

"MY BLUE RIBBON GRANDMOTHER"

Given by Edith Whitehead

The Literary Arts Club are proud to honor my Blue Ribbon Grandmother, Elizabeth Oxborrow McArthur. I am equally proud to be the one to tell you of her life.

You see, my Grandmother has a remarkable history, and she herself has made it so. Just as she has designed and created so many lovely blue ribbon quilts out of scraps of color, so she has made of her life a blue ribbon masterpiece of beauty and richness, shaped from the pieces of her colorful experiences. Out of hardships and disappointments and determination, she has designed a life so colorful and honorable that it far outshines, in loveliness, any of the exquisite creations of her hand. Her life is like one of her blue ribbon quilt blocks, for it began with a background well worth revealing.

Elizabeth Oxborrow McArthur's mother was Mary Leicht, whose German parents had moved to England just prior to Mary's birth. Mary's father was a musician and band leader; while her mother also was talented in music, having a beautiful voice and being an artist on the harp. When Mary was but ten months old her mother passed away. Later her father married a widow. Mary inherited her mother's talent for she became an accomplished child harpist at the age of five.

The Latter Day Saint Missionaries, Samuel Adams and John D. McAllister of St. George, brought the Gospel to Mary's family. They planned to come to America in the year 1857, but before their plans materialized the father died of typhoid fever. So it was in 1864 that they sailed for "Zion". After 5 weeks and 4 days on the water they arrived in America, but their journey had but begun. They now walked all the way across the plains with an ox-team company in which the Tom Judd family were members.

When they arrived in St. George it was but a sagebrush city; having been settled only three years. It was a desolate looking place compared to the green hills of England.

Mary immediately began to work in the John Pymn home. Here she worked until she was seventeen years old. During this time she became acquainted with Joseph Oxborrow, whose wife Jenette she already knew. After Mary's seventeenth birthday she married Joseph, who was then 52 years old. She lived with the first wife, Jenette, until after her oldest child was born. The family then moved to Beaver in 1872 and on October 28th of that year my blue ribbon grandmother, Elizabeth, was born.

Shortly after this Joseph was called to St. George by President Brigham Young to run the church bakery. And so the pattern of my Grandmother's life began. Child of Joseph and Mary Leicht Oxborrow, she had a rich background and heritage. Now upon this background she began to lay the intricate designs that were to become her remarkable life pattern.

Elizabeth had six brothers and four sisters. When she was five they lived on a farm in Middleton where she enjoyed walking to St. George with her father over the black ridge. He would point out to her the place where a tunnel would some day be built through the ridge.

Her father had a bakery where the Mathis Market now stands. He had been a baker in England for 25 years, so was accomplished in his work. But here in Dixie it was quite a different business to what he was used to. It was so hot he had to make the bread at night to keep the yeast from spoiling. His oven was made of rocks and heated by coals and his bread was often exchanged for flour that people would bring to him to trade. But his reputation was good and when a cook was needed at the Temple he was given the job. With this, he was also to care for the Temple grounds. In order for him to be near his work his family lived on the Temple grounds for the next five years.

Elizabeth was but a small child but she often carried kettles of hot gruel to the workers. She was taught to work at an early age and helped all the time,

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as her mother took in sewing, washings, and tended small children to help supplement the father's inadequate salary. Elizabeth also was baby sitter for the Temple workers, gleaned grain at harvest time, and did many other things to help with the family living.

Though they worked hard the family played too, and had great enjoyment in simple things. To Elizabeth, one of the most enjoyable sports of her youth were the candy pulls the family and her friends had. The McAllister family lived close by and their children were among her first playmates and dearest friends.

When she was eleven the family moved into the Mills home on 3rd West. Here, with her bosom girl-hood friends, Olive Snow, Philene Pickett, Susie Atkin, and Minnie Mathis, and others, she played the exciting childhood games of "Prisoners Base", "Steal Sticks," and "Run Sheep Run".

At the age of 13 she took in sewing and also went out to her customers homes to make children's clothing. At 16 she was accomplished at making wedding dresses. She learned from Jane T. Bleak how to make a dressmakers chart with holes and measurements for various sizes. She would then get her ideas from Sears Roebuck, Bellas Hess and Spiegel catalogues, and her finished product would look as good or better than the catalogue model. She also made her own original newspaper patterns. So expert did she become that she was the regular seamstress for the Snows, Rebers, Leavitts, Miles', and made the children's clothes for the Anthony W. Ivins family. The pay she received for this work was: 50 cents for a waist, 75 cents for a pleated skirt, \$3.00 for a wedding dress. The material she used came from Wooley Lund and Judd, unless it was purchased in Salt Lake City. The most popular style in those days was the braided dress of Alpaca material.

