Thoughts of Richard Browning.

Richard was the fourth child born to Charles Henry and Viola Rebecca McFate Browning. His siblings were Geneva who was married to Clyde Thomas, Cleo who was married to Norma Bean and Florence. Rich was only 8 years old when his mother quite unexpected passed away. Charles remarried after his wife’s passing as Floss and Rich were still at home and he need a mother for them. Dad married Emma Margaret Hill, a single divorced mother with two children Margaret and Floyd Robert (Bob). To that marriage was born 3 boys, LeRoy, Kenneth H and Dan Irven.

During World War II Rich joined the U.S. Army and went to Basic Training. Rich being 16 years older than I am, my 1st remember of him was that he was in the Army. I remember when he returned and then he was soon off to work. I know that both Rich and Cleo were color blind, but very little else.

I don’t remember anything about Rich and Lois’s wedding but I remember when they came to our home shortly after they were married. I thought that Lois was the most beautiful lady that I had ever seen. She really made an impression on me and I hoped that I might someday have a wife like that. Another thing I have always remembered about that visit. Mom had painted the back porch a light green. Some of us, including Rich, were sitting out on the pouch. As Lois came out, Rich looked at her and made the comment that her dress was the same color as the porch. To this, we all laughed because Lois’s dress was a pretty red.

I remember other hummer’s incidence as to his color blindness. One day Irven and I were riding with Rich and Lois and the subject came up. I asked Rich the color of their car, it was a light green, and Rich said he wasn’t sure. This brought up a few more questions concerning colors until Irven asked him what color is that green light was on the dash. When Rich answered that is was green, Irven said, I didn’t think you could tell colors. Another time that I was with Rich and Lois, in the car, it was fairly early in the morning and there wasn’t any other traffic as of yet, and Rich was driving, Rich drove through a red light. Neither Lois nor I said anything. At the next intersection the light was again red and Rich went right through it. At the third light that had turned green, Rich began to apply the brake and slow down. Lois then spoke up, saying “I know the problem, the lights are upside down. Rich was going on the position of the lit light and not the color.

Rich later told me of some of his military experances. He said that during the Basic Training program he mainly remembered the marching. He said seemed to be endless. He also told of crawling in full battle gear under bobbed wire with machine gun firing live ammunition over their head. He said that during that exercise, a solder crawled into a rattle snake. Without thinking he jumped up and was killed with the machine gun fire. He also told of being marched out into the desert until they were tired and then told that they had (only a short time) to dig a fox hole deep enough that a tank could run over them and they would not get hurt. He said that most of them thought this was a joke and non-saliently started digging. He said that speed changed dramatically when they saw the long row of tanks come over the horizon towards them. He said that as the tank went over them the tracks would sink several inches into the earth under the weight of the tank.

As basic training concluded he said that his company was marched to a nice grassy area. They were seated under the shade of trees and given lemon aid. The Company Commander then spoke to them about the need for Paratroopers. Rich said that they should have been aware that something was up, with the grass; the shade; the lemon aid and the officer not use any foul language. The Company Commander encouraged them to volunteer. He promised those that volunteered that they would never have to march again. At the conclusion they were told that anyone under 21 had to have parental consent. There were 6 young men from the valley that all joined at the same time. All six wrote home but Dad was the only one that gave his permission. Interestingly, Rich was the only one of those 6 that was not killed in action. Rich also told me that as far as the “Never having to March again”, he said that was correct for as soon as they were accepted into Paratrooper Training, they ran to the barrack, rolled up their belongings into their mattress, placed the mattress on their heads and ran to their new barracks. Rich said all the rest of their training was on a full run.

Rich never had to jump behind enemy lines. Several times they were set to go behind the lines but something always came up, usually weather conditions and the jump was canceled. The last jump was a sure thing and their plane was making its final check before leaving the runway when D day was announced. I asked Rich if it scarred him to jump and he said he never got over being afraid but if you hesitated going out the door there was a big boot that shoved you out.

Worked with Rich, during summer school vacation in 1953, 1954 & 1955, helping him with the haying. There are many stories that can be told about those summers.

Rich and I both must have learned about finances, from our father. Dad never was very good at his financial dealings with others. Dad believed that your word and a hand shake was all the contract that you needed. He had many that took advantage of him, but Dad never reminded anyone of their promise to pay. I think Rich had several that took advantage of him. In all the time I spent with Rich I don’t remember of him getting upset at anyone. I don’t recall of him ever criticizing others and I never heard him swore.

As Rich and Lois’s family grew up, I noticed that they bought several Snowmobiles. On one occasion while we were visiting with them I asked Rich how he could afford the snowmobiles. He said that he really couldn’t but he had to because he was losing contact with his boys. Rich explained that his sons were getting some height, where he took after our father who was just a little over 5 feet tall. His boys would play basket ball with their friends and with each other. Rich said that he couldn’t compete with them on those sorts, so he bought a snowmobile and the boys came back. Then he had to buy more as one person was not safe to ride very far by their self, plus they needed enough so that they could all go together. I can tell you that Rich could compete with almost anyone on snowmobils. Mae and I had several opportunities to spend time with Rich and Lois in the Island Park area. Rich took us up Two Top, which in itself is quite a ride. You are on top of the Continental Divide and can see clear for miles, including the Teton Peaks area. The blowing wind made great snow monsters of the trees and would blow a solid pack out over the East side that dropped off more than a straight drop. As we were looking over the valley below, Rich asked me if I wanted to go off the edge with him. I looked at him questioningly and asked him if he was kidding. He responded “No! You just count to three, hit the throttle and lean back. You will free fall 75 to 100 feet when the back end of the snowmobile will hit snow and then the front end will tip down. He said that they had done it before with no problems. He also said that you need two to go together in case one has problems, then the other can help out.” I told him that if he went first, he would be all by himself because I wasn’t going over that edge.

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