down the street pushing it. Obviously I'd have to run fast to make it look like I was actually riding. And that's what I did. I probably made it halfway down the block before turning around and heading back. No one yelled out their window and told me I was doing well. No one at home even knew what was happening.

Generally that was the story of my life. Mostly no one knew what I was up to.

I did eventually learn to ride. I think it was in the alley behind the house where Dad probably held my seat and ran alongside me. I think it was on a girl's bike with a banana seat.

Siblings

Kenny, Benny, Rebekah, Josh, Melissa, Melody.

We could say that pretty fast. Mom had six kids under 6 years old. Then Clarke came along when I was older shortly followed by Parker then David

I was 13 when he was born. He's my buddy but I didn't live in the same house as him for very long after he could talk. He was only 6 by the time I went on my mission.

The three little boys were probably not treated like equals much. But we loved them.

Kenny was definitely the boss. You did what he said or he beat you up. And he was stronger. He is 3 years older than me. He also did most of the stupid things that must have put mom eternally on edge. Not wicked and evil things, more like "gee, I wonder what would happen if..." sort of things. More to follow.

Ben was my idol. He didn't beat me up. He was pretty technically inclined. He's 2 years older than me. We worked on a lot of projects together. More to follow.

Rebekah was my buddy when we were really little. She is 11 ½ months older than me. We played together a lot when we were really little, but that tapered off as we grew up. She did a lot of things like needle point and making cakes. I went in a different direction, but I always had a special place for her in my heart.

Melissa is a little less than 2 years younger than me. I didn't play with her much. I don't remember when she was born. I do remember that as a baby she took the milk out of the refrigerator and poured it on her head. She did that more than once. She also got hit by a car when she was riding her bike. I was sitting on the toilet in our living room bathroom and of course we had no bathroom door, so the teenage girl that hit her burst through the front door yelling that she just hit a little girl. We did have a curtain that was a piece of old ugly gypsy print green fabric hung over a piece of baling wire (dad called that tie wire) but we weren't concerned with privacy so the curtain was open providing a view straight across the living room to me. Melody or maybe Clarke said it was Melissa that got hit. Meanwhile, I'm still sitting on the toilet looking at this girl I don't know. She was so distraught that I'm not sure she ever fully comprehended what I was doing there. Melissa got a ride in an ambulance that day, but she was pretty much ok. She had a pretty big gouge in her shin that they stitched up. She had to wear a leg brace to keep her from bending her leg and pulling too hard on the stitches. Speaking of Melissa, she survived several accidents that could have been much worse. Once she got pushed off the stairs to the basement and cut her head open on a wooden stake pounded into the dirt floor of the basement. She said someone pushed her, but no one was around her when it happened. Dad thought she was pushed by the ghost of the previous owner of the home.

Another time, she was brushing her teeth and I evidently bumped the toothbrush right into the back of her throat. Her throat swelled up so much that she had to eat only soft food like pudding for a few days. She broke her collarbone too, but I don't remember the details on that. Another time, she had a bad allergic reaction to a bee sting.

Melody is 3 ½ years younger than me. Born on Christmas eve. We woke up and Sister Barns was home with us. She lived down the street on our same block. She told us Mom had the baby and fed us cheerios. That was a nice change from our standard fare of oatmeal or whatever we normally ate. Mom brought Melody home from the hospital in a Christmas stocking which I thought was really cool. I kept trying to get mom to put her back in the stocking but she said that Melody was too big.

Later when she was getting around she would pull all the towels out of the kitchen drawer and sit in it. (Melody had a story to add here about making tents or something in the house.)

I don't remember doing anything with Melody until we were much older. We went to Institute together after my mission and Melody would almost always make me and Melissa late which caused us no end of frustration.

Clarke is the oldest of the second platoon. He is 8 years younger. He followed suit to me and Kenny. He was always tinkering on something.

Parker is 10 years younger. I picked on him a lot when he was little, but we redid the flooring together when I was 18 and he was 8. This was one of several remodelings done after the house was "finished"

David is 13 years younger. He was born while we were finally finishing the house. He completely missed stud walls with cardboard stapled on, no doors, and no kitchen cabinets. I was probably installing some wiring when Mom came down the stairs and announced her water broke and was heading to the hospital.

Mom stayed at her sister's house with the baby for six weeks until the house was finished. I stayed there for part of that time too. I earned my Electricity merit badge there, but the local scout leader was afraid he couldn't sign off on it because I was a registered Boy Scout in a different district. I don't know if I ever got credit for it.

The house

Remodeling a house is a pain. Living in it while you are remodeling is impossible.

We were not just remodeling. We effectively tore down the house and rebuilt it from the foundation up. In fact there is very little of the original house left. I remember when dad was forming and pouring the foundation that is now underneath the kitchen, garage, and back hall. I don't really remember where we were sleeping at that time. But eventually we built the garage, back hall and kitchen. For a while there was no roof and we had sheets of plastic (dad always called it visqueen) stapled up around the room forming funnels into 2 big garbage cans. It must have rained a lot during that time because Dad had to shift those huge rubbermaid garbage cans full of water and dump them down the toilet.

Somewhere in the time before the remodeling really got moving I remember being huddled around the little brown electric space heater because there was no reliable heat in the house. I tried to pretend it was a campfire the glowing zig-zag element was almost the shape of a fire wasn't it? Most of the time the front room was complete. It had walls, wallpaper, carpet, and baseboard. It even had two furnace vents that happened to be the only ones in the house. They blew pretty hard when the furnace was working. We would stand over them with our night shirts and let them blow up like a balloon during family devotional which started at 7:00 am every weekday. Dad always said we needed to get up at 6:45 so we could go to the bathroom before devotional. I'm not sure how eight or nine of us were supposed to use one toilet in fifteen minutes.

There was a good long while when there was no tank on the toilet and it could only be flushed with a bucket of water. Needless to say it didn't get flushed every time it was used. You can guess how crappy that turned out.

The studio was eventually built on top of the garage and then we finally had a roof over our heads. But then all that rain water was diverted into the walk out basement patio which just filled up and flooded the basement. There was a sump pump down there that was supposed to catch the water and pump it out, but because the project wasn't finished it seemed to always have some sort of malfunction which led to the whole family bucket-brigading up the stairs into the back yard. I've carried buckets of water at all times of day and night, buckets so heavy I couldn't lift them, and it was almost always accompanied by treacherous rain.

Once when we were building the studio, Wade Barnes was helping. He was pulling out a tape measure or something and stepped backwards off the floor into the stairwell before there were stairs from the main level to the upstairs. He fell 2 ½ storeys onto the basement stairs. I saw him sitting sort of sprawled out on the stairs leaning his head against the framed wall moaning. He looked really bad. I don't think he bled much, but I thought there was a spot of blood on the joist

where his head was leaning. He left in an ambulance that day. He bruised his spleen in the fall. He did recover, but I remember seeing him at church sometime later and he showed us how he couldn't lift his arms all the way above his head yet.

Another time my primary teacher came over and built the box out of plywood using his own nail gun and pancake air compressor. That was the first time I've ever seen a pancake air compressor and I thought it was pretty cool. That box became a concrete form for a large block of concrete which is a footing under part of the house. It is still visible in the basement furnace room of my parents house.

A couple other people who helped a lot with the construction project are Ken Luker, John Pruess, Jim Wood, and Carwin Smith (mom's cousin). Why do I still not know his last name? I don't know what Dad would have ever done without the help from these guys. They are all really good men. At this time (3/30/2020), they are all still living except John Pruess who died when I was about 18. He was a surrogate grandfather to me. I spent a lot of time at their house because Tony Pruess lived with his grandparents who were John and Evelyn Pruess.

