

# The Knight Family Calendar

## 2008



**Michael Emmett Knight**

July 5, 1907 - June 8, 1987

For Dad and for Robert

Christmas, 2007

The 2008 Knight Family Calendar is about our patriarch, Michael Knight. He was born just over a hundred years ago, and he died twenty years ago, so it's too late now to get the facts for a proper biography, or to interview those who knew him when we didn't. This is really just a collection of some of his family's many memories, supplemented with some photographs.

He was born Daniel Emmett Knight, and was called Emmett in his childhood. About the time of his boxing career, he became known as Mickey. Why, we're not sure, but our guess is he had been billed as "The Fighting 'Mick'", and the name stuck. He never legally changed it, but he hired out on the Union Pacific as Michael Emmett Knight. That caused some confusion when he was ready to retire, and it took an affidavit by his sister, our Aunt Josie, to get it straightened out.

To gather these reminiscences and pictures, I took some time this fall to visit my brothers and sisters and their families. It was more fun than I've had in a long time. Thanks to all of you for your hospitality and help in getting this together. I thought about Tim often and wish he was still with us. He would have added so much.

The next step was to gather the notes into cohesive sentences and paragraphs, and I was then faced with how I should refer to him. If this was to be written only from my point of view, I would have just called him Dad. He was Dad to seven of us, and Grandpa to many, but he was Mickey to the world. I elected to write in the third person, so it made sense to refer to him principally as Mickey, and to Mom as Geraldine, but where I felt like it, I slipped in a "dad" or "mom" or "grandpa".

I kept a working title in my head through this entire process. It came to me when Maureen told me about Rosie's amusement with something she heard from Dad, a declaration we all heard a thousand times. I was going to call the calendar, "Good God, Geraldine." In the end, my sense of propriety overtook my sense of humor, and I dropped the idea. I didn't get the expression worked into the pages, either, but I got such a kick out of it, I had to write it down someplace. So there you have it.

Mickey Knight was a special man who created loving memories. Most of these little vignettes will seem as familiar as the smile in his Irish eyes. May the memories rise up to meet you.

Love,

Denny

Mickey's son, Mickey Don was just out of his training in the Navy on January 14, 1969, and in his very first days on the U.S.S. Enterprise, an aircraft carrier built with eight nuclear reactors that was the most powerful warship in the world. Mickey was watching the evening news while Geraldine was busy in the kitchen. "Geraldine! Come in here now!" Mickey shouted to her. Breaking news was coming across of an explosion on the deck of the Enterprise that had inflicted terrible loss of life and damage to the ship. It was the next day before their son could phone home and let his family know he was safe. Mickey Don had been very much at the center of the maelstrom and recently described his own survival as a series of miracles. It's a story we hope he will someday write down.

Mickey and Geraldine enjoyed bird watching at their breakfast table at 1015 Steele. They had a bird feeder on a pole just a few feet from the window, and a guide book at hand. They saw a surprising variety of colorful birds in summer and winter.

When Geraldine was in the hospital for Tim's birth, Mickey was in charge of cooking for the other six kids. He was never much for casseroles, until he found a recipe in a book of matches. It was successful.



Mickey with his parents, Kate and Will, and his niece Catherine



Mickey would regale the family with tales of his childhood. He usually opened with a modestly exciting or humorous adventure of some sort, but he would soon ramp up the story, sorely testing the credulity of the whole family, even Kathi. One frequent theme, told in a variety of ways, would reach its climax in an overturned outhouse. Geraldine later revealed she measured the tallness of the tale by the sparkle in Mickey's eye.

If Mickey expected to be called out on a Sunday, he would go to Mass early. One winter morning, we heard the Buick pull out of the driveway about 5:45, only to return five minutes later. Mickey had set off in his Sunday best – shirt and tie, suit jacket, overcoat, but no trousers. Fortunately he discovered his omission before he was in church.



One winter day Mickey observed grandson Stormy scooting down the sidewalk on his butt, pretending to ride a Big Wheel. Mickey admired the creative play, but promptly went out and bought the real thing, and threw in a dandy beacon helmet for safety. Stormy was thrilled with the ride, but his greater interest was in what made it work. Word is he had it disassembled within a week.



