

IN MEMORY OF
JESS BURRELL COOK
18 November 1996

by Cora Eleanor Cook Jones

To everything there is a season . . .
a time to be born
and a time to die . . .

Time passes more quickly than we realize to become forever a memory. Today we are remembering the past—the life of a dear brother, uncle, and friend to everyone, our dearest Jess.

Parting from our loved ones is a necessary part of life. I have always felt, at times like this, that words can scarcely express the feeling of loss. But in death we find we are drawn closer to one another, and to God . . . heaven seems a little closer.

Jess was a special man that you could write a book about. Although he would ask for no fuss or favors, Jess deserves our words of praise that will be expressed today. We are thankful for his life and the opportunity we have had to know and love him. He was content to see his loved ones have the things they wanted and needed. But as for his own wants, he set them aside for the happiness of others.

Jess Burrell Cook had lived for 90 years when he passed away on, Thursday, the 14th of November 1996, at the Heritage Park Care Center, in Roy, Utah. That crisp autumn morning he fulfilled his desire to return to his Heavenly Home, and his sweetheart, Agnes. Junior arrived to visit Jess within the hour of his passing. It is comforting to know that one of his family was there, even though he had already departed.

Jess was a strong man and a gentle man, whose tenderness and love for you were mirrored in his twinkling eyes. He was strong enough to break a horse, or rope a steer . . . and gentle enough to place a newborn calf on its feet for the first time. He had an ever-ready smile, a hearty handshake, and the special ability to draw people to him.

Born in Avon, Utah on the 29th of June 1906, Jess was the fourth of twelve children of Chloe Leila Burrell and David Hunter Cook. He was raised in Avon. He attended

Lincoln School in Hyrum, and graduated from Avon School. He was baptized a member of the LDS Church on the 30th of June 1918, at the age of 12.

For fourteen years, Jess was the only living boy in the Cook family. His brother Mel was born in 1920, but life was short for Mel. He died at the tender age of nine, leaving Jess alone again with all *those* sisters:

Bessie, Elva, Cora, Dee, Ethel, Janet, and Lavonne.

(David, Bert, and Afton had died as infants.)

As a young boy he helped his father herding sheep. Jess came to love the outdoors and animals. Once, on a trek with Bessie to visit Dad in the hills, they were confronted by a big bear along the way and had to use their wits to pass by without serious trouble.

Jess was almost seven when he met his best boyhood friend, Mel Summers. Mel was five. Immediately they started to play together, and remained lifelong friends. One day at school one of the McArthur twins threw a baseball that hit Mel in the stomach. It made him cry. Jess said, "Does it hurt *that* bad?" Mel answered, "It feels like it went clear through." Jess undid Mel's overalls, looked at his stomach, and said, "Mel, it didn't go clear through, you'll be okay!"

Mel also relates that Roy Forsberg had a young black mare that would run away every time he rode her. Roy thought he had a potential race horse. One afternoon, Jess, Morris Lofthouse and Mel, on his bally-faced mare, were together just west of Jess's home, when along came Roy on his mare. Jess said to Mel, "Let me have your spurs and your horse 'cause I think I can beat that black mare." And he did — he outran Roy on that black beauty!

Jess was the best ice skater in Avon. He would skate from Avon to Paradise on the canal. He could cut a perfect "figure 8." Jess and Morris made a flat sleigh [about 6 feet by 4 feet] with a high front that was horse-drawn. They called them "Go-gins." The ice in front of the school house was like glass. After loading the school children on the sleigh, they would have the horse turn around as it stood in one spot, making the sleigh cut "shines." There were many spills and thrills! The frosty air was full of squeals of delight!

The young kids would go coasting up on the hill south of our home. They liked it best when the snow was crusted and their sleighs could really go fast. The snow was often deep enough to cover all but the top strands of the barbed-wire fence. They would prop up the wire at one point so that they could zip under it as they came flying off the

hill. One time Elva went through the fence at the wrong place and cut her face and hands quite badly.

Jess was a favorite with Ada Nuhn. Some years ago she recalled that Jess was like a little brother to her, and a big brother to her boys. Avon *was* one big happy family!

