



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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Wanted: One man to fill the following requirements: law enforcement officer, traffic controller, road maintenance worker, ambulance driver, EMT, dentist, mortician's helper, mechanic, handyman and innkeeper.

If you think that is too much to ask, you will be surprised to know that it just what the first highway patrolman in this area did.

Elmer Carling had served as Town Marshall of Fillmore for several years before being hired as the first ever highway patrolman in this section of the state.

Appointed during Governor Blood's administration, he was hired on August 10, 1932 and was given Badge #5. His area of service covered the main highways from Chicken Creek on the north to Beaver on the south and Delta on the west. At the time those were all unpaved.

Perhaps the most interesting part of his highway patrol beginning was his mode of transportation. He was trained to ride a motorcycle to use as a patrol vehicle. He had ridden horses all his life and had trouble making the adjustment. He found out on several occasions that hollering, "Whoa!" doesn't bring a motorcycle to a stop. Stories tell of him hitting trees and ditches before he mastered his new mount.



The 1932 Harley he was given came complete with a sidecar, which he used as an ambulance for the injured and even to bring in the victims of fatal accidents.

His only backup was his German Shepherd, "Thurn", who sometimes accompanied him. That dog was well trained and also very protective of Officer Carling. He would not let anyone near the sidecar.

Elmer had a schedule sent out from the State on a regular basis telling which days of the week he would patrol the different sections of the roads in his area. The days would change each week so no one would know where he was going to be located.

Sometimes the snow would be bad on Scipio Summit and Cove Fort. It would be hours and hours before he arrived home because he was out helping travelers back onto the road and guiding them through the snow, even shoveling to get them out of drifts.

When he would go the Delta in a wind storm the sand dunes offered the same kind of problems.

Apparently, after several years, the patrol gave him a car to drive in the winter to get out of the cold conditions.

Officer Carling felt that the children of the community should look up to policemen as their friend, so he always paid attention to them. The children would often call out, "Uncle Elmer, can we sit in the sidecar? Or can we see the red lights on your car?" He was never too busy to stop and talk to them.

Elmer's daughter Wanda Carling Day tells of an experience that exemplified how her father treated people on the highway. "One time there was a newlywed couple on their honeymoon who had an accident down by Cove Fort and the wife was killed. He stayed with them until help could come. Then he brought the man to our home and he stayed with us until he could get all the business taken care of and get him another car to come pick up his things."

Several times he took families whose cars had broken down to his home where they were fed while he found them a place to stay.

Elmer Carling retired from the Utah Highway Patrol in 1952. He passed away in 1953.