Emmett (as he was called as a boy) with brothers Charlie, Bill and Tom



Clowning at the Gate

Mickey was a notably good ballroom dancer, and he and Geraldine would frequently go to Denver to dance at the Trocadero. They also enjoyed the groups who would come in to play at the Elks or Moose in Laramie, and at Centennial, Woods Landing, or the nearby Summit. Lawrence Welk's orchestra was part of that circuit in the years before his TV show.



Mickey, Mickey Don, Denny, Jerry, Kathi, Maureen, Timmy, Geraldine, Jimmy (1954)

Mickey respected the military, and three sons served in the Navy and one in the Army. Despite that, he had a strong disrespect for the institution of the National Guard, because of the Ludlow Massacre in 1914, when guardsmen killed some twenty people, including women and children, in Southern Colorado. The Guard was called out by Colorado's governor to deal with a coal mine strike. The coal companies had used Pinkerton Guards as well, and Mickey never had much use for that agency, either.

"Meet the Press" was going strong when television first came to the Knight household, and Mickey wouldn't miss it if he could help it. In those days the format was a group of two or three panelists interviewing a weekly guest, all under the thumb of the cranky moderator, Lawrence E. Spivak.

His political meter had a neutral zone, but he seldom had neutral thoughts about any politician. Neutral was about the highest a Republican or Dixiecrat could rank on his scale, with most falling somewhere among bad, lousy and SOB. A true Democrat would ring in at good to great, with a very few even rising to sainthood.



Mickey was a Real Railroad Man, and by his estimation that meant a railroad cap, a bandana, and bib overalls. Geraldine would launder and block the hat, iron the bandana, and starch and iron the overalls—a lot of work when there were also seven kids who needed starching. All that apparel was good protection for men "firing" the steam engines. After diesel engines completely replaced steam, Geraldine finally persuaded Mickey to wear wash-and-wear Dickies work clothes. He may have been the last in Laramie to make the switch.



Front: Denny, Jimmy, Kathi, Mickey Don. Back: Maureen, Geraldine, Mickey

This photo was at Pat and Oren's house at Easter, about 1952. We were on our way to Loveland but the car broke down not far out of Laramie. Oren came and took us back to town. He said we were "all dressed up with no place to go", so we spent the day at their house. Pat served us what Oren said were frog legs, and we ate them up. Probably the only legs involved were our own, but a little longer.

Oren and Mickey would think up competitions for the kids or grandkids. Things like races or wrasslin' matches. Maureen's kids remember being challenged to taste a spoonful of horseradish with a promise of a 50 cent reward.

Back in the days of independent merchants, Mickey and Geraldine always ran a charge account at their favorite grocery. Mickey would make a monthly round of Laramie to pay all the bills, and the largest was always the food account. Geraldine was a good planner who set a fine table for nine on a reasonable budget. Mickey never tried to get her to skimp, but he was taken aback that month in the sixties when the bill for the first time surpassed \$100.

Their favorite grocer was Jimmy Davidson, a fine merchant and meat cutter, who always set aside the ideal cut of meat for the Knight family. Jimmy would deliver the groceries on days Mom had her hands full, and she and Mickey both missed him greatly when he sold the store to Mr. Green.

Mickey and Oren Johnson were great friends, and enjoyed kidding each other about all sorts of stuff, including their nationalities (Oren was a Swede.) By extension, Geraldine and Pat Johnson became lifetime friends, and the four shared good times for many years. Unfortunately, we didn't come across any pictures of Pat and Oren for our calendar, but all of the Knight kids and many of the grandkids who spent time around Laramie remember them well.

Pat, Oren, Mickey and Geraldine once went for a pleasant late afternoon ride in the country in an area known as "Hubbard's Cupboard". Tim was a baby and they had taken him along. It was getting dark, and they were getting lost. One of the men, likely Oren, decided they should proceed along a dirt road that was unfamiliar, but he was pretty sure he knew where it would come out. It didn't come out anywhere. It just gradually ceased to be, somewhere in the night between Laramie and Cheyenne. With Timmy in the car, all they could do was to keep making their way, by whatever moonlight there was, always with the possibility of going over a cliff. Eventually they could see the lights of Cheyenne, which gave them their bearings, but without a road under their wheels they still had to proceed with great caution. Finally they did connect with a road, but it was about two a.m. before they got back to Laramie. The friendship survived.

