

## Ella Maud Leavitt

I, Ella Maud Leavitt, was born on March 28, 1912, last of 8 children born to David Cate Leavitt and Ella Gertrude Bird in Kenilworth, Carbon County, Utah. My father and brothers were coal miners and moved from one town to another where ever the work was best the wages good. My mother either operated the boarding house in the town or took boarders into their home. We lived in Morland, Carbon County, Utah where a family picture was taken in 1916. I was 4 years old then.

My brothers Lynn and Don had married and one niece, Wanda Lynette, was born in 1916, to Lynn and Louise; and in 1917 another niece, Donna Flavella was born to Don and Mable.

The family had moved to Segoe, Utah and to Cameo and Palisade, Colorado where my father worked in the coal mines of Segoe and Cameo. Don and Margaret lived in Segoe, as well as Norma, who had by then married Lawrence Madsen. This was the year of the great epidemic of the flu (1918). Norma caught the flu and mother (Ella Gertrude Bird) went to Segoe to take care of her as Norma was expecting her first child. The whole family came sick and mother spent time going from Norma's to Don's homes helping until she caught the flu herself. Norma was in a weakened condition and she died in November of 1918. Everyone was quarantined in, and none of the family could attend her funeral or burial. She was buried in Segoe Cemetary with her baby.

I started school in Standardville, Carbon County, Utah, then moved to Kenilworth where I attended school off and on for the rest of my school years.

I was a happy child and was spoiled by the whole family with lots of love.

When I was 10 years old we moved to Oakland, California with Mother and two brothers, Clifford and Claude. My father was already in Oakland waiting for the family. Mother hated to go, as Roxie was married to Nephi Christensen and had a small daughter, Barbara, a few months old. The family had sold everything they had – furniture, etc. I had to give up my prized possessions – a roll-top desk and a doll bed, they were given to Wanda, my oldest niece (she is just 4 years older than me). The family didn't stay long in Oakland.

We moved on to a rice farm about 500 miles northeast of San Francisco, about where Chico, California is now located.

In the meantime Don was divorced from Mable and he came up to Oregon and met the family. Father (David Cate Leavitt) had contracted to put up the hay on a large ranch just outside of Kelso, Washington. One day as all the men were in to eat dinner (Mother (Ella) cooking for all of them) Father (David) sent Claude and another boy to water the horses. They had to take them several miles so the boys decided to ride. There was an old gravel pit and the train would go in there every week or two to get gravel. The train blew its whistle as they were riding. The noise of the whistle scared the horses; the horses ran straight for the train. Just as Claude's horse got to the train it whirled around throwing Claude off – and right under the wheels of the train.

The last two wheels of one car ran over his legs and the front two wheels of the second car, cutting his legs completely off just below the knee. The train stopped and they put Claude in the cab of the train. He had not lost consciousness and he put his own tourniquets on his legs to stop the bleeding. The engineer took him to where the tracks met the road and hailed a car down to take him down to the Kelso Hospital. The other boy rode back to the ranch and told us what had happened. Everyone hurried into the Kelso Hospital and found Claude (still conscious)

waiting in the hall on a stretcher for them to take him into the operating room. This was an awfully hard thing for Ella (Mother) away from her home (Utah) and away from her family. Mother and I stayed in Kelso for many months. Mother and I stayed with a family who had just recently been baptized by the missionaries. (The missionaries had read about the accident in the papers and found that we were LDS and they arranged with this family for our lodging).

After this the family came back to Utah to be with the rest of the family and for Claude to go to telegraphy school.

When we came back to Salt Lake we lived with Grandmother (Harriett Leavitt) at 8<sup>th</sup> South and 3<sup>rd</sup> West (rented a house). I went to school at Grant Elementary – moved to Floral Street (bought a house) between State Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> East and between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> South. I went to school at Oquirre School. Claude was going to telegraphy school, and to the doctor to fit him with artificial legs. Claude had to walk a lot to get used to his legs so he and I visited many places – like the Capitol Building, City and County Building, Temple Square, Museum and movies. Mother worked in a hotel, cleaning rooms. Father was working in Carbon County, Utah in the coal mines.