Elizabeth's early schooling was in the first ward school house where she swept floors to pay for her education. Alice Milne was her teacher and she finished the 5th grade. Then when she was 18 she went to the St. George Stake Academy which was held in the basement of the Tabernacle. She had to discontinue school here because of her increased sewing business.

She was an active Church worker along with all her other responsibilities. She was Secretary of the Sunday School while but a very young girl and taught in the Primary for 5 years. She was also Counselor in the Primary for 5 years and a member of the Stake Primary Board for 5 years.

Elizabeth was full of fun and enjoyed the recreation of her day. Her light feet often swung to the polka and the two step in the old Opera House to Jim Booth's Orchestra. How she loved the hay rack rides and the song fests where they sang such favorites as "When You Wore a Tulip", "When You and I Were Young Maggie" and "After The Ball".

She had a number of boy friends, for she was always fun and good company. Among them was James McArthur, who had gone to the same school with her and who had often walked her home. Their friendship ripened and on October 18, 1894 they were married in the St. George Temple by David H. Cannon. She was even now just a slip of a girl, barely tipping the scales at 96 pounds.

Auntie Crane had sent the material for her wedding dress from Salt Lake City. It was beautiful Japanese silk, but a grey and white stripe. Elizabeth was so disappointed that she cried and cried, but Aunt Jean Coates helped her make it up and it turned out beautifully. The wedding reception was held in their home and the young people who came stayed all night.

They did not have much to start married life on, according to our modern standards, but were well fixed for their day. "Jim" as she always called him, had a team and wagon he had earned. "Lizzie", as she was called by every one except Jim, who affectionately called her "Dolly", had made rag carpets and fancy linens and shams. Their wedding gifts included a churn and molds, a cow, dishes, and fancy doilies.

For a honeymoon they went on a trip to Bunkerville in a No. 3 covered wagon, but not alone, for his sisters Belle and Emma went too. Belle had a school teaching job at Bunkerville but Emma just went along for the ride. So all three girls slept in the wagon while Jim spent his honeymoon sleeping on the ground close by.

When they finally returned to St. George they rented a home from John T. Woodbury. It was now about 5 months since their wedding day and they had never had their wedding pictures taken. By now she also knew she had a family on the way so she told Jim they had better get down to Jim Booths and have their wedding picture taken or people would talk and their posterity might wonder.

The year following her marriage was a sad year for Elizabeth. First her Father died; then she had a still born son that nearly cost her her life and left her seriously ill for weeks; after that her sister Eliza Effke died of membranous croup; and her brother George, who was freighting from St. George to Milford, was kicked in the face by a horse and seriously injured. It seemed as if tragedy followed on tragedy all that year.

But by this time she could see how the pattern of her life was going to be. Then in December of 1896, color was added to her pattern for her first daughter Clio was born. From this start she added color upon color in harmonizing design as her family increased and her life broadened and enriched.

It was in February of 1897 they moved into the home where she now lives. Charles and Emma Seegmiller bought the house with them. There were two rooms sown stairs and 6 rooms upstairs. They drew straws to see who would live in which part of the house. After the death of Charles' wife Emma, Jim bought the rest of the house.

Here in this home all the rest of their children were born: Bessie, Mary, Joseph, LaVera, Ina and Andrew. Here indeed was added all the color and the warmth that has gone into her life to make it beautiful and rich. Here she loved and sorrowed and lived to all the heights and depths of joy and anguish that any mother does. As each child came into her home it increased her happiness and joy. And surely no where in all the world was there more happiness and loyalty and love than was found within the four walls of her humble home. She had her measures of sorrow for her last child was still-born, and her daughter Mary died at the age of 12. But her sorrows and troubles only seemed to mellow the color into the patterns of her life.

In 1899 her husband, Jim, went on a mission to Kentucky, returning in 1. 2. 1901. When he came back she had \$25.00 in the co-op store, \$100.00 in the bank, and had bought a organ and bed room set besides. This was but evidence of the industry and thrift that ruled her life.

When Jim returned from his mission he was made Bishop, which position he held for 23 years. Also, within 6 months he was put in charge of the tithing office. While he was Bishop the girls in the family had to spend most of their time at the tithing office since most of the tithing was produce and needed immediate care. The butter had to have special attention as there was no refrigeration. The hay and grain had to be weighed and put in special bins and barns. Then all these tithing goods had to be sold, traded, or given to the poor.