Oren had two kids of his own, only a little older than Mickey's family, but Oren always got a kick out of the little Knights. He and Mickey on their knees would engage the boys in boxing matches, and Mickey and Oren would sometimes take each other on in a friendly bout.

Excavation for a water treatment plant was under underway across the river and not far at all from the house at 718 Spruce. Jerry, a budding civil engineer even as a little boy, was sitting on the roof of the chicken house where he could watch the activity, and the crew encountered a boulder. Summarily and without notice to the neighborhood, they blasted it with dynamite. A large rock or piece of rock fell from the sky, breaking through the chicken house. Mickey, hearing the explosion, rumble and crash, came running and found Jerry, still on the roof, startled but safe. There was hell to pay.

Years later in Jerry's own engineering career, he happened to meet Jim Sheldon, who had been an engineer on the construction project. Jerry told him about the chicken house and Sheldon allowed that he remembered Jerry's dad quite well.



Mickey and Vince catch a game

The Knight family's first television was a Packard Bell which had the maddening tendency to go completely out of adjustment, flickering and rolling wildly, at the onset of the baseball game of the week with Dizzy Dean and Pee-wee Reese. Mickey would call the dealer out until it went out of warranty, then he learned to adjust it and check the tubes himself. The tuner wore completely out from monkeying with the fine tune knob.

Mickey acquired a set of electric clippers, and determined from that time forward to cut the boys' hair. Jerry was mostly spared this indignity, but the other four would be taken in line on a Saturday afternoon. He would start with Denny, who remembers the clippers getting warmer as his haircut proceeded, then Jim who really felt the heat, and then Mickey Don, whose ears were in danger of burning as well as being lopped off. Mickey would then considerably volunteer that maybe he should let the machine cool down before he started on little Timmy. Story submitted by Mick. (Note: Word is the clippers came out of the closet when Maureen's boys were small and living in Laramie, and the few years in the closet hadn't cooled them down.)

He bought a Zenith Cobramatic console radio and phonograph, a beautiful instrument in a modern wood cabinet. He enjoyed playing his phonograph records on the machine, and loved to see from how far he could pick up a radio signal.

He was not a mechanically-oriented man but he was intrigued by mechanical contraptions. He once brought home a wind-up, jumping monkey just for his own and the family's general amusement.

Kathi remembers when he put together two radio kits (coil radios), one for Maureen and the other for Jerry. Jerry says it was only one radio, and he didn't put it together from a kit (but he might have painted it.)

Mickey asked Kevin and Mike to come outside to see the bicycle he'd bought for himself. He tooled out of the garage on a 20-inch banana seat bike with streamers that would have been the envy of any ten-year old in Wyoming.

When grandson Mike was a few weeks old, Rosie, Geraldine and Mickey went to the supermarket. Mickey waited on a bench at the front of the store and held Mike. A woman passing by stopped to admire the baby, and asked Mickey how old he was. Mickey responded, "a few hours."

All the Knight kids and most of the grandchildren had to learn to like the Lawrence Welk show. There really wasn't a choice, unless you wanted to do your homework.

There was the legendary car swap that Mickey made with the next door neighbor, Howard Shaner back in the early fifties. Both men wanted to take their families on trips, and neither thought their own cars could make it. So they swapped cars, each smugly proud horse traders. We don't know now how far up the highway the Shaners got, but the Knight family didn't make it out of town.

He often told his kids about the restaurant he and Geraldine operated in Lyons, Colorado, "Mickey's Barbecue". We believed his stories about running specials on ice cream sundaes which he would top off with a rubber cherry.



Mickey with sisters Margaret and Josie



May 19, 1958. Mickey gave the bride away. Congratulations to Mac and Maureen on your Golden Wedding Anniversary this month.



With grandsons (left to right) Jud, Kevin, Mike, Danny, Stormy and Vince

Mickey and Geraldine had been visiting Jerry and Rosie and their family in Lakewood. Mickey took little Mike for a walk, and they encountered another little boy around the block. "Where you goin', mister?" the boy asked. "I'm looking for that big black bear that got loose... have you seen him?" The startled boy ran straight into his house, yelling "Mommy, Mommy!" Mickey and Mike high-tailed it home before Mommy could respond.



