

Grandpa Kimball Jenson was born in 1898. He had a very unique upbringing. His parents owned a farm in Cedar Valley, but they spent their summers on Cedar Mountain, near Panquitch Lake, where his father, Heber Jenson operated a water-powered sawmill that was responsible for producing the lumber that, among other things, enabled the building of the original building(s) that founded what ultimately became Southern Utah University.

<https://ironcountytoday.com/2025/07/10/jensen-sawmill-miracle-up-the-mountain/> While Grandpa Heber was cutting timber and sawing lumber, his wife, Laura was running an alpine dairy on the mountain, milking anywhere from 10-20 cows by hand, to make cheese and butter to sell in the surrounding communities. So, Grandpa Kimball grew up milking cows, farming with horses, and moving livestock back and forth with the seasons, which helped prepare him for his ultimate occupation as a livestock man (or Stockman, as they were known), who moved his livestock from the valley to the mountain and back again, with the seasons.

Around the Cedar City community where he operated, Grandpa Kimball was well known as a very capable, competent and respected Stockman, with a love for good horses. Several of the pictures that exist of Grandpa prove this point. And there is no question that Grandpa was generally more comfortable with his animals than he was with most people. But despite that, with his wife, Grandma Elene Jenson, they ended up with a productive posterity of six children (Garth, David, Juliene, Kim, Sara, and Scott), 24 grandchildren, and many great-grandchildren. Despite the fact that he was an introverted stockman, through his own shortened life and the lives of his posterity, Grandpa made his mark on the world. Unfortunately, Grandpa's hard-working life ended at the relatively young age of 63, before many of his grandchildren even got to know him.

The peak of Grandpa's livestock operation essentially coincided with the Great Depression and World War II, when times were tough, and good help was hard to come by, so Grandpa made do by doing much of the work himself, often at the expense of his family and family life.

Grandpa's sheep operation followed the typical migratory, nomadic production model of Western sheep operations at the time, where the sheep were wintered on the desert west of Cedar City, sheared at Iron Springs, and then trailed to the farm in Cedar Valley for lambing, before moving the sheep gradually across the valley, first to the homestead at Ashdown Gorge, and then higher on the mountain to spend the summer, much as he had done with his parents when he was growing up. Because of all this moving around, he lived primarily in a mobile sheep camp that stayed with the herd. He would spend his days tending the sheep on a saddle horse, with the help of herding dogs, and sleep in the camp wagon at night. The usual routine was to cook one meal a day, about lunchtime, consisting primarily of standard Sheepherder fare of mutton, fried or dutch oven potatoes, and sourdough biscuits, relying on leftovers for the other meals.

While most of Grandpa Kimball's life was spent tending his livestock, Grandma Elene was holding down the fort at home, and shuffling food and supplies back and forth. Again, these were hard times. To make ends meet and live as self-sufficiently as possible, with some help from her children, Grandma Elene tended a large garden, canned and preserved a lot of its produce, and milked a cow, which she rarely got a break from. But those were different times.

In those days, milking a cow was considered to simply be a part of a woman's daily "household" chores.

Despite a variety of challenges, the sheep market was quite strong and stable up through the end of WWII. One of the primary reasons for this was the strong demand and corresponding price for wool, which was used extensively in military uniforms, etc. Following the end of the war, though, the Western Sheep Industry experienced its first great collapse, as a result of lower market demand for the food and fiber sheep produced. This put a real squeeze on many operators, including Grandpa Jenson, which often resulted in diversification into cattle, which is something Grandpa also did, and according to his death certificate, he died of a heart attack while working cattle..

Because Grandpa spent almost all his time out on the range, tending his animals, one of the only times that he would take a break and enjoy a little relaxation was during the Iron County Fair, Livestock Show, and Horse Races. Grandpa and all his sons enjoyed going to the horse races, and one of his sons (Kim) did some jockeying and race horse training. And, another son (Scott) owned racehorses most of his life.

Grandpa's agricultural operation was ultimately passed on to his son David, and then to grandsons, two brothers (our first cousins) Garth and Kerry Jenson, who still operate Grandpa's farm in Cedar Valley today. They and their children sometimes wear T-shirts that say "Jenson Brothers Ag -- Five Generations of Farming in Iron County." For that, Grandpa Kimball would be proud.