(Incidentally, in German their name was Prüß.) John was my blazers scout leader when I was 11 years old. I spent a few days practicing archery in his backyard to get my archery merit badge. He also had a real workshop in his basement and in his garage. His garage had an attic that was full of all sorts of materials and gadgets and devices that were intriguing to look through. He even had a set of fold-up kayaks that he and his kids had made some years before. I learned to weld at his house. Steve Pruess, his son, helped us build our go-kart. That's a different story. Once, we had a big work day in which a whole singles ward came over to do a bunch of work on the house. There were a lot of people there that day. I was pretty small at the time and I don't remember what they worked on. I think it may have been the studio framing. What I really remember about it was the large number of sack lunches that were probably prepared by the relief society. They were filled with delicious sandwiches, individual bags of chips, and probably a dingdong or twinkie. Of course those were special treats for us because we never had stuff like that. I think I ate 2 or 3 lunches.

There was a day that the new windows arrived in bulk. Nice new double paned aluminum windows showed up on a truck and got stacked against the house. There were cool little square pads that were placed between them to keep them from scratching each other. The pads were cork. I had all these imaginative ideas to use them for as they came available but I don't think I ever did anything with them.

For many years the house was a bare plywood exterior which got uglier and uglier as time wore on. Eventually there was some sort of grant made available to us to paint the house. The city I believe paid for quite a few gallons of paint. I don't remember who did the work but not long after that we had a nice forest green house. I think we even painted the front door, and oh boy did it need it. A fellow named John Steed who was a family friend took photos of us once in front of that old door. I think I was holding a little rifle he had. That picture shows just how bad that door was.

Some time after Aunt Leah Mary got married to a widower, Ballard Pead. He came and spent a number of weekends laying brick around the house. Before that there was just a little 3" ledge on top of the foundation all the way around the house. We used to try to traverse all the way around the house on the ledge without touching the ground. Ben fell off once and slammed his knee into the corner of the concrete. He had to get stitches that day.

Ballard was super nice and always had a smile. Even as it was it took a long time to get the bricks all laid. The original plan was to lay brick all the way up the front of the house but probably because it was so much work that plan changed to just the bottom section. But we sure had a lot of extra bricks. They are all in the back yard as a patio now.

Eventually when I was 13 years old mom and dad acquired some sort of 401k loan or construction loan to finish the house. They hired Uncle Dave Parker as the general contractor and he did most of the framing and finish work himself but hired out drywall, roofing, HVAC, carpet and flooring, cabinets, and painting.

When we finally got the go-ahead to begin work it was mine Ben's and Ken's job to remove the Attic roof above what is now the dining room. There was a nearly flat roof section with the small Gable section next to it and a dumpster in the yard next to the house where the flat roof section was and where the driveway is now. So we got chainsaws and cut holes through the roof and pushed sections of the roof right off into the dumpster.

We tore up all the roof that day and had it down to the attic floor above the kitchen.

Later Uncle Dave finished removing the ceiling of the kitchen and living room with a sledgehammer. he was standing on the north side of the house where the wall is about 1 foot away from a chain link fence swinging a sledgehammer at the already sagging ceiling knocking out the last of the joists that were still holding up the old lath and plaster ceiling when suddenly everything went all at once. The whole ceiling collapsed into the old living room in one fell swoop throwing up a cloud of dust. Dave teetered precariously on the now unsupported wall, rocked back and forth a couple of times, dropped the sledgehammer inside of the house, and fell backwards towards the fence.

Somehow he bent his knees enough that he was able to catch the top of the wall as he went down. he pulled himself right back up like a superhero and tightroped across the top edge of the wall back into the structurally stable part of the house.

After that we lived in a house with no roof for a few weeks. Luckily it didn't rain. It was kind of fun to make a meal in the kitchen and sit and eat with the sky above us but walls around us. I say kitchen, but it was most certainly not a kitchen. It was a stove and sink cobbled into a funky wooden box cabinet with some plywood countertops covered in contact paper.

under Uncle Dave's direction the construction of the house moved quickly and the framing was probably done within a few days or a week.

one of the jobs was to rent a electric jackhammer and break out all of the old porch concrete. we built an A-frame out of two-by-fours and supported the jackhammer from the A-frame with rope to support the jackhammer horizontally to break through all the old concrete. This was a lot of work but we all helped each other and that ended up being a pretty good memory.

After that it was mine and Ben's job to do the electrical installation while Kenny's job was to plumb the entire house. None of us knew anything about HVAC and so that was something that was hired out.

Ben and I installed all of the wiring and later on the plugs and switches using only a plug in Black & Decker hand drill and some janky hand tools. Ben probably pulled a lot more of the wire than I did. I was tasked with doing a lot of the insulation throughout the house. It was all fiberglass insulation and I really hated that job. I especially remember installing the R19 batts in the ceiling of the front bedrooms. Cramming myself in weird positions trying to staple the batts to the framing, arms itchy and sweaty. It was a real nasty job.

I think it was about the time that the drywallers were to beginning their work that I went and stayed at Leah Mary's house because I don't remember much about that. I was there when the guy was texturing the ceiling in the living room. But I do remember when the painters came and started painting. That joker was thinning the paint with water before they sprayed it on. I think we got one coat of primer and one coat of paint. Later there were still places that I could see through the paint. He painted the whole house for \$500.

Finally the carpet installers came and one guy installed all the carpet and vinyl in the house I think in two days vinyl first then the carpet. He use a power stretcher that had a spike at the back end that he jammed into the floor through the carpet and then stretch the carpet and shoved it into the tack strip.

My brother Kenny spent every single day that summer working on the house with Uncle Dave. My Uncle Kenny started working for Dave at that time too and to my knowledge worked for Dave for many years after that. I don't know that Dave ever did any more general contracting work after that. He stuck more to finish carpentry.

Once when the HVAC guy was working he started installing a cold attire return box right in the middle of the main dining room area. That is one point where Dad put his foot down and said no. I'm glad he did. It would have been awful to have that big ugly box in the middle of the living room ceiling.

Special Events:

The smoke bomb

Once Kenny obtained a recipe to make a smoke bomb. A little potassium nitrate, sulfur, and sugar melted together over a stove sounded pretty easy. He waited until one night Mom and Dad were gone to some Amway meeting or something. Then he got the project started. Ben was assigned to stir the concoction in a #10 can on the stove. I was standing maybe 8 feet away watching, not really sure what they were doing. Ken was further away than me. I suppose he was preparing some way to divide the sticky goop into high quality homemade smoke bombs. Suddenly Ben saw the stuff ignite in the can and before he could react a volcano of napalm hot molten smoke bomb sugar exploded from the can in a dazzling array of sparks and smoke. Thick acrid lung choking smoke. Ben's hand got severely

burned.



The girls were upstairs and must have thought the house was on fire as the smoke filled the entire house. We ran outside in the front yard. Somehow we filled a 5 gallon bucket with water for Ben's hand. I had at least 2 hot drops fall on my arm for which I still have scars today. The girls were scared but got outside ok and I think Kenny ran in and set up a fan to blow the smoke out. While we were yet hanging out in our dark front yard with smoke billowing out of the house and Ben's hand dunked in a bucket our Bishop walked by on his nightly walk. He asked if we were ok to which we all affirmed that we were fine and everything was great. Once the smoke cleared which took a while, we reentered the house. The ceiling above the stove, which was bare, unpainted drywall, had dozens of black burns speckled all over it. Those remained there until the remodel.

Dumpster diving with Jarron Lindow

When I was about 5 or 6 I had a friend in the ward named Jarron Lindow. He would come over to my house sometimes and I would go to his house other times. He had a little stream that came through his back yard with a tiny pond. I always thought that was pretty cool. When he came to my house one of our activities was to go dumpster diving down the alley behind our house. There were several dumpsters in our alley and sometimes we found cool stuff. I found a Mr. Coffee machine once which I turned into an alarm clock. It had a built in timer with a digital clock and relay so I installed it in a project box and attached a plug socket to the relay output. Then I just had to plug a radio or tape player into the plug socket and it would come on automatically. I used that as my alarm clock for many years. I still have it to this day. I had a Beach Boys Still Crusin' tape that was my go to morning sounds. I usually set it to play Make it Big or Kokomo.

