

WANDA PARKINSON CANNON

I was born in Logan, Cache County, Utah, on July 31, 1911. I was the youngest of my mother's ten children and the youngest of my father's twenty-two children. My father had two wives. My father, William Chandler Parkinson, was born on Aug. 2, 1855, the son of Samuel Rose Parkinson and Arabella Chandler.

Samuel Rose Parkinson joined the Church in St. Louis, Mo., in 1850. Arabella Chandler had joined the Church in England in 1844 and then migrated to America, settling in St. Louis where she met Samuel. They were married in 1852.

My mother, Louisa Benson Parkinson was born March 28, 1869, the daughter of George T. Benson, Sr., and Louisa Ballif. George's father, Ezra T. Benson, joined the Church in Quincy, Ill. in the summer of 1840 after having associated with some of the Latter Day Saints for some time. He was called as the 20th member of the Quorum of the Twelve on July 16, 1846, in Council Bluffs, Iowa, as the church members were moving westward to the Salt Lake Valley.

Louisa Ballif, my grandmother on my mother's side, was born Feb. 25, 1850, in Lausanne, Switzerland. She was the daughter of Serge Louis Ballif and Elise Marie LeCoultre. This couple joined the Church in Lausanne in 1852 and migrated to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1854, settling in the Cache Valley. Louisa met George T. Benson several years later and they were married in 1867.

In 1884 my father was made bishop of the Preston, Idaho, ward with George T. Benson as one of his counselors. The story is told that while George was settling his tithing for the year 1886 he mentioned that his 10th child had just been born, to which Bishop Parkinson said, "It is time you turned one in for tithing. I'll take the oldest one!" This was Louisa, my mother. The marriage of William C. Parkinson and Louisa Benson took place in the Logan Temple on Feb. 11, 1887.

My father was a good provider, even with two large families to support. We always had plenty to eat and never wanted for much. My mother was a loving, kind and happy person, a marvelous cook and immaculate housekeeper. Both of my parents were active in the Church throughout their lives. After being bishop for 14 years he served as president of the Hyrum Stake for over 20 years. Mother worked in Relief Society and in music callings in her ward. She had a lovely voice and played the piano quite well. She taught piano in her early years.

We lived in a large home in Logan consisting of five bedrooms upstairs, two bedrooms downstairs behind a "parlor", dining room, large kitchen and pantry. The parlor was a very special room and we were only permitted to be in there on special occasions. We did not have any bathrooms in the house but under each bed there was a "potty" to be used at night. In the back yard, some distance from the house, was the "outhouse" which in wintertime was not very comfortable! We had our weekly baths, generally on Saturday nights, in a tin tub in the kitchen by the wood stove. My sister, Evelyn, who was 16 months older than I, would have her bath with me when we were small. Mother dressed us alike for many years and people thought we were twins. And to this day we are frequently mistaken for each other.

Our Christmases were always very special. We did not have much money to spend but Mother made sure we all got some presents. Each year we had a large beautiful tree several days before Christmas and would string popcorn and cranberries on long pieces of thread for decorations. In the early days we had small candles attached to the tree branches which would be lighted for short periods during the holidays. All of the decorations were handmade by members of the family.

As indicated above Mother was an excellent cook. I can remember seeing as many as ten pies cooling on the shelf in the pantry before special holidays, apple, pumpkin, raisin and mince meat being her favorites. She regularly made eight loaves of bread at a time, along with fruit cakes and every kind of pastry one could want.

My teen years were typical of the 1920's in a small town like Logan. After graduating from Logan High School I entered Utah State University in the Fall of 1929. My father passed away in November of that year. My mother had lived for 42 years as the "second" wife and had become somewhat accustomed to caring for her family on her own. However,

the loss of her husband was an event of great sorrow to her and to us children who had always looked forward to the times when our father could be with us in our home.

At the beginning of the Fall semester in 1930 I met Winfield Q. Cannon of Salt Lake City, who had just returned from a mission to Germany. Winfield is the son of Sylvester Q. Cannon and Winifred Saville. At the time of our meeting Sylvester Q. Cannon was the Presiding Bishop in the Church. Some years later he became the 60th member of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Winfield and I dated while we were in school together during the 1930-31 year. In the summer of 1931 my mother decided to move to Salt Lake so my sister, Evelyn, could attend the University of Utah. This move hampered our "romance" to some degree with Winfield in Logan and me in Salt Lake but our weekend dates were more meaningful because of this situation. As the academic year 1931-32 drew to a close with Winfield's graduation we set a date for our marriage for July 15th in the Salt Lake Temple. The ceremony was performed by Bishop Sylvester Q. Cannon.

The "Great Depression" of the early 1930's resulted in a scarcity of jobs for college graduates but Winfield was able to get employment with a research arm of the Bell Telephone system doing development work in sound for motion pictures in Hollywood. We left Salt Lake on our honeymoon heading for Los Angeles in a 1930 Nash coupe which had been given to us as a wedding present by Earl J. Glade, the manager of KSL radio. Unfortunately, the car had some major engine defects which resulted in four extended delays across the hot desert due mainly to bearing burnouts. It took us four days to get to Hollywood!

Those first few years of married life were challenging because of the Depression. Our income was very limited and as our children came along we had to be very frugal to make ends meet. But they were happy years and we managed to gradually improve our economic circumstances. We lived in Hollywood close to Winfield's work and became active in the Wilshire Ward and the Hollywood (later renamed Los Angeles) Stake. Over the first 15-20 years of our marriage I taught Primary and Junior Sunday School for several years and was Junior Sunday School Coordinator for six years. In later years I was a counselor in the Relief Society two different times in the Hollywood 2nd Ward.

