

# Our Family Links

The Groberg/Holbrook Family History Association Newsletter

Special Edition, May 2004

## Jennie Holbrook Groberg 1908-2004



### Life Sketch by Anny Fritzen

Presented at Jennie's funeral on March 29, 2004 by her grandchildren Laura Groberg, Andrew Groberg, Michael Groberg, and Anny Fritzen.

In a birthday message commemorating Jennie's 27th birthday, her mother wrote these words, "Go on my girl with your abundant life." Truly, Jennie's life is a story of abundance: full

of opportunity, talents, blessings, service, challenges, faith, learning, love, and family.

Her beginnings were simple. She was born on March 3, 1908 "on the road to Springville." Her parents, Alsina and Lafayette Holbrook (Sina and Fay), welcomed her as the fourth child in their family. For a short while, they lived in a farm home complete with chickens, cows, and orchards. When Jennie was young, they moved to a clinker brick home in Provo where the Holbrooks raised their growing family. Jennie enjoyed sweet companionship with her eight sisters and two brothers.

Jennie's father worked hard to support his family, teaching them the value of work and honesty. Once Jennie was approached by an acquaintance of her dad who said to her, "Miss Holbrook, I hope all your father's posterity will be just like your father and grandfather - so honest that folks laugh at them." Although for a time Fay had aspirations of moving the family to California, Sina was set on raising her children in Provo under the influence of Brigham

Young University, which she did. In fact, Sina's father, George H. Brimhall, was president of BYU for many years. Each of the Holbrook children started kindergarten at the BYU elementary school and continued their education there until they graduated from the university.

Jennie loved learning and BYU. Years later she wrote, "I loved BYU with all my heart; it was my life, past, present, future."

Although somewhat shy and frail, Jennie was a bright, capable child who willingly worked to help with the other children and the house. Jennie learned to play the piano as a child and she and her sisters made dramatic presentations for the family and neighbors. While there was plenty of housework to be

done, Sina sometimes allowed her girls to not do their other chores if they preferred to practice the piano instead. Jennie had a special relationship with her Aunt Jennie Knight, her namesake and second mother, and enjoyed frequently spending time at her home. Jennie recalled running to her aunt's home three blocks away as a young child, desperately



Newlyweds, 1930.

### Grandma and the Eye Doctor by Bonnie J. Groberg

We took Grandma to the eye doctor  
to test her sight and vision  
Today's world must have paper work  
verified with precision

The doctor and his assistant  
were very respectful and nice  
to their 93 year old patient  
doing each test and procedure-precise.

They began with drops for dilation  
Carefully checking each eye.  
Lens, optic nerve, visual acuity  
All procedures to verify.

"Legally blind," said the doctor  
with out any hesitation  
The vision is very poor  
due to macular degeneration.

The doctor continued talking,  
Sharing his observations  
Delineating possible treatments  
And the challenge and ramifications.

Grandma sat in the chair and listened  
She knew, her eyes- worn with time.  
Couldn't see at all like they used to  
But her face had a smile sublime.

The light in the darkened room  
Shone on her wrinkled face  
And I realized she could envision  
Another time and place.

So much she could see that we couldn't  
Of history, of family, of life,  
Meeting challenges with courage  
Keeping love and faith amid strife.

She can see that the gospel's teachings  
are true and inspired and right,  
She sees clearly the importance of temples  
And scriptures she knows and can cite.

She's always focused on family  
and proclaimed, like the church, that no other  
Work is quite as important  
As an inspired father and mother.

She saw the goodness in Delbert  
And her trust was not misplaced  
With his foresight, wisdom, and kindness  
A joyful life she embraced.

Now she sees the task before her  
Is to patiently seek the Lord's will,  
Love her husband, and family, stay faithful  
A mother's vision fulfilled.

"Legally blind," said the doctor.  
It's too bad he really can't see  
Life's purpose that Grandma sees clearly  
On through eternity.

Written for Grandma's 96<sup>th</sup> birthday, March  
2004 about a visit to the eye doctor on Dec.  
20, 2001.



17 year old Ward Organist, 1925.

wanting to be reassured that she had been misinformed when some friends had told her that there was no Santa Claus. Her Aunt Jennie confirmed the truth of her disappointment, but in such a way that everything seemed all right.