Mickey and Geraldine often visited his brother Tom at the Colorado Veterans Center, Monte Vista, Colorado

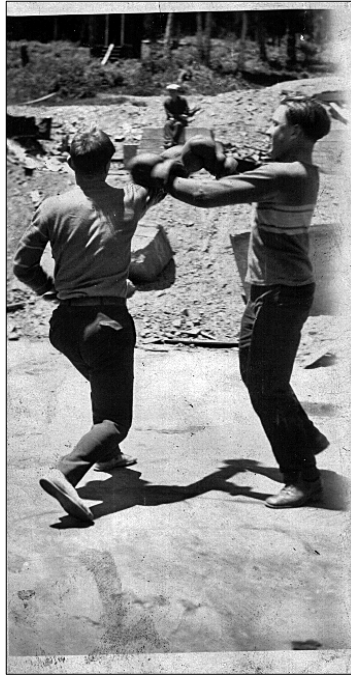
Mickey had an assortment of old cars in the 1960's and 70's that he used for such chores as runs to the city dump. Maureen's kids often went along, and sometimes he treated them to root beer at Scotties. Then they would hit the drive-through at the package liquor store, where Mickey would get a little something for himself, and the purveyor would have tootsie rolls for the kids.

Mickey enjoyed thrilling the kids and grandkids with "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum". Becky's brother Kevin had difficulty pronouncing her name, and she was used to being called "Be He". It frightened little Becky when, holding her on his knee, Mickey darkly intoned, "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman, be he alive, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make me bread."

After Mickey had cataracts removed he relied on contacts. He would occasionally drop a lens, and he would reward the sharp-eyed grandkid who found it with a quarter or 50 cents.

Mickey always enjoyed being with his grandchildren. At one time, Charlie was sure he was grandpa's favorite, but then another little MacMillan or Knight or Finley would come along and he or she would win grandpa's favor, too.

The last member of the first generation of grandchildren was Robert, who was born May 4, 1987. Mickey was excited when he heard the baby's name, Robert Emmett, because it is the name of an important revolutionary Irish patriot. That night, Mickey suffered the aneurism that ultimately led to his death. Later in the month, Robert's doctors and the staff at Mickey's hospital let us bring the baby so his grandfather could see and hold him. It is a treasured memory.



Mickey's early life experience as a soda jerk gave him special expertise in the fine art of serving ice cream. One of his favorite preparations was to dress a dish of vanilla ice cream with peanut butter and jam.

Making ice cream was a favorite family project in the summer, and the ice cream machine was not motorized. Geraldine would prepare the custard, and Mickey would put ice and salt in the maker and supervise the kids who all took a few cranks, with Tim or Mickey Don turning while it was easy, then stepping up to Kathi, then Jim, Denny and Maureen. But the really impossible last cranks fell to Mickey and Jerry, and it seems like it took hours.

We knew he refused to entertain the notion of travel by air, and we didn't know why, but Mickey revealed to Mickey Don about a barnstormer who came to town to give thrill rides in what was likely a sputtering flying machine with an open cockpit. The wild ride was enough to make him promise the good God in heaven never to leave the ground again, or words to that effect. He honored the pledge until the age of 78 when he and Geraldine, and his nephew, Bill, took their trip to Ireland. It was under the auspices of the Catholic Tour Company, so he was released from his oath and safe in the hands of the Lord. The breaking news the morning of their flight on June 23, 1985 was the crash of an Air India jet, ironically off the coast of Ireland, killing all 329 people aboard. That terrible news was wisely and carefully kept from Mickey, and their trip was a complete success.

He was a prize fighter as a young man, and the family believes this is how he came to be called Mickey, as in "the Fighting Mick". These are the only pictures we have of him boxing, and he's not in a ring, but that wasn't unusual for matches staged at the mining camps in Southern Colorado.

Mickey and Geraldine had a grand time in the summer of '36



Radio and then television offered Mickey the joy of following his own sport of boxing. He enjoyed teaching his kids how to score a fight, and he was very opinionated that boxing must maintain itself as a respectable sport. Jim remembers in the 1980's watching a match with Mickey between Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini, and a kid from Korea, Duk Koo Kim. It was a beating for the Korean, but he kept getting up and coming back to finish rounds. Mickey yelled helplessly at the TV to stop the bout immediately, and he was really angry when it finally did end. He was right, because shortly after, Kim fell into a coma and died at the hospital. Jim says Mickey never seemed to enjoy boxing as much.

