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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE HENRY BLUNCK

Compiled from tapes made by his grandchildren,  
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## THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE HENRY BLUNCK

I, George Henry Blunck, was born at Rexburg, Idaho, February 26, 1905. Rexburg was in Fremont County at that time, but later another county was formed and that put Rexburg in Madison County. My father was Hans Henry Christian Blunck and my mother was Hedwig Howells. My parents were devout members of the LDS Church. They were married in the LDS temple in Salt Lake City and I was born under the covenant.

Our home was of log construction, having just been built in 1904. It was located on the east side of Rexburg, on 3rd East Street. My grandfather was one of the first leaders of the church in the Schleswig-Holstein district of Northern Germany. He met the missionaries there. Grandfather was installed as the branch president there in Northern Germany. His parents all joined the church; brothers, sisters and friends, about 1895. There was often persecution and they were often prevented from having the privileges of assembly. They gradually worked at it and did finally get better results.

My father came to this country when he was 14 years old with his aunt. The missionaries escorted them over. They came piecemeal wise, first one and then the other. Finally the whole family was here. They situated themselves in the sugarhouse area, near 21st or 27th south. Through the influence of some of the missionaries, they were able to get situated with a place to live. My father moved to Rexburg in search of employment. He had a chance to lease some land, taking in on a share basis. Later on the ultimate goal was to accumulate a homestead, which they did. You see, the Homestead Act gave each one a chance for 160 acres of land. My grandfather and father homesteaded 160 acres 12 miles southeast of Rexburg. The stipulation of that act required a certain amount of improvement of the land, like a building, a shed, a corral, or a barn. They built the place up and made it quite nice. They eventually broke up the sod and sagebrush and planted wheat on about 20 acres. They next year they added another 40 acres to it.

My father was 21 when he moved to Rexburg. He later married a girl from Rexburg. Our home was of log construction. We soon abandoned that place in Rexburg to move on to the homestead. Up until 1916 we lived on that ranch right out of Rexburg. In 1916 the situation for schools cropped up. We had a one-room school house which gave us some of the fundamentals of education. We found we needed more schooling, so we moved to Rexburg and from thereafter I started the 6th grade and did 6th, 7th and 8th grade there at Rexburg Central School. From there I went to Ricks College which, at that time, was a highschool. I had 4 years of highschool and 2 years of college. I didn't go the farthest in school, but I enjoyed it and we had a good time.

I remember my baptism. There were four boys and girls from the branch that were baptized that day. They took us out to a little creek which was quite cold. The water came right out of the mountains there and supplied

On the 7th of July, 1925, I arrived in Zurich Switzerland. I knew one or two words of German which wasn't much. When we arrived in Cologne, Germany the missionaries I was with were to have sent a telegram ahead to notify the folks in Zurich that I was coming. When I got to Zurich, no one was there to meet me. I had this address where I was going, but not knowing who it was. I got me a taxicab and gave the cabby this address. I ended up at the home of the district president, who was a local member and spoke half english and half german. He wasn't at home, but his wife and children were there. They couldn't speak any english. I spent nearly the whole day waiting for the district president. I felt kind of strange, not being able to communicate. I met this district president that night. He was a family man, making his living as an architect. He worked all day long at his job. I met with him that night. We had a chance to talk with some of the others and he assigned me to work with a certain elder in the Zurich District. He was an american by the name of Elder Davies. We met with the district president often in the evenings or on Sundays.

I went out tracting on the streets of Zurich. I would say to the people, "I am a missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. I have a happy message for you." I would leave them a tract and tell them to read it. My german improved fairly fast. Sometime later I did my tracting alone.

I wasn't hardly in Germany three months when Elder Hoffman, the district president, wanted someone to work with him. I was appointed to be secretary of the district. I would travel and work with him on Sunday. During the week I would spend my time with this other missionary. It got to be pretty heavy work for me. Before long a branch president died and I had to step in and take charge of the branch for two or three months. I visited many branches and even spoke at funerals. I made most of my progress as a missionary when I was working amongst the people.

I would go out a visit them on the farms and homes. I remember helping one family haul their hay in for the winter. In Germany they don't cut with mowing machines, they cut with a sickle. There I was wacking away at this here hay and hauling it with a little wagon. I made a lot of friends that way. They thought that was great that I could get in and talk and do what they did. I knew the farming business and could help them gather the hay without any difficulty.

