

## FLAVIUS THEODORE SPURLOCK

1885 – 1968

6<sup>TH</sup> CHILD, 5<sup>TH</sup> SON OF Robert A. Spurlock and Elizabeth Phoebe Leverton

Uncle Theo and Aunt Mayme were a huge part of my (Elizabeth Anna Spurlock Smithson) childhood. I have many more memories of them that I can put in this file. Uncle Theo and my father, Ransom, were very close. Even after Uncle Theo sold his own ranch he spent a great deal of time with us, working with Daddy on our ranch. He was a part of our family and seemed to me to always be there. He was very quiet and gentle and easy going. He never lost patience with us. He always looked so good to me. He even smelled good. He smoked a pipe in the evening after supper and would show us that he could make smoke come out of his eyes. He taught us how to play poker. He would play with us until he got tired then clean us out of the matches we used for poker chips and send us on our way so he could go to bed. He and Daddy both wore good looking Stetson hats and custom made Bleucher boots which they ordered from Texas. He loved us kids as if we were his own. Uncle Theo and Daddy both had the same gift and talent for handling cattle and horses and managing the range. They complimented each other perfectly. Uncle Theo was highly skilled in roping and branding and one of the few people Daddy would trust to do those jobs. When we shipped cattle from the stockyards in Holbrook or later on trucks, Uncle Theo would always do the counting. He would sit quietly on his horse or on the stockyard fence and never move his hands or his mouth. He had a little tablet and a little stub of a pencil and would count and tally the cattle. He was very accurate and never got flustered or made mistakes. He, like Daddy, was a superior horseman.

Charlie Wetzler, my father (Ransom Spurlock's) business partner told me how he met the Spurlock's for the first time. Uncle Theo was the Spurlock that he first met. One of Charlie Wetzler's jobs besides operating his ranch, the BK, (which we always called Charlie's Place) 5 miles north of Holbrook was to meet the cattle herds coming from Pleasant Valley to the Holbrook stock yards for shipment to market and "pilot" them across the Little Colorado, avoiding the quick sand bogs. Charlie had word that the Spurlock herd was leaving Pleasant Valley and his services would be needed. He knew about how long the drive took and rode out to meet the herd when he thought they should be there. He waited for many hours and finally he saw the herd coming far in the distance at a very slow pace. When they got to him he met Uncle Theo who was in charge of the cattle drive and after introductions he asked Theo why they moved so slowly. Uncle Theo said that was the way the Spurlock's operated. They moved the cattle at a very slow pace so as to not stress the cattle, causing them to lose weight. The Spurlock's were known for their gentle cattle. Charlie noticed they had no remuda (extra horses) and asked where it was. Theo said they had no remuda. When Charlie asked Uncle Theo what they would do if a horse became lame. Uncle Theo said "I guess we would just have to walk." Charlie liked what he heard and agreed with the Spurlock philosophy of handling cattle and horses. They became good friends and later Spurlock and Wetzler became one of the largest cattle ranches in the State of Arizona. Uncle Charlie, as we called him, told me this story and it is recorded on cassette.

Another little story involves a horse Papa had recently bought. I knew this horse as "Jug Head". This is how he got that name. The horse was gentle but had been into the loco weed sometime in his life and was sometimes unpredictable. Uncle Theo had come to help out at round-up time as he often did. He was riding this new horse and sometime during the day for some unknown reason the horse started to buck and Uncle Theo fell off. This was very unusual as Uncle Theo was a very accomplished horseman. Someone asked him what horse he was riding. Uncle Theo answered, "That jug headed horse of Rances." That name stuck. Jug Head was a good looking sorrel horse and was a fast runner and liked to run. We kids liked to ride him for that reason. One round-up I was riding him and he started to run for no apparent reason. I was a teenager by then and a good rider but couldn't stop him. I pulled on one rein and ran him around in circles for a long time. He was tiring out but I still couldn't stop him so I ran him into a fence hoping he would stop. He ran right through it. I finally jumped off him. He ran a little way off and stopped. I went over and got him, got back on and finished the day's work without incident. We kept Jug Head for many years and he was a good worker. The name suited him, though and we all watched out for his little quirks.

I love my Uncle Theo!!

Written by Betty "Dutch" Spurlock Smithson