Mickey was a spontaneous traveler. He would decide on a Thursday that the family was off to California, Yellowstone or other points on Saturday. Geraldine barely had twenty-four hours to get clothes ready and packed for four or five kids or whatever was that summer's current inventory of kids in the nest, as well as for themselves. Who knows what else she had to do, but it got done. Mickey would do his part, of course. He got gas and had the oil checked.



Mickey Don, Mickey, Byrd, Geraldine, Denny, Ann Payton, Maureen, Kathi, Judy Payton, Jerry, Ida, Jimmy



Mike's back, Rosie, Jim, Jill, Kevin, Joanne's friend Mildred, Mickey and Geraldine

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July picnics in Loveland were for some sixty years an annual Knight family tradition that started as a way to celebrate Mickey's birthday and the birthday of Geraldine's dad. Mickey not only got along with Byrd Payton, they actually enjoyed each other's company. That is a story in itself, because they were of such different traditions. Byrd was a Methodist preacher and Lincoln Republican who frowned on all the vices. Mickey was an Irish Catholic, liberal New Dealer, a smoker, and not exactly dry. Perhaps the bond, besides family itself, was they shared a remarkable and slightly irreverent sense of humor and the ability to laugh at the high and mighty.

Our house on the west side at 718 Spruce dated to Laramie's pioneer days where it was first the Wyoming Tannery Company. It was converted to a house many years before our folks bought it in about 1942 for less than \$1,000. Digging around the house was often challenging because we would encounter buried cowhides.

Mickey's lawns were the envy of neighbors on the west side and later at 1015 Steele. He hand watered for hours. We didn't understand how he had the patience, but it was likely just a time for him to meditate.

Jo Beth, age 18, came by train with her grandmother Josie, and returned before Josie because of school. Mickey was called to "deadhead" to Rawlins the day she left, and he rode with her in the passenger car rather than on the engine.

The house on the Laramie River was inside the city limits and Mickey and Geraldine paid city property taxes, but the neighborhood lacked the basic services you should expect in the city. Because of that, Mickey was frequently at city hall pushing for city sewer service, among other things. One spring weekend, Geraldine had taken the kids for a visit to Loveland. They arrived back in Laramie to the sight of Caterpillar tractors and earth movers engaged in an emergency effort to build a dike to save the block from a flash flood that was moving down the Laramie River. Mickey had demanded the City come to the rescue, and he was overlooking the operations, pointing and commanding. He warned one of the drivers to avoid the benign looking flat ground just beyond where Sheridan Street ended. The guy took his big Cat in there anyway, and it took several pieces of equipment to pull him out of the sinkhole. The operation was on time and the Big Laramie roared safely downstream without damage to 718 Spruce or its neighbors.

In the box to the left, we speak of Mickey's ongoing battles with city hall because of paying city taxes without city services. One feature of 718 Spruce was the 50 gallon "burn barrel" where the Knight family incinerated the trash. The Laramie Fire Chief was a friend of Mickey's, but they were at constant odds over the burn barrel. The Chief wanted it out of there, but Mickey always countered he would remove the barrel when he got paved streets, curb and gutter and the other entitlements of paying city taxes.

This story has a confluence of Mickeys, so we will refer to Mickey senior as M-1 and Mickey Don as M-2. One morning when M-2 was in first or second grade, he decided he wasn't going to school. He got ready along with his brothers, but then hid in a pile of clothes in the boys' bedroom. When she took the kids to school, Geraldine discovered her delivery was short one. She hurried home to find M-2 with his hand peeking from the pile. Spotted, M-2 sprinted out the back door to the river. M-1 chased him on foot for a bit, but M-2 knew all the great hiding places. M-1 got the car and patrolled the lane between the houses on our block and the willow bushes that occupied most of the wide, rambling riverbed. He spotted M-2 and got him in the car. M-2 was intent on jumping out and had to be restrained all the way, but he did complete his education.

Barbara and Charlie, when asked for memories of their grandpa, both separately recalled his advice on how to catch a bird by sprinkling salt on its tail. It took them many tries to realize that, if you have time to salt the tail, you might also have time to grab the bird. Charlie admits he is guilty of putting his stepson Zeb up to the same task.



