



Gayle 1934.

How Joe and Gayle Met 4

When Joe returned home from his mission, he gave his report to the membership of the Stake at the old Pioneer Stake House on about 120 West Fifth South. I attended with my mother, and we were both impressed with his sincerity, enthusiasm, and spirituality. She remarked afterwards that he must be a very fine man in the church. You will see, however, that she later became opposed to our marriage.

In November 1931, Joe was made a member of the Pioneer Stake Sunday School Board as an assistant in the Old Testament department. I was the Assistant Stake Sunday School secretary. We met at one of the board meetings.

I was, at that time, going with a boy named Hubert Thompson. He was a school friend and very likeable. Joe didn't pay much attention to me, although he thought I was eighteen; in reality I was only sixteen. I was in the stake play in January 1932. Joe told me later that as I stood on the stage and acted my part, the spirit told him that I was going to be his future wife. That really shook



Poplar Grove Basketball Team.



June 1933

him up, as he wasn't quite ready to get married at that time. However, it wasn't until the All-Church Basketball Tournament in Ogden, March 10, 11, 12, or 1932, that I had my first date with him.

The group of board members were standing and sitting around waiting for our meeting to start, and Joe was telling us about the games. He belonged to the Poplar Grove Ward Basketball team, and they were in the

finals. I merely mentioned that I had never seen an All-Church game and he invited me to go with the team and him. He didn't sit with me while the team was waiting to play nor did he sit with me after while they watched the next game, but he did send me a milk nickel (chocolate covered ice cream on a stick) which I ate while thoroughly enjoying myself.

He dropped the members of the team off first, and when he took me home he asked me if I would like to go to the contest on March 12, with just him. Thus I had my first date with him. He continued to visit me all during that spring and summer. When I graduated from South High School in June 1932, he went with me to the exercises and to the dance afterwards. The poor guy couldn't dance, but, as I didn't know this, I traded many of my dances. All he could do with the other girls was walk them around the floor. (Trading dances was a practice enjoyed by couples in the 1930's. If a girl had a dance card or a program, she would ask another girl to trade a dance and then put the other girl's partner's name on her card and visa versa.) After that experience, Joe usually refused to trade dances with other couples. Even after we were married and he was in the Stake Presidency, which was during the six years preceding his death, he disliked trading dances with others. He did go with Virginia a few times when I was in school in California, but even though she tried to teach him to dance, he just didn't like to dance with anyone but me.

I belonged to the Seminary class at South High, and we often went to other wards to speak. Joe always went with me. Sometimes Hubert Thompson would ask me to go home with him, but I usually went home with Joe as he always called for me in his green four-door Oldsmobile with red wooden wheels that he called "Susy." On the Fourth of July, Joe wanted to go on a pic-

nic in the canyon, but mother didn't have any money nor anything that I could use for a lunch, so Joe brought the lunch. He had a bottle of pickled green beans, and I ate nearly the whole bottle full of those beans. That was my introduction to German cooking. Mom wasn't too keen on me going with him. In fact, sometimes she made life quite miserable, but we persisted, enjoying each other's company. We talked of many things on those dates, especially of religion. He told me about his mission, his family, and his friends. All my married life, Joe taught the Gospel to me. Sometimes we would argue as I couldn't understand the point he was trying to teach me, but I was always a sounding board for him.

Hubert Thompson was a fine fellow (he was doing post-graduate work at South High School), but when I started to go with Joe, I just didn't go with Hubert or anyone else in Salt Lake City anymore. One time Joe and I were talking, and he decided to write down some German words and see if I could guess what they meant. After writing down several words, he wrote down the phrase "Ich liebe dich," but then he wouldn't tell me what it meant. Of course, it means "I love you." I tore the paper out of his hands and had someone at school translate it for me. He was sure embarrassed.

I didn't let Joe kiss me until we had gone together for three months, and then his first kiss was a little peck on my cheek. But of course, before that, he hadn't even tried to kiss me. He hadn't finished high school, so he enrolled in summer school two different times. He got some girl at the school to tutor him in English, and I was very upset because I could have helped him just fine. Anyway, he couldn't go but for a few days because he had to quit and work to help pay board to his mother. Elizabeth Nemelka didn't have much money. Carl was only a custodian at Rio Grande Depot, so Joe got a job at Rio

Grande and helped support his family. Walt and Nephi also paid board to their parents.

