

## LIFE SKETCH OF DOROTHY MATILDA (TILLIE) YANCEY OCKERMAN

Dorothy Matilda (Tillie) Yancey Ockerman was born 28 March 1908 at her grandparents' home in Groveland. She was the oldest of 22 children to come to her parents, Emron Yancey and Eliza Dorothe Dean. Seventeen children grew up. The first eight years of her life she lived in Rose, ID. on a farm. Her parents then bought a farm in Groveland where she started school. Grade school was finished here. She attended high school at Moreland, and one year at USAC in Logan, Utah. She completed high school in 3 years.

She married Melvin A. Ockerman on 15 June 1926 at her parents' home in Groveland. They lived in Groveland and Melvin worked for her father and Thomas Bond. Blonde-haired Melvin Vern was born on 22 Apr. 1927. Over the years he would be followed by Kent in 1932, Melba in 1936, and Ralph in 1939.

When Vern was about 4 they purchased a 40 acre farm in Rose. A clear title could not be obtained, so after two years their money was returned. They then lived in Blackfoot, and Melvin worked at a hot house and did custom work. They had a large apple orchard here and sold apples. It was here that Kent was born. Melvin liked farming, so they rented a farm at Riverside, where Melba was born. Their next move was to the Indian Reservation for 6 years of farming and where Ralph was born.

In Nov. 1942 they purchased the old Thompson place at Goshen. Besides running his own farm Melvin rented more land, did custom work, plowing and harvesting, and for 14 years worked for Darrell Cook.

Tillie worked just as hard. She began cooking for school lunches at Presto. At this time not much Government assistance was being given; they only received sugar and tomato paste. The economy was not good, so the children paid for lunches in produce. Many spoiled eggs were opened. Often she didn't know ahead what she would have to cook with. She cooked on a coal stove and carried water from an outside well. Her family furnished milk, and some of the mothers canned fruit to use. The teachers, mostly Mrs. Oliver Kunz furnished half a beef. Butcher shops donated soup bones. Her children helped her with the dishes. Ralph, who was only 3, was allowed a desk at school while his mother worked. She and the children walked to and from school

(1½ miles each way--not much fun during some of our Idaho weather. She cooked here 2 years and then went to Goshen when the districts were consolidated, where she cooked for 4 more years.

She worked with her children in the potato harvest. And what an example she set for them with her industry and endurance. There was no one--not man, woman nor child who could keep up with her when it came to picking spuds. And even at the end of a long, hard day, when everyone else was dropping in exhaustion, she would still be going strong.

For 10 years she worked for Anna, Emma, and Afton Cook and Elaine Hanny, doing house work. This way she could choose her working hours. She wanted to be home when the children were there. At times she worked with Pete Yorgensen helping him papering houses. One winter when times were especially hard, she and Melvin both worked at painting and papering. She loved and enjoyed work of any kind, her favorites being quilting, cooking, and yard work, with plenty of flowers.

While working for the County, Melvin's road cook died in an accident. Tillie was talked into pinch hitting for him until other help could be found. This lasted 7 years until Melvin retired from the County. Tillie loved the job which lasted each fall from about a month until as long as 7 weeks, while the road crews <sup>(12 MEN)</sup> worked up in the hills.

Although Melvin had not been active in the church, he had always supported Tillie 100% in anything she wished to do, and now in February 1953, they went to the temple along with several other Goshen couples. Tillie served in many church positions over the years, among them were Relief Society president and Primary president. She was given a beautiful hand-made quilt for being the Primary president serving the longest number of years in the organization. She served as a teacher, librarian, as well as president for a total of 32 years.

She and Melvin enjoyed working for two years at the Temple Visitors' Center. She was able to attend the temple many times while the Leland Christensens worked there by going with them.

In 1963 they sold the farm to Kent and built a home on the Goshen town-site because Melvin had developed heart problems and could no longer do the strenuous work on the farm. Those were pleasant years for them. Both could take life easier, and they enjoyed taking care of the yard and garden and had time for some good fishing and camping trips. Some of her grand-children have fond memories about those trips--learning to fish with their grandfather and enjoying their grandmother's delicious meals around the campfire.

After Melvin's death in 1982, Tillie's health also deteriorated, and she had several trips to the hospital. Due to the effects of Polio, suffered many years before, she had to use a walker during the last years of her life, which at times provoked her and occasionally caused some nasty falls. Her neighbor, Mildred McInelly, she loved as a sister. Mildred checked on her every day, and if Tillie didn't answer the phone, Mildred would soon appear to see if she was all right. Tillie also felt very blessed to have all her children and most of her grandchildren live near her.

Even though it became more and more difficult for her to get around, she still clung to her independence, refusing to let her family or neighbors do such things as bring in the wood for her stove. She still raised a good garden and picked and canned the vegetables; still baked bread and made cookies. Anyone who visited was always given something to eat or to take home. When family or friends remonstrated with her and urged her not to do so much, she'd say, "If I don't keep moving all my joints will freeze up and I'll be perfectly useless."

When her eyesight began to fail and she could no longer see to do the beautiful quilting and embroidery she used to do, she turned to fabric painting. Many of us are the fortunate recipients of beautiful pillow cases or table cloths, the loving work of hands that could never stand to be idle.

She was always so generous that one could never even the score. If you gave her an apple, she'd probably bring you an apple pie in return. Her instructions to a daughter-in-law were, "If someone brings you something in a pan, see that you return a pan and a half full." And she always did.

After her accident a year ago last summer she was hospitalized and told that she'd just as well get used to the idea that she'd never walk again nor be able to go home to live. With typical Tillie spunk and determination she proved the doctors wrong on both counts and was able to stay in her own home for another year, thanks to the loving and attentive care of all her children, who did so much to make life a little easier for her. And when she said "children" she <sup>also</sup> meant the daughters-in-law and the son-in-law, all of whom she loved as much as her own children and who gave her so much loving care and service.

Three words help sum up Tillie's life: Work, Service, and Independence, and it was a sad day for her when she had to give up all three and submit to the loving care of her family on a 24 hour-a-day basis. Never have I ever seen more devoted, unselfish care given than by those 4 devoted children and their spouses. But when I commented on it to Ralph, he shrugged off the compliment saying, "She took care of us all our lives, now it's our turn to care for her." And they certainly did.

And when the move to a nursing home became inevitable and necessary, Tillie accepted it with her usual patience and graciousness and was always so uncomplaining and undemanding, and so appreciative of a visit or of anything done for her.

She passed away peacefully in her sleep on Tuesday, Nov. 30, 1993, with loved ones close around her. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, 9 brothers and sisters and 2 grandchildren. She is survived by her 4 children, 17 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren.

A short time before her death she expressed this thought: that her life had been richly blessed by the gospel and the family she so dearly loved, and now she looked forward to the challenges of yet another life. We who have known her have also been richly blessed, as well as touched and inspired by her life and example.