

360 Hansen Avenue

Memories of Dee Lora and Stella Davis Hays

By
Jean Hays Cornwall a granddaughter



MY Grandparents. Dee Lora and Stella Davis Hays lived down a lane...on the left were the backyards of the homes facing seventeenth south. In one of those houses lived Ada, Perdita and Colleen. Colleen was a girl about 8, Ada was her divorced mother and Perdita her widowed grandmother. Their house was clean and always smelled of home cooking and cleaning products.

On the right side of Hansen Avenue there were empty lots. A big old house that a woman named Dolly lived in. She was old and smelled really bad. My grandmother always took food to her and I went a long to look at the many things she collected. She had a lot of thick hair on her face and was very fat. Her breathing was labored and noisy.

Just past my Grandparents home on the right was a run down little home with renters in it. There were a lot of children and not much money. The father was always angry and the mother screamed at the father or the kids continually.

Grandma was always taking food and clothing to them as she said they didn't "have enough to get by with" One day the father put his arm through a window in a drunken rage and cut it terribly. I remember my grandmother tearing up sheets and tightly wrapping the badly bleeding arm. She then called someone to come and take him to the hospital.

My grandparent's home was surrounded by a picket fence that needed paint badly. The sidewalk leading to the front porch was uneven from the roots of the trees forcing it up in places. Grandmother had planted many Iris and Rose bushes so the yard was awash with colorful fragrant flowers in the spring and summer.



Family in Front of 360 Hansen Avenue

Memories of Dee Lora Hays and Stella Davis Hays by Jean H. Cornwall a granddaughter copyright 1999

The big screened in porch was my favorite place. There was a porch swing, a bed, a small table and lots of geraniums and hanging plants. We would sit out there in the evenings listening to the katydids and crickets. We'd drink cool aid and eat bread with sugar on it. During the day Grandmother would teach me to embroider and knit while we sat on the old porch swing.



Donna, Cora, Gay (and Marilyn on porch swing)

On the window of the front door was a crochet horse; grandmother had made it and stretched it across the glass instead of a curtain. Inside the front door was a corner glass display cabinet built into the living room, It held such treasures. I always stopped to admire the trinkets and baubles grandmother had collected. I loved the cabinet and its contents.

The living room rug had been nailed down with big roofing nails. There was a flood a few years earlier and grandfather had nailed the carpets down so they wouldn't float away.



The kitchen was large and had a floor that sloped toward the back door. There was a wooden table and chairs where we would eat pancakes covered with sorghum and sugar. On the back porch were two hundred boxes of detergent. The Soap Company had a great prize one-year for two hundred box tops so Grandpa bought all the boxes of soap at once so he could get the prize. They never had to buy soap again in their entire lives.

It was the 1950's and everyone wanted a bomb shelter. Grandfather built one in the back yard out of cardboard and dirt. We loved to play in it but were cautioned not to get on top of it because it would cave in. Even as a child I wondered how it could keep bombs from blowing us up if it would cave in by kids walking on top of it.

There was an old out house across from the bomb shelter; we used it Monday through Saturday. On Saturday evening grandfather would fill it with newspaper and set it on fire to kill the bugs and the odor. The house had indoor plumbing but we were only allowed to use it on Sundays. The bathtub was filled with water and we would flush the toilet by scooping water into the bucket and dumping it in the toilet. On Monday we would return to the old bug free, odor free, fire sanitized out house.

There was a large barn and chicken coop behind the house. It was old and rickety and leaned to one side. It had a dirt floor and looked very interesting to children. We were forbidden to go out there, as Mother was afraid it would fall in on us and we'd be killed. We sneaked out there whenever the opportunity arose. Once inside the barn there was a long wobbly staircase, held up by two by fours propped against the sides to keep it from pulling away from the wall and falling down. We would carefully inch up the stairs as they moved and creaked with each step. Opening the door at the top of the stairs we discovered a million feathers. There was an old chicken coop up there, The feathers were mostly white and there was chicken poop everywhere. We thought it was a wonderful place. We tied a rope to the windowsill and swung Tarzan style out of the windows dropping to the ground below.

