

Chapter 16 The Big explosions

One day we heard a big explosion and learned later that it was the powder house up at No.6 Sublet and eight men were killed and we were asked to let the miners use our hall for the funeral for five of them, the other three were catholics and were taken to that church for their funeral.

Some time later we rented our hall to the Knights of Columbus for a large banquet, we allowed them the use of our large room on the ground floor for their kitchen and tables were set in the main hall by using saw horses and new lumber in a long line up one side and across the top and down the other side and that night two hundred a forty sat down to the big feast at one time with the Father at the head of the table and when they had finished their meal everybody including the Father himself had either a cigar or cigarette and they filled our hall so full of tobacco smoke we were many days before we got rid of it.

In the east end of our hall in one corner I cut a hole in the floor and also one in the wall and made a garage and built a stand over the top of it for a place for our orchestras, Fonso was working for Charlie Griff in a gas station and garage and they had a new Oakland automobile that they were selling and Fonso thought it was such a bargain he wanted me to buy it, we had to have a place to keep it, that was the reason for the garage. I paid thirteen hundred dollars for that car in cash.

A little higher up on the wall above and to one side of this orchestra pit I made a big shelf where we intended to place our band organ but had not

done so yet. When the Vice President of the United States Mr. Marshal came to Kemmerer and was to speak there the committee came to me and wanted to use our hall so we let him together with P.J. Queally and some other dignitaries get up on that large shelf and although it was perfectly safe it was only fastened to the wall with several men on it they could detect a slight vibration and Mr. Queally told me after, "I was afraid it would fall down with us". At another time we had the Mormon conference in our place which was well attended. Later we had wrestling in our place, Lee Brown whom we had known in Starvalley came to me and wanted to promote Wrestling there, we had had prize fights in our hall before with Johnny Gibs from Cumberland and a Frankie Dearn from Utah which had paid very well in fact we had taken in over twelve hundred dollars that night because all the miners from all the camps were there and paid as high as three dollars for admission, of course the promoter and fighters got the most of it, Brown went down to the lumber yard and bought lumber on time payments and he and I worked several days making a ring and seats to sit on and the agreement was I should get twentyfive dollars for each time he used the hall, he got several wrestlers to come and the first night he payed me the twentyfive dollars but the next time he was a little short so he gave me sixteen and a promise of the rest and the third time we were settling up he did not have any to pay me after he had paid his wrestlers but a promise but he told me he knew a fellow down in Nevada that would surely draw a big crowd and we would make all kinds of money with him if he would

get him but he must have twentyfive dollars to send to the fellow to pay his rail road fare up here, he coaxed so very sincerely that I like a dunce went and signed a note with him at the bank for the twentyfive dollars. I don't think we ever got the fellow but soon after Brown took his wife and two or three children and left for Utah and I have never seen him since so I had to pay the bank and by figuring up I found he owed me eighty five dollars all together. I don't think I would have trusted him so far if it had not been, he told me that Ira Dern the famous wrastler of the time was his partner and as he had been there to Wrastle I took his word for^t but later when I wrote to Dern about it he simply said, "You better forget it for he beat me more than that" and that Brown was no partner of his". It was while we were in Kemmerer too that they had that awful explosion at Frontier mine No. one where nintynine men were killed and also when the other mine at No. five at Sublet that killed thirtysix more miners. Anther expierence we had was with a medicine show owned by a man by the name of Davenport with his wife and one or two children who wanted to use the hall each night for perhaps a week and as it was summer time and we did not need to heat the place I let him use it for ten dollars per night, he was a very likeable fellow and Fonsogot quite a kick out of the performances and one night Fonso wrastled with a tame bear he had just to entertain the croud and one other night they left a very visious lion in a cage in our hall, ofcoarse he could not get out but we felt releaved when they took it away in the morning. Some years later one day two men on the heads of two elephants came up