In order to take care of all this church responsibility the family had to be up early to get their 12 head of cows milked so that the children could be off to help father. It was usually late at night before they would get home, especially during the haying season, and of course the cows had to be milked again. Lizzie had very little help while raising the children because of the added Bishop responsibility. The oldest child, Clio, started helping her father at the age of ten. All the children were taught to work and had special jobs to do. Jim was the disciplinarian. Whenever the children heard his special whistle they came running from wherever they were for they knew he meant business.

While Lizzie was raising her own children she was wet nurse to several other children. At one time she gave this service to 4 other children at the same time.

Thought the family worked hard they had many pleasures too. Lizzie always made Christmas a most special occasion for her children. Christmas morning the children always ran to their stockings first to count how many chocolates they each had. Lizzie made all the doll clothes for the dolls and a new outfit for each child. They always had a good Christmas, but it never failed that Jim had to spend part of the day at the tithing office for the Indians came enmass on

Christmas day to get their gift from the Church.

Lizzie's life wasn't all work for she and Jim enjoyed their many friends and the good times they had together. Not the least of these occasions were their Hallowe'en parties. It was customary for the men and women to go in separate rooms and costume in sheets. Then the women would sit along one side of a long table and the men on the other side. Then the men were to pick out their wives from among the sheeted figures. At one time, to everyone's amusement, Wally Mathis sat on the women's side and Hon Snow picked him out for his wife. They always enjoyed charades too, of which a favorite was "Tin Lizzie on the Bum".

Lizzie belonged to a literary club called "The Aricoles". When it was her turn to entertain the house had to be cleaned from top to bottom. The girls were kept busy scrubbing and cleaning for a week before club day. They all remember how they had to stay out side the day of the club so nothing would get dirty. The members of the club served a full course dinner at their meetings. Lizzie and Mamie Seegmiller often sang duets. A favorite song of theirs was "Whispering Hope".

In 1924 Jim contracted with George Whitehead and Andrew Winsor to build a new road. Lizzie took her two youngest children, Ina and Andrew, and cooked for the road crew of 30. As a result of this road contract, they lost all they had because the cost was much more than their bid. When they returned home they had to kill three cows with T.B. and burn the honey bees because of foul breed. They were very upset for everything they had was gone.

She then got a job cooking for the O.K. Market, making pies, cakes and sweet rolls. Her pie crust recipe was given to her by her father. She enjoyed doing this work and working for Ern Nelson. Then President Edw. H. Snow asked Jim if he would like to buy the tithing office. When Jim consulted Lizzie she said, "You bet." She was now 51 years old but she had great plans for making the "office" into a bakery. She had saved \$200.00, and so they bought some equipment from Winn Sanders and an oven from Ern Nelson. They hired Grover McGee to make the bread until Jim learned how. Everything was done by hand then. They both worked hard to make the Quality Bakery (as they had named their new business) a success. But as usual they had their hands in more than one pie at the same time for they had a farm to take care of too, with pigs, chickens, and cows to look after.

Besides her bakery work, Lizzie still managed to help her daughters with their sewing. She made all of her grandchildrens coats and dresses and cared for her girls when they had their babies. She and Jim helped their son Joseph get his bakery started. They sent Andrew and Joseph both on missions and helped Bessie and LaVera to get their college degrees and their other children through Junior College.

Lizzie was always ready to learn and do new things that came her way and so at the age of 60 she learned to drive a car. Nothing was ever too difficult for her to try to do for she has always been young at heart.

In July of 1939 the family home caught fire and the upstairs was completely ruined. So Lizzie and Jim remodeled and made two apartments for renting. Later they bought the Lund home and made it into apartments and also the Jane Bleak home.

Lizzie's and Jim's lives had been full to overflowing. They were always busy and happy and contented with life. Now they were approaching their Golden Wedding Day. But just 4 months prior to that date Jim took sick and died very suddenly after an operation. Their life had been so full and complete that to a lesser woman this great tragedy would have been the end of all good things, but not to Elizabeth Oxborrow McArthur, my Blue Ribbon Grandmother. She threw back her shoulders and went right on filling her days full of activity. She knew there was still much for her to do and she is doing it every day of her life. Her accomplishments aren't just mediocre, but have been blue ribbon winners every one. Let me tell you some about them.

Grandma became an expert maker of beautiful wedding cakes. She usually made the cake a rich fruit cake unless otherwise ordered. She always took these cakes home to decorate after the other work was done. The tiered cake was given a complete covering of white icing which was allowed to become perfectly dry before she added the fancy lace work, as it was called. Then the delicate loops were put on day

after day, as each must be thoroughly dry. It usually took her five days or more to complete the decorating depending on the size of the cake. She would often have 5 or 6 drying at one time and they were always white. When they were finished they were always eligible for a blue ribbon.

