**Chopping fire wood, the Huckle Berry Finn style.**

In Victor we used fire wood and coal for the main heat in the house and for the cooking. We did have an oil burning stove in the front room but oil was more expensive so the kitchen range was the primary heat source. The cooking stove also had a water jacket in it which heated the potable water. As you can imagine, the kitchen range had to be used almost every day of the year. During the cold months, which in Idaho are most of the time, Dad would be the first one up and start a fire in the kitchen stove to warm the house. Before we went to bed at night someone, again it was usually Dad, would stoke the stove so the house would remain warm as long as possible, but the fire still went out before it was time to get up. During the winter months it was not unusual for Dad to get up during the night to rebuild the fire so the water in the house wouldn’t freeze. From the time I can really remember, it was Roy’s and my job to keep firewood, kindling and coal supplied in the house. I guess that Rich and Bob had their turns but I really don’t remember Rich at home. My first remembrance of him was that he was in the army. After Bob graduated from High School he joined the Air force, so the job fell to Roy and I. Each summer Dad would take us boys in the pickup to the mountains and we would bring back several loads of logs. Dad would then have a man bring a power saw to the house and cut the trees into logs about 12 to 14 inches long. I remember that Roy and I had the job of stacking the cut logs into a shed to keep the wood dry. Half the shed was for wood and the other half was for coal. Most of the time, Roy or I would chop the kindling on Saturdays so we would have enough kindling for the coming week. As Roy and I seldom got along with each other, Mom would have Roy chop wood for one week and then the next week it would be my turn. Chopping a week’s worth of wood could take three to four hours, so we usually did that on Saturday. Besides that, every evening we had to carry out the ashes and refill the coal bucket, plus carry in the next day’s supply of wood. If we hadn’t chopped enough wood on Saturday, then we had to chop what was needed that evening. During the winter, night come early so you had to get started as soon as you got home from school. I remember that with chores during the week and chopping wood every other Saturday, it didn’t seem to leave you with much play time.

There was a single man named Ceiler Westover and his sister that lived just west of town. I don’t know how old Ceiler was, but mentally he was considered to be a moron or had the mental capacity of a young boy. His sister was just crazy and I don’t remember any of the youth in town, that wasn’t totally afraid to go to their house because of her. I remember going with Barbara and Roy selling paper Poppies to raise money for the Veterans. I don’t remember how it was organized or who the money was turned into. I just remember that Barbara, Roy and I were out going from door to door selling Poppies. Barbara had her bike and Roy had our bike. That meant that I had to ride on the back fender with one of them. When we came to Westover’s house, Roy and Barbara decided that it was my turn to go to the house. I didn’t want to but they had decided. I remember that it was a warm sunny day and as I started up to the front door, I saw other adults in the front yard. I continued towards the front porch but about half way there, someone screamed. I didn’t know who it was but I throw the poppies into the air and ran. As I reached the gate I saw Barbara and Roy riding the bikes just as hard as they could go down the road. They weren’t waiting for me so I just ran as hard as I could.

I remember that Ceiler was a little taller than my father, but he was very strong. Dad often let Ceiler work for him doing odd jobs at the slaughter house. I remember Dad giving him some meat for his help, but other times I think Ceiler came to the slaughter house just to have something to do. He liked being with people and especially boys. Grandma seemed especially concerned to have him be around us and at that age I didn’t quite understand why, because Ceiler was so strong, he could chop my share of wood in ¼ the time it would take me. I don’t remember Ceiler helping Roy, but he often came over on my Saturday. He would invite me to go to the drug store for a pop or some candy. I would tell him that I couldn’t do anything until I got my wood chopped. To this he always asked if he could chop my wood for me. I would tell him no, that it was my job. Then he would beg me to let him help. After he begged long enough, I would reluctantly give in, only if he would buy me a milk shake or a candy bar.