

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF HOLLIS CLARK SEAT

The abundant life – John 10:10

It is my desire that the information in this autobiography will be of interest to my family. I plan to name many people who were my friends and had an influence on my life.

I was born on March 21, 1915, to George S. and Laura M. (Neiger) Seat, being their fourth and last child. I was born in their new family home about four miles southeast of Allendale and six miles northeast of Denver, Missouri. The house was of a good size for that time with four bedrooms upstairs. Florence and Mary shared a room, Grandma had a room, and my parents had a room. The space that Curtis and I slept in was not a private room but a large area at the top of the stairs. There were also four rooms on the first floor.

I do not remember much of my preschool years. I was told that I was a sickly baby since I seemed not to be able to tolerate milk. I weighed 12 pounds at eight months of age. I was the “runt” of the family, which probably didn’t have anything to do with my being timid or shy. I think after the first year, I grew very much like a normal child. I do not think I was spoiled because of my health or by being the youngest. In fact, I thought Dad might have favored Curtis a little, but that might be my imagination. He was the first boy in the family.

I was born in the early years of the automobile age. My parents had their first car by the time I was born. It was a 1914 Model T Ford. I remember well when Dad traded for a new car in 1922. It also was a Model T, but it had many improvements, such as a battery, electric lights and a starter.

One of my early memories was attending family reunions. They were somewhat of a bore to me since I was the youngest of all my relatives—but I enjoyed the good food that was set on the table. Another early memory was attending the services at the New Hope Baptist Church. When little boys dressed for church, they wore long stockings and short pants which came together above the knees. I remember my first long dress pants at about the age of eight. At first I felt a little conspicuous, since a lot of boys didn’t get long pants until a later age. I think I got my long

pants earlier because my parents wanted me to make the transition at the same time that my brother did.

Being a farm family, most of our food was raised, so we did not go to town very often. We butchered our cattle and hogs for our meat, and we milked some cows and raised chickens for our eggs and meat. We always had some eggs and cream to sell, which provided some cash to buy needed groceries. Our main town for shopping was Denver, which was six miles from home. During my high school years, Grant City became our main town for shopping. Most of the groceries we bought were items we could not raise such as flour, sugar, salt and pepper. Much of our clothing was purchased ready-made; however, some was made by the women in the family. Some of our clothing was purchased from a traveling salesman who carried a line of clothing with him in a small closed-in wagon pulled by horses. Sometimes he would stay overnight with us and give us some clothing to pay for his lodging and meals. He was a Jew and later opened a General store with his brother in Grant City.

I believe we were a fairly close-knit family. We played games together. In the summer we played croquet and went swimming in a pond or in a river. In the winter we played games on the ice and snow. We fished some and hunted some rabbits which we could sell for 10 cents each. Some young people today say they don't have anything to do. We made up things to do and games to play.

Since my sisters were quite a bit older, I always looked to them as role models. They set a good example for me to follow. Curtis and I always enjoyed doing things together.

All of my grandparents had died 15 to 35 years before I was born except Grandma Seat, who had been a widow for 35 years when I was born and was 63 years old at that time. Grandma was a little woman with lots of energy and a hard worker. She was 89 when she died.

Living in a rural community without much communication with the outside world, I realize now that our world was rather small. Our best friends were usually the ones who lived nearest to us. Our closest neighbors had a boy near my age and we played together a lot. His name was Victor Savacool. He was a nice boy, but very shy. His parents moved away from our community when Victor was about 15 years old. He later married and had one child, but was killed while in the service during World War II.

Our house was one of the better ones in the rural area at that time. We had a partial water system hooked up to a cistern which was dry much of the time, but when we had plenty of rain we could pump water by hand to a pressure tank to give us running water. We had a bathtub but most of the time we heated water on the cook stove and carried it to the tub. The stove had a water tank on one side that kept the water hot in the cold months. We always burned wood for heat and cooking, however; in the summer months we used a kerosene stove for most of the cooking as it didn't throw out as much heat into the room.

During the first 30 years of my life, I would guess that at least 90% of the farmers had no plumbing and used an outhouse and probably 50% of the people in town had no plumbing. Not many of the rural people had electricity until the 1940s. We got our first radio about 1927. It operated on batteries much larger than what we use today.

