

We three children would like to give you some insight into our Mothers life. Stories that not everyone will know. This is the real story of Bessie Marie Fordham Edwards.

She was born as Bessie Marie Fordham on February 25, 1923 in Greenville, Beaver County Utah at the home of her maternal Grandparents, William Hyrum and Laura Jane Arthur Calvert. It is the home where Ralph and Faye Fordham lived and where Josh and Heather Gates now reside. She was the 3rd child of nine children, 6 boys and 3 girls.

She grew up in the home where Sandy and I now live. Grandpa Fordham was a teacher and did veterinary work for people in the area, along with farming. Grandpa proudly served in World War I so Mom grew up in a very patriotic home. Neither of her parents had a drivers license or drove a vehicle. They walked everywhere they went and Grandpa was great with a team of horses. Bessie went to school in Greenville from 1st to 6th grade and attended high school in Beaver, graduating valedictorian of her class in 1941. She met Dad at a high school dance. Dad was 6 years older than Mom. On one of their first dates he ran his vehicle off the road and into the ditch. He had to go to the house and ask GA to pull him out. As some of you may know GA could be very intimidating.

Dad was a member of the Utah National Guard Unit known as the Triple Duce and was called into active duty. Mom attended Utah Agricultural College in Logan Utah. During a furlow, they went with Dad's cousin to visit Uncle Cecil and Aunt Norma Edwards in Ely. Ignoring the pleas from Grandma Fordham "not go out there and get married", they could not resist the repeated dares from Uncle Jess and Aunt LaPriel Edwards. Once they decided to get married, the only way to accomplish this was to get the Justice of the Peace out of bed in the middle of the night. In Mom's words, the Justice of the Peace pronounced them Husband and Wife and said "That will be 5 dollars please". They spent their honeymoon at Uncle Cecils with Jess and LaPriel!!!

Dad then went with his Unit to California and Mom continued her education in Logan. As World War II intensified Dad's unit continued training around the country. Mom and several other wives traveled together to the various military instillations. These young women grew very close as they traveled. Mom has always felt she was responsible to make sure everything was ok. This feeling of responsibility served Mom well during this time and we have been told by the women that Mom traveled with that they always knew that they would be safe because Mom was with them. While stationed in Tennessee, Ricke was born. After Pearl Harbor the Triple Duce was sent back to California to prepare to deploy to

Europe. Mom and Ricke returned to live at home with her parents. Dads guard unit came ashore at Normandy Beach. Dad promised himself if he ever got home he would never leave Mother again. He returned in 1944 and they began their married life again.

Their marriage was solemnized in the St. George Temple in February of 1951.

The home that we were raised in was brought from Manderfield to Greenville, where she resided until her death.

Mom passed the civil service exam in 1947 and replaced Blaine Blackett as post master, having the only paying job in Greenville. The Post Office and store were located in our home just off of the kitchen. The towns people came to collect the mail and catch up on the news.

As children Ricke, Annette, and Brent were taught the value of work. With Mary Anne, it was just easier to send her with her Dad to the creamery or out in the fields. At dish washing time Mary Anne always somehow ended up at the piano. Because Mom loved music so much and so wanted us to learn to play the piano, if we would play, we could get out of a multitude of less desirable chores. Mary Anne pulled this off with great skill. If Brent didn't practice he had to milk cows and he was always milking cows. I sure wish I would have played that piano. Annette was older and excelled at adding custom designs in the form of dents to Dads' new Impala and later to his sporty Ford Torino. She was showing her friends how great driving was and just how skilled she was at pulling it into the garagewithout a license.....on the 4th of July....in front of her friends!! Mom and Dad never had the door repaired as a reminder to Annie of her 14 year old lack of judgement. Rick was always playing Ranger Rick with the forest service, catching chipmunks and driving around in his fancy black Chevy Malibu.

On holidays we looked forward to mothers' brothers and sisters coming to stay and having fun with the cousins. We rode Pet our horse, we caught poly wogs, played in dry creek, we hopped around on the bumpity tumpers, chased fire flies, picked Johnny jump-ups in the meadow, played under the street light, and sleep on the lawn in anticipation of the booms on the 4th of July. And you had better be up in time for the 4th of July flag ceremony at sunrise. Mom loved for us to have fun. She felt it was important for us to play and always loved hearing "the kids" playing under the streetlight.

Dad spent most of his summers growing up in Indian Creek. His love continued throughout his life and that consequently became a big part of his and Mom's life after they got married. Early in their life together, when Dad got home from work,

Mom would have the car packed and they would go and stay for the night in the mountains he loved. Thanks to the Post Office and dairy, the family didn't go very far or on many trips, but we always had time for a quick evening meal or afternoon fishing up Indian Creek.