Joe owed quite a bit of money to several people. Among them was Ernie Snider, who helped him buy his car Susy. We didn't get Ernie entirely paid off until we had been married several years. As a result, we had very little money to spend on dates that summer of 1932. We went to Saltair, riding the open air car out there and back. We only went to dance. I think once or twice we rode on the rides, but it always made me nauseated, so we just went out to the open air pavilion to dance. Glenn Miller and the famous band leaders came to Saltair, and we enjoyed the lovely long ride out, the dancing, and the long ride back. Joe still couldn't dance very well, but we enjoyed being together, sometimes just moving slowly to the music. We also went to the Roseland which was on Ninth South and State to dance, but always alone as he preferred just my company. Mother, in the meantime, couldn't say anything good about Joe, and she scolded me all summer for going with him. I hated to leave him to go to school in California, but Aunt Beulah offered to let me go to Junior College. I wanted to be a school teacher, so Joe promised to wait for me. We weren't engaged, just "going steady."

My sister Virginia offered to keep track of him because the girls in his ward wanted him too. Grandma Nemelka also gave him a bad time since she wanted him to marry a German girl. In fact, she had one picked out for him to marry. Marian Steuff was her name, but Joe liked me better. Several girls in the ward had written to him on his mission, and they also expected to go with him, they all sent daggers at me. If looks could have killed, I would have died several times. One girl in particular, Verena Gardner, thought that she owned Joe. He took her on a date and also furnished the picnic, but she

gobbled up the food so fast that he was disgusted with her and wouldn't date her any more. Thank goodness!

Joe had so little money to spend that summer that we had to make do with the cheap or free places like Liberty Park. We could go there after he had treated me to a banana split that was twice the size of one bought in 1984 and only cost 10 cents. We went to June conference up at the tabernacle. I met him up there, and as he sat down by me, an electric thrill shot through me that I felt clear down to my toes. He looked so sweet and clean right at that moment; that was the moment that I fell in love with him, and I never fell out of love. He was not demonstrative out in public, occasionally he would hold my hand, but seldom would he put his arm on my shoulder. Sometimes he would after we were married, but not in public before we were married. I had to teach him many things, like walking on the outside on the street, opening the door of the car, and taking my arm to help me; but once he learned he didn't forget.

Joe's sister, Mary, remembered that Joe had asked his mother's advice as to how to treat me when we were dating and where to go and what to do. He was always a perfect gentleman.

Mary recalled that Joe took his two sisters on a date with us once. They were sweet girls, and we tried to help them. Mary also reminded me that I even tried to give them some suggestions and help on dressing and hair styles. They had so few clothes that it was difficult for them, but they both grew and developed into lovely young ladies.

Joe's good friend was Frank Lemperle, but after we started to date I only saw Frank a few times. Often Joe had to do his Block Teaching (Home Teaching now), and I would sit and wait for him in the car. He played some baseball and I watched that too, getting acquainted with the wives and girl friends of his companions. He was well

liked but very shy and reticent with people he didn't know. For those who remember him now, this must be hard to believe! After he became a bishop, he really became more outgoing and friendly.

Mother had to move from the house on Jefferson Street during the summer of 1932. Her money from my father's insurance ran out, so she didn't have an income. Dad's oldest brother, William, said that mom could move into his house at 777 South Fourth East. Uncle Will owned the house but hadn't paid up the taxes. It was to be sold by the Sheriff when they got around to selling it. In the meantime, we could live in it. We had plenty of furniture to move, but no food. Mom told me to use the one egg and the little bit of milk and make a one-egg cake for us on the moving day. I did, and when Joe came to see me, he was horrified that we only had that little cake to eat. He went to President Harold B. Lee who was at that time working in Pioneer Stake and had just started the Welfare Plan for Latter-Day Saints. President Lee gave Joe some food for us, and Joe also got some food from his mom. Many times during the following two years that I was in California at school, Joe took food to mom and the girls. He was very good to them, even though mom didn't exactly approve of him. Virginia went with him to the various dances and parties so that no other girl could claim him, and then she would write to me and describe what they had done. In spite of her feelings, mom took good care to watch over Joe too. When my school companions realized that I had a boy friend in Salt Lake, they wanted to know his name and I would say "Joe Nemelka." Somehow it always came out "Jonah Melka," and for a long time they would ask me how Jonah was.

