

Jeanne Groberg's Parents: Claron Ure and Virginia Pratt



Claron Pratt, April, 1944.

In 2000, Scot and Maurine Proctor inserted a photo of Jeanne Groberg's father, Claron Ure Pratt, in their Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, Revised and Enhanced Edition.

Claron was the only surviving grandchild of the apostle. He was born February 15, 1910, the youngest son of Parley's youngest son, Mathoni Wood Pratt and his plural wife, Agnes Jones Ure.

Being the "second family," Agnes and her three children, Melvin, Mary, and Claron, had to move often. Claron was born in Centerville, Utah, but grew up in Portland, Oregon; Pocatello, Idaho; Driggs, Idaho; and Salt Lake City.

While living in Driggs, seven-year old Claron heard that two World War I aviators were to give an air show in the community. Beside himself with excitement, he searched the skies for them for weeks, thinking every hawk he saw soaring over the Tetons was their airplane. When they finally arrived, he stayed at the field all day, watching them take off and land. He determined that he, too, would someday fly. He was undaunted by the tragic news that his heroes had crashed and not made it to the next town on their tour.

Of necessity, Claron learned to work. By the time he was 16, he was supporting his mother by making the mortgage payments on her little home on Layton Ave.

in Salt Lake City. He had a variety of jobs: machine cutting and stamping parts for radios, mowing lawns, planting and tending sugar beets. When 19 years old, he delivered ice by horse-drawn wagon. One customer was the University of Utah that required a 300 pound block of ice be delivered in one piece to its box at the bottom of a flight of stairs. He was proud that he could shoulder that heavy block, inch his way down the stairs, and set it, unbroken, in the icebox.

After high school graduation, Claron used \$95 of his hard-earned money to buy a very used Harley-Davidson motorcycle. After work, he and a cousin rode the motorcycle to the airport where they enrolled in an airplane mechanics course. Claron learned to repair airplane wings with fabric and glue and to dismantle and reassemble engines. He attended a ground school for pilots and, in the evenings, took classes in typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping at the LDS Business College. While serving as Secretary of the YMMIA of the McKinley Ward, he met Virginia Reeves.

Virginia was the first of three children born to Bertram Francis Reeves and Winifred Pettit. She was born December 5, 1911, in Salt Lake City. Her sister, Leone, was born a year later, and a little brother was born four years later but lived only one day. Virginia did not feel



Virginia Reeves, 1931.

she belonged to a small family. A few blocks to the north lived her Reeves grandparents, and a few blocks further north and west lived her Pettit grandparents, both first generation members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Reeves joined the church in England and emigrated to SLC in the 1870s. The Pettits joined the church in New York and crossed the plains in covered wagons in 1847. Lots of aunts and uncles and cousins lived nearby.

Virginia's Grandpa Reeves was a postman who delivered the mail with his little postal cart and horse. He was also an amateur artist who taught Virginia to draw and paint. All her life, Virginia loved to make beautiful things: polished stones, copper-enameled jewelry, ceramic knick-knacks, tooled brass pictures, feathered hats, knitted sweaters, tailored suits and dresses, reupholstered sofas and chairs, cakes and sugared eggs adorned with frosting rosebuds and sweet peas. She read voraciously. Her gift with the written word made her a formidable Scrabble opponent. In their later years, Claron and Virginia often invited visiting children and grandchildren to play the word game. All learned that "no one beat Grandma at Scrabble!"

Virginia graduated from the LDS Business College and worked for 6 years as a



Claron and Virginia, Lambs Canyon, 1933.



E.T. and Kristin Clark Family

E.T. and Kristin Clark and family live in Mesa, Arizona. E.T. continues to practice law at the Clark Law Firm and Kristin helps him with the bookkeeping. Kimberly & Chase Lucero live in Boston and love it! Chase is busy working in advertising and Kimberly works as an SLP. Katie lives in Salt Lake City and works as a financial analyst for Goldman Sachs. Carie is studying Communication Disorders at BYU and works at the BYU Math Lab. Matthew is a senior at Mountain View High School and is preparing to serve a mission this summer. Courtney is a freshman at MVHS and is currently playing tennis.



Sean and Anna Glenn Family

Sean and Anna Glenn are living in Mesa Arizona, where Sean has been with Mayo Clinic Arizona for the past nine years. Sean is currently serving in the stake presidency and Anna works with the young women. Hailey (20) is graduating from BYU in communication disorders and Brittany (18) is headed to BYU in June. Emily (16) and Abby (13) will both be in high school this year and Joey (9) will be in fifth grade! The kids all stay busy with sports, school and work. Abby has become our family history expert and found over 100 names for the rest of us to take to the temple!