Her parents instilled in Jennie a deep and abiding faith in Heavenly Father and a commitment to always stay true to the church. When Jennie was 8 years old, she was baptized. Of this significant event, she wrote: "Mother was unable to go with me and father was out of town so I took my towel and clothing and went alone, so frightened that I still remember how it hurt. After being baptized it was a great relief to me to see my father arrive to take me home. . ." Jennie learned to pray from a young age and was blessed with several experiences in her childhood that nurtured her testimony of the power of prayer. She was about 10 years old when she first bore her testimony saying, "I am glad I belong to the one and only true ward in all the whole church!"

Jennie adored her mother, always maintaining implicit trust in her mother's wisdom and faith. An experience with her mother that shaped the course of Jennie's life occurred when she was very young. On this occasion, Jennie went on a walk with her sister and her mother to Temple Hill where BYU campus is now spread out. With the glorious mountains on the east and the sun setting over Utah Lake on the west, her mother revealed to Jennie that in a few months a new baby would join their family. She taught her daughters of the great blessing of having a spirit child of Heavenly Father come to their home and told them that when they grew up, they would be privileged to marry in the temple and become mothers also - the greatest possible calling and joy they would know. This conversation with her mother left a lasting impression on Jennie. Motherhood truly would become her life's mission.

Jennie's grandfather, George H. Brimhall, confirmed her mother's teachings with his response to a doctor who, upon delivering a baby girl had said to Jennie's dad, "What a shame - another girl! And you had hoped to be a farmer. Too bad, Fay." At this remark, Jennie's Grandpa Brimhall replied, "Doctor, is there anything greater than to be a mother of mothers in Israel?"

During Jennie's university years at BYU she studied speech and drama and worked as a secretary for her beloved Grandpa Brimhall. She participated in plays and public speaking contests and accompanied for BYU choruses and church services. She loved dancing, but when the school doctor advised against it, she had to give up dancing and gym. Meanwhile, Jennie was as successful socially as she was academically. In fact, the number of young men pursuing her proved to be a slight deterrent to the one man she really wanted to date: a certain Delbert Groberg.



Making friends at St. Mary's Well in Israel, 1962.



Making friends in Tonga. (doctor of John E. Groberg, 1968)

**THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**  
47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE STREET  
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84150

**GORDON B. HINCKLEY**  
PRESIDENT

March 26, 2004

**Delbert Groberg**  
827 Linden  
Idaho Falls, ID 83401

Dear Delbert and Family:

Jennie is gone. She has lived a long and useful life. She has been true to the traditions and faith of great forebears.

We mourn her passing, and yet we know that it is timely. She outlived her contemporaries and was the neighbor and friend of generations.

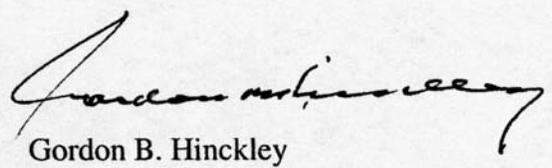
She has reared a remarkable family who will forever treasure her memory.

She loved her Redeemer and worked with diligence in His service. Many, so very many, have been touched by her influence.

I wish I could be with you when her virtues are spoken of, but circumstances prevent my doing so.

I send my love and blessing to you, dear Delbert, and to all of your family.

Sincerely,

  
Gordon B. Hinckley

Letter delivered to Delbert V. Groberg at Jennie's funeral.



**The Holbrook's beautiful baby, 1908.**

Her first encounter with Delbert was when he came to register for classes after having served a mission in the Eastern States. Later, Delbert would joke that he went to BYU and married the first girl he met. (Some things never change!) Her first date with Delbert was to the Banyan Dance. Arranging to go with Delbert took a bit of finagling on Jennie's part. She already had a date and had been invited by seven other young men, as well - most everyone on campus, except for Delbert! Fate worked in her favor, however, when her original date became ill, so she made arrangements to go with her first choice. Not many days after the dance, Jennie returned from a date with Delbert and woke her younger sisters to inform them that the man she had gone out with that evening was the one she would marry - but not to say anything about it to anyone yet.

