



Dean W. Hurst

Weber College Student

Ogden, UT

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Rick Randle

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Rick Randle: Tell us a little about growing up here in Ogden and what the attitude was like in school and where you were on December and what was going through your mind then.

Dean Hurst: My mother had started me in school a little early so I graduated from High School at age 17 and while I volunteered for the Air Force previously, I couldn't get in because of eyes, so I was waiting for my entry in the service, which would have been December 4, 1944. With nothing else to do my friend and I decided to enroll at Weber College, then a junior college here in Ogden. I only went one quarter, but that one quarter was full of a number of events that changed my life. There were 400 approximately (this varies with who tells it) but somewhere between 450 women co-eds and 50 men, so we had kind of a ripe field to choose from. It opened up any number of alternatives for us to work on but it was a field of dreams for awhile.

Rick Randle: And you were 18 years old?

Dean Hurst: Well I was only 17 at that time. Girls that were in high school—the popular kids probably wouldn't have looked at you twice, but all of a sudden with a dearth of men, why we became prime candidates. But the downside, in all fairness to the girls, was that there hadn't been a dance. They had socials and we had a lot of fun in that they would have war bond auctions where we would bid for dates, both male and female. We raised a lot of money in those things. The whole student-body kind of evolved around the war, which was natural at the time. Most of us knew we would be going within a short period of time and as Dickens would say, "It was the best of time... it was the worst of times." There were our friends that had left earlier, some who were getting killed. Guys like Dilworth Young, Ensign Richie who were a couple of classes ahead of us in school. So it wasn't all fun and games. We were totally aware of what was happening. But by the same token we decided to make the best of a bad situation and I suppose that's one of the things that led up to the infamous polygamy prance that some people still talk about.

Rick Randle: Tell us about that now.

Dean Hurst: Laurence Burton, who later went on to become a State Representative in Congress was president of the class, a freshman class it would have been and together with him there were a few of us who got together with the women involved in it too and thought it would be a great thing to have a dance. They hadn't had one for a couple of years. We knew we'd have to flesh it out with something more than just a dance because if we were going to do it the way we decided it would work would be, we were ecclesiastical about it. We went to the scriptures and in Isaiah, the fourth chapter in the first verse it says, "In the last days seven women shall take hold of one man saying come, let us be called by thy name." So we went that route. Every fellow had to take every girl that asked him up to seven. After seven he had the right to say no, but up to that point... why that was considered fair game. Then we would top the evening off with a performance of a student-sponsored play, a cutting of HMS Pinafore. Laurence took the role of Captain Corcoran and I was Sir Joseph Porter K.C.B. (First Lord of the Admiralty) and we had this little play in the auditorium before. All of the guys would come in with their various wives. We had, contrary to the people that talk about somebody bringing a flatbed truck with twenty wives, I honestly doubt that. I remember the highest was—one of the fellows had eight, maybe nine of his wives.

Rick Randle: And the girls did the asking?

Dean Hurst: They asked and then you just took whatever means of transportation you could. I didn't have that much trouble. I could load six girls into my car. Laurence borrowed a neighbor's milk truck—a little delivery truck that had little Sunday school chairs in the back that he brought his wives in. It turned out to be a tremendous success. It was true that you'd dance maybe one dance with each wife, six times to go around.

Rick Randle: So the men would dance every dance and if he took six girls with him then they got every sixth dance?

Dean Hurst: That's correct. And they played short dances and they had girl's tag on occasion so that the girls could dance with someone else other than their own husbands if they so elected. And it was a lot of fun.

Rick Randle: Why don't you explain about the six girls waiting once every six times.

Dean Hurst: Well the modus operandi of the dance was you would take your turn dancing once with each wife so you'd go through all six wives in turn, then come back to the first. But it took a little time to do that and the girls were beginning to be bored so they came up with the idea of having a girl's choice, which mixed it up. It was mayhem for a while because for the first time in my life I was an answer to a maiden's prayer. This sudden burst of popularity and I have girls fighting you over for a dance where normally I would have been on the attack mode the other way, it was kind of refreshing to the male ego.

Rick Randle: So the girls got tired of waiting and then even somebody that you didn't bring would ask you?