One time we found a motorcycle frame which I think we pulled out, or maybe we didn't because it was too heavy, but I wanted to.

Jaron lindow also sold us our blue honda passport, 70cc street motorcycle. We paid \$6 for it because we were just kids. His parents had a rental house and it was left behind by a tenant, so we never had a title for it, of course that didn't matter because we never drove it legally anyway. We did a lot of tinkering around on it to get it to work, including disassembling the top end, adding a full size motorcycle battery in a wooden box that we fit on the side of the gear rack. We didn't get the correct/smaller size battery because it cost way more, probably on our paper route budgets the \$45 or so was cost prohibitive. We also added a standard light switch in place of the defunct starter solenoid. It's load rating was plenty to handle the starter and we had plenty of them kicking around the construction site, er house.

Public school

We were homeschooled until I was in 2nd grade. Then we decided to go to public school which lasted for my 2nd and 3rd grade years.

At some point mom had me wear blue, green, and white plaid polyester bell bottoms. This was in 1987-88. That was not a good thing. I was teased and harassed endlessly that day. I don't remember what people said but I remember it made me feel pretty small and lousy. It seems like I had to wear those pants twice. After that I just wouldn't wear them again. I don't know if I ever told my parents about the teasing at school.

Sometime in 3rd grade Larry, the kid who sat in front of me, kept turning around and flicking the paper I was working on off my desk and on to the floor. I asked him to stop but he kept doing it. I eventually went to the teachers desk and told her what was happening and asked for help. She didn't do anything about it and that left me feeling even more upset and frustrated.

The next time he did it I grabbed him by both ears and slammed his face into my desk. As his nose bled a pool the teacher furiously bustled over and began to reprimand me. But I reminded her that she already had her chance to intervene, and had she been attentive and concerned about her students this would not have happened.

Unfortunately that part is fiction. I just wish it were true. I never discovered a suitable solution to the Larry problem. I just bore it by allowing my feelings to pen up inside me.

Another time in the same class I became friends with Sarah Opikins. She held my hand on one of the last days at school, and I don't think I ever saw her again. I'm sure it was awkward, but I liked it, not that I ever would have admitted it.

Friends or the lack thereof

I was camping with the boy scouts in my ward in skull valley somewhere. I had brought my bike and Tony and I went on a bike ride. Unfortunately the dirt road was very muddy and we soon found ourselves stuck in the mud. We started pushing our bikes back towards the camp. After slogging through quite a bit of mud when we were just about back to the camp

Johnny Hull shot me in the face with a blunted plastic slug blow dart. It hit me in the forehead just an inch above my eye. It hurt a lot. I tried to run after him and administer justice but I was so out of breath I couldn't run fast enough. Pretty quickly whatever leader were there came to his aid and stopped me from beating the crap out of him. I don't remember what was done or said to get me to calm down but I don't think Johnny ever got in trouble for nearly shooting my eye out.

Sandbox

When we were quite little dad built a sandbox in the back yard under the apple tree. We borrowed a pickup truck or something, probably from Carwin. We drove to a sand and gravel pit

somewhere where we had to shovel sand into the truck by hand. I think I had my shoes off, already gearing up for playing. Suddenly someone kicked a shovel into the sand right near my foot and caught my toe. Of course I was probably only 4 or 5 so it seemed to me that they almost cut my toe off. With my adult mind I don't think it was probably as bad as it could have been, but I did bleed a lot and I might have had a flap of skin cut loose. I'm sure it could have been much worse.

Sometime later Ben and I built a cool road way city in the sand box complete with bridges and embankments etc. I have a great picture of that. Our little city ran all throughout the sand box with roads and little houses and bridges and all sorts of things. We had green wood slats from a discarded miniblind that made nice Bridges and all sorts of things. They were easy to break off to whatever length you needed. They burned really well too... we used them as kindling for a lot of back yard camp fires. Some of which brought the fire department to our house. Not because there was a problem, but because some of our neighbors seemed to feel the need to keep us in check... I still don't understand that.

Left Behind

Once our family did a Christmas performance somewhere near 2100 south and State St. After it was over I went to the bathroom and when I came out the building was dark and locked up. I was alone inside. I was probably 8-9 years old. I rushed out through the crash doors and saw my family driving away in the old beige VW bus. I knew where I was and even though I was scared and it was cold and snowy I decided I should just walk home.

As I walked past a church they were having a ward party and someone leaving saw me crying and walking down the sidewalk. They brought me in and a bishop or someone tried to call my house. I sat in his office for what seemed like an eternity waiting for him to give me a ride home. Meanwhile my family was out looking for me and apparently decided not to answer the phone because they didn't want it to be busy just in case I called...

Eventually I got a ride home and everyone was relieved to see me. We discussed the idea that if you get lost it is better to stay there so if someone comes looking for you they can find you easier.

Injuries

Speaking of injuries, I actually fared pretty well for a busy little boy. I had the toe incident, several times I fell and hit my head and got some nasty bleeding head cuts. I think they were mostly while playing in the little creek through Sugar House park. Dad shaved my scalp and sutured them up with butterfly bandages.

The worst by far injury was when I was building my metal lathe. August 27, 1996 I was trying to finish my very first sand casting pattern Which was the bed made of ¼" plywood. I was trying to cut some draft into the slots on top with my pocket knife when it slipped and sliced deeply into my middle finger first knuckle. I knew it was bad. I rushed inside before something went wrong. I found my mom and told her about it. About then I started feeling really woozy so I laid down on her bed for a few minutes. We went to the doctor and when he looked at it he got a good look inside the cut, which I wasn't interested in doing. He determined that I had cut through 80% of my tendon. We scheduled a surgery for a day or two later with a hand specialist. The surgeon

cut a flap of skin so he could peel it back and then stitched the tendon back together with non-dissolving thread because the tendon would take 3 months to heal. It took that long for the flap of skin to heal too, it seems it had to grow back because the way he cut it open cut off blood supply to the tip of the flap so it died.

To this day I still have that suture thread in my tendon.

I went and helped Starla fix her dad's car that night. I also replaced the brakes on our big family van while I was still wearing a splint on my finger. While working on the van I grabbed the axle spindle without thinking and the pain from trying to bend my finger was incredible.

I had to wear a finger splint and keep my hand elevated for weeks. It looked like I was flipping off the world. That would be the only time in my life when I did flip anyone off. When the need for the splint finally ended I couldn't bend my finger at all. It was as stiff as a board. The physical therapist manually stretched and prodded my finger for a few visits before I began to take it into my own hands (so to speak). One Sunday I sat in church and bent my finger as far and as hard as I could stand. It hurt a lot! But after my mobility reached most of the way I had forced it. I probably did that a few times. Eventually I got my mobility back and it hasn't been any real limitation for me. Just a little bit of the scarred area is still numb.

About a year later just a few months before I turned 18 I was helping dispose of Kenny's old toronado. It was a giant car you might expect to see massive bull horns on the front for hood ornaments. For some reason we were trying to cut it into manageable pieces to scrap it. I had a nice tear going using an ax when I suddenly swung the ax and my index finger got pinched between a sharp jagged edge of sheet metal and the ax handle. I was just a block from the hospital where Dad's health insurance covered, so I drove myself there. We tried to get my parents on the phone but they weren't home, so they got 2 doctors to sign off that I needed stitches and they sewed me up. That was the first time I took myself to the doctor.

- I was a scab picker. Not sure what that was about whenever I got a cut or something it took a long time to heal because I kept picking at it. I had a cut on my earlobe that I kept picking at. Other kids teased and harassed me that I tried to pierce my own ear.

I also had some elbow injuries that took forever to heal. I finally grew out of it and learned that the trick is to put a little triple antibiotic on it and then leave it alone. 3 days later it's good.