And then, Grandma's quilts! If there is a scrap of material laying around Grandmother can always find something to go with it and she'll pieve it into quilt blocks. She has made many original designs and patterns which have been copied far and wide. Her tulip quilt block pattern that I am using here today was brought over from England by her mother. Other patterns for which she is noted are the "Star and the Applique". She has made quilt tops for every child and grandchild and is now making them for her great grand children. My son, Dick, received his last year. She finds great joy in quilting for she can visit and still be accomplishing something. Her sister, Mary, also enjoys this work and they nearly break their necks to get busy at quilting new quilts. These two sisters have been so close and enjoy each others accompanishment immensely. Grandmother's last blue ribbon is on the quilt you see here.

As you can see Grandma never wastes a minute. When she isn't busy with her housework she picks up her needlework. Any evening, when I was younger, I always found her busy making pillow cases, luncheon sets or dish towels.

But with all the things she was doing Grandma still wasn't satisfied, so at the age of 76 she found a new interest. At that time I was taking a class in Ceramics and the teacher told me she had the sweetest little old lady taking her class. She showed us the little lady's work and then told us that her family was not to know about it as it was to be a surprise. Of course, it was Grandma, and of course she has become accomplished in this field too.

Every child and every grandchild and nearly every great-grandchild has a piece or two of her work. Even her brothers and sisters, some of their children, and her friends have been remembered along this line. All her own children have received china clocks and figurines and she is now completeing each of them a hand painted set of china. She has received many blue ribbons in this field.

Grandmother is a regular globe trotter and certainly merits a blue ribbon in this field too. In 1951 at the age of 78, she went on a three weeks trip to New York with Marcel and Annie Schmutz. In February of this year she went on a three and a half weeks tour to Florida again with the Schmutz's. She has also made a trip to see LaVera in Long Beach so she has spaned the continent in this the 82nd year of her life. Whenever a trip is in the making and Grandmother can go, she will go and is a most agreeable passenger. At present she is thinking strongly of a trip to Hawaii. Who knows, next year it may be the moon.

No matter when you visit Grandma she has a full schedule ahead, such as making aprons for the bakery, bleaching sacks for dish towels, going Relief Society teaching (she has been a teacher for over 50 years,) making quilt blocks, painting china, making one of the girls a dress, or helping some one with their canning. She enjoys walking up town as she insists you can't see as much from a car and you can't visit with people along the way. I have decided she is never idle a minute. When my husband and I called to see her one evening, she was soaking her feet and reading the Bible at the same time. So we have proof that she never wastes a minute.

Thanksgiving and Christmas are both blue ribbon days with Grandma, and certainly at these times she portrays in rich measure her own blue ribbon qualities. These two occasions are family days at her house. She has an extra large bedroom and all the furniture is moved out so that one long table can be set there to feed the family which now numbers 52. Last year there were 42 of us present and Grandma always feels badly if any one can't come. If there is anyone she knows of who hasn't a place to eat on Thanksgiving they are always invited to eat at her house. It usually takes two large turkeys and 6 or 8 chickens (plus all the trimmings) to feed the crowd. Grandma always fixes the turkeys and pies and cakes. Then in the evening she enjoys (or seems to) a family program participated in by everyones from the oldest to the youngest. This is something we all cherish.

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But Christmas at Grandma's is really a treat. Under her tree is a gift for all and it will be something she has made. But no one gets their gift unless they come to her house to receive it. This occasion is strictly for the family only. We all hurry to get to her house by 5:00 A.M.. Then we all try to shout "Merry Christmas" before Grandma does. But that is really a feat. After the greetings then the oh's and 'h's and shouting begins as we each examine our gifts. From here we pile into 6 or 8 cars and make the rounds to every family members home. By evening we are all exhausted-- all except Grandma, and she'll be busy starting on Christmas presents for next year. On all these special days she sends pies, cakes, cookies or fruit to friends and neighbors.

Grandma is always thoughtful of others. All her relatives are welcome in her home. Several of them have spent the winters with her. They will all speak highly of "Aunt Lizzie". When they get together at reunion time she is always the life of the party. At the last family reunion she and her sister entertained the crowd with an original skit.

Yes, Grandma is a champion and a true blue ribbon winner. Not the least of all her wonderful attributes is her deep and abiding faith that has never faltered through the years. Neither she nor her husband ever let a day or a meal go by without thanking their Father in Heaven for all his many mercies and blessings to them. This faith is her crown and makes her tops as My Blue Ribbon Grandmother.