My first experience of formal education was in September 1921, when I became a student in the first grade at the Dry School District #40. This was one of the largest districts in the rural area of the county, being about three miles square. There were at least 18 families in the district. There were about 33 pupils enrolled that year, and one teacher taught all eight grades. The teacher was Leah Dunfee, who was my teacher for five years. She married Emmett Seat, a distant relative of mine. Leah was the first person outside of my home who had much influence on my life. By today's standard she might not be classified as a very good teacher, but she had love and concern for her pupils and they had respect for her. Since we lived two miles from school, Curtis and I rode a horse to school most of the time. Even though he was three years older, Curtis was not able to handle a horse successfully at all times. In my first year of school I think I was dumped from the horse at least six times, which didn't increase my love for horses. After Curtis graduated from grade school I walked to school most of the time.

We hear a lot being said today about taking prayer out of the school, but I can't remember one prayer being uttered in the classroom in the 12 years I went to school. Prayer in the school would be fine in a Christian community, but in America today with so many religions it may not be practical.

My parents were good Christian people, and our family always attended church—but as I look back I think they were somewhat lax in family Bible study. My grandmother lived with us

and she read the Bible a lot, but she didn't encourage me to read the Bible or read it to me.

In August of 1928, the New Hope Church had a revival meeting in progress with V. F. Walker as the preacher. It seems that every night at the close of the service they would sing “Let Jesus Come into Your Heart.” Then the next day while we were working, I would hear my Dad whistle the same tune. One night as I went to bed my mother told me she was concerned about my soul. I came under conviction, and the next night I accepted Christ as my Saviour. Herbert Morris was the pastor, and he baptized me and I became a member of the New Hope Baptist Church.

My spiritual life was somewhat similar to my physical life. I did not grow very fast spiritually—probably because I did not spend enough time in prayer and Bible study. These things are essential for spiritual growth.

In September of 1929 I enrolled as a freshman in the Grant City High School. Being a timid country boy, it was hard for me to adjust to the “city” school. Our superintendent, Roy D. Brown, was an ex-military man who was strong on discipline, and I respected him, as did most of the other students. I did not engage in any sport activities. I was in a music glee club for one year and was in a music cantata. I think I enjoyed vocational agriculture as much as anything in school. My teacher, Prof. Nuckols, taught me things that I could use in later years when I became a farmer. I graduated from high school in May 1933, which ended my formal education.

During my high school years, the economy seemed to get worse each year. In 1932 money was very scarce. In February of that year when Dad needed to sell some hogs, we had to drive 40 head of hogs through the mud four miles to Allendale, where we loaded them on trucks which were on a gravel road. The 250-pound hogs brought about \$7.00 each, which gave Dad enough money to pay his previous year’s taxes and buy some corn for 15 cents per bushel.

I was able to make many friends during my high school years, and some of these have been my lifelong friends. I did not date many girls during this time; however, one girl became very special to me. After a courtship of two and a half years, Helen Cousins became my bride on May 12, 1935. We were married in the Pattee Park Baptist Church in St. Joseph, Missouri, by W. D. Baker. Our friends, Bill Maxwell and Violet Findley, were the attendants at our wedding. There were five people present at the wedding: the preacher, our attendants, and us. Since this

was on Mother's Day, the church was decorated with flowers for the morning service and we were married in the afternoon. Helen has been a very devoted, caring and loving wife for all of these years. She has been a good mother to our children, always willing to give of herself for their welfare.

In September of 1935 I moved my church membership to the Grant City Baptist Church, where Helen had been a member for about eight years. Jesse Cunningham was the pastor, and he was a dedicated man of God; because of his dedication he had a good influence on our lives. Others pastors who influenced us positively were G. D. Parrack, Truett Baker (the son of W. D. Baker), Jerrold Parker and Ron Hornecker. Helen and I spent many years attending and trying to serve our Lord in the Grant City Church. We both worked with youth groups in Sunday School and Church Training. Helen also worked in Vacation Bible School and youth camps. I served as a deacon for about 50 years and was also a Sunday School director for several years. I was an adult Sunday School teacher at various times.

