

MARY VERENA BRYNER REDD

by Jessie R. Ursenbach

Before mother had her first stroke I gave her a looseleaf notebook, asking her to write her history for us. She consented. I have the book now, blank, because I didn't take time to talk to her and write it myself. Soon after she got the book, ill health with continued strokes finally took her from us. I shall always regret that we have not her story as she would tell it herself.

She was born 3 March 1866 at New Harmony, Washington co., Utah. Her father, Hans Ulrich Bryner and her mother Anna Maria Dorothea Mathys, were Swiss converts. Her father had been totally blind since young manhood, so in her younger years she learned to be her father's eyes, leading him where he wished to go, handing him tools, etc., as he worked, for he was a good workman and not only did he work for himself, having the straightest fence in all Lehi Valley, but he fixed the fences of many of the widows and missionaries wives, with one of his children to help him. Her mother was a very small woman, but must have had an unusual amount of determination and energy and resourcefulness. Mother inherited the best of all their wonderful virtues. She will never have a chick nor child to match her and her crown is secure and her reward happy for eternity with her "William." The way she said that "Willilam" made poetry of the greatest kind and father was very proud of his Swiss-Dutch wife, and the family which she gave to him forever.

Father was bishop when my memory begins, of a small ward, New Harmony, and was very hospitable and generous with everything he owned, and this made much work for his wife, Verena B. A bishop's wife in any small ward has many duties. I recall going to Relief Society where she seemed to be seeing to many things. I delighted most in hearing her start the singing. I could always pick out her voice among all the others. Many meetings, choir practises, polling station, community telephone were in our home, and mother surely could have paved the entire street from our house to the meeting house with pies and cakes taken to socials, etc. It was years before I knew it wasn't 'pine cake.'

She was artistic and talented in many ways, versatile and a natural home maker. Had she had time or opportunity she would have loved to have painted or learned to play the piano. In her later life, after we were all married, she often said to me, "If you were near enough to help me, I would try to paint," and she did take a few piano lessons after she was 60 years old, but was very self-conscious for fear someone would laugh at her. She owned a set of oil paints in tubes in a tin box. When I was 'good' I could use them. When father brought home 12 new enamel cups, the first we had seen, she helped me decorate them, but the work was very unsatisfactory and meant hours of cleaning, to be useful. Most of my early painting was in the same category. She did much handwork and continually served for her large family. A basic brown paper dress pattern was kept locked in the bottom machine drawer, and from this she made all our dresses, including her own, enlarging or diminishing the size, as needed. We girls always had a new dress for the fourth of July and one for Christmas, next year we would use them for school, and our new ones for best. She spared no pains to make them attractive or good dresses. The boys wore overalls for everyday and mother made denim shirts to match. On Sundays we all looked our best in our Sunday clothes.

Rag bees and quiltings were the social functions of that day and our home was made comfortable and attractive with the rag carpets, laid over fresh new straw, and crisp lace curtains. The smell of turpentine and linseed oil, mother's own brand of furniture polish, mixed with that of home-made soap and burned food, for we children were early allowed and assigned to cook meals when mother was otherwise engaged. This would have been hard on the diners, but there was always a plentiful supply of good food to fall back on. Our cellar shelves were loaded with bottled fruit of every kind. Jellies, jams, preserves, pickles, crocks of home made butter, whole cheeses from Aunt Lucette's ranch. The flour bin full of flour. Crocks of home rendered lard, sometimes covering fried sausages. Plenty of fresh and cured meats. Each fall grandfather came to help with the curing of the pork and the making of a huge barrel of sauerkraut. There was always cream and milk, a cellar full of vegetables. Long shelves, like trays, full of winter apples from our own orchards, sacks of pine nuts, boxes of figs, raisins and almonds. Stores of dried corn, beans, fruit of our own drying. Mother always made or had us make, great batches of bread, coming from the oven in great brown loaves. So many things supervised or prepared by mother of thirteen, none of which were living. Kay was born after we came to Canada. Mother was a good cook and father was justly proud of her. He used to say, "She could make a good meal with a bacon rind and an onion." Many times, after he left us, she did just that.

We always had barrels of dixie sorghum and quantities of honey. Each summer a large garden provided fresh vegetables and stores to be dried or bottled or preserved for winter. In the huge old barn filled with hay were buried winter watermelons and squashes. She made her own soap and rugs too.

There was no hotel in our little town and the travelling public stayed with the bishop. This added greatly to mother's duties. Always there was a bed in the parlor and since we lived three hundred miles from the railroad, many of the General Authorities visiting the south rested there and were welcome guests, and warm personal friends. We children loved it all. Our big dining table always surrounded. I recall Ruder Clawson as a young man, Amasa M. Lyman particularly loved mother's tomato soup, Brother McCune had soda water tablets, Mathias F. Cowley came frequently.