Dean Hurst: Oh ya... I don't know that I would want to appear that chauvinistic to say they were all lined up but it did open up the gates to whoever wanted to dance with whom and there were some good-looking guys there that had their full complement. They had had more than their seven and didn't have to take any more and girls wanted to dance with them. They stood in line and patted them on the shoulder and everyone was a good sport about it. It was more from the standpoint of fun, and a unique experience, and I have to say that having come from a polygamous family with a great-great grandfather who had three wives, I developed a whole new appreciation for what it took to have four or five girls that you liked and would like to have dated and yet didn't show any favoritism to one more than the other. I've always said that the real trick of that evening wasn't in how you spread yourself over the dances during the evening, it was who you took home first and who you took home last. And again I was scriptural about it. I went to the scriptures and it said, "The last shall be first and the first shall be last." It so happened that the girl that asked me first was a girl named Beverly Farr who I would have liked to have taken home last. So you got to the door taking your first date up and I looked back at the car and there were five little faces all pressed up against the window to see what the term of affection was going to be in bidding the girls goodnight because what you did first you were probably going to be expected to do last, which was o.k. I had six good wives.

Rick Randle: I'll bet that they talked about that for a long time after. Did they ever do any other polygamy prances?

Dean Hurst: I don't know that they ever did. You know that was a product unique to it's time. I ended up going back to work at Weber and spent dearly 25 years full-time working at Weber and we used to talk occasionally. Everyone thought it was such a funny little thing that had happened. I don't believe they could have ever done it again. It wouldn't have had quite the same... it was a little tongue and cheek, but it was also a little bit of necessity and I might add Rick there was one interesting thing... two years later the war was over, all of the servicemen came back, all of the sudden there was about the same number; 450 female students and 1200 and some odd men, so there was a three to one ratio of male to female so the girls had their comeuppance and as I've been quoted as saying, "Sic transit gloria mundi--thus passes away the glory of my world." All of a sudden the popularity I knew in 1944 was considerably erased in 1946 and '47.

Rick Randle: You were here in Ogden during the major part of WWII getting ready to be called up. There was a railway depot that carried every soldier and serviceman or woman to the East as well as to the West. Tell us about what you remember about that railroad.

Dean Hurst: Ogden's Railway Depot of course was a crossroads of the West, far more than Salt Lake even. All of the trains routing through East and West, North and South for that matter, but primarily East and West came through Ogden on the infamous 25th Street. Twenty Fifth Street was finally labeled "off limits" and the MP's and the SP's patrolled that. They didn't act fast enough and there weren't enough of them because you have a train to unload with two or three hundred soldiers or sailors going East or West and it was pretty hard to control but it was wild and wooly and one of our favorite diversions as a teenager was to park our car on 25th Street and watch the girls work the streets. It was open and avowed and the reason that Ogden developed such a reputation at that time was 25th Street or two-bit street. It was pretty wild and it was pretty wooly.

Rick Randle: So a train would come through and stop here for maybe an hour or so, they'd unload it and these guys would head down to 25th Street?

Dean Hurst: That was the only direction you could go. You got off at Wall Avenue and the road headed East. You could go up to Washington Boulevard and a lot of them did. There were many restaurants further on up the street—Keeley's and RosinJacks and the Senate Café... any number of on-limit places where the servicemen would go and the streets would be flooded for a few hours and Ogden was really good about it. We had the girls from the college, the USOs, which would make sure there was some diversion of a more compatible nature with the morals and customs of the times, but by the same token it was a very very vivid and alive street.

Rick Randle: All of the local Utah veterans would come through Ogden either to depart on the train or come home. Did you witness any of that? Were the train stations filled with parents and loved ones saying goodbye or welcoming?

Dean Hurst: You know it's hard for me to even think back. It was a nostalgic time. There were so many farewells as well as later in the war, kids coming home. The train station is difficult to even imagine what it was during the war. I don't have the facts and figures to tell how many thousands of people or how many trains unloaded. There were underground (I don't want to say cavern but...) areas where you could go to catch the trains on the various sides of the track. They're all gone now. You look at the railroad stations that exist today and the only thing there is the main depot where there were many tracks that went under the train's tracks at that time. So there would be a lot of fond and affectionate farewells. There was the train station there and many of the soldiers and sailors—servicemen left from the Bamberger Station. I would dare say that the majority of us entering the service going to Ft. Douglas here from Ogden would go on the Bamberger. At least my older brother who preceded me went that way and I always associated—that's where mom and dad kissed us goodbye and put us on the train and sent us to Ft. Douglas for whatever destinations we would follow up with.

Rick Randle: Ogden also in the war had a POW camp here. Can you tell us what you remember about that?

