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Chapter 6.1 - Our Early Married Life in Ogden (1959-1961)

1959

After our reception in Salmon it was time to get to Ogden and start our married life together, and for me to begin classes at Weber College. We packed everything we owned into the 56 Ford Fairlane and departed Salmon.

We found a furnished basement apartment in Ogden for \$50 per month at 2044 Madison Avenue. It was three or four blocks from Gail and Carma on Adams Avenue. Our landlord was a widow who decided to rent the basement apartment after her husband passed away.

The quirky thing about the apartment was that the toilet was in a closet on the left side of the kitchen and the shower was in a closet on the right side of the kitchen. We didn't care and were happy with our first apartment. We were newly married and enrolled in college just a little over three months after getting discharged from the Air Force. It had been a whirlwind.

We went shopping at Skaggs downtown to buy the many things needed to set up housekeeping. It was fun doing it together and we made several trips as we always needed something. The clerks soon noticed we were newlyweds setting up house keeping and were very helpful.

We didn't have a TV, so our entertainment was LaRue's portable stereo. I had a bunch of 33 1/3rd albums that I acquired while in Turkey.

The first crisis was when LaRue made her first batch of cookies. They were so hard that I couldn't chew them, and she had a melt down.

The second and last crisis (a major disagreement) happened much later in December. It was a bitter cold Sunday morning. We went to breakfast at Harmon's Old Mill, which was a short drive. The car interior stayed cold and LaRue said the heater was broke again. I said the car just needed more distance and time to warm up. She insisted it was broke. We still disagree. I never had anything done to the car and the heater worked thereafter.

LaRue's childhood friend Sondra, and husband Bart, lived in Hyrum and came to see us one Saturday. We went to a drive-in movie and drank some refreshments. The next day our landlady complained about us flushing the toilet so many times.

I enrolled in the spring quarter taking a remedial algebra course and a couple of electives, so I could get used to studying and college. I sent for my transcripts from the University of Maryland extension courses that I took in Scotland and was glad I had my college English requirement fulfilled. Weber classified me as out of state for tuition purposes. I petitioned that I did not have a home or reside in Idaho since 1955. They granted me resident status.

LaRue went into the new Bank of Utah and was immediately hired as a bookkeeper. Now we would have a little income coming in. Gail knew a house contractor and I got a part time job sanding wallboard in new houses a few hours a week. We were in good shape as I still had some money in the bank from my Air Force savings. The only obligation besides the rent was a small payment on the stereo. I decided to hold off on the G.I. Bill that

quarter figuring I would need it for four full years of college ahead of us.

Gail recommended us to Dr. Harding, an ophthalmologist, who needed a handyman around his office complex and five apartments above. We talked to Dr Harding and he offered us a deal. All I had to do is keep the parking lot clean, mow a small strip of grass, and shovel sidewalks in the winter. In return he would give us \$25 credit on the \$80 apartment rental. It was apartment #5 on the far end from 23rd Street. It looked new and modern and had two bedrooms. We were thrilled even with the light green paint throughout that we dubbed Dr. Harding green. That color is still Dr. Harding green to us.

Our apartment was above Dr Harding's office complex on 23rd street and less than a block to Washington Blvd, which is the main street of Ogden. This was the center of the downtown business area and very convenient. The only problem was Christmas shoppers would use the parking lot. Dr. Harding instructed me to put up a chain about 6pm to lock them in. A sign instructed them to come to apartment #5 and pay a parking fee to get their car. It upset people tremendously. I believe Dr. Harding gave me some of the take, but it wasn't worth the hassle. I quit putting the chain up and Dr. Harding never said a word.

Bea Gayle was Dr Harding's nurse and lived in the apartment nearest us with a laundry room in between. Next to her was a nurse, Arzella Bird. They were older and never married. We called them "Auntie B" and "Auntie A". They adopted us as their own.

