

Life Sketch

Shirley Tibbitts McAfee

By Shirlene Elledge (daughter)*

My mom, Shirley Tibbitts McAfee was born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, December 12, 1933, to Benjamin Emmett and Mary Bodily Galbraith Tibbitts. Shirley was the 7th of 8 children but was raised as the youngest since her younger brother David lived only 10 months. When Shirley was born, the family lived at what was called the Reno Ranch out by Dubois. They soon moved to the Lost River valley, first to the Hanna place which is now the Helm Autobody shop; then when Shirley was 2 or 3 years old Grandpa moved the family to the place we all remember, and where mom grew up, at the ranch off the old Lost River highway.

When mom was just about 2 years old, The men were bringing the sheep in from the summer pastures and Grandma had the car loaded with the blankets and bedding. We won't say who was driving the car, Aunt Thora, but Grandma didn't think this young driver was going to make the turn to go over the canal bridge so Grandma grabbed the wheel and between the two of them, the car ended up in the canal. Aunt Della spotted mom's little red coat as she was floating down the canal on top of the bedding just as she passed under the bridge. Mom was having a hard time when they pulled her out of the canal and coughed up water before she started breathing again. Her life was spared at a very young age, Certainly, she had a mission yet to fill.

Another adventure well remembered, from age 5, which Uncle Steve no doubt is tired of hearing about; when Grandma, Uncle Steve and Mom were leaving to go to Primary and Uncle Steve, not realizing mom was right behind him as he climbed into the car, pulled the car door shut not realizing mom was holding onto the door jam waiting to get into the car. Her middle finger on her right hand was all but severed. They wrapped her finger, took her to Dr. Egbert who said if she was a boy, he'd just clip the piece of skin and let it go but since she was a girl, he would attempt to save it just in case she might want to play the piano someday. The tip of her finger healed and she did indeed play the piano.

Mom spent her childhood days outside as much as she could. She loved to be outside. Grandpa always said she should have been a boy. Mom says she played all kinds of games outside with Steve but when it was time to play house, he wanted nothing to do with it. Aside from her tomboyish side, mom admits she was very pampered.

Mom and I were reminiscing over a photo taken when she was in 8th grade and she commented that even at that age, grandma was still fixing her hair. Mom's album has snapshots of herself in high school with some very creative hair-dos. I commented on her sense of style, Mom just laughed and said, "oh, I struggled with my hair, I didn't know what to do with it because grandma had fixed it for so many years." Personally, I was impressed with her creativity. In one of her photos she has her hair pulled to one side of her head with all these twists & knots on one side of her head. Mom and I just sat and laughed at all her different hair-dos.

Being so much younger than her oldest siblings, mom had the privilege of being very close to her oldest nieces and nephews. She says that Karen was more like a sister than a niece. Mom spoke

so tenderly and with so much love for her nieces and nephews who were part of her childhood. She loved having them around and never tired of their company.

Mom loved to ride Old queen, the family horse. One time she was out on the horse and Grandpa, looking out the window could see that mom was struggling to manage Old Queen. Grandpa asked Uncle Steve to go out and help her. Somehow, the horse got away from mom with Uncle Steve in front of her and by the time the horse was stopped, Uncle Steve was on the ground with Old Queen standing on his foot. He ended up with the back of his shoe split open.

I asked mom if she rode old queen much and she said, she couldn't manage to bridle Old Queen by herself so she was dependent upon her brothers to do that for her which limited her opportunities to ride Old Queen—she didn't ride her a lot. I think it was a conspiracy on their part to keep mom off the horse.

Grandma used to make mom wear “those ugly long stockings” (as mom called them) in the winter time until the snow was off the mountains. Mom, “I hated those stockings, I thought they were the ugliest things.” Though Uncle Steve wasn't a party to this—he kept mom's secret—that is; mom would leave the house for school wearing those stockings and when she and Steve would reach the end of the lane, mom would take her stockings off and cram them into the mailbox, then after school, she would put them on again before walking down the lane to home. . . Somehow that eases my conscience from my own school days of leaving home and rolling up my skirt at the waist.

Mom has an adventurous spirit. She was talked into running for student body president in high school. Aunt Joyce was a big part of her campaign and she tells of what a strong effort they gave to the cause. Mom ended only a few votes short of beating the guy she ran against. Quite an accomplishment considering the era they were living in.