I spent many happy seasons with my grandparents. They were like a Norman Rockwell picture. Grandmother, Stella Davis Hays was very short and very round. She had pure white hair that touched the back of her knees when she let it down. I remember she would clean out the hairbrush after she finished brushing her hair and used the hair picked from the old boar's hairbrush to wind around her braid. Then the long braid was wound carefully into a circle and plopped on top of her head. She usually wore it up with big plastic silver hairpins to hold it in place. She wore round granny eyeglasses about half way down her nose. Her nose tweaked up on the end and she had wonderful big cracks in her cheeks that were deep dimples in her youth. She always wore dresses covered by an apron, support hose and slippers on her feet instead of shoes. When Grandma Hays went out she powdered her nose, took off her apron, and put on some low healed black shoes. On Sundays she added gloves, a small hat with flowers on it

and a pearl necklace.



She would let me comb her silky, long white hair. When I was about eight we put it in donkey ears, and placed a big red ribbon on each one. Grandmother was in her seventies and wore the kindergarten style hairstyle to the store and back because I did it. I was so proud as she told everyone I did her hair that day.

Grandfather Dee Lora Hays didn't have much hair on his head. He seemed tall to me back then, although I think he was under six-foot tall. He always had a white cloth handkerchief sticking out of his dark trousers. His belly was larger than his hips so suspenders held up the pants or a belt pulled tight around his middle.

Grandfather was quite a character and more than thirty-five years after his death his many grandchildren still delight in recalling "Grandpa Hays Stories". He came from Alabama, and at one time was a riverboat gambler. He joined the Mormon Church and was on a first name basis with the prophets Heber C. Kimball and George Albert Smith. I loved getting on the Salt Lake City buses with grandpa and going down town. He always carried nickels in his pockets and handed them out to any children he saw. It seemed to me he knew everyone by name the bus driver and the other passengers on the bus and of course the people at the lunch counter where we got a root beer.

I remember my mother telling me a story about Grandpa Hays. It seems he

wanted grandmother to have an indoor bathtub. They had an outhouse at the time and bathed one after another in an old Steele laundry tub. Grandfather bought a porcelain bathtub and brought it home. There was no indoor plumbing in their house. Grandfather took a drill and drilled holes through the wood floor. He told grandmother to just pull the plug after everyone had finished bathing and the water would run all over the kitchen floor and eventually seep through the drilled holes and disappear under the wooden kitchen floor.

One twenty Fourth of July Grandfather and I rode the bus downtown to watch the days of 47 parade. I was probably 6 or 7 years old. We positioned ourselves across the street from the Hotel Utah on South temple, as that was where the parade began. When it was time for President George Albert Smith to get in the convertible to ride along the parade route and wave. He was no where to be found. So the car had no choice but to proceed empty down the street. I heard clapping and laughing just as I heard Grandpa yell "You better run George" President Smith came running out of the hotel and tried to catch the car in the parade but he wasn't fast enough. The ice cream peddler on a large three wheeled bicycle with a ice chest mounted on it offered him a ride. The Prophet climbed on the back, when on top of the ice chest He was smiling and waving to the crowd. Soon he caught up with his car much to the delight of everyone watching.

When I was ten my baby brother Johnny was born. As was the custom we took him on the first Sunday of the following month to Sacrament Meeting to be blessed and named. Grandfather gave him a name and a blessing. After the blessing of the babies the meeting was opened for the bearing of testimonies. As one young adult after another rose to bear testimony of Jesus Christ the meeting time ended. The Bishop tried to bring the meeting to a close by standing after a testimony to announce the closing song and prayer. Three different times he stood up. Each time Grandfather stood up in the middle of the congregation and told the Bishop to sit down and be quiet there were many young people that needed to bear their testimonies. The Bishop sat down and the meeting continued for an additional forty five minutes. The other ward that met in the building right after us was forced to wait in the foyer and begin their meeting late.

When I was about 10 or 11 years old Mother, Daddy and I were going to take my grandparents to Paris Idaho for Memorial Day. We arrived at 360 Hansen Avenue early so we could pick flowers and put them into mason jars to place at the

graves of loved ones. I followed my grandfather around the yard as he carefully examined some white rose buds. When he found one that was just what he wanted, he took a small pocketknife out of his pants and cut it off about 3 inches before the bud. I followed him into the kitchen where he soaked it in water and then wrapped it in some wet white cloth. He gently tied the wrapped rose and placed it in his pocket. I didn't question him. Later in the day, at the Cemetery, he found the grave of Stella Hays. Grandfather, with tears in his eyes unwrapped the perfect white rose bud. He placed it on top of her headstone, and whispered. "This is for you Stella baby, It's not much but I picked it just for you."

