

What is one of your fondest childhood memories?

by [David Shields](#) on June 29, 2020.



Dearest Lauriann,

Your question: “What is one of your fondest childhood memories?” has really set me to thinking about how to choose a memory or memories to share.

I thought about the years that I could classify as my childhood.

If I say my childhood covered the period up through age 9 it could work out pretty well because we moved from our farm near Shaughnessy, Alberta, Canada to our first “city” home in Lethbridge, Alberta when I was 10 and the nature of my memories of city life were considerably different than my memories of life on the farm.

But, then again, what are my earliest memories and which of my childhood memories are “fond” memories.

Fortunately, my earliest memories, which are drawn from the years 1942 through 1944, when Mother and we were living in Provo, Utah, during World War II, are good memories,

Finally, I came to the conclusion that one of my fondest memories of my childhood is that: "I enjoyed my childhood".

Following are episodes from the childhood I enjoyed, varied in their content and associated emotions, NOT IN chronological order.

Train trip to Provo

Life in Provo

Train trip back to Alberta

Life in the worker's shack on the farm.

Adventures in the blacksmith shop on the farm

Our wagon, a hill and a ramp

Stick built forts on the ditch bank

Gardening

The hole in the ice for animals to drink

Harvesting ice for the icehouse.

Caliber 22 shells in the warming fire by the frozen lake

Riding a horse to the grocery store for groceries

Saturday hockey at the coal mine hockey rink

Elementary school - chatterbox

Power outage fudgsicles and Jerry Bennett

Springtime capture of the horses

Saturday bread baking disaster

Wayne Burbank, Blondie the quarter horse and me

Rolling down the hill at Uncle Ned and Aunt Thelma's

Swimming in the canal at Ned's

The electric fence at Ned's

Setting uncle Morris's barn on fire

Snakes in the coulee bad lands

The wild bull and me driving the car at age 7

First electricity in 1947

Hand pumping water from the cistern

Hand cranked ice cream

Rabbits in hutches on the ditch bank.

Snaking a rope to the attic window.

Sewing machine needle through Tom's finger

Lamona Noreen

Mary Ellen

Coleen

Diamond City Ward

My baptism

The Burbank's son's drowning.

Thinning sugar beets

Hand topping sugar beets and Roy Wood's cut-off finger

3 sibling boys

The Diamond City grain elevator

Learning to ride a bicycle – through the bars of a man’s bicycle

It will be fun to record the details of these episodes, tell the tales and share the feelings as this Story Worth year proceeds.

Thank you very much for getting this project underway.

I love you

Dad



So, one of my fondest childhood memories occurred in the spring of 1947 when I was about eight years old and it involved Blondie the Pinto quarter horse.

Blondie was owned by the Burbank family who lived 1 mile west of our farm.

Every time that I had the opportunity to see Harold Burbank or Wayne

Burbank, who were the Burbank’s teenage sons, riding Blondie, it was simply amazing to watch her. She was a high-spirited horse. She was always ready to get going, moving, doing.

Harold or Wayne rode her always with a saddle and used a bridle that has a

U shaped portion of the bit that went into her mouth in such a way that when they pulled back on the reins, the U shaped portion pressed up against the top of her mouth and she would bow her neck to relieve the pressure on her mouth and would obey her riders control.

Here are straight, gentle U, sharper U, and harsh U bits:



This is the kind of spirited horse that Blondie was. She had to be controlled by the rider.



Quarter horses are very muscular, they can accelerate very rapidly to top speed for short distances, such as a quarter of a mile. They can almost always win short races against any other breed. Great horses for working cow and horse herds.





In those days, when horses were used both for riding and for farm work, it was customary for the farmers in our area to allow at least some of their horses, both saddle and workhorses, to move from farm to farm, pasture to pasture, haystack to haystack, water source to water source, throughout the winter months, rather than keeping them all in corrals or barns.

But, one of the effects of that was that the horses had to be rounded up and returned to their owners in the spring. Another effect, was that the horses became a little wilder and woollier during the winter months. That is, they were not used to being handled or told what to do. Their coats became heavier and rougher to keep them warm and their hoofs became ragged as they grew beyond the limits of their shoes and as pieces of their hoofs broke off and shoes came loose and fell off.