Mom met the love of her life, Tilford Eugene McAfee at a church dance. They were engaged on Christmas eve, her senior year, she graduated from Butte High School in 1952 and “On June 12th Gene lost his wealth” according to the graffiti on his car-- marking the special occasion. Of course dad knows that little quip missed the mark as June 12th, dad's life was incredibly enriched when he married mom in the Idaho Falls LDS temple. They had a fun honeymoon to British Columbia where dad had served part of his mission.

Grandma Tibbitts was quite concerned as to whether mom was up for the challenge of beginning a family of her own after her happy-go-lucky childhood and adolescence. I'm sure mom amazed grandma through the years. In fact, Grandma used to go on and on about how accomplished she had become at so many things. Mom has so many talents, skills and abilities—we'd be here all day enumerating them. Can I just say, we loved her bread, pies, caramels, angel food cake, rolls. In fact, mom provided the angel food cake for our family reunion we just had the end of July.

After a couple moves, mom and dad settled into the home we all know and love in Darlington. The ensuing years of raising 10 children and all that goes with it provided many experiences and opportunities which led to mom evolving into a talented homemaker, who wasn't afraid to roll

up her sleeves to get the job done and yet was still a refined beautiful lady. Ivan remembers how proud he was whenever mom came to school because he thought he had the prettiest mom.

Mom and dad were happy. They loved each other—it was evident to us children. Mom was dad's Shirley Girl and mom honored and supported dad in all his callings and every endeavor. Dad was mom's number one concern, to her last day on earth. Just 2 weeks ago, dad came home from church, thinking he had left mom home to rest, instead, he came home to a dinner she had made for him. She loved to serve dad—and her family—in this way. That day, she suffered afterwards for being on her feet too long—but doing things for dad provided some quality of life for her in her last months and weeks. Her desire was to make his world a better place.

Mom taught us that money doesn't buy class—it is not found in the roots of wealth, rather, in the strength of character. She also taught us to care for what we had and the importance of a clean home. We had our Saturday morning routine of cleaning the house to make it sparkle for Sunday—which was a sacred day in our home. We mopped and waxed the floors, ironed clothes, polished shoes, took turns taking our bath and settling in to Lawrence Welk. Mom ensured our clothes were clean, crisp and ready for Sunday. She taught us how to prepare for the Sabbath day. We had other special days as well.

Christmas was special and magical. Mom was a child at heart when it came to the magic of Christmas. Christmas shopping was a family event-- spending the day in Idaho Falls with mom and dad, shopping, going out to eat and sitting on Santa's lap. Mom filled the house with wonder, luscious smells and Christmas music.

Mom made sure we had new Easter dresses every year. We felt so beautiful on Easter morning donning our new dresses. For several years the boys also had matching shirts for Easter.—which of course, she made. They wore their matching shirts until they rebelled and refused to wear them anymore.

Speaking of Easter. Mom loved to color Easter eggs, even without kids at home. My family was visiting mom and dad on Easter weekend just this year and she wanted to color Easter eggs. She already had the eggs cooked when we arrived for the weekend. Just before we started coloring eggs, April showed up with her granddaughter Hallie and suddenly, it became a special event for mom--coloring eggs with a toddler. It was so cute.

Mom was an accomplished seamstress. We would go shopping for school clothes by choosing fabrics and patterns we loved which mom transformed into new additions to our ward robes. She would sew late into the night ensuring we all had something new to wear on the first day of school. That included the boys as well. Flint remembers some one asking him where he got his good looking shirt because they wanted to go buy one just like it. Her endless hours of sewing was a sacrifice that didn't go unnoticed by us. I remember waking during the night—several nights—in fact and hearing the sewing machine humming away. We appreciated what she created for us. I hope she knew that.

Mom loved school shopping and buying school supplies. She just told me about a month ago how much she misses school shopping and how she loved it.

Her daughters lived through the tricot days when any home maker who was worth their weight knew how to sew underwear and slips out of tricot. Remember tricot? That light weight silky stretchy fabric? Each of us girls chose our own color for our own set of such feminine articles. It was hard not to show them off.

Shellie remembers designer jeans mom made for her right down to the special stitching and design on the back pockets. Mom enjoyed going the extra mile and giving the extra effort in order to make something special.

The night before mom's passing, as her children sat reminiscing, Janice, Caroline and April spoke of appreciating mom's patient nature in teaching us mundane things--like ironing handkerchiefs, and how to make Barbie Doll clothes—of all things. Can you imagine the patience it took to teach kids how to sew Barbie clothes? In their words: "Mom was never cross if you asked questions over and over about those things...she had so much patience".

She taught her boys to cook too. Gene, Maurice & Flint remember learning to make cakes from scratch and memorizing the recipe. They kept us in chocolate cake for quite a few years. Ivan did a lot of cooking and mom was patient with him and his messes.

