

My Memories of Morgan Smith

It is July 1951. I am sitting in the Champion Community Hall waiting for the family of Morgan Smith to enter the hall which was being used as a chapel for his funeral. The time seemed to drag and I wished they would hurry and yet I dreaded the time I would see them come in without Morgan. Morgan! What a man he was! He had been part of my life all my life. Well not quite all, because I could remember the first time I saw him. Now as I waited, my mind took me back twenty years to my first acquaintance with him. Was it only twenty years? It had been my whole life. At that time twenty years seemed like forever.

As I sat there reminiscing my mind replayed that first memory. It was a Sunday, early in 1931. I had just turned 5 years old but I can remember it vividly. We were holding our meetings in homes of the members as we were a very small group. Before the meeting began I can remember quite a commotion as everyone present was shaking hands and giving hugs to a complete stranger. At least to me he was a stranger. Everyone expressed joy at seeing him again and I didn't know who he was and no one would tell me. I had been only three when he left on his mission so of course I didn't remember him. I suppose no one even thought that it was necessary to include a little five-year-old in the conversation. I still remember feeling a bit angry because I knew everyone else knew something I didn't and that put me at a disadvantage.

Gradually I made the connection and began to know Morgan. From then on he became ~~one~~ of my best friends. He was everyone's best friend. He was 25 years old, tall, handsome and single, and I'm sure every young lady for miles around would have been very happy to have his attentions. Even my little sister who wasn't born until the next year grew up saying she was going to marry Morgan. I think she was the only one who dared say it out loud.

When I was twelve Morgan was Sunday School Superintendent and asked me to be the Secretary. I was almost speechless, and said I didn't think I could do it. He opened his notebook turned to a special page and told to sit down and read this poem and then come back and talk to him. The poem told of someone saying Lord, get some one else or wait till I get through, when he was asked to do something. Then he thinks he hears the Lord say the same thing when he asked for help. After reading that, what could I say. So that was the beginning of five years as secretary. I learned to appreciate Morgan in a different way then. He was very kind and helpful and gave me encouragement.

He also teased me a lot. I was used to being teased by my brothers and my dad so that was nothing new but sometimes I thought he didn't realize I was becoming a young lady and didn't really like to have what he called a 'dry shave' on Sunday mornings. Of course I had to laugh and join in the fun or he would have made it a lot worse. It would have given him something more to tease me about if had said I thought I was too grown up for such games.

The only time I ever had negative feelings toward him was when he got married. And not just because I didn't want to share him. Morgan and Elva Smith were married on 22 September 1937. My mother was in hospital with typhoid fever and we knew she was dying. She died on the 30th of that month just eight days later and I was also a bit angry that anyone could be so frivolous as to get married when my mother was dying!

I soon forgave them and learned to love Elva too. Soon there were babies in the family for me to love. I claimed them as my own and still do. I helped Elva one summer and tended Arlen and milked the cow while the men were in the field. Then there was Eldon and Carol and Richard. I tended all of them while Morgan and Elva went to Lethbridge for an overnight stay. Our family moved away soon after that and I didn't see them for a long time but Morgan and Elva's home was home to me any time I got up to Champion.

After I was married I spent a few days at the farm and it was so good to get out in the country again. I helped Morgan in the field and had a great time. One day we went to his farm that was a short distance on the far side of Champion. He needed to get some repairs for the tractor and while we were stopped in town he suggested that we should have lunch while we were there. The restaurant was also the Bus Depot and as we were eating, a friend on mine got off the bus and came in for a minute. She noticed my wedding ring and asked if Morgan was my husband. Before I had a chance to say more than 'no' the bus tooted and she had to leave. She never did find out why I was having dinner with a good-looking man who was not my husband. Morgan thought that was a pretty good joke. He was twenty years older than me and enjoyed being taken for my husband.

We went back out to the field and I ran the tractor while he went back to town to get some more repairs. As I was finishing a round, a service man from Calgary drove up looking for Morgan. He asked where my father was. I kept a straight face and told him he would be right back. I made another round and by the time I got back Morgan had returned. I didn't tell him of the misunderstanding.

When we got home for supper Morgan enjoyed telling Elva someone thought he was my husband. His story got a good laugh. Then I told my story. Someone else thought he was my father! That also got a laugh and Morgan told me I didn't have to tell everything I knew.

On another day when Morgan wanted me to go out to the field to bring the truck back while he brought the tractor in, Elva put her foot down. No, she said. 'I'm going to have her today. I'm going to teach her how to crochet'. I didn't really want to stay in the house when there was something to do outside but Elva was unshakable. So I stayed in the house and learned basic crochet stitches. We used what we called 'store string'. I made a square of single and double crochet stitches and then started again and did it better. It wasn't that difficult and I made a piece big enough to be a dish cloth. When I left I took with me my accomplishment and some new knowledge. I made another dish cloth and a pair of pot holders. Then I realized I was pregnant and I made a baby sweater. I made more as the years went by. Now my fourth baby was only two months old.

As my thoughts traveled the many miles and days the family started to come into the building. We stood in reverence and awe as Elva came in with her family. Never have I seen anything to break your heart like that scene. I can still see Elva caring a little one, about two years old, asleep in her mothers arms. I can see her long blonde curls rippling down past her mothers arm. I still could not realize that Morgan, my good friend was really gone. I realized that going home to Champion meant going to see Morgan and I wouldn't see him again. I still miss him. But he has left a wonderful family in his place and I love them all.