LIFE SKETCH
OF
MERRILL B. TEW
(As told by Granddaughter. Sylvia Tew Poague)
LIFE
By McKay A. Allphin

Mortal life is but a moment when you count the sands of time,
Just a brief eternal moment from His presence so divine.
But in that little instant though it be minutely small
We shape our lasting destiny ere death's trumpet sounds its call.

Merrill B. Tew was born on the 7th day of May 1908, to John Henry Tew and
Emma Leona Bulkley, in York, Utah, just outside of what is now Santaquin.
The "B" represented his mother's maiden name, her father being Newman
Bulkley, a noted member of the "Mormon Battalion." Although he was the "baby" of 10
children, he for sure was not the smallest! His birth weight was 13½ lbs., which Great-
Grandma Tew helped support by using a kitchen chair as a crutch for weeks before he
was born! That set a precedent for his nickname, "Fat Tew" which he was dubbed for
several of his childhood years.

Grandpa labeled those years as "object poverty", years. His mother made-over a coat that
had belonged to one of his older sisters. He hated that coat and was so embarrassed by it,
that he would wad it up and leave it in a roadside culvert, and run all the way to school to
keep from freezing. He'd pick it up on his way home. This he did to save himself from
the ridicule of the other children who made fun of his 'girl coat.'

While living on the "Lone Cedar Farm" Grampa had a dog named Ben, his true and
faithful friend. He used to watch Ben from his upstairs bedroom window chase the
coyotes away when they came near the house. When the family moved to the SLC area to
look [or employment, Ben returned to the farm to guard the house and nearly starved to
death while doing so.

Grampa Merrill, as I affectionately call him, graduated in 1926, from West High School
in Salt Lake City. It was there that his singing career got its start, as he participated in
many of the school plays and operetta's, in roles that had him singing solos. It launched
many opportunities to sing in many church services in the area, and by the time he
graduated, he had gained quite a reputation as a promising singer with a musical career in his future.

After high school graduation, Grandpa Merrill went to work at the Linde Air Plant, where he continued to work until 1929. While there, he survived 2 plant explosions.

In the spring of 1929, Grampa Merrill received a mission call for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the Eastern States, Boston, Mass. Area. Through his dynamic activity, he was soon made District President, with the responsibility of reactivating the resting members. Here, he met Nannie Tout whose family were noted singers. During a conversation, Grampa persuaded Nannie to sing for him. He then in turn, sang the same song for Nannie, who was so impressed, she invited him to sing with her sister Margaret Romaine in the Sacred Grove, which to Grampa was a privilege and an honor! Nannie's husband made arrangements for Elder Tew to audition for RCA Vaudeville in New York City. Right about this time, Grampa received a letter from his parents requesting him to come home because of financial difficulties. He returned to SLC in October of 1930, a very disappointed and bitter young man because he was unable to complete his mission.

He barely made ends meet shoveling snow on the city streets and singing for advertisement spots on KSL Radio, plus any other work he could find. He eventually applied for a sales position with Excelsis Cosmetics and was transferred to El Paso, Texas.

It was here that Grampa Merrill had his encounter with a bullet that to this day remains lodged in one of his lungs. No one can tell the story quite like Grampa, but my father, Don, will later attempt to recall the event that took place from the "Miracle in the Desert."

He returned to Utah and did Temple work during the winter of 1932-33. In the spring, he joined a professional show troupe that traveled throughout Idaho and Wyoming. This marked the end of his existence as a single individual and the follies incident to youth. The influence of the dramatic company was not as wholesome as he would have hoped, and he determined to leave them as soon as possible. He stayed behind the troupe in Afton, Wyoming, and formed his own dramatic theatre company.

Grampa Merrill was encouraged financially, morally and spiritually by a local hotel owner, a noble woman who people referred to as "Aunt Miranda Allred." She was loved and admired throughout all of Star Valley. Grampa recruited the services of Aunt Miranda's green-eyed, auburn haired daughter, Daisy, to accompany the musical acts on the piano. (She's been accompanying Grampa's performances and acts ever since!)