Jon and Katie Groberg Family

The exciting news with our family is that we are re-locating out West as Jon accepted a new job with Ancestry.com. It will be a big change as Jon has primarily worked on Wall Street and been on the East Coast since 1996, Katie grew up in CT, and all the kids were born in NYC. We are both excited and nervous about the change. Cami is turning 11 and finishing 5th grade, which is in middle school in New Canaan, and loves to play basketball, ski, and read voraciously (especially Harry Potter). Charlie is 8 and

finishing 3rd grade. He is fearless and up for basically anything, though if it is computer related he will get particularly excited. He loves math and his basketball team won the championship. Christian is 4 and loves trucks and dinosaurs (though not life-size T-Rex's as we discovered on the Jurassic Park ride!), and increasingly to wrestle Charlie.

Pamela Groberg Family

Pamela's been enjoying every moment she gets to practice and play the piano. She starts Pathway soon and is really looking forward to that. Breyyana's fin-

ishing up 2nd grade. She's enjoyed being in Robotics club all year as well as playing basketball and singing in a children's choir. Mackenzie is busy being 2. She's curious about and into everything and truly delights in making us all laugh each and every day.



Alex Odida Family

The Alex Odidas (Alex, Sr., Tiffany-14 yrs., Natasha-12 yrs., and Alex, Jr.-11 yrs.) are holding down the fort in Salt Lake City. Tiffany is finishing the 8th grade and dancing with her middle school's dance club. She likes black activist poetry, specifically Langston Hughes. Natasha is completing the 6th grade and discusses political and social matters with clarity and sincere concern. Alex, Jr. is finishing 5th grade and never changes his answer when asked his favorite subject and sport: math...basketball. Alex, Sr. still works for Delta

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stenographer and teller at the Deseret Building Society on South Main Street. She taught Junior Sunday School from the age of 17. She dated a lot, but the fellow she really liked was the Secretary of the YMMIA.

Claron and Virginia courted for two years. Claron worked for the Salt Lake Hardware Company and, with this meager but steady income, finally felt financially capable of asking Virginia to marry him. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple on October 3, 1934.

They spent time hiking in the canyons in the summer and, after Claron taught Virginia to ski, they enjoyed the canyons in the winter, too. This was long before the advent of groomed trails and ski lifts, so Claron built v-shaped blocks to strap onto their skis so they could walk up the steep slopes. At the top, they would remove the blocks and ski down. Once, when skiing in Parley's Canyon by the big ski jump where famous athletes performed their incredible feats, Claron suggested they hold hands and go off the jump together! Virginia tried to refuse, but Claron talked her into it. They climbed to the top of the jump and stood with their tips over the edge and looked down. Virginia expressed real fear. Claron agreed that perhaps it wasn't such a good idea after all. She gratefully climbed down, carrying her skis. Claron pushed off alone.

Their first baby, Robert LeGrande (Bob), was born in 1936, their second, Richard Stephen (Steve), in 1940, their third, Jeanne, in 1947, and their last, Sharon, in 1950. Virginia devoted herself 100% to her husband and children.

In 1938, Claron bought his first airplane, a Kinner Sportster, with money Virginia had saved before their marriage, and which she willingly shared with him to help him fulfill his dream. His first task after the purchase was to get the plane from Ogden to Glenwood Springs, where he had accepted an assignment as sales representative for the Salt Lake Hardware Company. After three supervised landings, he felt ready to go. His friend and trainer, Kerm McKay, asked him how much air time he had, and Claron answered, "Only what you've just given me." Kerm told him he was crazy to try to fly over that rugged terrain to Glenwood with no more experience than that. Claron said, "Well, if you'll go with me, I'll pay your way back on the train." It was a deal. Claron never needed Kerm's help, not even when landing on the short strip bounded on either end by steep cliffs down to the river below. Years later, Kerm told Claron, "When I left you there, I gave you 30 days before you had a crack-up." Virginia did not enjoy fly-



Elephant loading plane, December, 1944.

ing in the small plane, but she knew how much Claron loved it, and supported him.

Claron flew the first airmail from Glenwood Springs to Grand Junction, Colorado, on May 19, 1938. That fall, he asked for a company transfer back to Salt Lake City, where he could further his flight training. He wanted to fly commercial aircraft, and he was fast approaching the hiring age cut-off of 29. He did some barnstorming for extra cash and additional hours of flight time. In 1939, he achieved his dream and was the 260th pilot hired by United Airlines.

He joined the U.S. Army Air Corps Reserves to get more flying time and was commissioned a second lieutenant. When the U.S. was thrown into World War II on December 7, 1941, he was called to active duty in the Ferrying Division of the Army Air Corps. For five weeks he was loaned to the Ferrying Command in Anchorage, Alaska, where he transported troops and supplies to the outer tip of the Aleutian Islands. In 1944, he was made commander of an air base on the Brahmaputra River in the Assam Valley of India. His crews flew needed supplies over "the Hump," the high Himalaya boundary between India and China, to the Chinese who were fighting the Japanese. After the war, this route became known as the "Aluminum Trail" because of the number of crashes suffered due to the extremely harsh flying conditions.