Dean Hurst: It was out at the area around 2nd Street. It was initially enclosed with a barbed wire fence. It was a POW camp and there were both German and Italian soldiers. I never saw any Japanese there, but quite a number of both German and Italian. The unique thing about this was the Italians—and if you study the history of the war where the Italian Government had surrendered and many of the servicemen... I guess they put them in because they didn't know what to do with them... they were given pretty much (and I suppose it depended on their demeanor and attitude too) but they could walk the streets. They wore a uniform so you could tell that they were prisoners of war. I never saw any German POWs, but it was not unusual to see an Italian prisoner of war. And I have to go one step farther and say that they were entertained many times by the local populace, including young women. Gene Miconi, who was one of the Italian prisoners of war, stayed on and married a local girl here and started a very prosperous tile installation. He passed away a number of years ago and he did some tile work for me in the first home that I built... a great guy. What an example of an opportunity for a former POW, under the free enterprise system, to come back and start from scratch and end up running a prosperous business. I think his boys run it now. I think I've seen the Miconi store, if they haven't sold out or done something else, but his industry and thrift was such that he made a very prosperous and lucrative business out of his former POW status.

Rick Randle: That's interesting. Did you ever have any personal contact with any of those prisoners yourself?

Dean Hurst: I never did personally. I remember going out to Bushnell Hospital in Brigham and on that occasion there were sometimes where they would take those prisoners there for treatment, if they required it. But that was modest to say the least. Most of them it was entertaining—we put on shows and sometimes I wondered if we cured them or killed them with some of the stuff we used to take out to entertain the troops.

Rick Randle: Tell us a little more about what you remember about Bushnell Hospital. Was it a hospital for wounded servicemen?

Dean Hurst: Bushnell General Hospital, as I recall and I was not a frequent visitor, but on occasion we went to entertain from the University. Laurence Burton again, my companion in crime, had produced a little show—a takeoff on Hamlet. It was called Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, he was pure as snow but he drifted. We used to take that around to the USOs and what have you. The word got out that they might like to have it up to Bushnell and I've always had doubt about this because we used a quart and a half of ketchup in every production of Hamlet that we put on. I was King Claudius, and I think Laurence was either Hamlet or Laertes. We ended up slashing each other with our swords and we would dispense ketchup all over the place and I can remember looking down into that audience with those soldiers, some of them who had suffered loss of limb and what have you, and I guess they were entertained, and I'd like to think they were laughing but I've often wondered in retrospect whether some of them went into shock seeing that. There again, it was a farce and portrayed to be and most of the time servicemen were remarkable in showing a lot of good spirit.

Rick Randle: What happened to Bushnell Hospital?

Dean Hurst: It eventually evolved into the Intermountain Indian School, and you really can't tell looking at it today as you look over the golf course that they've developed in the area. It was built, as I recall, in kind of a huge spoke with all of the radii (?) coming into a central hub with the various units branching off from that. It's interesting to note that one of the servicemen that came back there was the brother of one of my good friends in school named Reed Stringfellow. His brother was Douglas Stringfellow who was terribly wounded with a mine explosion in Europe. He came back and was paralyzed. He met his wife at Bushnell. His wife was a volunteer that went up to cheer and fell in love with Doug and they married and had a very successful life. Doug was a very competent artist. I think he moved on and eventually moved to Mexico in a little artist colony there and lived out his life. He died many years ago.

Dean Hurst: Tell us about being called up and your basic training and your paratrooper experience.

Dean Hurst: My birthday, on December the 4th as I mentioned, I went into the service a month later and it's an interesting thing... I had volunteered for the Air Force but couldn't get in because my eyes were failing. So when I was inducted into the service at Ft. Douglas, I volunteered for the Marines first and their limit was full. I volunteered for the Navy, and everybody wanted to get in the Navy and so that was full too so I ended up in the infantry and I thought well the least I can do and the closest I can get to airplanes, because that's what I wanted to do all of my life was fly, was the paratroops. So I volunteered for the paratroops while I was in Ft. Douglas. I took my basic training at Camp Maxey, Texas and all of the unit that I trained with at that time, well not all but the majority of them ended up interestingly enough in the latter phases of the war at Okinawa. Some went into the Philippines, but most of them at Okinawa. I went to Ft. Benning, Georgia for parachute school and stayed over for some additional training and demolitions and what have you. The war ended. As I was making a practice jump our unit, we assumed would have been used in the invasion of Japan, so I've always had the ambivalent feeling thinking the war ended with me a state side commando so to speak. Interesting too that the jump that took place the night that we had word the war ended, the young man above me, a fellow by the name of Johny Barnes was killed on that jump. I thought of a certain irony in losing your life the day the war ended. I'm sure there were others that would have similar stories. But I had a rich adventure and I've always been grateful I ended up... I was assigned first after the war ended the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment and then eventually the 82nd Airborne Division who were chosen to lead the victory parade down 5th Avenue in New York.