He fell hopelessly in love with this young maiden, however, the show troupe had to move on! He traveled with them as far as Montpelier, Idaho, and decided to leave the company and proceeded to walk all the back to Afton to propose marriage to his ladylove. They were joined in holy matrimony on the 10th of November 1933, in the Salt Lake Temple.
They soon learned that living on love alone was not doing much to their physical well being, but with the help of Mother Allred and other members of the family, they enjoyed a beautiful Christmas together.

Having been tutored in carpentry by his father and older brothers, Merrill built a small frame home just south of Grandma Miranda's home. The house still stands as a monument of those times.

Grandma Miranda knew of Grandpa Merrill's desire to further his education and offered to buy their little home from them so he could pursue his education. Shortly after New Years' Day, 1936, they packed their meager belongings, along with their eldest son Don, who was born January 25, 1935, climbed into the old "puddle jumper" and left for SLC and the University of Utah.

Professor Richard P. Condie of the U of- U faculty and co-partner in the Salt Lake Civic Opera, assisted Merrill in getting an academic scholarship and Baritone Soloist position for the 120 voice women's glee club. In the meantime, Merrill Lloyd made his appearance into Merrill and Daisy's life on April 7, 1936. They now had a real family, but no little girls yet... Aunt Evelyn Tew told them, "if you don't name him after Merrill, you won't get a girl next time! (I found this to be quite true myself: and it even works with adoption!) Hence, the name Merrill Lloyd.

Hard times being what they were, presiding Bishop Smith manufactured a job for Grampa at the Deseret Gym, to help him support his family while in school, until with the help of his brother-in-law, Al Nielson, he again gained employment with Linde Air.

The spring of 1940, (March 11th) be exact) brought a curly headed precious blonde baby girl, Genielle, into the family. (Auntie Evelyn was right!) While on tour with the women's chorus in Price, Utah, they gave their sale male member a baby shower of everything a mother and baby needed to get a great start in life.

Grampa Merrill continued with his studies at the university, receiving starring roles in the opera and drama departments; AIDA, SAMSON AND DELILAH MARGIN FOR ERROR, were among some of the productions. He graduated with high honors and was offered a contract with the New York Metropolitan Opera Company. After weighing the offer carefully and prayerfully, he decided to turn them down in favor at becoming a Seminary Teacher in Lovell, Wyoming. He wanted to raise his family in a favorable, spiritual environment. So, in the summer of 1942, they sold their 3 room home in SLC, loaded up the two-wheeled trailer with furniture and household goods, put his little family in the newly purchased 1939 Dodge sedan, and headed for the sticks. Wyoming that is, " (Personal Note: I’m so glad G&G did go to Lovell, because it's there that my mother and father met. Who knows where I would be without their paths crossing?) Grampa Merrill taught Seminary to high school students in both Lovell and Cowley, and taught band and chorus in the Cowley Schools, (my fathers ability to wave a baton must have been an inherited trait) and in his spare time, gave private voice lessons to many
young people. He gained a wonderful rapport with all of his students and was well loved and respected in the whole Big Horn Basin. Upon Grampa's passing, my mother sobbed in my arms and said, "He was my first love!" And I know she truly meant it, (even though I think she did alright with the next generation.) He was active in civic as well as church affairs and gained many, many life-long friends. Many times throughout my life, people have asked me if I was related to Merrill and Daisy Tew, and I have been proud to reply that they are my grandparents!


As the family was growing and appetites kept getting bigger, Grampa Merrill signed on with Beneficial Life Insurance Company as a salesman to supplement his salary with the Church Education System. (That must have been something my Uncle Lloyd inherited) This proved to be a very BENEFICIAL move for Grampa, as he did very well, and qualified every year to attend the annual conventions, all expenses paid! Several years, he was named Agent of the Year, with special prizes presented to him. One of those gifts was a beautiful chime clock, and as long as I can remember, has been in their home, and sits in G & G's kitchen today. When my oldest brother Randy was born, my father was on his way home from Laramie, and mother was invited to stay the night at G & G's. Mother remembers the clock bonging every 15 minutes all night long, as she wasn't used to it. It did take some getting used to, but as a little girl, I enjoyed anticipating its music in my ears.

In 1951, Grampa decided to temporarily retire from his Seminary career and pursue full-time in the insurance business, in which he was becoming quite successful. He was elected to the Lovell School Board and served for a number of years. He served in the Big Horn Stake Presidency for several years as well.