TRIBUTE TO SISTER MCARTHUR --- KAY SULLIVAN

I was just trying to think of when it was that I last stood before a St. George audience. I can't seem to remember ever making many public performances, unless perhaps, you would count the few times I played in Sister Stewart's or Sister Thurston's piano recitals. I think I'm just as frightened now and will probably perform just as badly as I must have done on those long ago occasions.

But being here today and being asked to give a few remarks is for me a very wonderful and a very happy privilege. Your club is honoring a great lady today. I could have made the choice for you 30 or 35 years ago. All of our family and all of the McArthurs were such close friendly neighbors, and two of my sisters, Laura and Aleath, are here today also, and are as thrilled as I am to help you pay tribute to such a dear friend.

I can't remember when I wasn't as much at home at McArthur's house as at my own home. Mother always said, "You might just as well live there." And I think, probably, I have as many intimate family memories of their home as I do my own.

I remember the excitement of Clio's wedding. I remember when her first child, Mary, was born. Sister Fawcett, who was helping out, gave us kids bread and honey, and sent us over to the barn to play. I remember trying to eavesdrop on Bessie and her beau-----then when she and Wayne were married we went up to Gardner's house at 5 o'clock the next morning to waken them--it was Christmas morning. I remember Joe leaving for his mission. I think Charlie Starr called for him in the "passenger" and as he left he gave Ina and me his usual "box on the ears." I can remember LaVera being chosen "Popular Lady" and how proud we were of her.

I can remember my mother saying, "Go down to Sister McArthur's and ask her to cut me a sleeve pattern, or a waist pattern." How many of us now can sew well enough that we could do that?

Yes, I can even remember all the animals in the corral. The cows, Lill, Irene, Star and Daisy; the horses, Nance and Moll, and old Pojus, the bull, he was the terror of the neighborhood. And I can remember how we'd go down to the field day after day in the wagon with either the Bishop or Joe--then later with Andrew, but mostly with the Bishop or Joe, because by the time Andrew was big enough to go, Ina and I had to take our turn "mindin" the T.O. (The T.O. was the Tithing Office to those of you who are too young or too new to remember.

And the day Ina was eight years old, The Bishop and Sister McArthur took the two of us down to the Temple. Bless his heart, he must have had a special pull--for even though I wouldn't be eight for two more weeks, we were both baptized that day.

When the Bishop took the contract to help build the road up by Pintura Sister McArthur went along to cook for the men, and as usual, I was permitted to share that experience with them also, I can still see her taking pan after pan of hot biscuits out of the oven three times a day for those crews of hungry men, and Andrew, Ina and I reluctant to leave our perpetual game of "boney horses" long enough to help her at all.

I can remember going down to their house every night, with a lard bucket, to get our milk and every night we'd coax Sister McArthur to call up my mother and ask her if I could sleep there if I'd get the milk home in time for breakfast the next morning. And how Ina would have to come home every night at sundown, no matter where we were or what we were doing, to put the separator together-- I can remember the fascination of watching Sister McArthur decorate those beautiful wedding cakes, and the equal fascination of that creamy white homemade soup she used to make. Yes, and the cheese press in the back yard that produced those great cakes of yellow cheese; and how on hot summer afternoons we learned to tie a quilt, then later to really quilt, in the big south bedroom.

And I can remember the many many Saturday afternoons, after our weekly baths, we went to Primary with Sister McArthur, in the Woodward School Building where the old West Ward used to meet. She and Aunt Mame, Sister Woodbuy, Sister Worthen, Aunt Myra Hunt, Aunt Orpha Hunt, and others who are gone now, were the leaders.

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But especially do I remember the family prayers, and I'll always be grateful to the Bishop and Sister McArthur for including me in that circle for so many years. I wish that I had listened more closely to their prayers and to their advice through the years, for they have surely been living examples of the great commandment, "Love Thy Neighbor."

Yes, you honor a great lady today. Three words symbolize her life--- Home, Family and Church. Her life has truly been one of right living, sincere convictions and devotion to high ideals. And Sister McArthur, I have just thrilled these past years at how well you have kept, and at your interest and enjoyment of life. Maybe these few lines will say what I mean:

A grandmother in years long ago
Was serene and quiet of eye,
And gazed upon life from an easy chair
As the days drifted tranquilly by.
She resigned her tasks to younger hands,
And avoided storms and the cold
And gravely, patiently, day by day
Gave her attention to ---GROWING OLD.

But Lizzie McArthur, Grandmother of today,
In the chimney corner sits not at ease,
She dabbles in ceramics, joins the clubs
And does whatever happens to please.
She travels, she studies, she has the latest
on the tip of her tongue,
She follows her hobbies with daily care
And gives her attention to --KEEPING YOUNG.