On one afternoon fishing trip, a water fight ensued among some family members including Mom (who always seemed to be in the middle of such things) and Brent. As Mom was bent over beaver pond up Twitchell canyon to re-load her water container, Brent came barreling down the bank behind her. Unable to stop, he had no choice but to run into her, shoving her face first into the beaver pond. Although soaking wet and freezing cold, Mom came padding back to the shore with a big grin on her face. Our Dad, very protective of his Sweetheart, displayed one of the rare moments of anger we witnessed in our lives. Mom quelled his fears saying "What was he to do??? He just couldn't stop!!!" This story has lived in family infamy!!! But, perhaps Brent would like to share with us the REAL story.l

Speaking of water fights!!! Mom was a master!!! A skill she learned well from her father. It was not only water fights, it was also snow ball fights, and even a food fight at the cabin at Elk Meadows after Thanksgiving dinner. Such behavior sort of made us scratch our heads and wonder how this could be our Mother who drilled proper behavior decorum into our brains from a very young age.

Most of you know Brent, so the beaver pond incident is no surprise to you. Can you imagine the parenting challenge he posed to Mom? After repeated attempts at quieting him during the Sacrament, she was on the way out of the chapel and was so exasperated that she pinched him as he tried to get his attention as he screamed "Look Mom, you turned me pink"!!!He would take apart anything he could get his hands on, clocks, piggy banks, or sewing machines. So, she got him an erector set so that he could put things back together. When Mom went to Grandpa in desperation over just what to do about Brent, He told her simply, "Just love him."

Brent was not the only one to try Mom's patience. One warm summer Sunday, Ricke secretly snuck his pet horny toad into church in his pocket. The Sacrament seemed the perfect time to impress his friends and bring it out to play. It always seemed that Mom had a special sense of any wrong doing going on and was on to this instantly. She and Rick went quickly out the door to discuss the situation.

Mom was a harsh task master at times. The most anticipated activity of the summer was the trip to stay with Aunt Barbara. Shortly before the trip one summer, Annette was left to watch me. I got into a plant in the living room and spilled dirt all over the floor. Because Annie didn't watch me closely enough, neither Brent nor Annie got to go to Salt Lake. I have been reminded of this travesty multiple times.

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Annette and Brent were not able to go on their summer vacation to stay with Aunt Barbara in Salt Lake because Annette didn't watch Mary Anne closely enough and Mary Anne spilled a plant and the dirt all over the living room floor.

Our home was always open to pets. Mind you, not just the dogs and cats... More like, a muskrat, a pelican, a chipmunk, and more than one skunk. This provided endless entertainment. For example our repeated torment of Bishop Arthur Blackner as he would stop by to get his mail. His kind and gentle demeanor was put to the test as he found this striped demon crawling around his feet or sleeping lazily in the store window. He let out a string of..... well... let's just say that he said some things that he would not repeat over the pulpit on Sunday.

Mom loved mornings! If it was light outside, the sunlight must come in and she would throw open the blinds. She thought all creatures felt the same way, thus the reason the skunk was sunning himself in the store window and why she put the pet chipmunk out on the silver mailbox. What a shock it was for her to find that the chipmunk didn't fare well in the bright sun and died of heat stroke.

Everyone was welcome in our home. Many were the times that we would have guests sleeping here or there. If we ate, anyone could eat, if we slept, anyone was welcome to sleep in our home. Our early years were carefree and felt secure. That peace was threatened and life began to change in the summer of 1967 when our brother Rick began having headaches. He had his first surgery for a brain tumor in the fall of 1967. We all thought that life would get back to normal and for a time it seemed that it would happen. Rick married his sweetheart Kay in Feb of 1968 and things seemed just right. We all helped them remodel the little Julia Griffiths home up the lane and their 1st son and THE 1st grandson Eric was born in Nov of 1968. What a joy. Mom was so excited to have baby to dote on. And that she did!!

Our world was again threatened when Dad was diagnosed with colon cancer in the spring of 1970. Dad battled for four years and passed away in June of 1974. Meanwhile, Rick battled an illness that would ultimately last for 17 years, require 5 major surgeries and an untold number of complications. At the same time, Grandma

Fordham's health was failing and she moved in with Mom so that she could be more easily cared for. Grandma passed away in Nov of 1983.

Many of you are not strangers to acts of service rendered by our Mother. With all the chaos in our lives to say that it was a constant struggle to maintain any normalcy and sanity is a severe understatement. We could not have survived without the love and support of untold numbers of people – especially the incredible people in our little town of Greenville. The kind service offered from so many, for so many years allowed us, and it especially allowed Mom to give the constant service required.

All of Mom's grandsons and one granddaughter have served missions. The youngest grandson, Jordan, will be putting in papers soon. Mom has supported all of them monetarily and with letters. It was a joy and an honor for her to do so.

Over the past sixteen months, Mother especially enjoyed following Deloy and Annette's mission service in the New York Rochester Mission at the Hill Cumorah Visitor's Sites Annette sent blog posts and e-mails regarding their mission to Brent and he would copy them and deliver them to Mom. She was saving them in a three ring binder to give to me when I returned home. One of the sweetest things mother has done for me was call Deloy and I each night while we have served our mission in NY up until May 22nd, 2011 when she became too ill to do so. How I've missed those phone calls. Thanks Mom for your love and support.