During my times when I was in Kenilworth my best friend was Melba Bunce. Other friends were Ardith Hutsman, Francis Davis, Phillis Snow, and many others. School day boyfriends were Clarence Burton, William Blackham, Darrell Zwallen and Mont Heath.

Claude got his artificial legs and walked up and down streets and avenues of Salt Lake City to go to school, he was in lots of pain.

We bought a home in Salt Lake (12<sup>th</sup> “C” Street). Father went back to work in the coal mines in Carbon County, Utah. He had black lung and a bad heart. He came home to Salt Lake and died on August 4, 1924 just one year after Claude had been hurt.

Mother stayed in this home, making two apartments out of it and renting one side to help with finances; also doing housework for people. I went to school at Lowell School. Brother, Clifford, married Ida Winters in 1926.

Mother went to the Temple and had Father’s (David Cate Leavitt) word done and Me and Norma Bertha sealed to our parents on September 11, 1924 in Salt Lake Temple.

Mother, Me and Claude moved to 414 Cleveland Avenue (a smaller home). Claude worked for Western Telegraph – Mother still worked at home cleaning for people, and was custodian of the Waterloo Ward Chapel. I helped with this custodian work after school. (I hated washing and drying the sacrament cups). Went to Whittier School and 1 year at Summer School. Friends were Ione Christensen and Irene Tuttle. For the next 3 or 4 years I would go to school back and forth from Kenilworth, Utah to Salt Lake City. When in Kenilworth (Carbon County) Utah I lived with my sister Roxie and her husband Nephi Christensen and their two children. Went to school in Kenilworth, Spring Glen, and Price High School. My last year of school was in 1928. (two years of high school). Mother and I went back to Salt Lake and moved in with Grandma Leavit Lillywhite to take care of her as she was quite old. Grandpa Lillywhite’s children had taken him to live with them, and Grandma was alone.

I worked at A&W Root Beer, not much money but it helped. At this time, my dear friend, Melba Bunce had moved to Salt Lake too, and we had a lot of fun together. In fact, it was through Melba that I met the man I would later marry.

In about 1925-26 my Mother and brother Claude, and I moved to Butte, Montana where Claude was working. It was a very cold winter and I walked 9 blocks to school in below freezing weather. Mother still worked at house cleaning. The people in the L.D.S. Church were very nice people and we became real close to them, which I’m sure helped mother a lot. We had many

ward dinners and outings and get togethers. In the spring of 1927 Claude was transferred to Helena, Montana. Mother went to be with him and I was sent back to Salt Lake on the train alone. Some of my brother-in-law, Nephi's family, picked me up and were to take me to Carbon County. They took a different route (through Nephi, Salina, Mt. Pleasant, Ephraim, etc.). I knew that wasn't the road to Carbon County and I thought they were kidnapping me – I was very glad to get to Kenilworth.

One day in June (the 6<sup>th</sup>) of 1930, word came to Mother that my brother Claude had been killed in the train yards at Omaha, Nebraska. He had been working in the east and was working at small jobs along the route trying to get back to Utah. It was depression times, and there was very little money and even less jobs available. This news was almost more than my Mother could stand. She had been awfully close to Claude because of his being hurt seven years before, and her trying to take care of him wherever his work took him. He had never married. He had a wonderful disposition and was handsome and easy to get along with. Everybody loved him.