In 1958, he moved his family to Utah where he continued to sell insurance until a tragic accident claimed the life of their son, Farrell, who went through the ice in Utah Lake on December 27th, 1960. Uncle Farrell had so many friends, and for years after his death. G & G hosted a memorial reunion for his friends at Christmastime.

The following spring, Grampa was called back into the Church Education System, to serve as principal in the Logan, Utah, Seminaries. He also served as Bishop in a college ward at Utah State in Logan. After 3 years in Logan, G & G moved back to Provo to continue with the insurance business. Grampa used to say that time spent in Logan was like serving in the mission field, but his retirement income depended on his renewals from the insurance business, and he felt he had to stay with it. He worked hard until 1977, when a heart attack forced him to retire.

After recovering from his heart attack, he became stir crazy and so he and Gramma moved to SLC to manage a Gas-A-Mat on Highland Drive.
G & G were called to serve a mission in Los Angeles, CA., as hosts and guides at the Los Angeles Temple Visitor's Center. They both loved the work, meeting all kinds of people from all walks of life and many old friends and relatives who went to visit. After a wonderful 18 months of service at the Visitor's Center, they returned to Provo, where they resumed their management for Gas-A-Mat on the Orem hill. While there, Grampa was held up at gunpoint for the cash in the till at the station, and fortunately for us, he lived to tell about his experience.

In 1985 G & G accepted a teaching position for the 55 Alive Driving Course for senior citizens with the AARP. They taught 3500 people in 12 years. They won many new friendships through this service, and I'm sure some of you are here today due to your association with them instructing this course. This always seemed a little ironic to me, because as a young girl I remembered Grampa as having the lead toot! I loved to ride with him, and anticipate his sudden stops at the red light!

I know that all of you here today have wonderful stories and memories of this Great Man, Merrill B. Tew, but since I was asked to speak, I get the honor and privilege telling some of my remembrances of Grampa, so I hope you will bear with me…

Grampa's smile and contagious laugh - made you feel like the most important person
Breakfasts in the Big Horns/Provo Canyon (Pancakes and Postum)
Family Reunions - life of the party - Baseball, Swimming, Volleyball, Motorcycle - Start Fire

General Authority Material!!! Spiritual Giant!!! Exemplar!!! Never saw anger on his face nor heard it in his voice.
Bragged for the last 25 years. "He doesn't look or act a day over 60!"
Grampa and Gramma always TEWGETHER (64 years. love continued to grow)
Great Patriarch! Journal and Writing - couldn't wait to be old enough to get his book
PACKING FOR OUR ETERNAL JOURNEY page 64 (From a Bishop's Notebook)

Kevin John Tew's death January 3,1998
- Introduce Poem. SOLACE page 73 (From A Bishop's Notebook)
Grampa, I'm sure your suitcase is bulging! Please walk hand in hand with Kevin and guide us into Eternity, is my prayer. In the Name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.
May I Go?

May I go now?
Don't you think the time is right?
May I say good-bye to pain-filled days
and endless lonely nights?
I've lived my life and done my best,
an example tried to be,
so can I take that step beyond
and set my spirit free?

I didn't want to go at first.
I fought with all my might!
But something seems to draw me now
to a warm and loving light.

I want to go! I really do!
It's difficult to stay.
But I will try as best I can
to live just one more day. ..
To give you time to care for me
and share your love and fears.
I know you're sad and are afraid
because I see your tears.

I'll not be far, I promise that,
and hope you'll always know
that my spirit will be close to you
wherever you may go.

Thank you so for loving me.
You know I loved you too.
That's why it's hard to say good-bye
and end this life with you.
So hold me now, just one more time,
and let me hear you say,
because you care so much for me,
You'll let me go today.
God took the strength of the mountain
    The majesty of a tree.
    The warmth of a summer sun,
    The calm of a quiet sea,
    The generous soul of nature,
    The comforting arm of night.
    The wisdom of the ages,
    The power of the eagle’s flight.
Then God combined these qualities,
    There was nothing more to add.
His masterpiece was now complete
    He lovingly called it, Dad.