We had the best folks that ever lived! Mother made the most delicious scones. She would never let anyone go away hungry from our home. When we were kids we took delight in simple things like taffy-pulls, and spin-the-bottle. Oh, the happy hours we spent listening to Dad and Elva play the violin. Janet's talent on the piano added to our fun. Our burdens were quickly laughed away.

Jess could be quite a tease. Dad was very slow to anger and it took a lot to get him roused. Once he took the razor strap to Jess because he was constantly teasing me. That is the only time I can remember my father getting mad!

Jess was a happy man, and always had a grin on his face. His life was garnished with good humor. He liked the smell of hay, the aroma of leather, the comfort of a pair of good boots, and western hats. He liked to watch the dawn coming over the mountains, hear the sound of cattle, survey the hay growing in the fields, and everything to do with horses.

His first car, a classic red Essex two-seater, carried Jess over many an un-oiled road. Being the only brother in a houseful of sisters, it's no wonder he headed for the nearest town on Saturday night. In Logan at the Paladore Dance Hall, he met the love of his life—Agnes Astle of Providence.

After a fun-filled year of courtship, Jess and Agnes were married in Logan on the 18th of June 1931. Jess was a few days away from being 25, and Agnes was almost 24. After their marriage ceremony they stayed the night in Logan. They spent the next day with Bessie & Buf in Hyrum, then returned to Logan. There was no money for a real honeymoon.

Side-by-side Jess & Agnes traveled their journey through life. Being the Depression years, the future was filled with uncertainty. There were hardships and disappointments. A dollar was a good wage for a day of hard labor, and there were no wintertime jobs.

They found joy in being together, in making something special of ordinary things. Their club, the "Nova Semad," held a get-together every other week. There were sleigh

rides, skiing, playing Rook after Church, and hot chili after coasting parties. Jess loved to lie on the floor while Agnes read Western stories to him.

They learned to rely on each other, and their caring grew deeper with each passing year. Jess was put in the Bishopric in June of 1942. The announcement of his calling was made at the burial of his mother. On the 23rd of March 1945, their marriage was solemnized in the Logan Temple

They wrestled the range for a living. They spent thirteen winters at the isolated "Fort Ranch" working for the Bar-B Browning Company. Winter on a ranch is a miserable time. They looked forward to the first signs of spring, after being snowed-in for three weeks at a time. Bishop Keller's dad from Providence would fly his plane over every other day to check on them. A "wave" meant all was okay.

Jess was a handyman, a trail boss, a post-hole digger, and a self-taught vet. He liked rodeos, fast horses, strong coffee, and Agnes's homemade biscuits. He loved the crackle of a campfire at deer hunting time, and especially turning his home into a bunkhouse for the weary hunters. The doors of the Jess Cook home were always open wide to everyone.

His "water witching" skills amazed many fortunate well-diggers. Chloan's granddaughter, Aleshia, remembers vividly how "Unk" charmed her resistant wart away by rubbing it with a cut potato, which he tossed out by the old water pump.

Dads are important to growing boys and girls, and *so* are *uncles*. Although Jess & Agnes had no children of their own, they lovingly cared for and helped raise Ethel's son, Paul Hardy. They loved and treated all their nieces and nephews, as if they were their own children. Favorite pictures adorned their mantle. They eagerly told of their "family's" accomplishments.

Most young boys yearn for a horse of their own, and sometimes wishes come true. Jess caught a little buckskin Mustang mare on Promontory that he gave to Junior. Junior proudly named her Nellie.

Jess was a role model in Doyle's early life. They continued to share this close companionship, as did Mike. Jess felt so bad when Mike slipped off his roof clearing a heavy snowfall. All the nephews showed their love and devotion to Unk by lending their hands whenever Jess needed help. Jess was so loved that he has at least two namesakes – Mike's son, Jess Cook Jones, and Roger Pulsipher's little boy.

Ross & Janet's children grew up with "Unk." When Chloan was a baby, Jess would stop by to see her on his way home from delivering Sego milk. He wanted to see his "little Ooska." To this day he always called her his "Oose." He enjoyed picking up the Summers children to buy them an ice cream cone, or taking them along on his milk route. David, Gordon, and Larry were never without a puppy, because he was always bringing them a new one.