After that Grandma Leavitt Lillywhite went to live with different members of her family – and Mother and I moved up to 280 G. Street and lived with Elizabeth Moffatt, her mother Grandma Jackson, and Elizabeth's two young daughters. Elizabeth was widowed and had to go to work, so Mother tended the children, helped Grandma Jackson and did the work and cooking for our board or room. I went to work at the Telephone Company, but was laid off because of bad times and I then went to doing house work in peoples homes. I was still close friends with Melba Bunce and once day she came to see me with two boys. One was Arthur Davis (who she later married), and the other was Harold Brown. I had met him about a year before when I was working at A&W Root Beer. We started going out together (Harold Brown and I) and we were married on March 21, 1931 in a double wedding with Melba and Arthur. We left the same day and went out to Kenilworth to let Harold meet my brothers and sister. Lynn and Louise, Don and Margaret, Clifford and Ida, and Roxie and Nephi Christensen.

We came home and rented a little house in Midvale, where Harold worked at the U.S. smelter. He kept this job all during the depression, sometimes only working 2 or 3 days a week. Everyone was out of work, and many people were hungry. We were really very lucky to have what little we did have. We would sometimes go to a movie which cost 10 cents. Eggs were 15 cents a dozen and we could afford to buy ½ dozen at that time. We would go to peoples orchards and pick fruit and receive a part of the fruit as a percentage of what we picked. We did the same with tomatoes and garden produce. We didn't have much money, but we had good times.

The neighbors would all get together and play games or listen to the radio. "Mert & Marge", "Stella Dallas", "Amos & Andy", "Fibber McGee", and we would exchange jig saw puzzles. No one had a car so we didn't get much.

During this time Mother (Ella Gertrude Bird) would live with us. Roxie and Nephi had moved to Salt Lake City and Mother would divide her time between us. She still worked most of the time, still doing housework or cleaning. She did a lot of Temple work at this time too, as she did throughout the rest of her life.

On March 23, 1933 we had a beautiful baby girl. It was a cold, blustery day. I had chosen to stay home and have my first child. The doctor disagreed, but I won out, and my Mother was there with me. Between her and my dear husband it was a wonderful happy experience... She was a good baby, no trouble, and we all enjoyed her very much. From the minute she was born she was something very special to my Mother, and remained that way until my Mother's death, even though I had three more children – two boys and another girl. Mother loved them all...

At this time we lived in the Grayson Apartments in Midvale, Utah. There were 8 family unites and all of us were very close. Melba and Arthur lived in one of the units. None of us could go anywhere (no cars), so we made our own fun and we had good times together. We lived there for about 1 year. We then moved to a little house on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Midvale. Our Home Teacher at that time was Earl Hobbs. Harold liked and admired him very much. He convinced Harold that he should join the Church, so on \_\_\_\_\_ 1934 Harold was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He was ordained a deacon.

We then moved to Sandy, Utah where Harold had lived all his life and where everyone knew him. He didn't go to Church for several years. I was pregnant when we moved in the summer of 1935.

Our son, Rodney Hal, was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of December 1935 in Murray, Utah. This time I went to the hospital. My Mother stayed home and took care of [the oldest] and helped Harold. Harold was working a little more now. Still at the U.S. smelter in Midvale, Utah, but the wages were small and we still had to struggle to get along. My hospital bill for Rodney including the doctor bill was \$52.00 (we paid it off in monthly payments). Rodney was another good baby, never cried or was fussy. (My Mother always said we neglected him because he was so good). He was a big baby, and [the oldest] adored him. She would try to carry him and he was bigger than she was, but she always tried to "mother" him. We had to watch her – one time she was quiet and we found her feeding him fried potatoes. He mouth was full and he was choking. Rodney loved [her] too, and they played together all the time.

When Rodney was 6 months old Harold's father (William Henry Brown) died. This was in June 1936. We spent a lot of time with Grandma Brown. She was totally blind and her only daughter lived out of state. She had three more boys at home, but they weren't very comforting to her. Grandma Brown and I became very close. I got her to join the Blind Association and to learn braille so she could read. She was a good housekeeper, but I helped her with her cleaning, etc. until her other sons were married, and then I had their wives help with this cleaning.