These people were mostly Lutherans. Switzerland is divided. They have Protestants and Catholics. You could go into one town and county that was dominantly catholic and you would have to pay a church tax to the Catholic church. In a protestant area you would pay to the Protestant church. I had to pay tax there in Zurich. They have you figure it out in a very good way in their favor. They take your passport away from you when you arrive. When you leave they figure up your tax and release your passport to you upon payment. After spending 21 months in Zurich, I went and payed about 75 francs.

After working in the Zurich area, I spent some time visiting the surrounding branches. I became very familiar with the members and branch presidents. I was then transferred to Solothurn, which is near Bern. I was called to be the branch president and served there by myself, for I had no companion. Some of my

responsibilities included teaching Relief Society. I performed several baptisms in the Aare River. This river is very big, much like the Missouri river. I remember being very cautious as to not lose my footing.

My mother was born in Solothurn, and I ran into two or three of her relatives. My mother left Solothurn and went to Salt Lake with her aunt and uncle when she was two years old. She kept house for them until she was 17 and then married dad. While in Switzerland I met several of my relatives and was instrumental in seeing a couple of nieces baptized.

I was transferred from Solothurn over into Northern Germany into Schleswig-Holstein. My first field of labor was Rendsberg. I worked there with a companion for a time. Then I was transferred from Rendsberg to Neumunster. In Neumunster they didn't have a branch, so I had to work cold turkey there. My companion was Lou Curtis from the Curtis Coal Company from Salt Lake. He was also the district president. He spent much of his time on the road, and only stayed with me once or twice a month. I visited with the people, held cottage meetings, and did get one or two people interested in the church. I rented an old building there, cleaned it up, and remodeled it, all on my own. I even built a pulpit. We had an old heaterola stove in the corner. We held meetings in this place.

In order to put inspiration into the situation, they had the missionaries come in and tract the city, going door to door, putting on a big campaign. They ran an ad in the newspaper, saying that 10 american missionaries would conduct a church meeting in the town hall. I made arrangements for this meeting. The mission president was there and 10 of the missionaries from the district. It fell to my lot to conduct that meeting. There were about 500 people there. It was a scary thing to speak to so many people. One or two became interested in the church. I talked to the mayor, the one I rented the hall from. He says, "You've got something real good going there. I'm amazed at what you folks are doing. But as for me, I can't join your church. I'm too well thought of in this town. I've got to live up to my reputation with the society folks here."

I went to another place where the protestant preacher was very much interested. He and his wife invited me into his home. I had dinner with them and presented to them the gospel. He was nice to us, but said basically the same thing. "I've got my reputation in this town to hold up and I couldn't think of it, but you've got something there. If I join any other church it would be your church. But I can't do it. I've got my job and everything here."

My father and grandfather came from northern Germany. They came from Kiel, Germany, which was on the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal. It was dug many years ago and connected the Baltic Sea and the English Channel. In this town of Kiel where dad was born, grandfather was president of the branch. There again grandfather's sister and two of his brothers lived. I met them and got acquainted with them. It was quite interesting to see your relatives and kinfolks.

I went to a little village not far from Kiel and was very excited to know that the barber, the butcher, the baker and it seemed everybody in the street all bore the name of Blunck. There were Bluncks in that town like there are Smith's in Salt Lake.

I carried on these meetings in Neumuster and other towns with very little success in bringing people into the church.

On January 10, 1928 I was released from my mission. I left the mission field from Neumunster, Germany and took a train to Hamburg, Germany. In Hamburg we took a boat to Harburg and then sailed down the English Channel, stopping at South Hampton. We then sailed on to New York City. We encountered a considerable sized storm on our voyage to New York which slowed our crossing to 11 days. I spent about 10 days in New York seeing the sights and then went on to Chicago for two or three days. I then went to Denver, Colorado. I traveled from Denver to Salt Lake City and then to Rexburg, Idaho. My family was excited to see me. Two of the little ones were not yet born when I left in the mission field. The older ones who were there before I left had changed and I didn't know them. It took quite a bit of time to get acquainted.

I spent just a very short time, in Rexburg Idaho reporting my mission to the stake. I arrived in Rexburg the morning they were having stake conference. As a result, I came in in the morning and in the afternoon session of conference I reported my mission. I was glad to get it over with so quickly.

After spending two or three days in Rexburg, I got on an old Greyhound bus and came to Salt Lake. I wanted to go to Salt Lake to see Rose. Before I left, we became very well acquainted over the years. Our families knew each other and we often visited at conference time. Before I left I gave her a 10 cent ring. She wrote to me quite frequently on my mission. But she had been chasing me for years and finally caught up with me.

