

P E R S O N A L H I S T O R Y

O F

ERMA GENEVE BLUNCK

We called it the white house on the hill. It was here where I was born: Erma Geneve Blunck; July 8, 1925. Rexburg, Madison county, Idaho. This baby business at our house was getting old by the time I arrived; there were already five boys and three girls born.

My father was a not too tall, very trim, dark hair and very active man. Mother described by father was a gentle, warm and very hard working woman.

Twelve miles from Rexburg located on what was called the Herbert Bench was our dry farm. It wasn't as large as some of the farms around but three hundred sixty acres was all our family could handle and it made a very good living. The girls never did live on the farm but it was a fun time when we could spend the day. My fear of rattlesnakes made us stay close to the farmhouse.

I do not know that anything special happened more than is common in most families, but I do think it was an interesting existence now that I choose to write about it. The trouble is that our family has never been very close; my brothers all being much older than I and I being next to the youngest - which was LaVina. We were the close ones. LaVina was my favorite, always getting along so well, going every place together, even double dating in high school. However, good families have a chief to keep them together and LaVina has always been that one. She keeps in

touch and so we always know what's with George, the oldest; Bill - second; Leo, Ken and Rulon, then the five girls; Lula, Viola, one stillborn, myself and LaVina.

Always those memories. I can remember a party, it must have been my father's and mother's wedding anniversary. Everyone brought gifts and everything was so pretty but there was not enough chairs for the wee ones and so they brought in boxes for us to sit on. I happened to fall and a nail caught my lip and the Dr. took lots of stitches. I still have the scar.

The snow storms seemed to be many; drifting sometimes to the rooftops. We would go sleigh riding. Christmas was always special - oranges and nuts being a real treat.

By the time I was eleven or twelve I was very adult. Without a mother we did the work, made our own rules. My mother died when I was eight years old and it was very hard at that time. Father was a very busy man - Bishop, High Councilman. Religion was deeply rooted in our family heritage. Father always led us in daily morning and evening prayer. My mother had been a very religious person herself but not as strict as father. I know I loved my mother but when she died I felt no pain, being too young to realize she had gone away forever.

I caught most childhood diseases - remembering how hard it was in second grade of school. I had scarlatina and pneumonia. In my lifetime I know I had everything but mumps.

Our house on the hill was so far from school, so when we became school age father bought a red brick home just around the corner from the main street of Rexburg. It was located just one block from ~~Lincoln~~ *Adams* Elementary which I attended 1 through 6 grades. We loved this new house.

Our upstairs bedrooms were large and one for each of us. The winters were cold and we had no heat, but we piled the blankets high. If there was not enough blankets we would go for the closet and get overcoats. We didn't mind and loved the pictures Jack Frost painted on the windows.

When the boys (brothers) left for college or a mission it was so special when they returned - always bringing us gifts and money.

Our whole family usually got together for holidays. On the 4th of July we would pack a lunch and with our neighbors and good friends, the Hill family; we would take off for a day at Cave Falls.

Thanksgiving was at Aunt Minnie and Uncle Joe Johansen - over the river and through the woods. It was just that: looked forward to her playerpiano; using the outside toilet; the good food; animals and river that went by the house.

Memorial day was spent visiting the cemetary at Rexburg and Salem, taking lots of flowers to mother's and baby sister's graves; then spending the afternoon going to Marysvale to Aunt Mary's ^{Dora} (father's sister) grave site.

Evans' Ice Cream Parlor was just around the corner from our house. A nickel was hard to come by but you can be sure when we had one away we would go to get an ice cream cone. My favorite being orange sherbet.

The library was just across the street and I loved to check out books every week. Saturday was spent maybe sometimes at the station watching the big black porter step off the train and help the passengers. Or take a walk up to Mill Hollow.

After 6th grade I went to Washington Jr. High school and a walk of about 5 blocks. The high school was located close by Washington school. We walked in blizzardy weather. Of course, we didn't mind because we didn't know anything else, like I know now.

During my high school years World War II and Pearl Harbor. They took away our Japanese friends - classmates and we couldn't understand why. I enjoyed music; belonged to choir, sang a solo in festival, and received Superior at a festival meet at Blackfoot. Just always liked to sing until after I was married. Went to many formal dances and had many dates. I learned to ice skate rather well and spent a lot of time at it. Had my appendix out. I was always told I was pretty but I wasn't the most popular girl. Received average grades - wasn't very outgoing, rather shy.

During my last year in high school, November 1943, father decided to take LaVina and I to St. George, Utah. We could go to school there and he could work in the temple in a warm climate. We attended Dixie High school. We made new friends very quickly and enjoyed it very much. And this is where I met Rudger. He asked me to marry him and we had a very fun courtship. We were engaged at Christmas time 1943. In April we returned to Rexburg to get the planting done and the girls back in school so I could graduate. I graduated from Madison High school, May 1944.

On June 21, 1944, it was the big day and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. A funny thing happened. We were on our way to Salt Lake and stopped in Logan to get our marriage license and I didn't have a Utah blood test so I had to step in the Judge's chambers and swear on a stack of Bibles that it was an emergency marriage.

I was married now and going to St. George to live. It might just as well been going to the moon. But of course as my father kept saying I was marrying a highly respectable young man and he knew if he was half as funny as he thought he was he would be pretty funny. It was hard leaving home. After honeymooning at Bryce Park we returned to St. George. The first four months I cried a lot, I was so very homesick and noticed the

heat so much. But on the other hand I was so very truly happy. It made up for it. We lived in a little house close to the business section of town. Close to his mother's house and close to church, the West Ward.