Early in the summer we learned that LaRue was pregnant. We were happy and excited to be future parents. LaRue was thrilled

to know that we could have children. With a baby on the way we had to acquire baby furniture. We made a trip to Salmon to visit her parents then went to the house in Patterson and picked up the small crib I had as a baby, sister Beverly's old highchair, and a chest of drawers. Later I stripped about seven layers of paint off the crib and refinished the highchair. We then obtained an old abandoned large crib that I stripped down and refurbished. We thought we might have a baby by year end, but nothing happened.

(My old baby crib has seen a lot of babies. We have it stored for future great grand babies)

Gail, with all his connections, got me a summer job with a Logan based firm, Legrande Johnson Construction. The job was building highway right of way fence on a new road south of Weber College towards Weber canyon. I worked with four big Utah State football players. We had to carry heavy cedar posts on our shoulders up and down the hills to where we were building the fence. We hand dug the holes and it was hot brutal work. I thought I would die but managed somehow to keep up with the football players. I lasted through it.

My folks returned that summer from Guatemala for Dad to be the mine superintendent at the Bunker Hill Mine in Kellogg, Idaho. Dad ordered a new 1959 Pontiac station wagon from the factory before leaving Guatemala. They flew to Detroit to pick up the car and drove to Ogden to see us. They were happy to see LaRue after so many years and thrilled they were going to be grandparents.

So much had happened since I last saw them on my visit to Guatemala. We went shopping downtown and mom bought me

some clothes, as she thought my wardrobe was in bad shape. It was also a nice treat to go to the well-known Maddox steak house in Brigham City. I was going to order chicken, but the folks insisted I have a big steak. I had not had a steak in a long time and surely appreciated it.

We found that mom and dad knew Auntie B's brother, Walt Gayle. He owned the store and service station in Mountain City, Nevada when dad was working at the Rio Tinto Mine. Small world.

Around the 4th of July we took LaRue's folks with us to visit Max and Loa in California. We left around 5am. We planned to drive straight through and get to Walnut Creek around dinner time. I was the only one awake until we got to Elko. We had a picnic lunch packed and stopped in Battle Mountain and had lunch beside the railroad tracks.

We had a nice couple of days in Walnut Creek and headed back to Utah. LaRue was driving just past Battle Mountain, Nevada, and I was sleeping in the backseat. Her folks were in the front seat. They were yakking away oblivious to the speed. The speedometer on the Ford would stick and never go past 60. I felt a floating sensation and could tell we were really flying. I raised up looking around and the speedometer was registering over 90 mph. The speedometer had come unstuck and was now working. No more driving that day for LaRue.

The fall of 1959 I enrolled in electrical engineering and began college in earnest. I had to have a slide rule and drafting equipment along with the textbooks. All engineering majors had to take engineering drawing which had long lab hours learning drafting. I also bought a drawing board for home to finish assignments outside of the lab. Learning drafting took a lot of

hours which I thought was a total waste of time. In the real world draftsmen do the drafting. I found theory of electricity and physics to be subjects I really didn't like, but suffered through them. I took Calculus my freshman year, found I liked it, and got an easy A. I started thinking about a Math major.

LaRue was working at the Bank of Utah and I received \$80 per month under the Korean GI Bill and we got along ok. I felt I should have a part time job and went to the state job service on a Friday afternoon. Grayson Robinson's (a women's department store) needed a stock clerk for a few hours on Saturday. I went and later the manager said he could use me for a few hours a week and Saturdays at 95 cents an hour. It was low pay, but I decided to do it. It was handy as the store was only two blocks from our apartment and the hours were totally flexible.

Grayson Robinson was based in New York City with stores throughout the country. One of my duties was to count and verify the quantity they shipped. One of the early shipments contained a box about 2-foot square and 2 feet high filled with women's underwear. I was not about to count so many and signed off on it. About a week later the store manager got a call saying to fire the new stock clerk. They had deliberately shorted a few as a test. The store manager laughed it off. He lived in Salt Lake and he often departed early as he trusted me to sweep the floors and close in the evening. I got an increase from .95 cents to \$1.05 an hour.

Christmas 1959 was special as I had not had a Christmas at home since 1953. We had a nicely decorated tree and apartment. I shook and examined every present trying to guess the contents. We had acquired a used black and white TV and could watch the Christmas programs that I had never seen.