After Jennie graduated as valedictorian from BYU, she took a job teaching high school in Ammon with the purpose of being near her sweetheart, Delbert, who was living and working in Idaho Falls. Their courtship was extended a while because Delbert wanted to make sure he was in a position to financially support a family before he acquired one. On June 11, 1930, her dream was fulfilled when she and Delbert were married in the Salt Lake temple.

They spent a happy, but hectic honeymoon in southern Utah. The most memorable segment was their two days and nights at Bryce Canyon lodge where the young couple subsisted on cheese and crackers because they felt they couldn't afford more, only to find out too late that the \$12 per day charge included three delicious meals - all of which they missed! In Jennie's words, "At first we felt disappointed -



**Kristen Blair's beautiful Gr.Gr.Gr., 1994.**

hungry! - and then laughed hilariously." Jennie and Delbert set up their home in Idaho Falls and quickly got to work establishing their family.

The birth of their first child, Mary Jane, was a fulfillment of Jennie's heartfelt desire for motherhood. The birth was extremely difficult, but Jennie felt sustained by the influence of her mother's prayers. Jennie rejoiced to begin this new phase of life. She recounted the following experience: "Once while I was out 'sunning' Mary Jane, a truant officer came and asked me why I was babysitting instead of in school where I belonged. She was reluctant to accept my explanation. After all, I had not needed to wear maternity clothes during the pregnancy."

About a year and a half later, Julia joined the family - then John, David, Richard, Dee, Joe, Beth, Lew, Gloria, and George. Eleven children in just over 20 years! Once a friend teased Delbert: When the Lord commanded you to multiply and replenish the earth, he didn't mean you and Jennie had to do it all yourself! Jokes aside, Jennie and Delbert considered their large family their greatest blessing and responsibility. Many years later after all the children were raised, Jennie suffered a bout with a serious, painful illness. At this time she wrote, "Some have



**Hawaiian bathing beauty, 1962.**



**11 Holbrook siblings, 1921-22. (Jennie standing 3rd from left)**



**Jennie's 11 Children, 1952.**

asked: Do you think having all those children was just too much and brought this on? Absolutely not - I quickly affirm - just the opposite - having them and living as we have tried to live, made me so healthy and strong that I could go through this experience and come out on top."

The Groberg home was a bustle of energy. Jennie's primary focus was teaching her children the gospel. Although for many, many years, Jennie wanted to move to Provo to be close to her family and BYU, the family remained in Idaho Falls where Delbert built a successful career. She maintained a close relationship with her mother who assisted her with the birth of her children and was a constant source of inspiration for her. Jennie encouraged her children to develop their talents and taught them to value education, healthy recreation, family, and good friendships. A few anecdotes from Jennie's journals and letters give us a picture of what it was like in the Groberg home and illustrate the challenges of motherhood.

For example:

John fell down the cellar. He gets too many bumps but is getting more able all the time to care for himself. He sucks the second finger of his left hand and holds his ear with his right hand. The parents magazine says to let him do it. I recall how we put white mittens on Julia for two weeks to break her from sucking her fingers.

Here's another account from a few years later:

Tonight after a "talking to" for misdeeds, I heard prayers something like this: David: "Bless Dee so he won't grow up to be naughty like me. Bless me not to eat Julia's candy anymore." John: "Bless me so I won't go sneaking around swiping other people's candy and eating it. Bless us not to be naughty so we won't grow up into tramps."

Jennie delighted in her children's imaginations. Of one of these memorable moments, she recorded:

David made an airplane and came in, excited: "Mom, this airplane went so high, it touched Jesus' house!" I asked if it broke any windows - "Course not. I guess Jesus really just lives in air, doesn't he?"



**Making friends in China, 1980.**

Although Jennie's primary focus was always on her children, she contributed in other ways, as well. In the church, she served as a teacher and leader in the primary, mutual, Relief Society, and Sunday School. She also freely shared her musical talents as a pianist and organist. She supported her husband in his many professional, community, and church responsibilities.

Through writing, Jennie expressed her creativity, recorded her life experiences, communicated with loved ones, and shared her testimony of family and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although talented in many ways, Jennie chose to put her family first and foremost and found deep meaning in this endeavor. The following selection from a poem she wrote exemplifies her sentiments:

I would be a poet!  
For within urge and yearning abide,  
Persisting, pervading, possessing,  
And will not be denied.