Rick Randle: Tell us about that. I understand you were an honor guard when the troops marched in Paris.

Dean Hurst: The 82nd Airborne Division was probably one of the most... I won't say the most decorated. I think that would go to the 442nd or the 100th Battalion, the Japanese Nisei group. The 82nd though, had made the four combat jumps under General James Gavin who was a soldier's general, a marvelous leader. They jumped at Sicily and Normandy and Italy and jumped at Market Garden up in Holland. They fought with distinction at the Bulge. The 101st always got credit for that. For some reason they were the ones that General McAuliff said, "Nuts!" The 82nd were very much there. We always had an inside joke, and I have to get it over

here because the 101st with Steven Ambrose Band of Brothers and everything thinks... and they were great. I had a lot of friends in the 101st. We used to say, "You know what that eagle is doing on that shirt? It's yelling HELP!" And they'll probably be a few from the 101st waiting to get me after this. 82nd was all American—AA. They were chosen to lead the victory parade simply because of the distinction. General Gavin led that parade. I've always said that most of them that were in that were non-combat veterans. I always felt that I was marching as a surrogate for those that didn't make the final parade themselves.

Rick Randle: That was New York?

Dean Hurst: That was New York, yes.

Rick Randle: Was there ticker tape coming down and...

Dean Hurst: It was a marvelous thing. I have to say that every time I've seen shots of that where they've had WWII highlights and what have you, the ticker tape parade was a thrill. The whole town came out. There wasn't anything that wasn't good enough for you. Not that I'm a drinker, because I'm not, but all of a sudden booze which had been so hard to get... you couldn't walk into an establishment up or down any of those streets without having the guys offering black and white or whatever the prime booze was at the time, anything and everything was ours for the taking. And everything literally opened up; free shows, free tickets. In addition to that I might add that the honor guard... that was the entire division that made that parade. Later there was a company chosen that I was fortunate enough to be selected to be in--that was Company A of the 505th and we made similar victory parades in Washington D.C. and Boston and Philadelphia so I had some great adventures that were probably earned by others. I've always been humbled but proud to represent a great outfit.

Rick Randle: Did they use ticker tape in those other parades?

Dean Hurst: I remember them doing so in Boston, but I don't remember Philadelphia so much simply because I don't know whether the parade march was... nor in Washington D.C. I

remember coming down, what would it be? Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington I guess it would be and seeing my first jet aircraft fly over the parade route but I don't remember the ticker. The ticker tape parade in New York was the highlight.

Rick Randle: Tell us about the one in Paris.

Dean Hurst: I wasn't a part of that.

Rick Randle: Do you recall the selling of war bonds?

Dean Hurst: As I mentioned, we were a very patriotic student body. I think everyone was, from Ogden High School going to Weber. There was a carryover of a strong patriotic sense. We had scrap metal drives and what have you. One of the unique things they did that kind of tied into the dearth of males students at Weber College was that we would have auctions where we would collect either war bonds and/or stamps and then have some of the most popular girls and boys in demand and you would put them up for auction. I remember I had a friend who, not of my own doing, but was able to get me a number of not stamps, but of books. I was bidding big time. I was up in the hundreds with a date with a young lady that would never had gone with me in a hundred thousand years and we had dates, so we did those kind of things.

Rick Randle: All to raise money for the war effort. So what were you doing when the war ended?

Dean Hurst: The war ended... we were packing our chutes. We packed our own chutes for each of our jumps for most of that time. Later on we had packers that did that for us. We were packing our chutes for our own jump and I remember it so well because there was always a certain concern, you know the war had ended giving the time distance and what have you, and I think this is probably before they had signed the official armistice. We just knew it was over in Japan and so we were packing our chutes and there was a great tendency of hurrying up so we could get out normally. When you're packing your own chute you want to do it with all of the care in the world and I remember this so well because just as I was coming down to the last fold

when your chute is compressed into such a tight package, it came loose and puffed out and when it exploded out I grabbed it and pushed it back down and I started to fold it all over again and a Major came in and he said, "Don't worry about it, that's your reserve chute. If you packed your main right, you'll never have to worry about your reserve." So I made all of my jumps with a reserve chute that I was afraid was not going to function at the time.

Rick Randle: Thank you so much for sharing these experiences with us.