the road from Diamondville with a large crowd of children as well as adults following them and they came right up to our front door, one of the men got down and asked for Mr. Cook, when he found me he said, Mr Davenport had a circus down in Diamondville and he had been sent by him to invite me and my family to enjoy his performances especially the act of his little girl, which was very clever. Ofcourse it was all an advertising stunt to show his elephants as well as invite us, Mr Davenport met us when we arrived at his tents and personally sat by us for quite a long time and talked about his success in getting a circus. As I mentioned before our two children graduated from the Kemmerer high school and Mona had got a job with the telephone Company as a switchboard operator together with some other girls and ofcourse she remained at home with us and each morning we would get up and cook her breakfast and get her off to work but she was a little different than her brother for as soon as she made some money she bought stock in the Company and as she was well known she also had several boy friends. In the spring of 1929 Frank Canoso, a junk dealer came to our house with a young man by the name of Fredrick William Albright who Canoso explained was a tap dance teacher who had been teaching his son Inocense, (we called him Jimmy) to tap dance and was staying at his house to and wanted a place to teach in so he could get other pupils but he had no money to pay rent with but if we would let him come in our place he would give our children lessons for the use of the room or hall, we decided it would be alright so he was allowed to use the large

room as it was still quit chilly and we had a heater in that room where they would be more comfortable for the time being anyway and later he used the main hall. Alfonso did not care a great deal about it and would rather do some other kind of work but Mona kept on with the dancing and by and by Fonso told his Mother, "She should watch her daughter because her teacher and her were getting altogether to friendly" and the girls at the exchange did not help as they kept teasing and dareing her, dancing teacher he was there all summer and had a few other pupils but in the fall when it began to get cold weather I told him, (we all called him Bill) he better fidd some other place because I wished to use the large room and it was to expensive to heat the big hall for his business, ofcoarse he told Mona and she became so awful angry with us and said, "If you kick Billy out I will go too"

We tried to reason with her but as I have mentioned before she is a very strong willed girl and all her life she wanted and generally got her own way but that night when Bill was going down to Montpelier she was determined to go down to the depot to see him off on the train, we objected and told her to leave him alone and let him go as we did care to have any thing more to do with him, she raved around for some time and then rushed to the telephone and called the sheriff McElvane who was only a short distance away and lived at the County jail, when the sheriff came we explaiidd what was woron and he said, " I have been watching that bum for some time and I will go down and see him", then turned to me and asked "If I would like to go with him". We got down to the depot and

found Bill and as usual Bill began to tell all about his part of the story, but McVaine told him to shut up and listen", and after a while Bill was allowed to leave and went down to Montpelier but Mona was not satisfied and a few days later she smuggled some of her clothes over to the telephone office and found a party who was driveing down to Montpelier and after her Mother had curled her hair as usual in ringlets she went supposedly to work but instead rode to Montpelier so when it was time for her to come home and did not appear her Mpther called the office and found out for the first time what she had done We did not know what to do so we did nothing and in a couple of days later she came home and told us she had got married to Bill by going to Soda springs where they had got a lisenche, It was a very hard jolt for us but she was old enough and we could not and did not want to do anything about it, we had nothing particular against Bill but did not exactly like the idea of her marrying a fellow we knew nothing about, however it was done and as the telephone Company had a ruleing that no married woman could work for them she was put off her job and as only employees could hold shares in the company she was asked to turn over her shares to the company again for which she received two hundred and eighty seven dollars, her brother Fonso had been studing to be an electrician through a correspondance course and wanted to continue his studies by going to Chicago to the Coyne electric school so he needed some money, I told Mona if she would let him borrow her twohundred and eightyseven dollars I would add thirteen more to it so he

would have three hundred and if he did not pay it back I would make it good for her so Fonso got it and went to Chicago.

Mona went down to Bill and they tried together to get pupils for their dancing business but did not do to well and they soon had one of those early marriage quarrels and she came home to us again but we told her she had made her bed and must sleep in it and make the best of it and for her to go back to him and we even took our oakland car and took her back to Bill, they had a very hard time of it and at last they both thought they would go up to Idaho Falls and try to get pupils there but did not do any better so Mona got a job clerking in a store or something while Bill stayed home (I suppose they had rented some sort of home) at last they could not stand it any longer and wired me for some money to come home with to us and stayed with us for a short time, then went again to Rocksprings to try what they could do there and later to Green River City where they rented a small house.