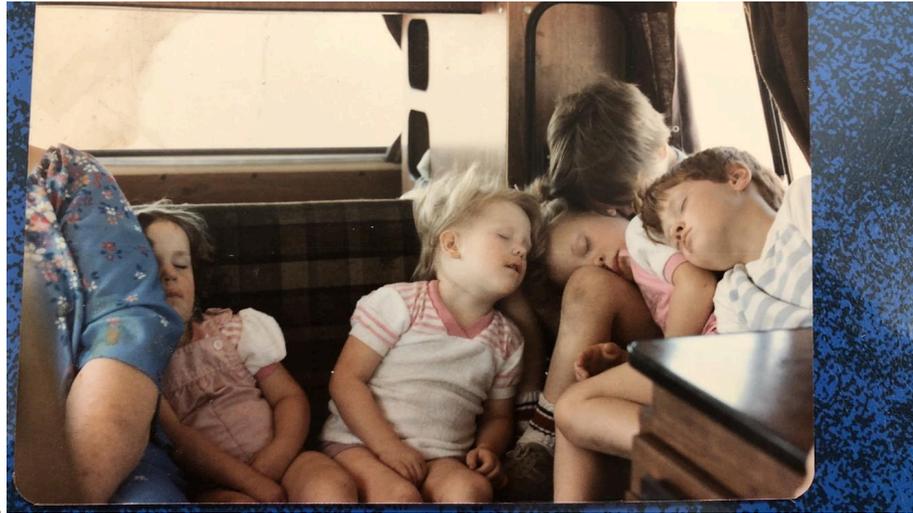
Microwave

We were the last ones to get a microwave, and that was only because Kenny bought it with his custodian money. He got a job when he was 14 as a custodian for the local elementary school, Emerson Elementary. So this was 1990. He worked from about 4 to 6 or 7 on school days and probably earned minimum wage around \$3.30 an hour. That was the first time anyone in the family besides Dad made any significant money.

Before long he bought the biggest microwave they sold in the store, probably Shopko or Kmart. probably big enough to fit a turkey into it. It probably cost over \$100 so he must have worked several weeks for that. When he got it home we got it unboxed and started looking around for something to nuke. The only thing we had was a box of oranges, so the first thing I ever had out of the microwave was an orange. Incidentally, it made them easier to peel.

The VW bus, with camper equipment

The only new car my parents ever bought was a 1979 VW camper bus, the year I was born. It had seating for about 3 people in back and 2 up front. Of course by the time I can remember



anything we had 4 kids.

In this photo you see Grandma Jessie's arm and Melody and Melissa next to her. Ben, Rebekah, and me are asleep on the fridge.

But what it lacked in safe seating with seat belts it made up for with sweet features like the pop up roof tent, the hammock that fit over the front seats, the lay down bench seat, a built in stove, sink, and even a refrigerator! I thought it was such a cool car. The extra passengers sat on top of the refrigerator against the closet or laying down in the back cargo area. We did go camping a number of times, but probably not as often as my parents thought we would when they bought it. One year we went to Lemman Caves. Somewhere near-ish to the caves we camped in a camp ground which is the first place I remember ever seeing real acorns. I'd seen them in cartoons and such but never in person. I collected several and treasured them for a long time. We went on a nice walk there and there is a photo of us climbing on a log fence.

I slept on the hammock over the front seats. I was probably crammed in there with one of the other kids so I had limited space. Sometime in the night I woke up looking past the curtains over the windshield. Looking back at me from outside was an ostrich. At least that's what I thought I saw. It freaked me out and I screamed. My parents told me to calm down, it's probably just a tree branch or something. I was convinced it was an ostrich or something about to break through the safety glass and swallow me whole but somehow I managed to go back to sleep. I couldn't find any foot prints or any sign of any sort of creature the next day. It might have been the moon casting shadows, or just a nocturnal hallucination, or maybe there really is a phantom killer ostrich stalking the desert forests near Lehman caves.

Another time we were camping, probably somewhere in the Utah desert. We were camping in a camp ground and Dad and I went to the out house later in the evening so we took our Coleman white gas lantern.

Those lanterns are classics. They use a light, clear fuel similar to gasoline called White Gas. You fill the tank and then pressurize it with a little built in pump. The gas gets forced up near the mantle inside of a tube where the heat from the burn vaporizes it just before it blows through a

venturi sucking in air then into the mantle where it burns. The heat makes the mantle glow quite brightly.

Anyway we took care of business and as we were about to go back I grabbed the wire handle and got burned one the back of my hand. It seems like the handle itself was hot but I've since used this same type of lantern many times and never had one get the handle hot enough to burn someone. Maybe I brushed my hand against the metal housing. Anyway it sucks to get burned while camping.

Eventually it became clear that we needed a bigger vehicle so we bought the big blue van.



Haunted houses

We made haunted houses in our basement many times growing up. Mostly they amounted to throwing up some sheets or fabric on top of the boxes of game books and then trying to get someone who didn't build it to walk through it.

However When Kenny was first a boyscout Dan Hull was the scout leader and they put together a haunted house in the church for the Halloween party. I don't know how much he did in that one. But when Kenny was 14 he went all out!

He wrote a script and recruited several people to be tour guides and spooks, all of whom turned out to be fantastic actors. Notably Lee Willis was not amongst them.

We spent probably a month or more preparing and a solid week putting it all together. This was a family effort and everyone pitched in with their particular skills. We displayed our ship cannon, and even "fired" it with special effects.

The theme was a tour through an abandoned country estate. The guide showed the guests through the family crypt where I was stationed to pop out of one of the boxes. It was all fully decorated and painted, fake ivy etc. After that they saw the boiler room where a frankenstein-esc spook threw a body into the boiler burner. Then there was a large room that we divided up with a fake wall. When you went into the room there were family portraits on the wall where the guide explained the terrible tragedy of the Thompson family and how the Thompson daughter was betrayed by her fiancée and her ghost still roams these halls. And the fiancée was hung for his betrayal but he never gave up the key that would set the daughter free.

- Slam!

That door slam got everybody! The guide then directed everyone into a small closet where they saw mice and rats crawling around as the guide, confused, made his way around the closet and back out the door they had gone in.

But the walls had changed!

The guide realized that they had inadvertently stumbled upon a fabled secret room and there was our cannon and 2 mannequins displaying clothes from all the way back to revolutionary war times. But then the mannequins came alive telling us we were not welcome in this cursed place. The other one lit the cannon and the guide hurried everyone out through the door. A loud kaboom and flash of light reported.

We continued down the hall and observed a bedroom with a rocking chair that began to rock spontaneously. And a hospital bed that started moving by itself. (The very worst effect of all)

Then we went to the sub basement boiler room (just going down there was creepy because the door was always locked) where we found the treacherous fiancée still hanging and gasping for air. He threw a key to the group, and died.

We then went up 2 flights of stairs to the tower room where we encountered a ghostly apparition still dressed in her bridal trousseau. She sang a descant song she made up about her situation as we ascended the stairs.

We gave her the key and she was finally free of the curse.

There was a gypsy fortune teller who did a short presentation. As she spoke, a lamp on her table slowly slid across the table, so slow that most people wouldn't notice until she grabbed it and moved it back to it's spot.

We also had a mad scientist room with a tesla coil and jacob's ladder. We made a "laser cannon" with an old theater spot light that came from the old projection room of the old Emerson ward building. It had a fluorescent light tube surrounded by 6 dowels coming down from the major diameter of the spot light to a point which was tipped with a small red neon light. The cord for the spot light was redirected to the end of the fluorescent tube and within sparking distance of the tesla coil. When the Tesla coil was activated it turned on the light in the laser cannon for a dazzling show.

Somewhere in there we had a turn table built out of an old front tine tiller gear box turning a smaller pulley to a bicycle wheel. The bicycle wheel was the pulley with the platform built over it. Someone was supposed to stand on the turn table and rotate like they were on display.

I'm fuzzy on how the tour ended, but suffice it to say that it was phenomenally cool.

That haunted house inspired many more over the years. I never spear headed them, but I helped Kenny build quite a few.

Another year when we were a little older we built one in the front yard.

