



*Charlie Glass with a woman who Bill Cunningham believes is Charlie's sister, who would visit him once or twice a year from Oklahoma. The photo was taken outside of a house here in Grand Junction circa 1925. Charlie's obit did list one sister as a survivor.
Photo courtesy Bill Cunningham.*

Rumors murmured after fatal accident of cowboy Charlie Glass

(Third in A Series)

By Kathy Jordan

In the early morning hours of Feb. 23, 1937, legendary cowboy Charlie Glass died from injuries he received in an auto accident. His friends figured he was about 65 years old.

His death occurred one day short of being the 16-year anniversary of the day he shot and killed Felix Jesui at the height of a feud between cattlemen and sheepmen over grazing rights.

The night before the accident Charlie sat in a game at Thompson, Utah, and shared a bottle or two with the other card players. Late in the evening, someone suggested that they go to Cisco, Utah, and get in on the big game there.

Charlie, never one to turn down a poker game, joined two other men for the trip to Thompson. The two men were shearers, Joe Savorna of Montrose and Andre Sartan of Grand Junction.

About an hour after the station agent started his 11 p.m. shift at the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad depot at Thompson, someone came into the telegraph office and asked the agent to get a doctor, saying that Charlie had been injured.

When a doctor arrived, he found Charlie dead of a broken neck in the back of the pickup truck.

The other two men, who had minor injuries, told the Utah lawmen who investigated that they were about a mile west of Cisco when the truck in which they were riding rolled at least three times.

Rumors following the accident were widespread because the road where the accident occurred was neither slippery nor a particularly dangerous stretch of highway, according to Bill Cunningham, son of one of Charlie's long-time employers. Utah police declared the death due to excessive speed and too much alcohol, and there was no further inquiry.

When it came time to bury Charlie, he further secured his legendary status, becoming the first black person to be interred in the Fruita Cemetery. Until Charlie's death, Fruita's Blacks were forbidden to be on the streets there after 6 p.m. and were not allowed to be buried in the local cemetery.

Charlie's grave is located near the family plot of Oscar Turner, the cattleman who employed Charlie for a number of years.

Pallbearers were important "west end" cowmen from Pinon Mesa and Glade Park, M.U. Osborn, C.N. Taylor, Don Weimer, A.B. Mahany, Lew Young and Leslie Tomlinson.

Cunningham, who had known Charlie for many years, said that someone started putting flowers on Charlie's grave in 1937. He said that when he goes to Elmwood Cemetery each Memorial Day, there are flowers there. He has never discovered who is responsible, but that fact only adds to the mystery and legend that continues to surround the story of Charlie Glass.