We were reminiscing about how many cloth diapers mom must have laundered, box lunches made for all the kids on school days and for dad's workday. We guesstimated that mom has made approximately 30,000 loaves of bread throughout her lifetime.

She did teach each of us how to make bread and placed her confidence in our abilities. We didn't always live up to that. I burned the bread so often on Tuesday nights while she was at mutual that after a time, whenever any of us burned the bread, it was referred to as Tuesday night bread. She took it all in stride and eventually, we have all become good bread makers.

One day mom had asked Caroline and April to bake bread while she was at the store. April was to knead the bread down in the bowl and Caroline, being in charge, didn't want her to do it in the living room—which April insisted on doing. April flicked some bread dough at Caroline—although there's a bit of debate actually about who flicked the first offence—but it became full on dough-flicking war. Suddenly, they came to their senses and realized mom would be home soon and furiously cleaned up every speck of bread dough—put it all into loaves just in time for mom to walk through the door. Mom walked into the house, looked at the clock and said, "What in the world is that" to Caroline and April's horror, there was bread dough stuck on the clock. This would be a good example of one of mom's favorite sayings: "What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve." It only took her about 2 seconds to spot that dough on the clock. Mom had an eagle eye for things--but not just for bread dough on clocks.

Mom could shoot and nail gophers, chickens and at one time even an obnoxious cat—all while they were on the run. She would decide to cook a chicken for dinner and go out and shoot it. She didn't have the stomach for cutting their heads off—her preference was to shoot them and put them out of their misery quickly because she felt like her head chopping skills were about as good as her horsemanship skills and didn't want the poor chickens to suffer. So she would take

the 22 out and shoot a chicken in the head, skin it, clean it, and cook it for dinner. But she was still refined—she wore an apron.

Most of the time mom was patient. However, one Saturday afternoon, Mom was leaning over the table with her head down making loaves of bread when Flint walked into the house after spending some time with Uncle Jack in the barnyard. Uncle Jack's sassiness had rubbed off on Flint and as he entered the kitchen he said something smart to mom. With her head still down, Mom said, "What did you say?" and Flint, feeling empowered from his time with Uncle Jack came closer to mom and leaned towards her and repeated what he had just said with even more boldness. Mom didn't even miss a beat, she was rolling a loaf, Flint made his comment and mom reached over and whacked Flint on the face with the loaf in her hands and continued right on rolling that loaf of bread. Flint got a kick out of her good-natured reaction and left the kitchen chuckling.

Ivan says, "if I were to describe mom, she was incredibly patient with me, always loving but never hesitated to discipline if needed." He remembers getting in trouble and mom chasing him around with the spoon—probably to swat his behind. Ivan, realizing he was faster than mom, would run up the stairs with mom giving her best effort to keep up. When she would reach the top of the stairs, Ivan would dart past her and run back down the stairs. He soon realized that the more she chased him, the angrier she became. He finally decided to slow down and let her catch him.

Yes, in raising 10 kids—mom was on the ride of her life! A ride, because of her humility, she allowed to refine her.

One of Lanell's fond memories, which I think we all share, was falling asleep at night while listening to mom playing the piano. What a peaceful secure feeling her piano playing created. Sometimes we would dance in the living room as she played—she could play some pretty sassy tunes. I loved the times when mom would—after much coaxing—convince Gene to take out his trombone, Maurice his trumpet and me the clarinet while she played the piano--to make us sound good and we would play for what seemed like hours.

She was fun and created magic in ordinary ways. One of our cousins told mom one time that she thought mom was such a fun mom to bottle green food-colored pears—it was a phase—I think it was Sandra who would go down in our fruit room and see the green pears on the shelves and think: "what a fun mom."

Mom helped us find pleasure in the simple things, she taught us how to whistle thru a lilac leaf, kissed us with snap dragons and showed us how to get nectar out of a honeysuckle.

Mom and dad purchased the Darlington Store in 1972. She was the post mistress of the Darlington Post Office. Mom's years at the store broadened her circle of friends. She enjoyed so much the visits from their regular patrons. Mom is the kind of person who has the ability to forge friendships beyond the bounds of her own generation. She had friends much younger and older than herself. Those who spent time with her knew of the trust they could place in her and appreciated her encouraging way. Her quiet, listening, encouraging manner will be sorely missed.