This one featured

- A large painted haunted house facade that stood at least 10-12' high and as wide as the whole front yard
- A very nice dracula's casket with Ben inside coughing. He had a microphone so people could hear his coughing before they even saw the casket. He would pop up and say do you have anything to stop this coffin?
- A 2 way mirror which made the effect of seeing a ghost in the hall with us
- A mad scientist lab (same as before)
- A hangman dummy (I built this one all by myself. It had functional shoulder, elbow, hip and knee joints.
- Holes in the hall way walls where we could reach through and grab people. Kenny happened to reach through one of the holes and grabbed a teenage girl's breast. As soon as he gave it a squeeze he realized the faux pas and quickly retracted his arm and didn't waste any time duct taping the hole closed.

Other years we did some more simple things.

- A black light illuminated area all done in black cloth with a candy bowl in the middle. The person giving out candy wore some full length black velvet gloves and then some nice white butler type gloves over the black gloves. The effect looked like a disembodied hand. It didn't work as well as we hoped but it did work pretty well.
- blocked the doorway off with a piece of plywood that had a hole in it to do the same effect. The jacob's ladder was on the porch. We were giving out game books that year and some dork kid thought it would be funny to drop it down the jacob's ladder. The apparatus couldn't be moved out of the doorway easily. Once we realized something was wrong, I think smelling smoke, I ran all the way around through the back door to turn it off. It had burned the book quite a lot by the time I got it turned off. Luckily it didn't start anything else on fire.

Costumes, masquerade ball

Why Lee Willis was excluded

Lee and my mom were both very accomplished vocalists and musicians, Lee played the piano and Mom played the violin. My first recollection of them working together on musical projects was when they were both in The Pirates of Penzance.

Lee played Frederick and Mom played Ruth.

After that Lee was ALWAYS involved in church music, choirs, teaching lessons and more.

But he was somehow passive aggressive and just when you think you're his friend he stabs you in the back, like one time when he was accompanying Mom when she was singing somewhere she kept getting off pitch and became embarrassed and confused because she didn't know what was going on. Later Jerry Powell who was a MUCH better pianist, and was also present,

(she was piano teacher to all the kids in my family who ever took piano lessons, including me) told mom that Lee was changing keys on her suddenly and without warning. It took mom many years to finally decide not to participate in Lee Willis musical events anymore. Rebekah studied music in college and learned enough to recognize that Lee's musical experience was limited. A few years ago mom finally joined a semi-professional choir, Salt Lake Choral Artists, and enjoyed performing under a good conductor for several years.

Gingham Guys and Gals

Performing, music, and dance was really important to my family. My dad was a ballet and tap dancer and danced in the Nutcracker when he was 19-20. But it inspired him to perform throughout his life. He was actually really good at directing showmanship.

When we were little mom and dad initiated the family performing group, Gingham Guys and Gals.

We rehearsed regularly, probably once a week at the church. Most of the time we were in the basement "scout room" this is the same room that had the hidden secret room in the Thompson Estate haunted house. There was a rug that we had to roll up first thing before our rehearsal. We performed a lot. Many nursing homes, church parties, private parties, Lagoon, Dickens festival, and other community events. We danced, sang, clogged, did magic, recited poems, and even a few pantomimes.

Dad did the most amazing pantomimes anyone has ever seen. Milking time was awesome. He found a sound track that was some sort of country hoedown banjo music that ended with a long cow moo. So the pantomime consisted of a farmer trying to get the milking done but running into trouble all the way. He led the cow out of the barn, set up the milking pail and stool, and had to fight with the cows tail flicking him in the head, stepping in the milk, and generally being a nuisance. Every action was perfectly in sync with the music. I've never seen anything else like it in the mime world.

Later dad did Bus Bench Blues. A story covering a man leaving for another drudgery day of work with his umbrella.

Ben accompanied this one on the piano. I think it was a mixture of Black and White rag and The Entertainer.

Again everything fit nicely with the music. The man leaves his house and had to jerk his door closed. He doesn't look too happy until he realizes the rain has stopped. That makes him feel better and he picks a flower. Suddenly he sees a beautiful woman sitting at his bus stop. He picks the flower petals off one by one, she loves me, she loves me not etc until he ends on she loves me and he's so excited he presents the petalless flower to the woman. Then realizes his mistake and is embarrassed. The woman boards a bus and he misses it because he's embarrassed. So he sits down and wonders what to do while he's waiting so he opens his lunchbox and pulls out a sandwich. He takes a bite and notices a cute dog next to him. He pays the dog and offers a bite of sandwich to the dog. The dog wolf's down the bite and turns for more. It's not a very friendly dog as it demands the rest of the sandwich. He gives another bite to the dog and almost loses his fingers in the process. He tosses the next bite or into the road and hurries an scarfs down the rest of the sandwich, laughing at the dog. But the dog is angry

and comes back menacing. He gets nervous and ends up using his umbrella as a sword to defend himself from the dog. A bus approaches and he kicks the dog onto the bus and watches it drive away.

Then 2 very fast women sit on the bus bench on both sides of him. He's suffocating as they start getting fresh with him, putting their hands on his knee. He pulls their hands off his knee and tries to remain nonchalant but he can't take it anymore and he bursts out of the small space between the fat ladies. Luckily another bus approaches and he pushes, or rather heaves them onto the bus and watches them go.

Finally he gives up on catching the bus and starts to walk, just then it starts to rain. He opens his umbrella only to find it leaks from the dog fight.

Some of my favorite numbers were our patriotic songs and dances. I got to sing a solo for I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy. We also sang a Cohan medley, Harrigan, and some others.

We even had a theme song for the Gingham Guys and Gals, to the tune of Sweet Georgia Brown.

Later we became the New Attitudes and used a song by that same name.

Some of the songs on our playlist were

Banjo fantasy

Elvira

Grandma's feather bed

Mountain music

Bonanza

For Christmas we did

I saw momma kissing Santa Claus

Sleigh ride

Jingle bell rock

Angels we have heard on high (4 part acapella)

Mr. Santa (also 4 part acapella)

Later we quit hosting the performing group for other people, but we still did some fantastic acapella songs with just our family. The animals are comin' and Angels we have heard on high got performed many times. We also learned Five foot Two, but I don't think we ever performed it.



Right before I went on my mission (literally the day before) us 6 older kids filmed a music video of winter wonderland. Kenny eventually edited it together and it was pretty cute.

Family work

Once when my dad was a child his school teacher asked the kids to write a report on what they did that last summer, the following is a reprint of my dad's report in it's entirety:

We worked.

I suppose that set a theme for our whole family life. When I was a kid

We worked.

We built our house, tilled the garden, planted the garden, pulled weeds, watered, sprayed the fruit trees, harvested fruit and vegetables, performing practice, clogging practice, piano practice, canned peaches, cherries, tomatoes, salsa, pickles, swept the floors, washed dishes, vacuumed, scrubbed, cleaned toilets (actually there was only one), fixed the family car, did paper routes, and certainly much much more.

But in all that work we learned to work, get along with each other, be supportive, seek for rewards after earning them, be patient, and be aware of others.



David pulling weeds



More work in the garden

Pipe cannon

Once kenny, (16ish) obtained a heavy, thickwall cardboard tube which was from a roll of paper. (the print shop in SLC that prints the Book of Mormon.) He sealed the end with a block of wood cut to fit inside, some drywall screws through the wall into the block, and some bondo to finish it off. He found an empty propane tank that fit just inside the tube. I'm not sure what he expected to happen but this is what really happened: he propped the tube up on the ground at about a 30° angle. He poured in a lot of gun powder, I estimated that it was about a cup. Added a fuse and the propane tank as a projectile. He lit it and we all took cover in the garage.

KABOOM!

A cloud of smoke erupted so big it filled our whole yard, and the neighbors yard. The neighbors freaked out. They came knocking on our door wanting to know what happened. They thought their house was on fire.