Fonso came back from Chicago for one reason he had made the acquaintance with an austran or slavish girl at one of our wrestling bouts and was anxious to see her again because he had fallen love with her I guess anyway he would go to see her every evening and as her mother was in the moonshine business on the sly and a flower shop as a blind he met several bad characters but Fonso was a good boy did not drink much, he got a job with the Steinhur Electric Co. and later started a shop of his own and did some repairing on radios and other electrical work but not enough to satisfy him so he got a job at a gas station with several camp cabins and one day

he came to us and said, "He was going to get married and wanted us to wish him good luck" and as I shook his hand I certainly did wish him good luck for I knew the dear boy surely needed it, he and some of his friends went to Randolph, Utah and got a lisenca and were married there on the fifteenth day of May 1933, when he came back he and wife lived at the gas station, one day my wife and I drove over to see them, we found Fonso washing dishes and he told us Ann his wife was in the bath room bathing,

Some oil men he got acquainted with wanted him to go with them to Denver and drive a wholesale delivery gas truck so on the fifteenth day of August he took his old car started for Denver but one time before he left, he took his car and drove down to Greenriver to get Bill and Mona who were living there at that time to bring them up to surprise me on my birthday so we could all be together.

He drove the gas truck for a few months all over Denver delivering gas to the different gas stations with out any mishaps but on December the fifteenth one evening after his days work he took his wife in the front seat and a neighbor lady and her year and a half child in the back of his old car and started for another part of town to buy some little things for us as Christmas presents as he drove along a very large car came from a side street and failed to stop for the red light and struck Fonso's car broadside so hard that it was completely turned around and the wires on his car got crossed some way so the horn kept on sounding although he was badly hurt because the big car struck on the side where he sat he got out of the car

and adjusted the wire to stop the honking and when the ambulance came he got in by himself and when they reached the hospital he walked in that too without help, the child in the back seat received a broken leg but the two ladies were only slightly hurt. Some time in the night Fonso became so bad although the doctor had told him he would be alright and released in the morning that he called the nurse who in turn called the doctor who said, "they would have to operate on him and when they did they found one of his broken ribs had severed his spleen and he had been bleeding internally and there was no way they could do anything about it.

One night in our beds we heard some one trying to climb the wooden ladder or fire escape on the side of our house and we found it was Mrs Fern, Fonso's Mother-in-law she had received a telegram and had been knocking at our front door but could not make us hear for we were upstairs and to far away so she was trying to reach us by way of the ladder, the telegram told of the accident and wanted to know if we wished to go to them for she intended to take the first train for she said, "what will the poor girl do" the way the telegram was worded we did not think it was very serious so we did not go then but when we received another telegram which said, "If you want to see your boy alive you better come at once" Bill and Mona had been doing a litter better and moved to Evanston so I called Mona and asked her if she wanted to go with us and if so to come down to Green River City on the first train and we would meet her there and we would all proceed together by train to Denver, when we reached

Cheyenne Mona called the hospital to see how he was while we were waiting for another train and then we heard the bad news that our son was dead.

He had got married May the fifteenth left home August the fifteenth and got killed on December the fifteenth.

We continued on to Denver and was met at the depot by Ann her Mother and the man he had been working for and they drove us to the camp cabins where Fonso and Ann had been living and saw the other lady and her child, the next day we went to the morgue to see our son's body and made arrangements to with an undertaker to have him shipped back home, we selected a casket that was to be hermetically sealed with a large glass covering it under the lid and the cost was seven hundred and fifty dollars which I paid and the body went back with us but we decided not to stop at Kemmerer as we wished him to be buried at Afton so we billed the casket to Cokeville. Fonso had an automatic pistol and Mrs Fern wanted me to take it because Ann put on such a big show of grief that her mother thought she might try to use it on herself, which I was sure was very far from the truth any way I kept the pistol for the time being and one of the first things they asked for when we were settled back home was that pistol for it would be fine for her brother Johnnie, Mrs was in the flower business as I mentioned before and had been buying flowers from a Denver florist and told us to let her get the flowers because she could buy them cheaper than we could and when everything was arranged for us to return home she was short for money to buy her ticket with and wanted to borrow some from me.