1960

LaRue's mother came to stay with us after New Years to assist when the baby came. Finally, in the middle of the night on January 6 we headed to the hospital in a heavy snowstorm. St. Benedicts Hospital was on a hill, and I just barely made it up. It was a long night and day, but we finally had a baby girl that evening on January 7, 1960. We named her Kathleen as LaRue always said her first daughter would be named after her childhood friend in Hyrum that was killed in a car wreck.

When Kathleen was born January 7, 1960, Aunties A and B were thrilled to have a baby around and called her "Muggins." If they heard her cry very long they were right over to check on things and lend a helping hand.

We didn't have health or hospital insurance or a lot of money, but we paid the doctor and hospital in cash. I believe the total bill was around \$250. It was the same at school. Tuition was very low and books for a quarter were around \$30 total, so we were able to pay as we went. Those were the good old days. We were happy with married life and doing well.

Between the winter and spring quarter we decided to go to Walnut Creek to show off Kathleen. Loa had already sent Kathleen a swimsuit that said "Miss California" on it. It was miserable snowy weather in Utah but the weather and green grass and flowers in California made quite an impression on us. This started us thinking about living in California. It was a nice break and was just one year from when we departed Walnut Creek for Salmon and our life together.

In April Kathleen was four months old and LaRue decided to go visit her folks who were in Laramie, Wyoming working as caretakers on a ranch. I put LaRue and Kathleen on the train and I had to batch it for a couple of weeks. She said she got something to eat on the train and it was expensive. She was going to bring a sandwich on the return trip. She was worried about me eating and cooking for myself. I wrote that I made spaghetti and it was good. I also wrote that my folks wanted us to come to Kellogg for a visit, but I felt we should not go. The store was working me a lot, and I didn't want to ask for time off as we could use the money.

I decided to join the Air Force Reserve unit in Ogden to make a few easy dollars a month. I was given my S/SGT rank and new uniforms. I served one weekend a month sitting around doing nothing. It was easy money and I enjoyed being around Air Force people again. I found I missed the Air Force and two or three times I talked to the recruiter about reenlisting. Then I would remember I got out of the Air Force to get a college education and that ended that.

Kathleen was known to raise a ruckus at bedtime after she got a little older. One time she was mad and jumped up and down. and while holding onto the side rail of the big crib, vaulted over the side, and landed on the floor on her feet. It scared us to death. We then left the side rail down so she could get out easily and safely. Auntie A and Auntie B were always ready to babysit and would suggest we go to a movie or dinner so they could have "Muggins". We couldn't have asked for a better setup. However, they would let her do anything she wanted in their apartments. We came back one night, and Kathleen had emptied all the cupboards in Auntie B's apartment.

LaRue stayed home with Kathleen until she was almost walking then went back to work. Her coworker had a daughter about the same time and decided not to work anymore. She agreed to babysit Kathleen when I was in school. The morning routine was to take Kathleen to the sitter in north Ogden, drop LaRue at the bank in mid Ogden, and I would continue to Weber college in south Ogden. I would pick up Kathleen about noon. I would study and she would nap and play and was no problem. When she started walking she could walk under the card table I studied on. Soon she was too tall to walk under it. We would pick LaRue up after work or she would walk home and I would go to work at the store for a couple of hours. I would put in a few hours at the store on Saturday and study. School wasn't easy for me and there was a lot of homework. I studied all I could.

I made some good friends at Weber College. The student body was mostly young local kids just out of high school or back from their missions. There were four or five of us that were older and veterans. We would meet and have coffee together if we had idle time. We would also meet at one of our houses and study together.

One of the guys, Marc, had a job at Hill AFB at night and was a computer operator. I asked him about it. It sounded interesting, and I filed it away. That conversation changed the course of our lives as I ended up with a career in computers.

In late spring of 1960 Grayson Robinson closed the Ogden store and my part time job went away. It was summer, and I looked all over for a job. I finally found one at Pacific Iron and Steel as a helper fabricating beams for bridges and buildings. I would hold

plates while a welder welded them to a beam or run a punch press punching bolt holes in the plates. It was a miserable job punching holes in plates one after another all day long. The environment was loud and dirty, and I would come home black after work. It gave me motivation to continue getting an education and away from a job like that. I was happy when school started, and I could get out of there.