We have a tree house in a big old apricot tree and on top of the tree house laid Dads aluminum extension ladder. As we began looking for the propane tank we noticed the bottom rung of the ladder was missing. We found it in the alley about 30 yards beyond where it was torn from the mangled ladder. So we started looking around the alley and then the street behind our house. We never found the propane tank. I hope it didn't kill someone or take a divot out of someone's roof. I specifically disclaim any part of this event. I simply saw it unfold.

Information acquisition AKA Catalog shopping

Ben, Ken, and I frequently looked for interesting instructional information via the only sources we had available, namely the Library (the only free source), book catalogs like Lindsey Books, and Information Unlimited. Lindsey had a lot of really cool books like metal working and electric devices. It was almost all Do It Yourself books. Information Unlimited sold smaller how-tos in report form, such as a few sheets of paper that taught how to do some interesting thing. Some of the best things we got from Information unlimited was a sheet about how to make bottle rocket engines, and how to make hydrogen out of caustic soda and aluminum.

Hydrogen firing

Ben and I found plans for building a cannon out of sewer pipe fittings in an old popular mechanics magazine that someone gave us. We built a ship type cannon out of 3" and 2" ABS pipe. The original plan said to use calcium carbide in the cannon. You drop it in water and it dissolves making acetylene gas. Light that off and get a giant bang.

Only problem was we didn't have any calcium carbide nor did we know how to get some.

Luckily we had a way to make hydrogen, which is also quite flammable. We figured out how to run a piece of hose from our hydrogen generator to the cannon and plug the muzzle with a gas station drink cup. We'd let it fill for a while, maybe a minute or two. Then we'd set a fuse in, pull the cup out, and light it. KABOOM! It was pretty loud and super fun. We'd set it off on the 4th and 24th of July and new years eve.

One new year's eve we set up the hydrogen generator but it was so cold that a few minutes of "charging" was not enough to get even a huff from the cannon. So we left it charging and went back inside for whatever party we were having. Well we forgot about it and left it running for probably 1-2 hours. Eventually we remembered, probably long after midnight so we did the normal ignition routine.

KABOOM!

It was so much louder and more forceful than we had ever seen. It blew the back end cap off the cannon and broke it. I'm sure the neighbors woke up. But we hurried to bed.

Motorcycles

When we were really little we went to our Stake campout up Spanish Fork Canyon. Steve Preuss brought his sand rail once and gave us rides in it. Another time a family (Maybe the

Gustophsens) had some dirt bikes they were riding around on. We went and watched them for hours it seems until they finally offered a ride. Ben and I really loved that.

A little later when I was 6-7 years old my friend Jarron Lindow had a honda Passport motorcycle that his dad had got from a rental house. (little did I know how much stuff I would eventually find in rental houses) Jarron sold it to us for \$6.00 and we spent a lot of time over the next few years fixing it up.

We ended up riding that motorcycle all over the place

Metal lathe

The crowning project of my youth, and something I'm still exceptionally proud of is my metal lathe. As I've mentioned, in the 1990s there was very little free information. We spent a lot of time flipping through the catalogs wishing we had more money so we could buy the books we needed. One set of books that I was particularly interested in was the Dave Gingery build a metal shop from scrap set of six books. It was \$52 for the whole set and we just didn't have the money. I looked at that in the catalog for probably 2 or 3 years before we finally pooled our money and bought the set.

I think we got them when I was 14 but I didn't start the actual projects just yet. I did read the books cover to cover trying to figure out how in the world I could complete such a big project. Finally, when I was 16 I put it right at the top of my priorities list and spent months building the Lathe.

I started off visiting a local foundry and chatting with the owner. He thought it was awesome that a kid had any interest in his trade. He let me hang around and watch them work. He even wanted to hire me but I was too young. He showed me how they make casting sand and how they ram up molds etc. He had a little blast furnace that he sold me for \$100. He said "look I know you want to make one and everything but I've got this one here that is exactly what you need and I'll sell it to you for less than you can build it for. You'll spend more than that on refractory.

So I bought it. He also gave me several old wood flasks he had kicking around. Then he sent me over to another shop nearby that specialized in aluminum casting and told me to just buy some casting sand from them, so I did that too. That guy also let me hang around his shop and watch his guys work. I learned an awful lot just watching.

The first thing I did was use the blast furnace to melt down some scrap aluminum and pour it into muffin tins.



After I got the hang of that, and all my custom tools built I started following the actual project bit by bit. I didn't do as Dave Gingery said which was to start with some simple castings and then do the bed. I jumped right to the bed which is the largest and most difficult of the castings. It turned out ok, but it might have been better if I had done some easier ones first.

That said, most of the castings were actually pretty complicated. The book showed technical drawings of the parts. I reproduced the parts from the drawings in wood to make patterns. Then I packed casting sand in the flasks around the pattern. Finally I carefully cut a sprue opening,

separated the halves of the mold, and extracted the wood pattern.



Once the mold was all set I lit the furnace, turned on the forced air and started feeding aluminum into the furnace. It took about a half hour to get a pot of metal full enough and hot enough to pour. When it was ready I lifted the lid and picked up the pot with my custom tongs, Carefully brought it over to the mold and poured it in as fast as it would take it. I let the part cool for a few minutes and then I opened the mold and pulled the part out. Most of the parts took quite a bit of post processing such as filing, drilling and tapping holes, and hand scraping to get the mating surfaces to be flat and fit together properly.

I also had to make a lot of parts out of steel. All told I spent about \$155 on materials, fasteners, pulleys, bronze bushings, etc.



About a year after I built the lathe there was a homeschool thing at the state capitol and we were asked to bring some of our home schooling projects to display. I brought my lathe and I'm fairly confident it got a lot of attention.

Building stuff

I was a builder my whole life. When I was 2 I was playing with scissors and paper and I cut out a little paper doll dress and brought it to my Mom. She taped it in my Baby Book. I actually don't even remember doing it, I remember seeing it when I was older and feeling proud of myself.

Over the years I built plastic models, model rockets, costumes (a colonial suit for a masquerade ball, a full indian costume with chaps







and a shirt and a full feather headdress, a romanesque warrior costume) , indian crafts, (dream catchers, the headdress, moccasins, stone tomahawk, etc), carved a skull in granite (I almost fell on the ground when I went and saw the Salt Lake Temple after that), boats and planes models from library book instructions, electronics kits (mostly I assisted Ben with those), a motorcycle out of a scooter and side drive engine, a power hacksaw, the metal lathe, some various wood carvings, etched glass and even a beveled glass box with an etched hummingbird on top which I gave to a girl I liked (Christina Johnson) and an untold number of other things I may never remember.

I even did some needle point embroidery, plastic canvas and yarn, quilting and sewing.

There was a time when I was a teen I wanted to get everything I had made together in a cool display and take some pictures, but I couldn't figure out how to collect it all and it was already too big of a job to actually do.

I learned a lot from all that making and crafting. Math was never something I thought I was good at but I did learn quite a lot of math. When it mattered to me I got it quickly. It was just unfortunate that most of the math I studied was taught from the mathematician approach that geeks out about theory and doesn't know a pie from a hole in the ground. I wish I had done more physics. That would have made sense to me and made the math more useful. In fact once I asked my mom if I could study physics but she said I wouldn't understand it because I didn't know the math I needed yet. I wonder what would have happened if she had said ok and got me some physics to study.

But it turns out that knowing all that math is not what makes one valuable in the world anyway. It is your ability to solve problems that really counts. And building things gave me lots of practice solving problems. I think everyone should take on a big project like I did in building the metal lathe. It was so much bigger than me but I stuck to it and kept going and even though it took months to complete it was a more useful experience than hours and months of classroom study.

Piece Goods, Rainbow Electric sign, Ernst, Grand Central, Pay n Pak,

In the 80's the really big box stores of today hadn't quite caught on. We had to buy most everything we wanted from these little specialty stores. If you wanted lumber you went to a lumber yard like Burton Lumber (which is still around). But if you wanted electrical parts you had to go to some other place. Pay n Pack, home base, and Ernst were precursors to Home Depot. They had most things for building. I don't remember exactly but I think their prices were actually pretty high.