In 1936 Helen and I bought our first property. It was a four room house about 24 feet square, which we paid \$100 for. We put a basement under the house, put on new siding, roof, windows and doors. We had a nice, cozy house for about \$1,000. We had no plumbing or bathroom, but only the rich people had that at this time. Our yearly income was less than \$1,000 a year. Since we worked at the lumber yard, we got a good price on building materials.

The year of 1937 was not the best year of my life. In May of that year I got three fingers hurt in a power saw. In July I had my appendix removed. Our first son, Gary, was born on September 16, and he died five days later on the same day my mother died. My mother had a heart attack and died about 8:00 that morning. Gary died that evening as the result of a blood clot in the liver. They were buried together in the New Hope cemetery.

The Lord helped us through those trying times. No doubt it strengthened our faith as we relied upon the message of Romans 8:28, which says that "all things work together for good for those that love the Lord." Our second son, Leroy, was born on August 15, 1938. Since we lost our first son, Leroy was very special to us.

In February of 1939 we moved to Huron, Kansas, where I was manager of a lumberyard for three years. We attended a Presbyterian church while living there. On March 3, 1942, our daughter, Laura Ann, was born. Ann also was very special to us since she was our first and only daughter.

In April of 1942 we moved back to Grant City, where I worked in the lumber yard for that summer at \$85 per month. By this time, World War II was getting heated up, so I tried to get into something that would help the war effort. I took employment with the Hercules Powder Company near DeSoto, Kansas, at a salary of \$170 per month. I worked there from October 1942 until October 1945. The first few months while the plant was under construction, I worked as a material checker. After the plant was in operation, I worked in the maintenance department driving a fuel truck. Helen worked for them the last 15 months. Helen worked on the powder lines running a powder press. We each worked for the average wage of about \$1.00 per hour. Since our cost of living was not very high, we were able to save about \$5,000 by the end of the war.

In October 1945, we moved back to Missouri to the farm we had purchased in January of 1945. Our first 200 acres cost us about \$8,000. We purchased another 120 acres for about \$8,500 in 1964. The first few years that we were on the farm our income was small, but we managed to make a living, even though it was meager at times. In 1946 I raised my first crop of corn. It yielded about 60 bushels per acre, which was pretty good for that day as we didn't use fertilizer then. That fall I bought three sows and 29 pigs. The next spring I sold the hogs, and they brought enough money to buy a new "B" Farmall tractor and cultivator, which cost about \$1,100.

The Lord continued to bless us through these years. He blessed us spiritually, physically and materially. We bought our first new car in 1950 for \$1,700, but we traded in our old car for about half the cost. We paid cash for the difference.

On October 28, 1949, our last son, Ronald, was born. He was a lovable child, full of energy like his brother and sister, and he was a joy to our family for the time he lived. In 1953 we were able to take a 10-day vacation and travel through several States we had never seen before. We went through some of Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee. We attended the graduation of Mary, who earned her Master's degree in elementary ed. in Nashville at Peabody University. On the way back home we attended a baseball game in St. Louis. This was the first time we had ever been so far away from home.

In early June of 1954, Ronald attended Vacation Bible School at our church, and he seemed to enjoy it very much and got a lot from it. One day at home, he said, "I want to go

and be with Jesus,” then quickly added, “No, I want to stay and help Daddy.” Ronald died on June 30 as a result of an accident. Because of his child-like faith, I believe Ronald went to be with Jesus.

In August of 1954 our family went to California to visit relatives, and Mary went with us. We were away from home a little over two weeks. We visited my cousin, Averil Morris and her husband, Herbert, who had baptized me. They lived south of Sacramento. We went on south to L.A. to visit my aunt and her family. Aunt Greta Wood was my last living aunt at the time and she died some two or three years later. We enjoyed swimming in the Great Salt Lake in Utah and swimming in the Pacific Ocean which was only a few blocks from Aunt Greta’s place. We traveled about 5,000 miles and spent about \$200 on the trip. The five of us could stay in a motel for about \$6.00 to \$8.00 per night. Gasoline cost about 25 to 35 cents per gallon.