When spring weather returned to our area, Wayne Burbank came to our farm, riding Blondie the Pinto Quarter horse and carrying two halters with lead ropes, one bridle with a straight bit and a lariat rope that he planned to use when he captured two of their workhorses that were part of the horse herd that was in our western pasture on that day. He planned to rope the workhorses one at a time and put a halter on each horse, then lead them back to their farm.

Everything went well until Wayne had caught the two workhorses. At that point he tried to lead them but they were too wild and would not follow him while he was riding Blondie. He tied the lead ropes to the saddle horn of his saddle and tried to force them to follow, but they pulled back so hard that they pulled Blondie backwards. The work horses were very strong and they had to be to pull the plows and other machines and wagon loads that were part of farm work.

I was outside watching all of this activity as Wayne captured the horses put halters on them and tried to leave them away. When he found that he was unable to make the workhorses follow him he asked me if I could help him.

He thought that if I could ride Blondie and he transferred the saddle and the bridle with the U shaped bit onto one of the workhorses that he could ride one workhorse lead the other one. I was definitely interested in helping because it would give me a chance to ride Blondie back to their farm which was a 1 1/2 mile road trip.

While I held onto the 3 horses reins and halter ropes, Wayne went to our farm house to ask my mother if I could help him. Mother was pretty skeptical because I would be riding Blondie using a bridle with a straight bit and would be riding bareback since Wayne would move the saddle to a work horse.

But I was excited about the possibility and begged her to let me help

She finally agreed to let me help. Wahoo.

So, Wayne switched the bridles and saddle and helped me get up on Blondie's bare back. I dug my knees into her withers and pulled the reins back to hold her head back and keep her under control while Wayne got onto the work horse and we started out of our yard following our road out onto the highway, turned left and road along the left side of the north-south gravel highway.

It was a couple of blocks to the intersection with the east-west county section line road that went towards the Burbank's farm. Blondie was prancing along, all the way, and I was pulling back on the reins as hard as could to keep her under control.

We turned right at the intersection and proceeded west, passing the home of one of my school classmates, Annie, a girl on whom I had a slight crush. She was out in her yard and saw me riding Blondie bareback. She called out to me and waved, but, all I could do was say "Hi" because I had to put all of my strength into controlling Blondie. I was working up a sweat from the effort and my hands were gradually slipping back on the reins.

Meanwhile, Wayne and the work horses were plugging along behind me.

By the time we had traveled one mile and reached the intersection with the north-south section line road that led to the Burbank's farm my hands had slipped so much on the reins that my hands were back as far as they could go and I needed to let go very briefly and lean and reach way forward to get a fresh hold on the reins as close to Blondie's mouth as I could. But, she was faster than I was. She was very anxious to get home to her barn and corral as fast as she could get

there, as all horses tend to want to do when they are away from home. She immediately clamped onto the straight bit with her teeth and burst into a full speed gallop as only a powerful quarter horse can.

All I could do was grab hold of her mane and hang on for dear life, so that I would not slip off her back onto the road. The straight stretch to their driveway was about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile long and Blondie covered that distance faster than I could ever have hoped to experience. The only problem was that in order for her to turn the corner into their driveway she had to slow down a lot.

She did that in a series of four legged braking jolts, which dislodged me and when she turned into the driveway I was thrown off her back and into the bar ditch that runs alongside the road.

I landed hard on my chest and arms and slid until I hit a large rock. The impact knocked me unconscious.

Wayne's mother was looking out her kitchen window and saw Blondie run into the yard and stop by the barn, with no rider. She became concerned and ran out to the road to see where Wayne was. He was coming toward her on the work horse and when he arrived she asked why he had allowed Blondie to run home by herself. Wayne told her that I was riding Blondie and they went looking for me. They found me lying unconscious in the bar ditch or barrow pit alongside the road.

They moved me to the house and I regained consciousness. They cleaned and treated my cuts and abrasions and took me back home in their truck.

This was the first time someone took me home to my mother and started the conversation with "David is OK, but there was an accident."

But the BIG DEAL was that I got to ride Blondie, the Pinto quarter horse.