Other stores like piece goods (a fabric store), Ra-elco (an electronic component store) were by today's standards really dumpy stores. They were dirty, their shelves looked like they came from anywhere they could get a bargain on shelves, their merchandise was often old and dusty. They might have had a roof leak for 5 years and the only repair ever attempted was to set a bucket under it during rain storms- Felt just like home to us.

Ra-Elco actually survived for a very long time. It was still in operation when it burned down a few years ago. (June 21, 2018)



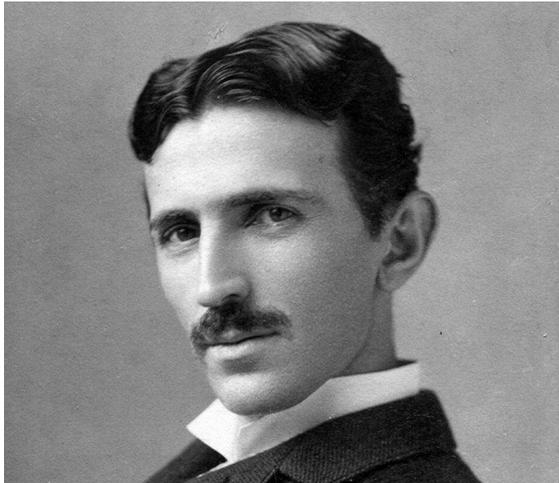
One thing I do like about these old specialty stores is you could usually park right in front of the front door.

Rainbow Electric Sign was more of a sign manufacturer but we went there to buy the neon light transformer for our Tesla coil.

Building a tesla coil

Ben and I built a Tesla coil LONG before anyone else knew or had even heard about Tesla.

In fact most people now think Tesla is an electric car. Actually Nikola Tesla was an inventor and massively forward thinker (July 10, 1856-January 7, 1943)



Nikola Tesla invented Alternating Current which is to this day the method of grid electric power distribution.

Ben and I built our first Tesla Coil probably in the summer-fall of 1990, finishing it in the minutes leading up to the Thompson Estate haunted house. There was something wrong with the glass plate capacitor that Dad and Ben were fiddling with right up to the last minute. It took several iterations to get it to work right. We started with a so-called beer bottle capacitor which gave dismal results. That dictated the size of the wooden stand that is the base of the device to this day. There is much more space in the bottom section than it needs because the bottle capacitor was so tall. Ben bought glass plates from a local glass shop and we made the plate capacitor. It worked much better but it still had some issues. I know we glued it up with shellac the first time through and then Ben and Dad had to dissolve that shellac in alcohol to fix whatever was wrong with it. That was the last minute repair before the haunted house. That Tesla coil never did output the huge 3ft arcs that it is theoretically capable of, but it was still really cool.

Paper Routes

Most of us kids had paper routes for a long time. Paper routes are quite a commitment. You have to deliver every single day, period. We delivered the Desert News which was an afternoon paper so Monday through Friday we started around 3:00. A white van would drop 3-4 big bundles of papers at our front door right around 3:00. We each got a manifest that told us if there were changes to our route. We would count out our papers and then sit and roll them up and pull a rubber band over each one.

We had to buy the rubber bands which was annoying but probably not very expensive. They were probably a couple tenths of a cent each. The bags for rainy weather were much worse,

probably about \$0.02 each but when you only make \$0.05 for each paper delivered they really ate into our pay. I only delivered papers in bags when there was nowhere dry to put the paper. On Saturday and Sunday the papers were supposed to be out by 7:00AM. Sundays however were huge. There were several sections which made each paper about 4-5 times larger and heavier than a typical paper. Thankfully Mom would drive us on Sunday to help us get them all done. But there was no sleeping in on Saturday or Sunday.

When Sun Chips first came out they sent samples out in the Sunday paper. We were able to sneak a couple to try. We really liked them!

I got my first route when I was probably 10-11. I first did the papers between 1300 south and Kensington Ave, and 10th and 11th east. Always on a bike.

Later I got the Hill route between 11th and 13th east. Those hills are very steep. Carrying a heavy load of papers up those hills is very difficult. I always had to push my bike up the hills and hope my brakes worked coming down.

I bought a brand new bike at some point while I had that hill route. Unfortunately before long the brakes already didn't work very well. One day I was blasting down the hill on 1300 south and someone pulled into their driveway and stopped right in front of me. There was no way for me to stop and I crashed right into the side of their car. I flew right up onto their windshield. I don't know how I didn't get dramatically injured. But the driver of the car was more concerned about the scratches on her car than me or my bike. She said if the costs of repairing her car weren't too much she wouldn't make me pay for them.

When I got home and told my parents my dad was pretty mad. I had the right of way.

I was so shaken that I never noticed the damage to my bike. Some time later as I was trying to pedal up one of those crappy hills I stepped hard on my pedal and the bike fell apart right underneath me. I later welded it back together with a plate of metal to strengthen it. Those were my first and crappiest welds ever.

I always felt bad that I was the one who really got the shaft on that deal. Buy a bike to deliver papers, deliver papers so I could buy a bike.

My last route was from 1300 south to Roosevelt and 600-700 East.

At least it didn't have those awful hills. But then there was this old guy who I delivered to who wanted to come out and chat with me every day. If I didn't wait for him he would call me out the next day and tell me to be sure to wait for him. He would give me candy bars and chips and stuff. But after a while it felt like he was grooming me (not that I knew that term then). He once said I had a nice butt. Sometime around then I started telling my parents and route manager about him. I was 15 by this time so I wasn't stupid. I wasn't going into his house for anything. I remember being pretty stressed about it. I got to where I didn't even want the candy bars. I remember coming home and throwing the candy bar at the wall so it fell behind my bed. I just didn't know what to do about it. Mostly I just wanted to deliver the stupid papers and get on with my other things, not stand outside listening to a really old guy with bits of food stuck in his mouth telling me about how nice my butt is. When I turned 16 I got a real job, a car, driver's license and kissed that stupid paper route goodbye. Last day delivering papers was great. I don't think I even told the old guy I was done.

Jobs and employment

After the paper route I worked several different jobs.

The best one was when my best friend Tony and I ran our own lawn mowing business.



We mowed about 7 lawns a week and made about \$75 each which was enough to build a metal lathe and go on some dates.

I worked as a janitor for an elementary school for a school year.

I worked for a while for Tony's Dad's company, Wheel Werks where I installed car tires and wheels. Eventually Mike (Tony's dad) taught me how to use the milling machine to bore out the center hole on aluminum wheels.

I also worked as a dish washer at the Joseph Smith Memorial Building restaurant. That was a sucky job with a sucky boss.

When I turned 18 I got a job in construction for a guy named Kevin Parkin. That job switch made me \$3/hr more than I was getting washing dishes, \$8/hr. A couple weeks later he raised me to \$9 and then a few more weeks after that to \$10.

Mostly we were building or refinishing decks, finishing basements, and a few other construction projects. He was a good guy to work for and I worked for him until I went on my mission. Funny enough I had an institute class, old testament history, that was taught by his dad. Which was painfully boring.

Fiat X19



When I was 15 I started looking for a car. Kody Brunsvick was a returned missionary in my ward and he had this old Fiat X19.

It was a cool sporty car with a removable hard top. Only fit 2 people. It had a burned valve so it didn't run very well at all.

I bought it and took the engine out, completely rebuilt it, which I found out was a very expensive thing to do. I even painted the engine and got it all fixed up. Unfortunately the smog control pump was completely rusted solid so there was no saving it. I managed to get it to pass emission tests for a few years but eventually I couldn't get it to pass anymore.

At some point I was driving down the freeway when I heard the engine just completely rip out a connector rod bearing and start rattling like crazy.

I got off the freeway and went into a jiffy lube and asked for some oil because the engine was all out. I didn't have any money but they were kind enough to give me some. It helped but the engine was already wrecked. Even so I continued to drive it for at least a few weeks.