During the high school years of Leroy and Ann, which were the years of 1951 to 1960, we were a very busy family. Church and school activities took a lot of our time. The Baptist churches of the area had youth rallies quite often and the local church had a lot of social gatherings for the youth. Before Leroy had a driver’s license, we always tried to see that he and Ann were able to participate. There were always ball games and music feasts to attend at school. With more livestock and more row crop, I thought I was a very busy farmer. Even though we were faithful to the affairs of the church and attended regularly, we did not take the time for regular family devotions. I hope my family forgave me for not leading out in this endeavor. I can see now that a person needs to take time to “smell the roses.”

After Leroy went to college, then got married in 1957 to June Tinsley and went on to seminary, Ann was ready for college. By this time we were already grandparents. Our first grandson, Keith, was born on August 15, 1958. In March of 1959, Keith became sick with the chicken pox and Helen went to Liberty to take care of him for a few days so his parents could attend classes at William Jewell. I thought I was a young grandpa at the age of 43 years. Helen and I both thought it was great to be grandparents, and it was just as great for five more times. We love them all very much.

Two years after Ann and Dwight were married, Leroy finished seminary and he and June with Keith and Kathy went to Japan as missionaries. This was the beginning of our family living a long distance from us. Two years later, in 1968, Ann and Dwight moved to Seattle. It was rather lonely at times with our family so far away, especially during the holidays. This situation gave us an opportunity to travel to be with family. We were able to see things and places we would not have seen otherwise. We have been to Japan three times. The first time was in 1969, then again in 1974 and 1990. I never did get used to eating with chopsticks and sitting on the floor to eat at a short table, but I enjoyed it.

It has always been a pleasure to have our grandchildren visit us on the farm. Keith probably spent more time with us than any, however Ken and Karen were with us all summer in 1976. Kathy always came here during the holidays while she was in college at William Jewell. Amy and Heidi came to be with us almost every summer while they lived in Washington. Marian and Lauren always seem to enjoy visiting here and we enjoy them. Hopefully, our younger and future great grandchildren will continue to follow the older ones.

In 1978 we started a new venture in traveling by the use of a travel trailer. In addition to spending some time in Texas each winter, we traveled to about 20 other States. Keith and Brenda went with us on one trip east and on one trip to the Rocky Mountains. Amy and Heidi went with us to Colorado and Wyoming to meet their parents.

We have made at least ten trips to the West coast in addition to three trips to Japan. One of the most enjoyable trips was to Alaska in 1981. We spent 16 days at the log cabin with Dwight, Ann, and their girls. Leroy, June, Karen, and Ken were there most of that time with us.

Some of the most recent trips were these: in 1987 we went with Leroy and his family to the northeastern States as we went to visit Keith and his family in Maryland. In 1990 Helen and I went to Japan for the third time. In 1992 we toured the southeastern States, which completed our visits to all fifty States.

In thinking back about the events of past years, there are a great number of people—family and friends—who have been a great blessing to me. First of all were my parents, who brought me into the world, nurtured me, and provided the necessities of life. They also tried to teach me to live a life based on Christian principles.

My sisters and brother and their families seemed to have high ideals and goals, which inspired me to try to do as well. Florence was a history teacher as well as a good mother to her two children, whom she raised by herself after her husband died in 1953. Mary was also a teacher. She was the only one of us that served in the armed services, being a WAC during and following World War II.

She was a world traveler, visiting countries all around the world. Curtis and Vera were hard workers and were willing to provide a home for many people who needed a home. The activities and deeds of my siblings were inspirational and a blessing to me.

After Helen and I were married, I felt the Cousins family accepted me as one of them. Her brothers and sisters and their families have all been good friends of mine.

I have had a large number of neighbors over the years, and most of them have been good neighbors. I take pride in the fact that I have had a good relationship with them. I would like to mention by name the families of Irvin Rinehart, Roland Maudlin, Arthur Raugh, Bill Wimer, Paul Gates, J.V. Stephenson, and a host of other friends that I will not mention, but who have been a blessing to me.

Praise be to God for Helen and the home He blessed us together to establish. I thank the Lord for our children and their spouses and the homes they have established founded on Christian principles.

We both love our grandchildren and the ones that have married have chosen good companions. We are very proud of our great grandchildren as well.

Hollis Seat

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