In September of 1936 Harold I found a little house that we wanted to buy. The Sandy Bank owned it and had a family living in it (free of rent) to keep people from breaking the windows, etc. they didn't want to move because they had no place to go and no job and no money. The Bank said we could buy the home for \$500.00 - \$25.00 down. We didn't have that so I went to the Bank and asked if we could pay \$15.00 down and \$15.00 a month, and they agreed so that is how we moved into our own home. The house was in terrible condition. In places the shingles on the roof were gone and we could see daylight. There were places in the floor that the boards were loose. We had three rooms and a water tap in the house, but no bathroom and no hot water. I wanted to move right back out – but Harold and my Mother convinced me it could be fixed up. Harold was real handy at any kind of repair work and he soon had it very comfortable, and had added another room (no bathroom still – in fact not until 1942), but we got along alright and I still live in that same house today and love it. (410 West 2<sup>nd</sup> South, Sandy, Utah).

In 1937 I found I was expecting another baby. I always had easy pregnancies, no trouble or anything. When I discovered that my baby was due around Christmas time (I had the same doctor that I had had for the births of my first two children) I again told him I wanted to stay home but he refused to let me. I was worried, because I didn't want to be away from my other children on Christmas. Someone had told me that if you take quinine and castor oil it would induce labor, so I tried it late on the night of December 14<sup>th</sup> (as they kept you in the hospital 10 days then). An hour after I took it I was on my way to the hospital and the baby was born a few

hours later, early morning of December 15, 1937. I was so afraid and I prayed that the baby would be alright, and I promised the Lord that I would never do anything like that again. I came home from the hospital on Christmas Eve. Harold had the tree all decorated, Mother had all the goodies made, and they had done the last minute shopping so it was a beautiful Christmas. [The oldest] and Rodney had a new baby brother, which was much more important than all the toys they got. They spoiled him, as we all did, but was the type of baby you wanted to spoil. He laughed a lot and entertained everyone who saw him. He was another good baby. We named our baby boy William (after Harold's father) and Claude (after my brother). Right from the very first he had a darling personality. He won everyone over with his smile and his cute ways. He kept this personality all his life, with his family, his teachers, his co-workers. Everyone loved him.

The next spring Harold got sick, one of the few times he was really sick. The doctor came (they made house calls then) and told us he had Diphtheria, and that we were quarantined; which meant that no one could come and we couldn't go out. The County Nurse came every day and gave us all a shot and took care of Harold. He was awfully sick and Mother and I did a lot of praying at that time. I think we were quarantined in for about 8 weeks. The doctor said Harold would always be a carrier of it, and he had to take shots, etc. for many years.

Mother became sick and was never able to do the hard work she had always done. She had typhoid fever and was in the hospital in intensive care. My sister Roxie went to see her every day as she lived within walking distance of the hospital. When Mother was better she moved into an apartment close to the Temple and did Temple Work until her high blood pressure prevented her from going up and down the stairs.

We had remodeled our house and made another bedroom and a room for a bathroom, and Harold decided he would build a small house in our back yard for Mother. We had a large yard and plenty of room. We got the lumber on time payment from the hardware store and mother paid for it in monthly payments. At this time I was expecting our fourth child. I wanted to stay home again and have my baby, but Mother was not able to help me with this one so I got our neighbor and good friend Mrs. John Elswood to come and assist the doctor and me. On August 25, 1940 we were blessed with another beautiful daughter, giving us two boys and two girls...She was a beautiful baby with blonde hair. BLONDE...while all the other three were dark complexioned. Her hair was also curly. We all adored her, and she drank it in – applying her winning ways with everyone. Aunts, and Uncles, Cousins and all.

When [the baby] was 6 months old Mother moved into her little house. She was so pleased and happy. Mother and I fixed it up real cute. Mother was so glad to have her own company and visitors in her own home, which she hadn't had for many years.