I eventually fixed it again.

That car was the biggest piece of crap ever. When it worked it was fun, but it broke down a lot. I replaced a wheel bearing, starter motor, alternator, CV drive shaft and probably more.

But I went on many a date in that car. One of the best times ever was when Melissa (my sister) and I drove to St. George in it and stayed with Ryan Simpkins family. We drove up from there to Zions Canyon for the day and were there until dark. Driving back to St George with the top off and the cool breeze after a hot day was just like magic. It was an indescribable magical feeling of freedom and relief. The only thing that would have made it better is if I was with a girl I liked instead of my

sister... or maybe not. Maybe part of that feeling was not having to pretend to be anything but what I am.

First kiss

I was always a hopeless romantic. Starla came into my life just before I turned 16. Her dad married a lady who had lived in our ward with her son, Paul (who was my age) for a few years.

That summer Starla and a few sisters came to spend the summer with their dad.

Naturally Paul wanted to get us Chapman boys together with his new step sisters. They only lived a few blocks away on 10th east. I don't remember exactly when we met but it didn't take long for Starla and I to become very comfortable with each other. I had never been very close to a girl before, although I had already had plenty of fantasy girl friends that NOBODY KNEW ABOUT. We must have just started doing things together and soon we were close friends. We were sad that she was only staying until the beginning of August or so. So I didn't have any particular expectations beyond that. When she went home to Canada I was pretty bummed but I had lots of other girlfriends in my life by then.

But then something happened.

I don't remember how I found out but Starla decided she wanted to live with her dad for the rest of high school. I think I may have had something to do with that decision.

A few weeks after she left she came back and I think I was the first person she came to see. We spent a lot of time together. We went to at least a couple proms, lots of official dates and lots

more unofficial dates. It was really fun.



We didn't kiss each other for a long time. I think it was 7 months after we met when we were up way late, probably after watching a movie. We were hugging each other in the dark. I think I kissed her cheek, then she turned and kissed my lips. Then we did it again.

That's how far it went. I floated home. I was shocked. I didn't know what to think.

But I couldn't wait to see her again. Pretty soon we were seeing each other almost every day.

We did a lot of different things together. Sometimes I would get annoyed with the assumption that we were getting together that day because I had other things to do too.

I also went on dates with lots of other girls too. I kept a journal of all my dates because a lot of them were really well planned and executed.

Eventually Starla got tired of me, she never said why. She went to visit her mother in Canada and later I found out that she essentially hooked up with some guy there. It was a while before I saw her again and I pretty much was over her. Eventually I found out she worked at the Dan's grocery store on Foothill drive.

One day I was on my first or second date with Heather and we were buying some food at that Dan's when I realized she was there working that day, so I made sure to check out in that line. It seemed like she was surprised to see me with a girl she didn't know.

Heather ended up as my second girlfriend right before I went on my mission. That was nice for a while. She taught me how to golf. I spent a lot of time with her too. I even gave her a nice emerald ring that was not any kind of commitment, but I think she thought it was. I got a dear

John letter of sorts from her while I was on my mission even though I thought it was clear that we weren't committed. Then when I got home we reconnected for a few weeks before she fell in love with one of my family's oldest friends, Ryan Simpkins.

It's strange to me that both Starla and Heather were on seminary council and we're active in the church all through their youth, Heather and Ryan even got married in the temple, but they both left the church as young parents and I don't know what they are doing now.

Dating and Dancing

I went on lots of dates. I was a pretty good dancer and I worked hard to become better. There were a few girls who were anxious to dance with me because I made them feel like good dancers (if they weren't) or gave them a good partner if they were. I had a personal goal to get into pictures with as many girls as possible, judging by the pictures I have.





For a while before my mission I attended an advanced class hosted by a student named Janell at the U of U. It was a free class that took place in the Naval science building. I learned a few good things in that class.

I didn't see Janell for a few years and then after I met Camille and we were dating I met one of her best friends, Laura who happened to be Janelle's sister.

I always thought and wondered when I was young if I had yet met my wife, if our paths had crossed, or we had even ever seen each other.

Well I don't know but Camille had been to at least 2 little shops in my neighborhood, one on the same block as me. Both within a typical bike ride or paper route I might have done. So it is a possibility that I rode my bike past right as she was walking into one of those shops.

And still it took an online dating website and a big misunderstanding to bring us together.

Meeting my wife

I met my wife on datelds.com. this was an early dating website that barely worked. It supported profiles and instant messaging. I discovered it and created a profile. Before long I went on dates with a few different girls. I chatted online with Camille for about 2 weeks. We found we were able to let down all our fake personality and be real with each other. I was telling her something about myself and she said "wow you are amazing!" I think that is what got me.

We set up a date in which I would meet her and then we would do some stuff, but just a little while before I was supposed to meet her she totally wrecked the whole side of her dad's truck in a parking garage while helping a friend move. She was in SLC so I drove over to where she was sorting things out and found her and gave her a hug.

I think she needed that emotional support. Pretty soon we left and I followed her to her parents house. I signed "cute" to her as we drove knowing that she was an ASL interpreter, and I had dabbled in sign language in my teens, along with Starla in fact.

At her parents house I sat in the living room with her dad and mom while she changed her clothes in her bedroom. She came out to put her shoes on and I winked at her. That melted her heart.

We went to a grocery store called grocery outlet. It was located where the Layton WinCo is now, and bought some food. Then we went up to Fernwood, a nature area in the hills above Layton. Camille made a dutch oven pizza and we had Shasta kiwi-strawberry sodas.

After that we sat and talked for a long time. We cuddled in a blanket as our campfire burned low. Camille nuzzled her face into my neck and I realized she wanted to kiss me. I had never kissed on a first date, or even a second or third for that matter. But suddenly I was kissing her. Long loving passionate kisses that surprised me.

It was a long time before we left. Eventually we returned to her house and she showed me her mission pictures. I don't think I got on my way until 3:00am. I was soo tired.

Well we both had dates planned with someone else the next day but our minds were on each other. So the next day was Sunday and Camille came down to my house for dinner and met my family. After that we walked down to Liberty Park and found a shady place to sit on the grass and talk. 3 hours later I shifted the conversation to discuss how she felt about marriage in general. I had been interested in several girls who really weren't interested in marriage and I was, so I wanted to know generally where she stood on the subject.

What I said was "How do you feel about getting married?"

She replied "I'd be alright with that."

I thought "whoa what just happened?" And I ran the scenario back through my mind and realized that she misunderstood me. Nevertheless she answered the question, and the next question and the next and the next in that simple 5 word response.

Suddenly I was confused and elated, joyful and scared, excited and surprised.

We talked for a long time about it as a possibility. I am pretty sure I quickly exposed the misunderstanding, but since the cat was out of the bag we were able to discuss what it would mean to us, and whether it was a good idea. We finished off that evening back at my house in the dark backyard and Camille said "let's set a date."

That way we could pray about it and work towards it. We must have decided October 18th, 2001 because I don't think we had any schedule slip.

We thought we would wake up the next day and say no-way. That didn't happen.

But we didn't.

We went to the temple together a couple days later and Camille got a strong impression that we were on the right path. I was a little more hesitant, but I felt enough that we should move forward.

I was able to buy an engagement ring, talk to her father, and write a song which I played on the guitar for her by the next Friday. We went up to Fernwood again and I sang the song to her and proposed. She said yes!

The Beginning

Oliver

Not long ago, over the week of Thanksgiving 2019 we went to Hollywood California to go to universal studios. One morning we woke up in the morning with Oliver who was then 2 ½ in our bed with us. He leaned over and he said Dad I love you. Then he rolled over and looked at Camille and said "Mom I love you".

8-28-21

About 6am Oliver came into our bedroom and climbed into bed with us and said "I need to take a little break."

A few minutes later he said "so my good news is.." I can't remember exactly what it was , kinda random stammerings, then "my bad news is..." then he went to sleep.

