NORA KATHLEEN GELSTON BRUBACHER

Nora Kathleen Gelston Brubacher born 26th day of February 1895 at Liverpool, England was the sixth child in a family of eleven children born to Hugh and Emily Gelston. She died August 8, 1979. She started school at the age of five years and left school when she was fifteen to work in her father’s tailor shop, which she adds, she did not like. She later worked at Meccanos where they manufactured toy meccano sets. She became a ‘charge hand’ or foreman over a hundred or so girls who were under her direction. Each year she spent her holidays visiting relatives in Northern Ireland, County Down, Antrim and Derry.

As she writes about her mother she states that her parents were very strict and very religious, strictly observing the Sabbath day. One time her mother and her uncle had forgotten to clean their shoes for Sunday. They thought, “now if we can get up to our playhouse we can clean them there.” But they forgot that their Father was home for sea at that time and happened to be down below in his shop. He heard them there and looked up to see what they were up to and reprimanded them for cleaning their shoes on the Sabbath day. “Mother,” she continued, “only having one of her shoes cleaned was made to go to the Sunday School with one shoe cleaned and the other dirty as punishment for not observing the Sabbath.” A talent which Nora inherited from her mother is noted in this item. “Mother was very clever with her fingers doing much sewing, knitting and crocheting.”

We were visiting with Nora just this past week and the question of Fair Exhibits was raised. Nora had several knitted and crocheted articles that she had made so we decided to display them at the Fair. She told us where to find them explaining that the Sommerfeldt girls had several of the stuffed animals and doll sets that she had given them as gifts which they might let us use as well. But the day before the Fair she passed away. Nevertheless we carried out our plan and set up a special table including an afghan, scarf, pillow cases, and the gifts she had given. The comment left along with a First Prize ribbon read, “A lovely collection of handicrafts. The workmanship is excellent. The enjoyment received by both the maker and the receivers of the gifts is surely high! Deserves a first!

Nora used her time profitably and kept her mind active and alert. In her story she recalled how as a child she and a younger brother “would sit each with a baby on our laps while mother held the other babe.” You see, her mother had given birth to triplets. They only lived two weeks. “Mother,” she adds, “taught us to be honest and thrifty; being taught the value of money and to live within our income. Never to borrow and if absolutely necessary then we should pay back a little more than what we had borrowed. Also she saw to it that when we made a promise it had to be fulfilled. Her mother had a profound influence on her character.

Nora and a girl friend met some Mormon elders and were baptized 17 September 1922. She knew Pres. David O McKay, his wife, their two daughters Lou Jean and Emma Ray, their sons Laurence, Ned and Bobby while they were on their mission in England. Also she knew James E. Talmage, his wife, daughter Helen and son John. Others also including Pres. Geo. Albert Smith, and John A. Widstoe and Elbert R. Curtis baptized her. Nora was secretary of the Mutual Improvement Association in Liverpool.
Though an ocean and a continent separated them, a situation was developing about this time when she would cross that ocean and travel nearly clear across Canada to be married to Jonas Brubacher. George Bourne and Charles James had come out from Liverpool and they met up with Jonas on a threshing crew in Glenwood. Jonas or Jack as he was called, was the engineer for the steam thresher. Jack confided in these men that he was getting older and would like to get married. So Charles James knowing that Nora Gelston was single and would possibly be interested became the matchmaker introducing them by correspondence. A year or so later Nora received this proposal typed on birch bark.

Dear Nora: I am sending you this message true, I hope t’will give you cheer, Though land and sea, between us lie, My thoughts are of you dear. Though throughs may in a moments time, Bridge the wide, wide span, We cannot thus communicate, T’is not yet known to man. As long as ships on oceans ply, and trains run on the land, Our messages may come and go, until we understand. Then Sail! O gallant ship so strong, Though billows make thee reel, Make speed; oh horse with fire breath, O’er shiny rails of steel. To the land across the prairies wide, where the tow’ring mountains rise, To the land beyond the setting sun, To the land of the Western skies. To the land of forests deep and green, To the land where the sunlight gleams, To the land where streamlets sparkling run, To the land of the Western dreams. And bring to me, from o’er the sea; The heart that beats so true, Another heart is waiting here, And a little home for tow, In a pretty little mountain vale, Where gaily sings the lark, Is the message I’d convey to you, On this piece of white birch bark. Signed Jack Brubacher.