That summer, 1941, Harold and I and family took our first trip. We drove to Vale, Oregon where Harold's only sister lived, whom I had never met, and Harold hadn't seen for 13 years. We had a good trip which we all enjoyed.

Mother had her cousin, Roxie Woods Terry from St. George, Utah, visiting with her and when it was time for "Aunt Roxie" (as we called her) to go home she talked Mother into going back to St. George with her. It was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time Mother had been back to St. George since she had left there when she had married David.

She and Roxie had a very good time visiting old friends and old places. One day they took a lunch and walked out to the "sugar loaf". (a flat topped mountain) where they had played as young girls. The sun was awfully hot and it was a long walk. When they got back home Mother was sick and from pure exhaustion she had a stroke. Aunt Roxie let us know right away and my sister Roxie and I got on the bus and traveled all night arriving in St. George about 9:00

AM. Mother was awful bad, she could not move her one side and she could not talk. The doctor told us she was not going to make it. I couldn't accept it and I felt sure there was something that could be done to help her. We sat with her all that day the next night. We called the Elders in to administer to her and about 10:00 AM on the morning of July 17, 1941 she passed away. My three brothers Lynn, Don and Clifford arrived about an hour after she had died. We made all the arrangements and had her body sent back to Sandy where I lived and where she had her little house. We had her funeral in the Sandy Third Ward with Bishop Marlon S. Bateman conducting. He was our Bishop and had been so good to Mother. She was buried in the Provo City Cemetary between her dear husband David and her son Claude.

I still had a hard time accepting Mother's death. We had been very close and I missed her terribly. It seemed like I didn't know how to raise my family without her. Thank goodness for a wonderful and understanding husband. Harold missed her too. They had thought the world of one another. Mother always took Harold's side in our disagreements.

World War II was getting close to home and they Government had set up an Arms Plant not too far from us, so I decided to go to work. Harold was in agreement with me, and even though [the oldest] was just 1 ½ years old I went to work. Partly for the money and partly because I missed my Mother. I found an older woman who would come into the house and tend my children for me and I went to work making bullets. I made good money, as much as Harold was making, so the first thing we did was get the bathroom put in the house. We still had Mother's little house in our backyard and we were still paying for it, so we rented it out. First to a newly wed couple who stayed there for a year, and then an older widowed woman who my children called "Grandma." There was no bath in that house so we still had to have the outside toilet. The people who bought it moved it off our property and it was awful to see them haul it away, it had been so much a part of Mother.

I worked for 2 years at the Remington Arms Plant. (My sister Roxie also worked there). The war had started and all of the young men were going to fight. At this time Harold's cousin, Norma Brown, married a pilot in the Air Force and he (her husband) had been killed. She had a small baby and needed to go to work, so we said we would tend her baby...we took him when he was 9 months old. The whole family adored him. He had big black eyes and curly hair and was a darling baby. We kept him night and day. His Mother would take him home on the weekends sometimes, but on the most part we had him all the time. We all grew to love him and Harold even tried to get Norma to let us adopt him. We kept him for two years and then Norma remarried again and she took him to live with her. She still worked, so I still tended him during the day, but he went home with his mother at night and she brought him back the next morning. That way we were weaned away from him gradually, which made it easier.

All of my children were in school now, so I decided to go back to work. Harold worked shift work (still at the U.S. Smelter) in Midvale where he had worked since 1929. This shows you what a steady, dependable and hard working man he was.

I went to work in Salt Lake City at the Payless Drug Store for a while, but as I had to ride the bus I didn't make much money and I was gone too long away from home, so I didn't work there very long. (maybe 6 months to a year). I then went to work at the Jordan Drug in Sandy (just 2 blocks from home). One day I would work from 10 AM until 4 PM and the next day from 4 PM until 10 PM so I was home a lot more and could be with my family and they could walk over and see me when I was at work. I stayed at that job for about 8 to 10 years.