Stella had been named after Grandmother. Her picture hung in their bedroom in a large oval frame. She had blonde wavy hair and a pearl necklace. She died of pneumonia when she was just two years old. I asked Grandmother about her and even 40 years after her death Grandma couldn't talk about her without tears. She told me that Grandfather had bought her a string of real pearls as a gift and Stella always wanted to wear them. Grandfather bought Stella her own little plastic string of pearls. She liked grandmothers better and would always try to take grandmothers pearls off her neck and trade her necklaces. When she died Grandma had her buried in the real pearls because she loved them so much

Grandmother told me she had a baby boy still born. She was pregnant and had felt the baby moving for a long time. When she went into labor the doctor told her she was not pregnant, that she had a tumor and put her in the hospital to have it surgically removed. Grandmother awoke during the surgery and there was a baby boy...still born... she says they put him in the laundry shoot and claimed it was a tumor. She said until her dying day that she felt him move and she saw him. So he is carried on her genealogy as a still born...Named William.

Grandma Hays was very religious and "dreamed" of almost all the family deaths before they occurred. She once had a dream that her departed son Jesse came to her and told he is was coming for his blue eyed blonde. Grandma was so upset by this dream that she called all her children and begged them to keep a watch over their blonde blue eyed children. A few months later my cousin Harry Hays was killed when the car he was working on fell off the lift and crushed him. Harry had blonde hair and bright blue eyes.

Grandma was also superstitious. She would not sit at a table with thirteen people. It had something to do with the Last Supper sitting twelve. Grandmother

firmly believed if there were thirteen at a table one of them would die. Eleven was All right, Fourteen and Twelve were OK. But thirteen people at the table were impossible.

When my Grandfather died Grandma spent a lot of time with us. She told me about her hopes and dreams and about Grandfather and some of his escapades. She told me about them serving a mission for the church during prohibition days. They would drive up into the mountains to teach the discussions to some hill people. Later Grandmother found out that they were running moonshine for them. The revenuers would not suspect an elderly missionary couple. While my grandparents were teaching from the scriptures in the mountain cabin, Men were loading their trunk up with illegal moonshine to carry over the mountain. When they got back to their own place other men would unload the trunk in the middle of the night. They were never found out but my grand mother worried about it the rest of her life. We don't really know if grandfather was a willing participant or if he was as surprised as grandma.

She said that she had always wanted to ride on the back of a motor cycle (she was in her eighties when she told me this.) A few months after my Grandfather died I took her for a ride in an Austin Healy (a very small sports car) it was a convertible and I put the top down. She wanted to let her hair blow out behind her. It was down to her knees, and she kept it pinned on the top of her head. We unpinned it and let it trail out behind her. We put a scarf on her to cover her ears, she was prone to ear aches. I drove her all over the Salt Lake Valley about eighty miles per hour. We turned the music up loud. It was the sixties and The Beatles were playing on the radio. Grandmother and I laughed the entire ride. She was excited and said she felt like a young girl. This is probably my favorite memory of my grandmother.

My stepfather Neldon and I took her to the cemetery to put flowers on the graves of my Father and Mother and my Grandfather one Memorial Day. At the end of our visit as we were heading toward the car Grandmother tripped and rolled down the hill. She started to cry. I was worried because Grandma was in her mid eighties. I ran over to her and got down on one knee " Oh Grandma are you hurt?" I said. She looked up at me with tears running down her cheeks, one hand holding her little flowered pill box hat on her head, and the other hanging on to her purse. "I'm not hurt, I'm embarrassed.....Imagine rolling down a hill like an Easter Egg at

my age!”

The last time I remember seeing Grandma she was living with Uncle Jim and Aunt Naomi in Magna. She was bedridden and knew she would be dieing soon. As I was preparing to leave she said. “Jeannie I will be seeing your father and mother soon, is there anything you want me to tell them?” I bent over and gave her a kiss on the cheek and said “ Oh Grandma just tell them I miss them, and I love them.... And grandma I love you” She smiled at me and said “I love you too.”



*My grandparents D.L. and Stella Hays
Golden Wedding Picture
September 18, 1951*