The world needs more uncles like Jess, whose lives are examples and who teach young hearts to find beauty in the simple things of life.

Jess & Agnes lived for a few years in Brigham City. While working at Pioneer Memorial Nursing Home in Brigham, Jess was more than a maintenance man. He was a breath of sweet life to the patients. His presence became a greater comfort to them than a skilled doctor's hands. His sparkling eyes, cheerful humor, and loving ways made the patients look forward to his visits. The patients loved Jess, and so did the Administration.

Jess looked forward to retirement, especially because it meant returning home to Avon. They were excited to build their new home on the site of the old Burrell homestead, where they had spent their earlier years.

After spending fifty-nine years together, Agnes passed away with a massive stroke on Tuesday, the 27th of November 1990. Jess had tenderly cared for Agnes after her initial stroke—cooking meals, doing the washing, and just passing time sitting with her. Jess missed Agnes so much, he said, "Home just ain't home with Agnes gone." He turned his thoughts to joining her.

Dee was always quick to the rescue helping him to get through *another* day, trips to the doctor, and helping with financial matters. It was so thoughtful and caring for Courtney to put up the wrought iron railing around the porch.

The past few years have not been the most joyous for dear Jess. And although he didn't feel the best, he put up a good front when you would visit him at his "Roy residence." Tears came easily, as they do when you're old, or when you're sick enough to die. He would get all choked up, but a smile would soon cross his lips as he remembered a lifetime of memories. His kind, loving, and joking ways made him a hit at Heritage.

How he missed his Avon home, and his friends and neighbors dropping in to gather 'round his table spread with food. He missed Gerald stopping by to visit when he was out checking the canals. He missed seeing Max in his waders out in the canal with his

fishing pole. Friendship meant the world to him, and each of us here today knows what a great friend he was.

He had so much appreciation for all the loving things Chloan did for him, and for her constant visits. He enjoyed the time he spent living in Doyle & Cleo's home. He cherished the special attention Doyle showed him and the tender care that Cleo gave. She was an angel of mercy for him.

This past summer we celebrated his 90th Birthday, and as he departed the festivities, the last words he said were, "Have these parties often!" We will, my dearest brother, and we will miss you with all our hearts. Family love is a miraculous blessing sent from God to give us happiness. Family ties are woven out of tenderness and caring, and this binds our hearts together.

On Sunday, the 6th of October, Chloan and David took Jess on his last journey home to Avon. He delighted once more in the beauty of Cache Valley and in visiting with old friends. He felt peace at the resting place of Agnes, not realizing that in just a few short weeks he would be at her side.

Jess was preceded in death by his beloved Agnes; his parents; three brothers, David, Bert, and Mel; and three sisters, Afton, Bessie, and Elva. He is survived by five sisters, Cora Jones of Clearfield, Dee O Bray of Paradise, Ethel Winslow and Janet Summers of Brigham City, and Lavonne Kimbrell of Livermore, California; and his many nieces and nephews.

Jess lived the American dream
of wide open spaces . . .
His cattle and sheep shared
the water and the grass
with the buffalo, the deer,
the antelope, the hawk,
the badger, the coyote,
and the eagle.

He understood the need to share . . .
He came from a glorious past,
lived in a tormented today,
and now has a certain tomorrow.

May my tender memories of Jess soften your grief. I know he is happy and this thought mellows my own sorrow as I whisper goodbye.

Soon in the east the gray twilight
Will be breaking.
With his old Stetson set
As a halo on his head,
Into his saddle he'll spring.
He'll pull at the reins
And off 'round the Valley go galloping,
Under those bright stars up yonder
A cowboy once again!

Goodbye, my dearest brother.

I know I'll see you again.

I love you!



Poems adapted from *Horse Talk & Other Poetry*, Larry M. Slade, 1994; *Heaven on Horseback*, Austin & Alta Fife, 1989; and a line or two from *Back At The Ranch*, Colen H. Sweeten, Jr., 1992.