Misamari, Claron's base, had been dubbed by the previous staff "Miserable Mary" because of its low morale and productivity. Claron and his staff overturned that reputation. At the end of the war,

General Tunner recommended Lt. Colonel Pratt for the Legion of Merit award, writing: "Lt. Col. Pratt commanded one of the largest Hump operating bases of the India/China Division. He assumed command of the unit when the morale and efficiency of the camp were at an all-record low and transformed the base into one of the most outstanding units in the entire India/China Division. Lt. Col. Pratt worked with the men, won their respect, and wholeheartedly lent himself to the mission of his command. His leadership...was above and beyond that of superior nature, and served not only as an inspiration to the men subordinate to him, but to other units...of the ICB Theater as well."

Meanwhile, Virginia kept a happy, fun, optimistic home life going. Through moves from Salt Lake to Glenwood Springs, Colorado, to Portland, Oregon, to Long Beach then Palm Springs, California, and finally to Denver, then Littleton, Colorado, and back "home" to Bountiful, Utah, Virginia rolled with the punches and cheerfully accepted the assignments that came her way, seeking out branches of the church wherever they lived and anchoring her children in the gospel. Bob said, "I felt that God was in His heaven and that all was right with the world, even when Daddy was far away in India during the war years." And he and Steve, then 7 and 4, felt their daddy's nearness. En route to India, Claron wrote them the following letter: "I just want to write you a little note asking a big favor of you. That favor is this: Watch over that dearest of all dear people in the world, the one who means more to you and to me than anyone else,

your mother. Remember that she lives for you and wants to bring you fellows up to be fine young men of whom we can all be proud. Listen to her carefully, every word she says, mind her quickly like soldiers responding to the commands of their superior officers, put yourselves out to do something nice for her, surprise her by doing those little things that should be done without asking. Do all of these things for her, for in so doing, you will be doing your Dad the biggest favor possible.”

Claron turned down a commission as Colonel to return to civilian life and his family. After closing down his base, he flew his plane, “the Brass Hat,” home via the great pyramids of Egypt, the Coliseum of Rome, and the Eiffel Tower of Paris, and resumed responsibilities with his family, the Boy Scouts in his ward, and United Airlines.

Claron was often the pilot assigned by the company to introduce new jet aircraft, such as the DC-8. He went to Sweden and to southern France to train in and bring back the new French Caravelle jets. When President Mobutu of Zaire bought a Lear jet, Claron was assigned to deliver it and to train the president’s personal pilot. In 1947, he was asked to fly a plane carrying some of the now elderly children of the Utah pioneers of ‘47 from Salt Lake City to Nauvoo, Illinois, in cel-

bration of the 100th anniversary of the Mormon exodus.

In 1964, Claron and Virginia bought their farm. It was 60 miles north of Denver, near Loveland, Colorado. Claron had always been looking for a piece of land big enough to accommodate a landing strip. The landing strip never materialized, but it didn’t matter. Claron immersed himself in farming on his days off work. By now he was Assistant Director of Flight Standards at United Airlines. Grandchildren began to arrive in 1969, and Claron and Virginia made the farm a haven for their ever-growing posterity. There were cows to milk, horses to ride, silage pits in which to play, asparagus to find, and vegetables to harvest.

Like his illustrious forebears, the Pratts and Ures, and like her stalwart ancestors, the Pettits and Reeves, Claron and Virginia stayed true to the guiding philosophy of their lives: “Never let anything take precedence over our main objective: love and companionship and happiness with each other and with our wonderful children.” He celebrated his 90th birthday judiciously: flying with a friend in a small, private plane to Huntsville Utah, and back to Salt Lake—instead of skydiving.

Claron passed away April 27, 2003, and Virginia passed away March 18, 2004. Together forever.



Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Claron U. Pratt, Misamari, India, January 11, 1945.

Editors Note

We invite you to make tax-deductible contributions to the Groberg-Holbrook Genealogy Association.

If each child of Delbert and Jennie gave \$100 or more and each grandchild \$50 or more, it would go a long way. Many can give more, some perhaps less, but it would be wonderful if everyone contributed something.

Please send your contributions to:
Groberg-Holbrook Genealogy Organiza-

tion

1605 S. Woodruff Ave.
Idaho Falls, ID 83404

or via PayPal to dvgroberg@gmail.com
You can pay for the cabin with PayPal as well.

We know many of the family have blogs. If you would like to share your blog with the rest of the family, please email them to me and we will share in

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