Long before Fonso got married I had persuaded him to join the Woodmen of the World which I belonged to and told him if he would I would pay his initiation fee and also I would pay his monthly dues as they come due if he would appoint his Mother as the beneficiary for a two thousand policy which we had done and while we were in Denver we called at the head office of the Woodman and arranged for the payment of it and, Mrs Fern said, "Ann should have something not with standing Fonso had taken out two other policies each for two thousand with a double indemnity clause in case of accidental death but Ann had objected when he was to pay the premium saying, "she needed the money to buy some clothes with" so both of those ^{two} insurance policies had lapsed and they never got any thing from them. I had paid all the expenses of the funeral, Ann's fare back and let Mrs Fern have money and thought I would be able to collect damages from the man who killed my boy but the lawyers told me I could do nothing because he had a wife and it was her who could collect the damages.

When we arrived at Kemmerer Bill was at the depot waiting to meet us so I asked him to go on to Cokeville together with Mona as the body was going there to take care of it while my wife and I stopped at home to make arrangements to have our local undertaker to take his hearse and pick up the body and take it on over to Afton and Axel had made the necessary arrangements for the funeral there. I had shut off all our water and emptied the hot water tank but some of the pipes still had water in them and had frozen and busted so I had extra work repairing them. Clarence Smith for whom Fonso had worked at his garage wanted to go over to the funeral so I told

him he could take my car and drive for me and we could all go together including his wife, my wife and Ann and the good people of Afton turned out and tryed to make us feel better by giving a most sympathetic funeral and our son was burried in a common grave in the Afton cemetary, Axel and my wife's sister Hilda gave us all a very nice dinner, all except Mr and Mrs Fern and one or two others who rode in their own car who immediately after the funeral start-back home. A day or two later Mrs Fern Ann and her sister Mary got on the train and went back to Denver to make a settlement with the fellow who killed our son and with the slick talk of some lawyer they made a settlement for eight hundred and I heard later Ann let her Mother have the money to start another Flower or Moonshine business in Rock Springs. The following March 17th, we rented our hall to the Knights of Columbus for a dance and Ann came with another boy friend named Joe Starman and seemed to have forgotten all about our boy and soon after she married Starman. The next summer my wife and I went over to Afton and made arrangements for a different cemetary lot and I dug a square hole in it nine feet square, about six feet deep then made a floor in it of concrete, I got Emil Nielson to help me make the forms for the walls in such a way that when the concrete was poured it made a shelf on either side about four inches thick and about two feet from the floorwell reinforced with irons so a casket could be placed on the shelf as well as one under it then with plenty more reinforcements we made a block of concrete on either side about two feet wide the length of the grave then around this we made a curbing which was to hold

a granite slab or covering eight feet and eight inches long, four feet and four inches wide and about six inches thick that I paid Bott monument Company five hundred dollars for and it weighs about one and one half tons.

After we had finished this concrete grave we dug up our boy's grave and placed him in the new one when the granite cover was delivered and when the time comes my dear wife and I expect to have that cover removed and we will be placed by the side of our boy.

Shortly after that Bill and Mona came home to us and lived in the large room which I made ready for them by placing a partition across the center of it so they could use the front part as a dance studio and the other part as their living room, I furnished them with coal, water and electric power, I made them a kitchen cabinet and gave them a new but cheap cast iron stove, a little later Mona ordered and received a better stove that we could hook up the hot water tank to so they would have hot water.

They paid us eighteen dollars per month, only slightly more than it cost me to furnish them these things especially in the winter time. Those two young folks traveled in all directions to try to get pupils, north as far as Pinedale, west as far as Montpelier, south to Evanston and Lyman and traveled in all kinds of weather, they had been able to buy a secondhand ford and many nights they were very late getting home and we sure felt sorry for them but they were young and could stand it, in the front room we placed wide two inch plank for the pupils to dance on as the taps sounded better, while my wife and I continued with our skating and dancing, also some Rawleigh business but since Cumberland

coal mines had closed down and all the miners moved away, the Frontier No one had long since discontinued to operate and Sublet was also closed down and some had moved to Kemmerer and Frontier but most had left for some other mines so there was very little business that way so in 1939 I discontinued my Raleigh business but we were intirely out of debt except about five hundred we owed the City on the pavement job along Topaz street but when I got my son's insurance money I paid that too.