It was a rough life in those days. After coming to Salt Lake, it took forever and a day to find a job. That was during the depression. Finally I got a job running a service station. Later on I had a sales job and as I worked my way along I took up a correspondence course and became a bookkeeper-accountant. Grandma and I were married October 3, 1928. The depression started to taper off around 1930. During that time I made about \$15.00 a week. I had put her off and made her wait that many years. It was time I was getting her married. Her father said, "You aim to marry my daughter? What means of support do you offer? Marriage is a serious business and we've got to know you are able to support her. You haven't had any experience in making a living." "Well," I said, "I'll try the best I can." He didn't feel very sure of my answer.

We lived in a little duplex at 1010 South 8th East for about 2 years. Then we moved to 967 Herbert Avenue which is right through the back yard here. We were there for two or three years. Then we moved to 924 East 8th South. We stayed in that place for the longest period of time up to this point. At this location Grandma had her operation for appendicitis and Bernice had her serious problem with rheumatic fever.

We were married two years when Bernice was born. I went into the hospital delivery room. I was worried sick about it. My wife was more worried about it than I was. She had quite a struggle. I was quite proud of that baby. I thought it was a real nice baby. Bernice was born in July and Marilyn was born in January, two and a half years later. That was the size of our family, two children. I got so I just loved them. I got used to it. It's hard at first, you know. I think I did my share of tending them, helping them and kidding them along.

Later I worked selling laundry and cleaning door to door. I soon switched over to keeping their books for them. I then took a job as an accountant for an iron and metal company. I worked there for about two and a half years. As World War II broke out I obtained a job as a civilian employee at Fort Douglas. We wanted a military job because it payed more money. Rationing wasn't too bad. For shoes it was worse. We saved our coupons every month for shoes for the kids. Sugar and margarine was rationed. Everything was curtailed to some extent, but it didn't effect us too much.

All of a sudden the war was over and they gave me 15 days notice. The place was closing down. We took the opportunity at that time to take a vacation to Saint George. Upon returning from St. George, I found several part-time accounting jobs which kept me busy for a time. I was offered a job at the county recorder's office and worked there for five years. I was then offered at Pearson's hardware store in Sugarhouse and worked there for seven years. I quit Pearson's and went to Utah Packers' and Landes and Sons. Landes and Sons were investment brokers. They worked along with Utah Packers' to produce canned goods and frozen food products. Due to illness I dropped out of the labor market except for part-time work.

I inherited the curse of ulcers. They were bleeding ulcers and at one time I lost almost all the blood in my body. My real trouble came when I had this accident down in the basement, losing the use of my legs. I was drilling through some timber and pushing with all my heart. All of a sudden this drill bit went through the timbers and the repercussion of the sudden jerk caused my sixth vertebrae to bleed out and rupture. That's why I'm crippled today. That vertebrae has gone bad on me. I have, of course, been lucky to have fairly good strength in my arms and hands. My lower anatomy is paralyzed.

Some of my church activity included being elder's quorum secretary, elder's quorum counselor, seventies quorum president, counselor in the Sunday School presidency, ward clerk for a total of about 15 years, stake missionary, counselor in the high priests, auditor for the stake and home teaching coordinator for the high priests. I can say I have faithfully worked at nearly everything they had to offer.

A spiritual experience that has meant a lot to me happened while I was in the mission field. I was called on one Sunday afternoon to speak in sacrament meeting. I had prepared my talk before hand. At this sacrament meeting there came a man who was bitter against the church. He came in with the full intent of causing trouble. He had been in prison for four years. During the time he was in prison, his family had taken a great, active part in the church and he was boiling mad about it. He was planning on causing trouble. I gave the talk and my testimony. It so affected his

decision that he changed right about face and worked for the church ever after. His whole family was then in the church. He was originally from the holy land, from Afghanistan. Then the authorities of the church came along and picked him up. He was called to be mission president in the holy land. His name was Peranian. His wife was German. They were called to go to the holy land to open up this new mission. I feel like I had a little part in changing that man's life and get him to join the church and do the things he should do. Later on he moved to Salt Lake and Logan. His children and some of his family are still here. I visited with him here. It was quite an experience over the years to know I had some little part in helping someone do something with their life to make it better and different. He'd been a salesman and got mixed up somehow for embezzlement. That little experience was a testimony to me that where the work of the Lord goes forward, people get their testimony and are able to serve the Lord better. He certainly did. He and his family was certainly a testimony to the church in the Swiss German mission.