Mac, Becky, Mickey, with Lucifer (Is it Christi in the back?)



Mickey, the chicken house and currant bushes

In the early days in Laramie, Mickey kept some chickens. If one of the birds got a little blood on her, the others would pick and peck at the poor thing. He solved the problem by putting red glasses on every hen in the flock. Jerry swears this is true. He says you can Google National Band & Tag to see their designer collection.

Mickey took Jerry to a livestock auction in Loveland or Longmont one day, and, raising his hand in a weak moment, purchased a lot of 100 Himalayan rabbits. They brought them home to Laramie where Mickey put them up in the chicken house. They were beautiful and did quite well. The herd grew and Mickey found a market for them at area stores and restaurants. He even went back to Colorado to purchase more. They didn't survive the Laramie winter, however, and Mickey's venture as a stockman was over.

Lucifer may have belonged to Maureen's family, but he chose to hang around Mickey. They were often seen tooling around town, Lucifer in the passenger seat with his head out the window



Beneath the feather is the family Knight. Denny, Jimmy and Kathi are in front, with Jerry and Maureen in the middle, all under the supervision of Mickey and Geraldine. There is snow in the picture, but the lawn is still green, and we're not wearing parkas, so this must be September or October, about 1949.

The lovely fish pond and waterfall he built from Wyoming stone was never filled because he was afraid one of the kids would drown. It's not likely fish could have survived a Laramie winter anyway. It was pretty to look at, in any event.

He built a barbecue pit in the back yard, near his fish pond, and it got used. Venison roasted on the spit was wonderful, but it took hours. He would baste it with Virginia Dare wine, and rotate the spit every now and then.

The stone fence he built at 718 Spruce was a beautiful thing. He gathered the rock east of Laramie in Telephone Canyon, bringing as many red rocks as the old station wagon would tolerate. He made many trips, and mixed a lot of batches of cement mortar. The fence still stands, and is likely to be a site of archaeological interest in a few centuries.

The kids were expected to help with yard work, usually mowing and raking. Jim had asked if he could go to the movies in the afternoon. Mickey salted enough coins under the currant bushes to pay his admission.

The Knight kids were always required to check the Wyoming Catholic Register for the Legion of Decency rating before we were permitted to see a movie.

There were several old and dying cottonwoods on the south side of the house, just where Mickey wanted to install a driveway. After the trees were cut down, Mickey still had to get the stumps out. His tactic was to simply burn them away. Although it was difficult to get them to catch fire, they did burn, but way too slowly. Mickey used bellows to promote the process, an exhausting chore that fanned a new idea. He could deliver oxygen to the smoldering fire by using the reverse-thrust option on Geraldine's canister vacuum cleaner. The one thing that got thoroughly burned out that day was the Electrolux.

The house at 1015 Steele was catty-corner from the Laramie Junior High football field. After practices, Mickey would take the nozzle off the garden hose, and let the boys get a chug of water when they passed on their way to the locker room and showers several blocks away.

As a teen, Maureen's friends knew she was expected to be home at ten, or Mickey would be out looking for her. She remembers rushing home in a car with her friends one night, just a few minutes late. Mickey passed them as they crossed the viaduct, just a few blocks from home.



Charcoal and determination: indispensable ingredients for a barbecue.



Front: Mickey, Catherine, Tom. Back: Charlie, Margaret, Josie, Julia, Mayme

Mickey had a very nice voice, and he was never far from a song. He crooned a number of melodies that were favorites of his children and grandchildren, but there was one he had to stop singing. Jerry and Maureen were toddlers, playing happily on the floor, and then bawling when their daddy sang a ballad about a train wreck where they found baby shoes in the rubble. Later, little Jerry ordered that it not be sung again.

Mickey heard a brand new song on the Laramie radio station by Marty Robbins. He called the station to see what it was, who sang it, and where he could get it. It wasn't readily available in Laramie, but he soon got a copy of *Felina*, a ballad about a beautiful Mexican girl. Playing it over and over, he and Geraldine eventually transcribed the lyrics which he then committed to memory. He loved all the songs on the album, including at least one he already sang often, the Strawberry Roan, but *Felina* had to have become his all time top hit, and his grandkids would hear him croon it often.