Although Bill and Mona had been married for seven or eight years they had no children but now Mona was expecting and one night the twentysecond of October when they came home from a long trip to Lyman and had been working all day (at that time Bill did most of the taching while Mona furnished the music on the piano) My wife and I had gone for a short ^{walk} and we heard them calling, we rushed home and found that Mona was having pains so we called Docter Marquis and he worked with her for some time then told us it wsa impossible for the baby to be born in the natural way and we must rush her to Salt Lake City to a hospital there, he gave us instructions for us to get all the hot water bottles we could fill them with hot water and get a lot of hot bricks to place at her dfeet while he went to get gas in his own car, I think Bill and Mona had managed to get better car that was new and after Mona was placed in the back seat with plenty of quilts wrapped around her with Bill and my wife in the front seat while the Docter and Mrs. Purdy his nurse was in the Docters car they started for Salt Lake City, they

had not gone far when the Doctor stopped Bill and asked him, "Can't you drive a little faster"? Bill had never driven a car until they got their first ford and Mona had taught him how to drive, So the doctor said, "here you drive my car and I will drive yours" My wife told me later she had never taken such a swift ride in all her life as she did with the Doctor, he made that car go as fast as it could possibly go and when they were passing the highway patrol building they were afraid they might be stopped for speeding, but they were not, the Doctor had wired ahead to the hospital of their coming but still there was a delay and it was morning before Mona was operated on and her baby was brought forth by a caesarian operation. Bill and Mrs Purdy arrived after some difficulty in locating the hospital and after the operation Doctor and Mrs Purdy returned to Kemmerer where I was anxiously waiting for what ever was to happen, they told me Mona likely would be alright but had their doubts that the baby would survive, it had been placed in an oxygen tent and they were living in hopes it would be alright. My wife and Bill obtained rooms across the street from the hospital where they stayed and visited Mona each day until she was able to leave with her baby girl and while they had been away I bought hard wood flooring and refloored the front part of their room and also place a heating stove in there so as to keep them warm with the baby to make them as comfortable as possible and the new floor would be much better for them to dance on, needless to say we all took good care of our little baby girl we named Noma after her Mother and Billie after her

Father and when her parents went to work with their dancing in different places my wife and I took care of the baby and when she was three years old she could stand on roller skates and soon she went alone on them.

When the second world war broke out Bill got a job with the government and was sent to Laramie, Wyoming and was soon joined by his wife and baby and after they had been there for some time he was transferred to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for about four months and then by his request he was sent back to Utah and Hill Air Force Base where he is still employed, Mona too worked there for some time but later Mona now a very good dance teacher took over the most of that part of their business and still continues to teaching with Bill and Noma now a big girl helping.

Mona and Bill bought a city lot in Ogden on the ten hundred block on twenty-ninetieth street and have built themselves a very lovely home which is entirely all paid for and they have money in the bank too but they have had some bad luck too, Mona has been through several operations, she has trouble with her hearing and must wear a hearing aid and their dear daughter Noma got some sort of infection in one of her legs and also went through several operations. The Doctors decided it was malignant when she was at Mayo Brothers in Rochester and it became necessary to amputate her leg to save her life so now our darling girl must wear an artificial leg, but still she seems to be very healthy or hop around on one leg or use crutches, which makes us all feel so very sorry for her, she was such a wonderful dancer and even now with her one and

only leg she goes out in the back yard on the lawn and does some very hard acrobatic tricks. After Bill and Mona had finished their house they still had ground enough for another house by their side on their lot so they asked us to try and sell our place and move down here and build ourselves a house on their ground so we would all be together. Besides our skating and dance business I had been given the job of City Police judge and water clerk, a job I held for about two years and in season I spent much time fishing and deer hunting, not very much success with the deer however. We had bought a new plymouth automobile and traded in our Oakland for which we were allowed only three hundred dollars, which had cost us thirteen hundred.

As our daughter and husband had asked us to do we decided to move to Ogden.