Our four children, two boys and two girls, were all born in Los Angeles during the first twelve years of our marriage, the first two during the Depression years and the other two during the World War II years. If you lived through those years you can attest to the fact that "luxuries" were few and far between, first because of the economic conditions and then later the unavailability of things due to the war. As a consequence we learned to "make do or do without" for those many years.

Winfield had transferred into the Telephone Company just prior to the outbreak of hostilities in Europe and when our country entered the conflict his assignment in engineering operations in war-related communications work made him "essential" to the war effort in Southern California.

As our children reached adulthood and went their various ways during our "middle" years our activities centered around Church assignments. Our older son and daughter were married and on their own by 1955 and our younger son left in 1961 to go to New York City to pursue his music career. Our younger daughter was attending BYU during the early 1960's and Winfield was president of the Los Angeles Stake after having been the bishop of two wards between 1953 and 1962.

On Valentine's Day of 1968 our telephone rang while we were eating breakfast in our home in the Los Feliz Hills. President Hugh B. Brown of the First Presidency was on the line. He asked Winfield if we would be willing to accept a call to preside over the Germany West Mission in Frankfurt, Germany! The answer was obviously "Yes". Preparations were made which involved early retirement for Winfield from the Telephone Company and release from his calling as Stake President, arranging for the leasing of our home for three years, storage of furniture, etc. I had to be released from my calling as Counselor in the Relief Society of the Hollywood II Ward. It was

a hectic period but we were able to leave at the appointed time in the summer of 1968.

This was probably the most challenging period of my life. I could not speak German and my Church experience had been limited to callings in ward assignments. To suddenly assume the responsibility for all of the supervision of the girls' and women's activities in six districts comprising 45 branches, and to be doing it in a foreign language, not to mention the primary responsibility for the well-being of approximately 150 missionaries, was frightening to say the least. But the Lord blessed me, even as Elder Thomas S. Monson had promised me when he set me apart in the Church Office Building before we left.

Those three years were a time of great happiness and growth for me. I was also greatly blessed to have my younger daughter, Kathie, with me for those three years. She had completed her schooling at BYU in 1967 in the field of education and was able to get a job teaching English at the American Military High School in Frankfurt.

Jusy shortly before we were released in 1971 Kathie was married to William Brooks, a long-time friend from our Hollywood 2nd Ward who had been drafted into the service during the Vietnam conflict and was assigned to duty in Germany in 1970. Their marriage in the Bern, Switzerland, Temple was a highlight of the last few weeks of our mission. I was faced with many challenges as I prepared an "American" wedding reception for them in a country where weddings are celebrated very differently. But our German Saints were so excited and thrilled to have the Mission President's daughter married there and be able to participate in the reception in their local Cultural Hall they could not do enough to help with all of the details. All of the Saints throughout the mission were invited to attend and it seemed that most of them came.

At the conclusion of our mission we invited our four children and their spouses to come to Germany for a tour of Europe. We had purchased a 9-passenger VW Bus and when they all arrived about the middle of July, 1971, we took off for a trip through eight countries, covering 4000 miles in about three weeks. The memories of that time together with our grown children will last forever with me.

Upon our return to our home in Los Angeles in Sept., 1971, we decided to move out of the "big city" as soon as we could decide where to move for our retirement. But for a year or so before we came to a decision we were called back into Church service in our home ward, I as a counselor in the Relief Society and Winfield as bishop.

In October, 1972, while attending General Conference, we were guided by our older daughter, who had been living in Provo since 1968, to inspect the Edgewood Condominiums which were just being built. We saw what we wanted and put down "earnest money" for the unit which we now occupy. We were able to sell our home in Los Angeles quickly and then had to wait several months before our unit here was ready. We moved into 2755 Edgewood in August, 1973 and have enjoyed our associations here and in the ward ever since.

We thought we were too old for any more Church callings other than home and visiting teaching but soon found that not to be so. In February, 1978, 10 years to the day after President Hugh B. Brown called us about going to Germany, we received a telephone call from Elder James E. Faust of the Quorum of the Twelve asking us to go to Singapore to preside over the mission there! This assignment also involved supervising the International Mission activities in all of Southeast Asia.

So once again we made our preparations. However, it was easier this time because, 1) we simply closed up our home, leaving everything intact and under the supervision of our daughter, Suzanne, 2) although there are several languages spoken in Singapore, English is the "language of choice", and 3) I had no mission organizational responsibilities and only a very few missionaries to work with. We did, however, have to travel extensively by air and I developed an aversion for airports and airplanes, particularly those in India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka where safety standards were far from optimum.

Our Singapore mission was very different from our German mission, but equally uplifting and rewarding. And when it came time to return home I found it very difficult to leave those wonderful Saints and friends we had associated with. Most of our members there are of Chinese ancestry and are a younger group than a cross-section of members here at home. They have grown up in the post-World War II period and have thrown off the ancient Oriental traditions and have become quite "Westernized". They are very intelligent and study the gospel very thoroughly before they join. As a result they provide excellent leadership in the Church there. Many of them have come all the way to Salt Lake City to go through the temple there for their endowments or to be sealed in marriage. This involves considerable expense but they are willing to make sacrifices for this privilege. And so we have fond memories of our mission to Singapore.

Since returning to our home in 1980 we have enjoyed our activities here in the Edgemont 12th Ward. Winfield was called as a Highcouncilman in the BYU 6th Stake, as well as being the patriarch. He still functions in these callings.

In addition to our four children, we now have 13 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren scattered from the East Coast to the West Coast and enjoy every opportunity to visit with them or have them come to visit us. Our "extended family" now numbers 43 and constitutes our "crowning glory".