Dickering was a sport for Mickey, often at Laramie Basin Hardware, and sometimes with Sam Smith at Smith Furniture. Once at Penney's he found a pop-up camper trailer for \$1,100. Everyone knows Penney's doesn't dicker, but Mickey offered \$850, "take it or leave it." He made the deal.

Mickey's friend, Joe Sanchez worked as a hostler in the Laramie rail yards. A hostler is an employee who operates engines to move them around a rail yard, but is not authorized to take the trains on the road. In the early 40's, Mickey had been appointed as a "griever" for the union, and the railroad needed men for engine crews on the road, but wouldn't promote Mexican or other minority employees. Mickey said Sanchez was the best employee in the yards, and deserved the job. He took his fight to the superintendent in Omaha, and was fired or threatened with his job over the deal. Mr. Sanchez came to our house to thank Mickey for his support, but said he didn't really want the job and called off the battle. Mickey stayed on the railroad, but he was no longer the griever, because the union wasn't too happy with him, either.

Mickey was required to test regularly on his knowledge of railroad laws and safety rules to maintain and further his employment. He had a series of rule books, and, when exam times approached he studied them thoroughly. We have heard he aced his exams every time. Another aspect of his performance Mickey was proud of was he never had a demerit in his railroad career (demerits were called "brownies".)

Mickey once lost the log book in which he kept track of his trips on the UP. This to him was like losing his wallet, so he sent the kids on a search expedition, promising a silver dollar to the finder, and he prayed to St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes. It was found.



40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1976.

Denny, age 33, Kathi 29, Mickey 69, Jim 30, Geraldine 62, Jerry 39, Mickey Don 27, Maureen 37

Charlie was a toddler of only 18 months on that sad November day, but he remembers the adults, including Mickey, crying the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

Mickey was a lifelong student of history and politics, and admired especially the eloquent speeches of Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy. Mickey and Mickey Don watched together the day Martin Luther King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. When it was finished, Mickey said it was the greatest speech he had ever heard.

His favorite newspaper columnist was Drew Pearson, who wrote the nationally syndicated "Washington Merry-Go-Round". Pearson was a muck-raking New Dealer who took on the Eisenhower administration, just to Mickey's liking.

If he came across a particularly important or interesting newspaper article, he would insist on reading it aloud to Geraldine.

Mickey predicted to Maureen the day Richard Nixon was elected to his first term that he would eventually be impeached.

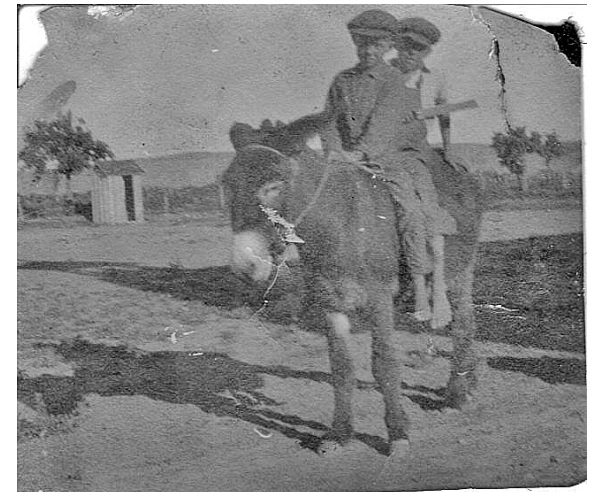
Sometimes if one of his trips ended in the evening, Mickey would bring home a large Tootsie Roll which he would cut into segments to divide among the kids.

He was always a fan of the Notre Dame and Wyoming football teams, and he loved baseball. In the 70's and 80's when cable television brought the Cubs to the television every day, he was in heaven. Mickey would have loved the Colorado Rockies, and we all thought about him and Uncle Tom when they made it to the World Series in 2007.

Because Mickey's trips on the railroad could come at any time, night or day, he also learned to get his sleep in the same way. Barbara remembers running next door to visit Grandma, who was not there, but she heard this tremendous ruckus that scared her right out of the house. It turned out to be her Grandpa snoring.

Mickey saw a car dealer's add one evening for a loss-leader sale the next morning on a Hillman Husky. It was a great price, and Mickey was determined to get it. To be sure he was first in line, he had Geraldine make him a sandwich and he spent the whole night in his car waiting at the dealer. He got the car.

