

Life Sketch of Opal Louise Swayne Gifford

As given by Lyman Swayne Gifford at the funeral of mother on September 24, 2003.

Mother was born in very humble surroundings. She loved her mother, Alice Swayne. She married dad a few days after she turned 16.

The story goes that Grandpa Swayne said yes she could marry dad if he could name the date and place and that a Presbyterian minister performed the ceremony. You see, she had just converted to Mormonism.

Mom only completed about 8 years of formal education. Mom encouraged all her children to get a good education. Eight of the kids have some college, two have completed advanced degrees, four have other degrees.

Mom was a hard worker. She taught us children to work hard. As we became old enough, 8 years old, she would pick us up from school and take us to the job site where dad was working. There we were expected to work until dark.

Our family never had much money. By today's standards we lived in poverty, very poor. But we never knew that. We always had clothing that mother made. We never went hungry. We always wondered why she never seemed to want that piece of pie, but realized years later there wasn't enough so mom just didn't want any. Mom canned every year. She prided herself with over 1,000 quarts each year of peaches, pears, cherries, applesauce (made from granvenstien apples only), string beans (only blue lake type), corn. You name it, we canned it. We grew a garden. We loved to sneak into the berry patch. She would chase us off but she didn't try very hard. When us boys would quarrel, and yes with 6 of us sometimes we didn't see eye-to-eye, she would simply send us to the garden to dig a 4'x4'x4' hold. Then after she inspected the hole she would simply say to fill it in again. Some of us never seemed to learn!

Mom loved to camp. Sometimes it was at the ocean while digging for clams, or occasionally the Olympic peninsula. In fact on one trip to Jefferson Lake us boys found an old raft that we just had to take out to the middle of the lake. Mom wasn't too happy with us but all was forgotten when we brought back several fish for dinner. Mom's favorite spot to camp though was on Mt. Rainer at Ohanapecosh campground. Our family went every year, usually around Labor Day. Us boys were always off exploring. Sometimes our little sister would tag along. Mom loved to hike to Silver Falls and the Grove of the Patriarchs. She even hiked to the ice caves once. We would also use the opportunity to make our trek to Yakima to buy fruit we would pick ourselves.

Mom was very ticklish, especially on her feet. If you knew what was good for you, you stayed away. Her favorite sandwich was an onion sandwich. She couldn't get enough of them. She made loaves of bread weekly. She always shared with others. Mom was a den mother in Cub Scouts. There were 3 things she loved: Her family, Her Grandchildren, Her flowers. She would spend hours making sugar eggs for Easter and sugar cookies for Valentine day, Halloween, and Christmas. All of them were

decorated by hand. Mom loved to quilt and do embroidery. She has made dozens of quilts and 100's of pillow cases.

Later in life, mother drove school bus in Olympia. She drove for over 20 years.

Mom had many flower beds around our home. She especially loved Sweet Peas, Calillillies, and roses. Her favorite color was purple. Christmas was her favorite holiday. She made cookies and pies. We strung popcorn for the tree. We would drive to Grandpa Fritz's farm each year and cut that "perfect" tree to decorate. Then she would pick up Grandpa Fritz to spend Christmas with us. Mom loved Cherry Cordials and received several boxes each year.

Mom had 9 children, 6 boys and 3 girls. She also has 30 grandchildren, 59 great grandchildren, and 3 great, great grandchildren 100 in all, and more still to come. The grand kids always loved it when they were taller than grandma. She would always tell them they were growing up too fast.

One time she came to visit our home. When Shad was very young, we were living in Hyrum Utah on Rosewood, they came for a 'surprise' visit. We had put Shad to sleep that night and retired early ourselves. What young newly married couple didn't want an early night to bed if they can get it!?! Shortly after we had also retired to bed we heard Shad talking and then saying "Grandma here, Grandma here." We told him to be quiet and go back to bed. He said again that grandma was here. Finally, dad got up to put that little boy back in bed and to his surprise found out the grandma was there and outside the window talking to her grandson. Mom would write to us faithfully each week and she would expect the seam in return. If you went too long without writing she would send paper and pencil. Then if you still didn't write she would send envelopes and stamps. If you still didn't write she would call to make sure you hadn't broken your arm.

Mom never complained about her life. She just worked hard and expect you to do the same. She was firm in her faith. She understood the Savior. She expected us to behave in church. As we became old enough to sit on the front row and pass the sacrament you knew you better be very quiet and reverent. We each found out what that meant as she would come forward and sit right next to us if we didn't stay still.

Mom loved to hear her children and grandchildren play their musical instruments. We weren't always very good but for her it was always wonderful.

In 1997 her world hanged while visiting our home in Boise Idaho for Thanksgiving she suffered a massive stroke. She would let dad wake Dee and I up to get her help. She figured we did need to be bothered. She had several strokes over the years since. Most were small but some were strong. She eventually lost her fine motor skills and could no longer quilt or do needlework. She also became too weak to walk and became confined to her wheelchair.

In July she became separated from dad while she lay in a nursing home. They wanted to be back together. We moved them to American Fork Utah where they could live together again. For 5 days they held hands and sit next to each other. Then a major stroke came again and took our beloved mother from us.

Mom was a great example to us. She taught us about selfless service. She loved dad with all her heart. She loved us. We sometimes made big mistakes but that didn't matter to her for her love was unconditional!

Mom we love you, we will miss you. But you left a legacy that will live on in each of us. Little did you know how much of a difference you made as we touched shoulders with you. We look forward to the day when we can be "reunited with you. But for now we are glad you have no pain or sorrow I no grief. May we each meet the challenge you have left and live up to your legacy.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.