I would be a poet!  
Would take these thoughts unfettered  
And with words, controlling close,  
Make them aptly clothed and lettered.

She concludes the poem with these verses:

I would be a poet!  
So the morrow I carefully plan  
To wake and claim my hour  
'Ere demanding duty can . . .

Then I hold my breath in awe,  
Overwhelmed with reality!  
In this simple, daily living  
Am I building poetry?

As her children married and started their families, she gratefully and joyfully embraced her role as grandmother. Grandchildren and in-laws brought a new dimension to the family, only expanding the joy and opportunities for service. The Groberg children delighted in having nieces and nephews. As a third grader, Lew (the ninth child) wrote to his older siblings who were living away from home: "I am an uncle of Margaret Jean. David is the grandest of all grand uncles and Dick and Dee are grand uncles and Joe and I and Georgie are low uncles."

Jennie found fulfillment as her children and grandchildren continued her pattern of service to church and family. She savored the opportunity to correspond with and pray for all seven sons and one daughter as they served full-time LDS missions. Well into the computer age, Jennie still used a manual typewriter to produce hundreds of pages of letters, family histories, journals, and lessons. She transcribed numerous patriarchal blessings given by her husband, compiled the writings of her grandfather, George H. Brimhall, and wrote a volume entitled, "Home Living in the Light of the Gospel." She traveled around the world visiting family members and meeting missionaries. In 1975, Delbert was called by President Spencer W. Kimball to serve as president of the Idaho Falls temple. For five years, she served alongside her husband as matron of the temple.

During the period of life when some people her age retire, Jennie stayed busy and active, filling her life with worthy causes consistent with her desire to strengthen home and family. She was a beloved grandma and orchestrated many family gatherings. Visitors to her home knew they would be welcomed with a warm embrace, words of love and affirmation, a listening ear, and good food. Grandma's fruit slush is legendary among her posterity.

Always, Jennie was a devoted wife to her eternal companion, Delbert. In fact, it's difficult to imagine one without the other. For many years, Jennie supported her husband in his remarkable life. The last few years of Jennie's life as her health dwindled, Delbert was her constant companion and lifeline, answering her every need and wish with a prompt and loving response. To the end of her life, Jennie rejoiced in her motherhood. She delighted in her great-grandchildren and lived to see the birth of a great-great granddaughter. A few months ago when she was very frail, her eyes brightened and a surge of energy came into her body as she held a great-granddaughter close saying, "As long as I have a little child in my arms, everything's fine."



**Welcoming Craig Teuscher into the family, 1994.**

Jennie liked to tell the story of a great-grandchild who was examining a picture on the cover of the Friend magazine. It was a picture of large steps climbing into the sky. On each step a word or phrase was written: faith, repentance, baptism, gift of the Holy Ghost. The little girl inquired of her mother what the steps represented. The mom replied, "The steps back to Heavenly Father." Then the girl asked if those were all of the steps. Her mother answered, "No, there are many steps we need to take." After thinking for a few minutes, the girl grinned with understanding and said, "Mom, that's why we need to hold on to the iron rod . . . so when we get to the top we won't fall back down through the clouds!"

Jennie clung to the iron rod faithfully throughout her life - to the point that we all feel confident that there's not a chance of her falling back down through the clouds. Her influence, however, will continue to bless her family and all whose lives she touched. Her love for the Savior and for her family is eternal and has left an indelible mark on all of us. We can scarcely imagine the joyful reunions that are taking place on the other side and can almost hear her mother saying to Jennie, "Go on my girl with your abundant life."



**FOR MORE ON GRANDMA CHECK OUT**



**By Margaret Blair Young**

You will find this Meridian Magazine article at [www.ldsmag.com/extories/040419household.htm](http://www.ldsmag.com/extories/040419household.htm) (As you read and note the grammatical blunder in the 3rd paragraph from the end, we have it on the best authority that Professor Margaret would never mistake a "has" for a "have." The error is Meridian's.

**Missionary and Military Addresses**

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*Reminder: It's not too early to send your 2004 contribution to the Groberg/Holbrook Family History Assoc. c/o Joseph Groberg 1605 S. Woodruff, Idaho Falls, ID 83404.*