Now what fair maiden could resist a love call like that? Nora bid farewell to her parents and family on October 14, 1927 and sailed for Canada. She arrived two weeks later at the railroad house in Yahk, B.C, where their friends George and Lucy Bourne lived; they too had just recently married, she coming out from England same as Nora. This was the day they had been waiting for so why delay longer. They called in a United Church minister and were married right there and then at Aldridge, British Columbia. George Bourne recalls how excited Jack was as he met Nora coming off the train, taking her into his arms in a fond embrace.

Jack took his bride to his cottage in Creston where he had employment as an engineer or boiler man for C.O. Rogers Box factory. Their neighbors were Roy and Elva Beazer and they remained friends throughout their lives. Nora has told me how the four of them would climb into a wagon and drive back into the hills to spend a day fishing and enjoying the beauties of nature.

On June 30, 1930 they moved to Ashcroft in the interior of British Columbia where Jack became a dealer for Rawleigh products. He traveled a lot of course and often he would take Nora with him so they could have time together perhaps fishing or just visiting while on his beat. In July 1940 they “gave up a good business,” she writes in her story, “to come to Cardston to live, buying a grocery business and three town lots with two houses.” The store they purchased was Cardston Fine Foods previously owned by Reginald Smith. It was on the 24th of Sept. 1941 that they were sealed for time and all eternity in the Alberta Temple by Pres. E.J. Wood. They were faithful attenders at the Temple doing work for their kindred dear. They really worked at searching out their deceased family members. A letter in her file dated 26th May 1978 from a Rev. Anthony Gelston concludes with this thought. “Thank you very much for writing again and for the
information you have supplied. It's rather like a jig-saw puzzle and one wishes one had all the pieces. But I hope we shall be able to put it together one day soon. With my best wishes, Yours sincerely, Tony Gelston.”

A letter from Nora's father written during the 2nd World War reveals some of the concerns they had.... Dated Dec. 24, 1940. Dear Nora. It is a long time since I wrote to you. The reason was we were bombed out in Abbeystead Road and had no home for 16 days so I could not give you an address. We were fortunate to get out without a scratch. A bomb was dropped in the Holt school playground and the force from it destroyed 400 houses. No one was killed nor few were hurt and those hurt were very slight as well but none of the houses were fit to live in. ...I cannot see to write very well. With love and good luck to you both, I remain, Your loving father, Hugh Gelston. He died at age 84.

Another interesting note from her mother in a letter stated that their father didn't want to give up his home and go live with Doris the youngest in the family and would Nora write and convince him that that arrangement would be the best. She did and he complied with her request but then she added this note of concern, "I sometimes regretted it because of the war and the bombings in the larger centers.”

Nora was secretary of the Sunday School at Creston, teacher of the infants in Primary in the Cardston 2nd Ward, and on genealogical committees. Every Tuesday morning they did sealings at the temple. She has been a Visiting Teacher for many years even while she was so ill she kept up her assignment phonning for reports. She has been a 100% tithe payer. She has been an active member of the Single Adults attending many firesides. She belonged to a Family Home Evening study group who met in members homes on a Monday evening. Yes, Nora has many friends, both young and old.

Travel has been an interesting part of Nora’s life. She accompanied her cousin, Mary Simpson, to Alaska and down the coast. She and Jack drove to Arizona and other states visiting temples along the way. After Jack passed away she went to Michigan by bus to visit some of his people. In 1976 she went to the Palmyra Pageant on a tour bus, and even though she was the oldest there she was first one up and ready to go each morning. They stopped at Niagara Falls, New York City, Washington D.C. besides the church history sites.

When she was older she became depressed and was hospitalized, but shortly after Mary Simpson and her son John came to visit, Nora revived and was soon discharged. She loved life and did not want to give up her home but finally she asked to go to the Grandview Nursing home.

Jack and Nora never had any children of their own but developed a closeness with special friends like Ada Blackmore. Nora was an avid reader reading several books a week. After Jacks passing she decided to buy a color television and she kept abreast of world affairs and had very definite opinions of the way the world was being run. Gardening was a special joy to her and there were no weeds in her garden. Strawberries, tulips, narcissus, red peonies and roses were a delight to see. Nora loved to send birthday cards to her friends and this was reciprocated by others and the cards were displayed on the top of her piano. The Sommerfeldt girls next door called her Grandma and would often sit and visit while she knitted or crocheted. When slippers were needed for primary children she knit well over 50 pair. She was a provident woman and her two year supply was in place. She gave Jack constant care during his failing health and sat many hours by his bed at the hospital. Nora died 8 Aug 1979. (Biography by Ada Blackmore.)