In September Rudger decided he wanted to try for the big city and so we went to Salt Lake City and he got a job and was employed by the Kearns Company. We lived there until November. Rudger and I both missed St. George and we were restless. So we moved back and lived in Roxy Terry's house. She lived in the other side of the house and I loved her like a mother and she was later known to my children as Grandma Terry. I went into the pattern of being a wife and mother when Jackie was born November 3, 1945. A little redhead. Such a pretty thing. Then March 1, 1947, just 17 months later, Joey was born. How we loved the two little girls. They proved to be such company for each other.

August 1951 father died of a cerebral hemorrhage at his home in St. George.

October 2, 1951, our first little boy was born. We named him Richard Clark. We had moved from Grandma Terry's house into our new home just next door. Our new house was red brick and lots of room for our three children.

In May 1956 our Scott Wilford was born. Not bearing any resemblance to anyone our first thought was maybe there was a mix-up at the hospital but we kept him and he proved to be the image of his father.

Another eight years and we decided it was time to have another child. I was thirty eight years old and couldn't waste any time. Jane was born December 18, 1963. We wanted a girl and was so happy. Then the doctor announced there were complications and I would have to have emergency surgery. It was so serious but I came through okay and Jane turned out to be spoiled by all. Her birth touched off a great happiness, great that

I was still here and at Christmas time. When she was fourteen months old she dislocated her hip and was an ordeal for all of us. She wore a cast and brace for 6 months - all turned out okay, until she was four years old and I will always remember spending 6 weeks every day and sometimes nights in the Primary Children's Hospital. Jane had spinal meningitis. It took a few years of heartbreak and lots of care to get her back again but we still have her. She is 15 and a lovely girl.

I used to speculate as how the future would be, that my children would be with us forever, but sooner than I had hoped Joey was the first to leave. Just ready to turn 18 and graduate from high school, she announced she wanted to marry Russell Ames. It was quite a surprise because she hadn't been going with him very long. Being over-protective I remember thinking no one was good enough for my Joey but she loved him and we learned to love him too. He being a very special person. They now live in Maine and have three children.

Jackie attended two years of college and worked for Zion's Bank. When she was 20 years old working and happily waiting for her missionary she discovered a lump in her neck. In April of that year she had surgery removing what we thought would be just her thyroid gland but it proved to be malignant and so with a second surgery the next day they took out what seemed to be everything in her neck. We are so grateful that our prayers were answered and she is still with us. We love her so much. After her cancer operation she married George Sanders on his return from a mission to England. They lived here for a while and then moved to Salt Lake City. We have missed them so much but they are happy there. We love visiting them and we do very often. They now have 4 children (girls) and one coming.

Richard's such a special son. He stayed around through two years of college and then met and married Ellen Burton of Vernal. He went on to two more years of college at Cedar City, Utah and is now teaching business. I remember how I couldn't get him to come home from school and so I would go after him and most often he was just standing watching some sort of construction so I thought that is what he would do someday. They have a son, Ryan Scot. Ellen is such a cute mother to that kid.

With mixed emotions we sent Scott on a mission - he being called to the Italy Padova mission. What a great experience for him and for us too. His letters for two whole years; and then he was home again but not for long. While he was going to his last year of Jr. college at Dixie College he fell in love as most boys do. He married Dayna Gai Gentry August 19, 1978. Now they live in Provo while he is finishing school. We lost a son alright but we gained a sweet daughter.

Rudger had purchased a lot in Pine Valley about the time we were married and we have spent much of our summers fixing up a house that we enjoy and have enjoyed along with our children. So many fine memories. The little white church house is so much a part of our lives. Rudger has been in the branch presidency for 15 years; 2nd counselor to Glenn Snow and then 1st counselor to Dean Gardner. I had the job as secretary most of that time. Pine Valley is such a peaceful place to be. Ruth and Eric Snow have been very special Pine Valley people to us all these years. Eric has gone now but we still enjoy Ruth, a very special lady in my life.

Of course, in my life I have seen the first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong. I have seen them find a vaccine for polio, measles, etc. Went through World War II and Viet Nam and Korea.

Boarded an airplane first time. Rudger and I flew to Maine to see Joey and Russel, Sean and Sherie. We landed in Denver, Colorado, then Boston and then on to Joey's house. It was a neat experience. Sherie was just a new baby and Rudger blessed her. He was so proud of that all the way out to Maine.

I do want to mention that I appreciate all Rudger's folks did for me. Living right next door their house was a refuge for me when I was lonesome, needed advice; and for my children when parents were angry - but mostly because they loved their grandparents so much.

I had lots of friends in my lifetime. School friends, couple friends to Rudger and I; the ones we partied and visited with. But someone that has been especially close to me is Jewell Bringhurst. I became acquainted with her while working on a Lady Lions float. We became friends and were together so much after that. Taking our children on picnics, making good things in our kitchen, going to each other with our problems. I am proud to call her the best friend I ever had.

I am getting older but still young at heart. It used to be our neighbors were the old people and we were the young ones. Now we are the old ones and our neighbors are the young ones. It takes me back when that's all I talked about was raising kids and having them. Now it is my turn to listen.

I am so thankful that I am a part of this great country we live in and the church, raising my children as such.

It is just now that I realize that the advice I sometimes thought was old fashioned was the best thing for me.

I worked in the PTA as room mother and as secretary in PTA. In the Sunday school as a teacher for 5 years. Worked in MIA as counselor and Beehive teacher. Primary teacher, Primary secretary and Relief Society Youth leader for 5 years. Relief Society teacher. Secretary or clerk for sacrament meeting in Pine Valley. Primary nursery coordinator.