I've always had, since I was very young, a very firm testimony of the gospel. I've loved the gospel and I've worked in the gospel as a deacon, teacher, priest, as an elder, seventy and as a high priest. I've worked in the clerkship of the ward. As a young man I was Sunday School secretary and I've always loved and wanted to be doing in the church. My father and my grandfather both joined the church when they were young. They believed the church to be the only true church. They believed they should spend their time doing all they could to keep the church going. Therefore, my grandfather was branch president in Germany. My father was branch president and later bishop in Idaho. So I naturally accepted what they were trying to do as the only real thing to do, to get all you can out of the gospel through working. I've always felt good in having the opportunity to serve and to do some good to somebody. That is why I have always believed and always will believe that the gospel is true. The priesthood exists in this church and is a power we cannot deny. The power of the priesthood is the only reason the church grows and exists as it is. I have a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have a testimony of the book of Mormon. I have a testimony of Joseph Smith. I know the things they did and inaugurated in the church are true and are of God. I firmly believe in Jesus Christ and in his Father and in those that have cared for the church through the years. I am firmly convinced that our prophet, Spencer W. Kimball, is a prophet of God and is a true prophet, which we should look to for guidance and help where spiritual matters are concerned. I believe the family is deeply seated in the tradition of love and respect of the gospel.

I have had, throughout the years in my activity as a church member, and member of the priesthood, the respect, love and help from my wife and family, in carrying out the principles of the gospel as we understand it. I'm thankful for my family and my wife and for the many things they have done to foster true religion in our lives. I've had great respect for the church in the administration of the ordinances of the gospel. I can remember back in 1913 when I was baptized. I was baptized on the 31st of May, 1913. I still have great respect for that day. My father and two or three of the other brethren took us over to a canal and baptized us. There was plenty of water. You weren't sprinkled on, you were baptized in reality. That was a great event

in my life to know that I was baptized by immersion, the only true way of baptism. I've had great respect over the years for the priesthood, for the great work the priesthood plays in our lives and in the church. I've been present on many occasions when people of high standing in the church were ordained to various offices. It has impressed me and given me courage to know the priesthood is really the ruling power in the church. I have had many experiences that would tend to give me greater faith and I have used them for faith promotion for my life. I recommend to each one that they spend as much time as possible in studying the regulations of the church, studying the gospel, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the many things pertaining to the church itself. Read about the admonitions that were given to the presidency of the church throughout the years and find out just why certain gifts and blessings are given. You will find great joy and great activity in the church by reading back through the lines and finding out why people join the church, why people have the priesthood, why they have Sunday School, and why they have all the other activities in the church.

I really have a firm testimony and I give it here in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



ROSA MARY SCHWAAR BLUNCK

I was born in Salt Lake City, Utah on March 25, 1901 and have lived here all my life. My parents were born in Germany and came to Utah in 1893. There were four boys and another girl making six children. Three of the brothers are deceased.

We did not have much in those days and worked hard to help out. My father was a baker and finally bought his own shop and we were all put to work there. Mother's health was not the best so we two girls had many chores at home, too.

We did not get the most schooling. In those days when you reached the eighth grade you graduated then went to high school, but eighth grade was as far as I could go.

George and I were engaged before he left for his mission to Germany in 1925; and he came home in February 1928. We were married October 3, 1928. Our girls had an open house for our Golden Wedding which we enjoyed.

In September 1980 I went to Hawaii with Marilyn and her family to meet her son, David, who had just been released from his mission to Australia. We spent 11 days there. It is such a beautiful place to see and I enjoyed it very much.

We had two daughters; Bernice, married to Roy Smith, and Marilyn, married to Earl Gilbert. They have been so good to us over the years. We love them very much. Now we have seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

George is in a wheel chair now having been paralyzed several years ago. We have been living here for 39 years. It was my parents home and where I spent my childhood.

Rosa S. Blunck



1928

*George and Rosa  
Blunck*



1978

## ROSE BERNICE BLUNCK SMITH

Rose Bernice Blunck was born July 24, 1930 in Salt Lake City, Utah; the first daughter of George Henry Blunck and Rosa Mary Schwaar. She attended Hamilton Elementary School from kindergarten through fifth grade. At this time the family moved in with Grandpa Schwaar after Grandma Schwaar had passed away. Emerson was the school she finished her elementary education at. Then it was on to two years at Roosevelt Junior High and two more years at East High School. Soon after graduation she started working at Freed Motor Company, where she worked for some two and a half years. Then almost a year later she worked for Mountain Motors for about six and one-half years. In the meantime, between work, came marriage and the birth of children.

Bernice is married to Roy Burrell Smith, who is the son of Burrell Swanson Smith and Elva Leone Richins; and was born in Pueblo, Colorado on December 23, 1931. He later lived in Denver, Colorado for a short time and then moved to Coalville, Utah.