While I was in California during the years 1932-1934, Joe had many invitations to go places—ward parties, basketball games, and dances. He didn't want to

go with anyone but me, and since I wasn't available he took Virginia to these places. I talked with her and she told me the following things about my sweetheart.

During this time, Joe didn't have a job. If he worked at all, he helped his dad at the Denver & Rio Grande Depot doing janitorial work. With no work to do, he spend a great deal of time at my mom's house. Whenever she, went to Tooele, or went to the temple, or occasionally worked at Sweet's Candy Co., Joe was the babysitter for Betty, age eight, and Charletta, age three. He was good to them as he had had a lot of practice tending his own two little sisters, Esther and Mary. Mom felt very safe leaving her two little ones with Joe. He was so morally clean that she didn't worry at all. Joe was much like a father or an elder brother to my sisters. Charletta told me that he was the only father that she had ever known and that she would take his word above all others when it came to Gospel Doctrine and our beliefs.

When he took Virginia with him to the various places, he never once became overly friendly or touched her in any way. He was kind and considerate to her and respected her as his girl friend. He always introduced her as "Gayle's sister, Virginia."

Virginia remembered an interesting occasion one winter when the basketball team had to play ball at Jordan High School. It was freezing cold, but Joe was determined to play with the team. Virginia said that they nearly froze to death before the game was finished, but she remembers his determination.

Mother told Virginia that she hoped that all the girls married good boys like Joe as he would eat anything that he was fed. That was always true—Joe was a good eater and enjoyed well prepared food. He would often bring fresh cantaloupes to the house or milk from their cow. He watched out for them and, when he could, gave them

When Joe was the lead in the Road Show (he was Depression), Virginia had to travel around with him to keep the girls away.

We didn't "double date" as Joe and I only spent about fourteen months together out of the three years that we knew each other. I was in school eighteen of those months in California, and he spent one month in Montana. So, nineteen months from thirty-six didn't give us too much time, and we spent four months just getting to know each other.

Joe's two brothers, Walt and Nephi, were so difficult for me to deal with that I very seldom went to his home at 1254 So. Redwood Road. As a result, Joe and I would just ride around. Once, when Joe had been out all day working and had been in a hurry to get to my house, he suggested that I go home with him in the dark so that he could wash his feet as he felt that they were dirty. So we went to the back of the house, he took off his shoes and socks, and he washed his feet in the well. He was certainly not embarrassed about doing this washing as he wanted to feel clean. He was always very immaculate about his clothes.

When we went to Stake Conference together, the girls all turned around and looked at me and frowned, and I deliberately put my head on his shoulder so they would recognize that he was spoken for. He wouldn't let me do that for very long, but at least the girls knew what I was doing. He was such fun to be with, I could understand how they felt. He told me about his mission from the beginning to the end. I felt that I knew his companions as well as he did. Once, we were emptying my mom's wash water from the machine in the basement on Jefferson Street, and all the while we discussed our future home. Joe told me before we were married what he expected out of our marriage. I remember that we read his



California, December 1933



patriarchal blessing wherein it says that he would have many children. He first asked me how many I thought “many” was. I told him it was a few, and he persisted until I named a number. I can’t remember which number I said. Then he told me that he wanted a full quiver of children which was twelve (according to the Bible). After we had discussed this idea many times, I consented to have as many children as I could. Then he patterned our whole life because he told me very frankly that the Church was his whole life and it came first and always should be first, no matter what. The Church did always come first with Joe, and I’m grateful that I loved him enough to do as he wished. I never remember standing in his way when he had a job to do for the Lord. He thanked me many, many times for my cooperation.

The events leading up to our marriage on October 1, 1934 were not the happy times that were to be expected in anticipation of marriage. Mother, in the summer of 1934, after I had graduated from Visalia Junior College, was very unhappy that I wasn’t going back to Fresno State and finish my education. She wanted me to get a teaching certificate and then help to send Virginia to school. She continually criticized Joe and me, in spite of all he had done for her. She like him as a man, but she just absolutely didn’t want me to get married. We argued all summer, and many bitter words came from both of us. Finally, in September, mother literally threw me out of the house—she had Virginia and Betty carry my cedar chest down the stairs at 777 South Fourth East and put it on the front porch. Joe had an aunt living east on Eighth South, and he carried the cedar chest on his shoulder to her place so that Mom wouldn’t destroy it. I had nowhere to go so I went to live with Joe’s family out at 1254 South Redwood Road.