She truly was, as the hymn we sang says a “Christ-like friend with gentle ways”

Mom loved to attend sporting events and cheer for her boys. I was shocked the first time I saw her cheering for Gene at a wrestling match. She would sit on the edge of the bleachers and just shake her hands—she could hardly stand the suspense. Her enthusiasm to cheer her family on continued to the next generation. She loved attending her grandsons’ games. She was also our personal cheerleader. We knew we could confide in mom, she would listen and we would walk away feeling comforted.

During our growing-up years, mom struggled to have what she felt was a beautiful yard. All too frequently, stray cows would end up in the yard and trample something to death. Mom ultimately mastered a beautiful yard. Her flowers were so pretty. She loved to garden. Mom and dad continued to garden as if they still had 10 kids at home including this summer as well. We’ve all been the beneficiaries of their harvests from their gardens and greenhouses. Not to mention the endless supplies of bottled fruit pickles and all kinds of things.

Mom and dad were called twice to serve in the Idaho Falls Temple and for a total of just over 14 years they traveled the Arco desert in the wee hours of the morning to be at their early morning shifts. They absolutely loved serving in the temple and associating with all whom they served with.

Mom and dad sold the store in 1990 when dad retired and this led to some of mom’s most treasured adventures.

Mom and dad served a full time mission in the Philippines. Although she was nervous about leaving her family, home and country—she was also excited for this new opportunity. The Philippino people captured mom’s heart and we said after they came home that mom left part of her heart in the Philippines.

She was up for yet another adventure to serve with dad on another full time mission in Salt Lake City, at the Family and Church History mission. It was so fun to go to Salt Lake and visit with mom and dad while they served there. And once again, mom made new friends.

Mom has a very quiet, private nature but get her to a girl’s retreat with her daughters and granddaughters and we’d see the fun, undone side of mom. Most women go to Women’s Conference for the spiritual uplift, but for us, it was a toss-up between that—and just being with mom. We would stay up late into the night being silly and laughing till our cheeks ached over mom’s stories and spontaneity.

Mom enjoyed the company of her family—Tibbitts and McAfee alike. She did especially love to be with her siblings. On June 26th I called to see how she was doing. She was suffering from some side effects of chemo therapy that day but had her heart set on attending a grave dedication that afternoon and she had added interest in being there to see her siblings whom she knew would be in attendance. The Lord showed his tender mercy and blessed her. The side affects subsided and she was able to go be with her siblings. That meant so much to her and she felt so

blessed. She loved it when her siblings visited. It meant so much to her. She treasured her visits from each. She told us over and over about your visits to come see her.

Mom loves the babies. As we gathered around her on Monday night and Tuesday, every time one of the great grandbabies were held up to her bedside to say hello or give her a kiss, mom would just light up. She loved babies and she believed all her life she had 10 very special babies of her own. I think we all secretly believe we are her favored child. Mom, we love being your children.

Mom was quick to always thank the Lord for the tender mercies He has shown her through this last challenging 10 months. There are many here who were part of those tender mercies as well. Mom really appreciated all the kindness shown her.

Mom spent her life diligently serving the Lord and her family and living her life congruent with the things she believed in. We have learned a plethora of lessons from her. Examples of love, faith, courage and hope shined brighter and brighter as her time on earth—all too quickly, came to a close.

I know Mom would want me to express that she accepted the Lords will for her as she was called home. Her mission here was complete. Mom was released from her suffering as she peacefully passed away on Wednesday, September 1st in Idaho Falls, in Maurice and Debbie's home, with family surrounding her and dad at her side.

She would say we were greatly blessed, through a series of events, which provided enough time for all of her children and some grandchildren to be with her and say our goodbyes.

Momma, we love you. Thank you for your beautiful life and endless examples. You are an elect beautiful lady. We look forward to enjoying your presence in fleeting moments and in the eternities to come. I do say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, whom she dearly loves, Amen.

*Contributions have been made by all my siblings: Gene McAfee, Maurice McAfee, Flint McAfee, Janice Turner, Caroline Craven, April Hill, Lanell Farmer, Ivan McAfee, Shellie Climer.

Bear claw tub

cook book tribute

mom made tricot underwear from debbies wedding.

Flint cake

Lady singing in sacrament meeting—sitting next to her—oh, I sound really good.

I wasn't really spoiled, I just wasn't worth anythin.

She also worked in the potatoes every fall. Maurice says mom was his best potatoe picking partner her ever had. Mom loved the fall of the year.

at least not until our womens conference days.

The younger kids were still at home and they thought they had died and gone to heaven. It was the fort time we had such abundant exposure to candy, frozen pizza and soda pop. Mom tried her best to control the fringe benefits but I'm not sure she won that battle.