That fall we found out that LaRue was pregnant again. We were in a bit of shock after just having Kathleen in January. Two children in the first two years of college was a pace that we would have to think about in the future.

That fall I was told about a decent job opportunity at the train station. It was with the Ogden Union Railroad Depot Company. You worked the extra board and only if you were called that day. I applied and was hired. I worked when I was called.

It involved sitting around a lot, loading and unloading baggage, mail, and caskets. The only thing you had to know is military veteran's caskets always go feet first. Others go head first. While sitting around I could study, so it worked well for me. The holiday season was a lot of work with rail cars full of packages and mail. The regular workers were old guys with 30 to 40 years handling baggage and mail. They loved to sit and issue directions when us young guys were on the job. I was working there when the earthquake happened near Yellowstone and formed Hebgen Lake. It shook Ogden also.

1961

My second year at Weber was study and work when I could. I would graduate with an Associate Science degree on June 2, 1961. I also had to start thinking about where to go for my next two years. In the back of mind was University of Utah since my Scotland buddy, Ed Smith, was going there. It would also be an easy move. I had reconnected with Ed and his wife, Joyce, and we enjoyed a couple of picnic outings with them. We were also beginning to think of beautiful warm California and attending the University of California in Berkeley. Loa and Max being in Walnut Creek helped influence the thinking. The more we discussed it the

better it sounded. As the year wore on it became the plan.
(Today, in hindsight an easy solution would have been to stay where we were and go to the University of Utah as we were Utah residents. However, I would probably not have ended up in computers had we not gone to California. The decision in the long run worked out for us)

LaRue was due around the middle of May, and I was to graduate around the 1st of June. Our plan was to move to California so that I could attend Cal. We gave notice to Dr. Harding to be out of the apartment on June 1. The middle of May came and went, and the end of May was approaching. We were in a panic, and all packed up to move. The doctor finally started labor on the last day of May and Brian was born on June 1, 1961. I was in the middle of finals and up all night before I took my last test that morning. LaRue said I looked awful. I passed and was ready to graduate.

LaRue was in the hospital where she had to spend three days and I graduated on June 2, 1961 with an Associate Science degree. The only celebration was Chinese dinner with Clyde and Joyce Howell, a couple we knew, and he had graduated also. It was the last junior college class to graduate from Weber College. It then became a four-year school and the name was changed from Weber College to Weber State College.

(I discovered years later that Clyde Howell and another buddy at Weber College, Wally Greenwell and I ended up working at Control Data Corp. Clyde and Wally were in different capacities than me. It is a strange coincidence. Wally and I also met up again in 1962 while attending Utah State in Logan.)

We were out of the apartment and ready to travel to California with a U-Haul trailer. LaRue and the kids would stay with her brother Val and sister in law, Loi, until she could travel to California. Val and Loi were shocked when LaRue flipped upside down and walked on her hands into their house! Loi still talks about it. Kind of a show off.

I didn't depart Ogden until late on June 4, as I couldn't get the lights to work on the trailer. The car was packed to the ceiling in the back seat and the front passenger seat as well. Larue's brother Gene dropped by with daughter Vickie and wanted me to take Vickie to California to visit friends! I couldn't believe it and gave a quick no. Not only there was no room I did not want to be responsible for a young girl if I should break down along the way.

Before I got to Wendover I was tired and pulled over and slept for three hours. I stopped again in Lovelock and worked on the trailer turn signals. Then had a flat rear tire on the car in Reno. I was relieved that it was just a patch that came off the inner tube, and the tire itself was ok. I had a spare inner tube and was back in business.

I made it over Donner Summit in the heat of the afternoon. I was relieved that the Ford didn't boil over, as it was prone to do. I made it to Max and Loa's about 7pm and surprised them. Max and I unloaded the next day and Max said I could not have put a sheet of newspaper anywhere in that load.

I started looking for work right away.

end of chapter 6.1. continued on chapter 6.2