Nephi and Walt were living there too, as were Esther and Mary, and there were enough complaints about our

imposition on their mother that, instead of getting married on October 8 as we originally planned, Joe decided we should get married on October 1. Ella and Paul Putscher, who lived just south of my in-law's house (1306 So. Redwood Rd.), offered their two front rooms to us for a temporary place to stay. Joe was working at the city cemetery getting \$90.00 a month, and we decided we would take her two front rooms and pay her rent.

Sister Harold B. Lee gave me a shower along with several other people. We met with President Harold B. Lee on Sunday, September 30, 1934, and he gave us our recommends. Elizabeth Nemelka refused to come out of her room that whole Sunday, and I never did feel that she wholly accepted me. She had already picked out a German girl for Joe. Joe told me later that she did accept me, but I was always doubtful.

We were married on the 5 o'clock evening session at the Salt Lake Temple on Monday, the first day of October 1934. Joe forgave my mother for what she had done and said to us. He said he had to be forgiving before he could have me sealed to him. I remember that when we faced each other over the temple altar, he was as white as a sheet. I was still bewildered by all that I had seen and heard, but I did remember that I was to be sealed for time and all eternity to the man of my choice. Father Carl Nemelka and Rudolf Hahn were the two witnesses. My mom had a light supper prepared for us at home (money was scarce—we had tuna fish salad), and we spent our honeymoon at the old Sutton Hotel on State Street. It has since been torn down, but it was a beautiful place to me that evening.

The following excerpt from my journal was written November 15, 1934, about 45 days after we were married.

There are two very important dates in my life which changed my future —On March 13, 1929, my father left us for his higher mission. His death left a void in my heart and life which only my faith and hope of a heavenly reunion have been able to heal.

In November 1931, I met the boy to whom I gave my love. Joseph Nephi Nemelka and I met on the Stake Board of Sunday School of Pioneer Stake. He had returned from a mission to Germany and they put him in charge of the Old Testament Department with Sister Logena Tadge. I was the assistant secretary to Eric Pollei.

Joseph was made a member of the board in November, but until March he took little notice of me. Then the Church finals of the M Men Basketball Tournament were held in Ogden on March 10, 11, 12. He was telling me about the games and I remarked that I had never seen one. He offered to take me with him and some of the boys and that was my first date. He took me to the contest on the tenth, but on the twelfth of March I had a date with just him alone.

To me he was a perfect, ideal “Mormon” boy. I was young and I soon was dreaming romantic dreams about this young returned missionary. All summer long he visited me. However, no word or mention of an engagement or marriage was mentioned. I was just Joe’s “girl.” Finally, September came and I went to California to go to the Visalia Junior College. That winter I stayed with my aunt, Mrs. Homer T. Hart, and made many acquaintances. For Christmas, Joe sent me a diamond ring but it was only a present. When I returned home in June, Joe was in Montana thinning sugar beets with other fellows from the Poplar Grove Ward and he

had made no plans to return home. He had decided to wander around the United States for a while until the depression changed. On my eighteenth birthday, I wrote him a letter which brought him back to me forever.

For two months we were in paradise and then once more September came. On July 20, 1933, Joe asked me to become his wife. That winter I was very lonely without him by my side in Visalia. During the Christmas holidays we had planned for me to go to Los Angeles and meet him there. My aunt didn't understand and refused to let me go. She said that if I did go, I couldn't go back to Visalia and finish school. Joe said that he haunted the bus station waiting for me, but I didn't appear. The agony and grief I went through left me determined to quit my school in June and stay with him in Salt Lake. I knew how much I loved him and I couldn't stand any more separations. I graduated from Visalia Junior College but didn't go on to Fresno.

This boy of mine had stepped right into my heart. With his charming, boyish smile, his beautiful moulded body and his manners, he could easily have been the desire of many girls, and he was. I have always been religious by nature. When I was a little girl, I couldn't stay away from Sunday School. This boy was very religious, deeply and sincerely. His religion, his church, and his Heavenly Father meant more to him than his life. I worshipped him before I married him, and all he is to me is perfection.

We were married in the Salt Lake Temple, October 1, 1934. I promised him before the altar to be his wife for time and eternity. I pray that the Lord

will bless me as a wife, that I may bear him many children and that I will be worthy to come forth with him on the morning of the first resurrection day.

