

ARVILLA BERNICE WANGSGARD
Life story as told to her daughter, Arvilla
November 1959

My father's name is Thomas Wangsgaard, born 28 February 1884. My Papa was the handsomest man in the world. He was tall, dark and handsome, so kind and loving, washing my face and loved to comb my long hair.

My mother Barbara Race, was born 29 July 1888. My Mama was tall and slim with black snapping eyes and black hair. She got her black hair and eyes from her great, great grandmother who was Cherokee Indian.

I was born 12 March 1907 in Mountain View, Wyoming in a little log house. Grandmother was midwife. We lived there till I was about five. I remember living with my bachelor uncle. We had so much snow you couldn't see out the window. We shoveled snow out to the barn. After chores we would go bob sledding on the hard packed snow that was as high as the fence posts.

Mama heated bricks and wrapped us in quilts. Papa hitched up the prettiest horses and Uncle Chris and Papa would take me out to shoot rabbits.

Mama and Papa would go to the country dances and dance all night. I danced with Papa. When I got tired Mama wrapped me up in one of the quilts and I would sleep on a bench while they danced.

Papa built a new cabin. We had a nice garden in sandy soil. I used to take my shoes off and my feet would get sore. Mama and Papa would spank me if they found out. I used to go down the row in the garden eating the onions.

Mama and Papa moved us to Hudson, Wyoming where Papa worked in the coal mines. I started school in Hudson, 1st and 2nd grades, then we moved, but I don't remember the date. Then we moved back to Hudson and Papa was on the police force. When I was eight Mama and Papa separated and Papa took me to Ogden. I lived with his Sister and her girl, Aunt Annie McGregor and her girl's name was Mable. I went to school there that year.

The next summer Papa married Annie Josephine Johnson, 21, Jun 1916. That September 3rd, 1916 Papa and I were both baptized.

We lived there till I was thirteen. Then we moved to Smith Valley Nevada, to homestead. We stayed there until I finished High School. I learned to milk twelve cows night and morning and worked in the hay and drove derrick all summer.

My special girlfriends was Mildred Newell. We were friends from the fifth grade till we were grown. I graduated from Smith Valley in May, 1926.

I was married the 1st of June, 1926, to Walter Isador Newell, Mildred's cousin. We lived in Smith Valley, Nevada till winter then moved to Fresno, California. The next fall, in October, we moved back to Smith Valley and our son William (Billy) Walter Newell was born November 16, 1927. Walter (Bud) was going to farm his uncle's place the next spring, so during the winter we were going to get things ready, but his mother came and insisted that we go back to Fresno. Bud went back right after Billy was born and a week later, myself, baby and mother-in-law went to Fresno by train.

My husband was working as a sign board painter going from town to town. One town he had to stay over in had an epidemic of spinal meningitis. He contracted it and fell ill with what I and the doctor thought was the flu. January 1, 1928, I phoned the doctor but he wasn't too concerned. January 2nd, the missionaries came but Bud said not to let them in and to tell them not to come back. The night of January 2nd, he was taken to the hospital where he suffered a horrible painful death.

Little Billy was just six weeks old when his daddy died. I took my baby son to Ogden when he was nine months old and lived with grandmother for the summer. We went back to California and I stayed with Mildred till April, then went back to Ogden, until the 1st of June. I spent the summer in Jackson Hole Wyoming with my mother. In the fall we went to Oregon where I met Bert.