Our childhood was happy. Mother was quick to try new recipes, and people of the valley came to learn how to make candy from white sugar, most candy made at home was made with honey or molasses. Parkerhouse rolls, cream puffs, cooked ice cream, all rather common now, but new then.

With all her duties, mother found time to drive with father wherever he wanted her to go, and we children slept much on the floor, where she made good beds with the many quilts she made from wool of our own sheep, covered mostly with flannel from wool taken from those same sheep and made into flannel by the Provo Woollen Mills.

Mother was versatile. Christmas would have taxed less ingenious women than she, but somehow she managed something for each one. Being so far removed from a shopping centre, she made many things. I recall seeing her putting small pieces of cloth in the opening of a tube of unbleached muslin or factory cloth, and asking if she was making a little piece sack. I was in

no way let down when the little piece sack, with others of its kind, appeared on the community Christmas tree for us girls in the form of legs, arms and body topped with a tin doll head.

She really met her Waterloo when father wrote from Salt Lake City, where he was enroute to Big Horn to find a new home for his expanding family, saying that he had decided to go to Canada. Mother wept disappointedly but began to prepare to go to Canada, seemingly knowing what was her destiny and that of her children. The first year in Canada was bitter. We lived in a frame house without insulation or furnace heat. We awoke in the morning to ten inches of stiff blanket tops where our breath had frozen them. She spent all the day thawing and drying bedding around the coal heater, to start all over again at night. Father built the big house in the middle of a five acre plot which had had sugar beets harvested from, and mother moved in with all of us children, full of life and running in and out through that lovely mud hole.

Kaya was born 28 April 1907, while father was in Utah attending conference, he being counsellor to President Heber S. Allen of the Taylor Stake. She had only a mid-wife, Sister Annie Gibb. Mother was made secretary of the Taylor Stake Relief Society while she was still in bed after his birth, and carried on that responsibility for 25 years, travelling any way she could, stone boat, buggy, horse, train. Before she was released, they were able to do some of their travel with a Model T Ford car, sometimes getting stuck in the mud. Many were the experiences she could relate of these trips throughout the stake, which reached to Taber then. Always when she travelled, if she didn't have a baby with her, she took some reading or handwork. Sister Georgin O'Brien told me often, "Your mother will wear her hands out someday." They were never idle.

She, with father, celebrated her Silver Wedding in the big new home. We were all at home, and hundreds of friends came. Father had brought his sister, Ellen Redd Bryner to Canada after her husband's death, so he could care for her, and she helped us with the baking. At the time of the 'underground' grandfather had taken his second family to Mexico. Grandmother Keziah Jane butler Redd and her four daughters, Della, Ellen, Alice and Alvira (Vilo) moved in with father and mother. Grandmother died before I was born, but mother has often told me how difficult it was for her. Grandmother had cancer of the stomach in a time when there were no sedatives. She suffered terribly and mother was naturally very sympathetic. Then too all of grandmother's other children, with their families, came to visit their mother often. The work of caring for them all depended upon mother. Father was a sheep man and was gone much of the time. He was also Bishop. She often said that she wondered that I had any strength at all, as I was born only two or three months after grandmother's passing.

She sent four of her children on missions. Will had filled one before father left us. When Lura returned, she went immediately to Calgary to Normal School, and then taught in Barnwell. Fern was next to go. She got a school in Raymond and was married 23 Dec. 1915. Paul went next and Fern helped him financially. I was running a small hat shop in Raymond, which Aunt Vilo and Lura bought from Mrs. Hill, for \$20.00 a month, making hats, doing book work and banking, everything. On very busy days Aunt Vilo or Lura would come to help out. My dream was also Normal. I thought that out of my \$20.00 I could save enough to go.

For seven years after father's death there were no crops, and keeping so large a family was

a real task for mother. Father had invested heavily in land and was holding many more acres 'in trust' helping others to hold their land. There were few clear titles and an enormous amount of unpaid-for land, his own and his friends. He had signed a note for \$63,000 with other men in the town. His sudden passing, leaving no will, threw mother and her brood into a real maelstrom of difficulties. I have wakened and found her walking the floor at night, weeping, wondering what to do next. The other signatories of the note were quite willing to slip out from under it and leave mother holding the bag.

Will was away at university when father died. He planned to study medicine. He gave it all up and came home to help mother with her problems, which were legion, in fact, I think they shortened both mother's and Will's lives. I wonder if we shall ever know what they went through to try to save some of the estate, yet through it all I don't recall mother asking us for our wages, or any part of them. When we saw need, we just automatically tried to meet it and gave all we could. I am judging all the rest by myself, and my own observations.

Mother worried about us giving so much. After several attempts to go to Normal, and failing, I was broken-hearted. I had never told anyone of my desire, feeling that I would do it alone. Will caught me crying over