During the years they have worked for many of the organizations of the Church. Roy has particularly enjoyed working in the Mutual and with the youth, and being with his own children during their growing-up years; and Bernice has spent much time in the Relief Society.

Our eldest son, Dennis George Smith, was born July 15,

(Rose Bernice Blunck Smith)

1950 and married Pauline Cundick on October 17, 1969. They have a daughter, Jamie, born October 11, 1976, and a son, Scott, born June 9, 1978. They are expecting a new addition to their family this September.

Dennis loved camping, boating, and all outdoor activities as a young man (still does when he gets a chance to enjoy them now). He was always active in leadership positions in the Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting. Later he enjoyed working with the youth and directing athletics in his stake. He has been an Alternate High Counselor and just was released as the Bishop of the Sugar House Ward. He graduated from Utah Technical College in architectural drafting and is now in the construction business.

Our second son, Gregg Burrell Smith was born on October 8, 1956 and married Julie Whitfield on May 17, 1978. They live in West Jordan with their son Tyler who was born on March 6, 1979.

Gregg now works with the same company as Dennis. Before his marriage he served two years in the Milan Italian Mission.

During his high school days Gregg became interested in photography and was on the staff of the yearbook for both school and seminary. He spent most of his teen-age summers working at Engh Floral developing a love and understanding for plants and growing things providing himself a fun hobby now. Gregg has recently worked in the Sunday School Presidency, been a Primary teacher, and is in the Elders Quorum Presidency.

Lori Gae Smith, our oldest daughter, was born on July 14,

(Rose Bernice Blunck Smith)

1959 and was married to Larry C. Anderson on April 20, 1978. They are the parents of daughters: Heather Lynn, born on January 12, 1979, and Melanie Anne, born May 4, 1980. They have just recently moved into their new home in West Jordan after putting in much hard work to complete it.

Lori was an excellent student during her junior and senior high school days and completed one year at B.Y.U. toward a nursing degree before her marriage. She now enjoys being a devoted wife and mother. She has worked in Primary both before and after marriage. She is an excellent seamstress and enjoys artistic crafts.

Our youngest daughter Cherylanne, "Cherrie," was born February 12, 1966 and now uses her sweet and persuasive way of keeping her parents in line now that she is the last child at home.

She enjoyed tennis, bicycle riding and swimming. She has graduated from Primary and enjoys the activities of the Young Women's Organization. She is about to graduate from Churchill Junior High School.

Cherrie has spent the last two years in and out of the hospital, having undergone leg surgery three different times. This has meant much time spent at home recovering with school and seminary teachers coming to teach her at home. She has worked hard to learn on her own and gets good grades. She likes to find and try new recipes and is a good cook. She is currently taking a tole painting class.

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MARILYN BLUNCK GILBERT

Marilyn Blunck Gilbert was born January 16, 1933 of goodly parents, George and Rose Blunck, and a sister to Bernice.

Born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah. Attended Hamilton and Emerson Schools, Roosevelt Junior High School and East High School.

Met Earl Gilbert on the 4th of July at Lagoon resort. Married the following March 24, 1955 in the Salt Lake Temple.

Built our first home in Sandy, Utah where David was born January 9, 1959. Moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1960 and lived there three years.

Our second son, Michael, was born on October 30, 1962 in Albuquerque. Shortly after his birth we moved to Woodland Hills in Southern California. We made lots of trips to Disneyland with family and friends while residing there.

Salt Lake called us back again; and we had our third son, Steven, born December 12, 1968.

We built us a lovely home in Holladay, Utah and were enjoying it very much when the call came to move again. This was a hard move. We made three trips to California before we decided we could sell our lovely home and go. It proved to be a very good move and we fell in love with San Jose, California. The climate is ideal.

Marilyn Blunck Gilbert (Continued)

The boys grew up loving all kinds of ball. They all played in the Little League Baseball; all three being pitchers.

David achieved Eagle Scout and fulfilled a mission for the Church in Sydney, Australia.

Michael just graduated from High School where he played on the baseball and basketball teams. He keeps busy working for Alpen Pantry, a cheese store, in the nearby shopping mall.

Steven just graduated from grade school and is very involved in baseball. His team won the championship last year and is well on its way to do the same this year. He earns his spending money by delivering papers.

Marilyn works part-time at Bullock's, a very expensive department store.

Earl just changed employment and has joined Bennett Paint as Credit Manager; so once again we will be moving.

As of right now we don't hold any positions in the Church, but we are still active. Earl just finished a stake mission and Marilyn has been teaching Relief Society.

David attends B.Y.U. but works at Ford Aero Space in Mountain View, California during the summer.

See you all in Salt Lake once again.

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