The rodeo was an event Mickey enjoyed. He was never a cowboy, but growing up in the part of the country he did he had a lot of respect for real cowboys, and enjoyed the excitement of their work in the rodeo arena. He once walked with Jimmy (and maybe Mickey Don) to see a rodeo at the fairgrounds south of town. He enjoyed attending a non-professional but "real" rodeo at the T-Bar-7 ranch situated right on the state line. He would bring one or more of his boys. There was no grandstand, so we would sit on the overlooking hillside or we could sit on the fence to get right close to the action. He would say, "Your feet are in Colorado and your butt's in Wyoming."



Emmett (front) and an unidentified pal ride a burro, probably near Farmington, NM, about 1915. Note both boys appear to be shoeless. Also note there is an outhouse in the background. Mickey did like to tell stories about outhouses getting tipped over. Do you suppose....?

Kathi saw a big, beautiful doll, not wrapped, not even in a box, standing under the tree. She was the only little girl in the family, but she couldn't believe the doll was actually hers until Mickey said, "For crying out loud, pick it up. Who do you think it's for?" They were just the words she wanted to hear.

It was likely right after the war, and Jerry was seven or eight. Our grandparents had come from Loveland. Mickey was just home from work and hadn't slept yet. The tree lights wouldn't work no matter what they tried, and there weren't any new sets left to be found in Laramie. Grandpa said there were Christmas lights at their house, so he, Mickey and Jerry drove the eighty miles to Loveland for them. After they arrived, Grandpa fixed something to eat, and Mickey took a much needed nap. Jerry remembers they had car trouble on the way back to Laramie, and Mickey cut a piece of baling wire hanging from a fence post to make the necessary temporary repair.

The trains didn't stop running for Christmas, and Mickey was always in jeopardy of not being home for Christmas morning. He would lay off if he needed to, but the right to do that was based on seniority, and the younger men might have to work, anyway. In the forties, the dispatcher would try to reach the crews by phone when their turns came up, but they also had a "call boy" they could send to roust those who didn't answer the telephone. We remember only one time when a call boy had to come to 718 Spruce. That was in the middle of the night before Christmas when Mickey just plain decided he wasn't going to work, come hell or high water. The call boy walked right into the house, and into our parents' bedroom to get Mickey, but even then he refused to take the call. Maureen remembers he didn't go to work that day, and apparently there were no repercussions.

Mickey belonged to the Union Pacific Junior Old Timers Association, and he liked to take his family to their Christmas parties. Mickey Don remembers the year his dad disappeared from the gala, which continued without him. Mickey Don didn't discover Santa was his dad until he made it all the way to his lap.

Christmas 1963 was a special event for the whole Knight family. Denny was on leave from the Army, and Maureen was in Laramie with her three kids (and fourth on the way), waiting to join Mac in Germany. The living room was nearly taken over with many presents for everybody piled high and wide, including tricycles for the kids. Geraldine, Maureen and Denny were up nearly all night getting things ready. In the wee hours, Mickey got called to go to work at 5 or 6 a.m., so Geraldine roused everyone out of bed and we had one of the grandest Christmases ever. Mickey received a Kennedy rocking chair that became his favorite place to sit for the next 24 years.



Geraldine and Mickey would take Jerry and Maureen to midnight Mass, and afterward they would have pie at the Paris Café.

One of the biggest blizzards of our childhood in Laramie hit at Christmas in 1949. We all got shiny new bikes, but there wasn't room for them under the tree, so they were nestled in a snow bank near the front door. They stayed there for most of Christmas vacation waiting for the snow to melt.

Mickey always tried to attend the events at St. Laurence School, including the Christmas program and party. The Knights of Columbus would send Santa with bags of goodies for the children, and Mickey would always check to be sure the KC's had been generous.

When Denny was in high school, Mickey took him downtown one Christmas Eve to help pick up the carload of presents that were being held on layaway at Gamble's store. Our folks didn't need the layaway plan for financing purposes, but it was an excellent way to hide the presents until the big day.

Jerry recalls that Boots was the name of the old Swede who delivered the tree every year, freshly cut from one of the forests around Laramie. It was always a special tree, and we knew Boots had picked it just for us. Mickey would pay him some other time, but there was never a discussion of money at the time of delivery, so we always thought of him as Kris Kringle with an old truck.