

A HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF



Minnie Meleta Tolman Durfee

her own account with additions by her daughter
Marcia Durfee Chisholm

On November 25, in the year of 1903, I, a baby girl, was born in my grandparents home, to Judson Adoniram Tolman Jr. and Jennie Call Tolman. I was given the name of Minnie Meleta Tolman on the 3rd of January 1904 by Judson Adoniram Tolman Sr. I was called Minnie Meleta until I was about six years old. After that they just called me Minnie. My father went on a mission when I was a baby. He left on the 14th of September, 1904. The mission was in Great Britain where he labored for two years. In the mean time my mother and I lived with Grandmother and Grandfather Tolman, and I am afraid that I was very much spoiled. I have been told that my grandmother favored me because my father was away. I can remember, when he came home from his mission, being put off in a nice little bed, which had been bought for me, away from my mother. I objected very strongly, and my father gave me my first trouncing. I remember how awful I thought he was to take me away from my mother, but it wasn't long before I learned that he was a most wonderful father. He was very stern but also very kind and understanding. I remember one day my mother had made me a lovely little dress, and, of course, I was put in it and taken down to the creamery which my father was managing for my grandfather, to show myself off- and very pretty I thought I was too.

On the 28th of August 1907, at Chesterfield Idaho, another Little girl was born into our home. Her name is Mary Drucilla, and from that time on I learned that I must share with others. One day my Aunt Dora came with my cousin Mary to our house for dinner. My mother baked a cake, and as a rule, it was my part to scrape the pan. This time I was told to share with Mary, but no, not me. I wanted it all for my self. I was warned that if I didn't give her some I would loose it all, but I was hard to convince so consequently I lost the whole pan.

I don't remember much from there until we had moved to Preston, Idaho, where my Grandfather Tolman had bought some property. We moved on to it and my father worked the ground. There was a big pond of water on part of this property, and we had a pump house that pumped water up on the land for irrigation. On the other side of this pond some Indians used to come and camp every year. When I was naughty, my mother would say "I guess I will give you to the Indians". Well it wasn't very long afterwards that these Indians came, and I thought that I was a goner for sure. One of the squaws said, "Why is she crying?", and mother said, "I had to spank her". Then the squaw said "Give her to us. We won't spank her." And then did I cling close to my

mother, so close she could hardly move. Mother then said "Well, I think I will keep her and spank her once in a while". Boy, was I glad to hear that, but it gave me a fear of Indians, a fear that I have had a hard time getting over. They even bothered me when I was a young women and had three children of my own, and the Indians would come to our house begging for food.

Father and mother were both very good singers, and they would leave me as a very young child with the other children while they went to choir practice. We now had another little sister named Genevieve, born 3rd of September, 1909 at Preston, Idaho. I would get mother to put us all in bed and blow out the light so my baby sister wouldn't tip the lamp over, for I was afraid of fire.

I began my schooling at the age of six in the Central School in Preston, Idaho. I had to walk about two miles to school, which I didn't mind at all, except in the winter and then it was not too bad. I do remember one spring, however, when the snow was melting, and on both streets that went into town, there was water until you couldn't get through without wading. I went on my way to school and waded all the way. When I got to school, my teacher took off my shoes and stockings and put them on the radiator to dry. On the way home I took the other road, but it was covered with water the same as the first one. I called and called to my father who was working in the Blacksmith shop, but he didn't pay any attention to me so I walked or rather waded home.

It wasn't long after this that my father went to work on the Parkinson's Ranch. We moved into the house on this ranch. It was here that another little girl came to our home. She was born 26th of March 1912 and was named Odessa, this making four girls. We stayed here for a year or so, and then we moved to Riverdale, Idaho. My father went into the Dairy business with my Aunt Charlotte and Uncle Lon Mecham. It was a large house, and each family had half of it to live in. There were large barns and chicken coops on this place, and we had a lot of fun while we lived there. I had a cousin my own age there. His name was Devon. We lived a long way from school there too, and in the winter, we would go to school by sled, which was a lot of fun too.

It was at this home that there came the fifth little girl named Juanita, born 3rd of January 1914. She nursed poison from my mother and in three weeks died. My mother was very ill and everyone was very concerned about her. They said that, if the baby had not nursed the poison from her she would have died too. The doctor said that mother would have to go to the hospital or she would never live. They had a hard time convincing her but finally she became so bad that they took her anyway. After she was operated on, they weren't sure she would make it. The abscesses, which was on the inside, broke before they operated, and she was in the hospital a very long time. The hospital was in Logan, Utah.

In the mean time, father built a new home in Preston, Idaho. Grandfather gave each of his boys a lot to build on. I remember how happy mother was over it. When it was finished it was a very nice home. The first winter we lived in our new home, mother took in some boys who were going to college to help pay for it, and the next spring we went back to Riverdale for the summer. Father worked for Ben Meekes to help pay for our new home. It was while we were at this place that my mother died. She had never gotten entirely well, and she developed Diabetes, which she died of on

the 15th of June 1915. I was then eleven years old, and there were four little girls for father to be both father and mother too.

Father had to work to make a living. He would work on Meeks' ranch in the summer and at the Logan Sugar Factory in the winter. We girls were shifted from one place to another to be taken care of. Father saw that this wasn't good, so he began to look for a companion to help him take care of his girls. Father was a very good man, and he made his problem a matter of prayer, and our Father in Heaven heard his prayers, and he found a good companion, Cecelia Durfee, who came into our home and took over us four girls and raised us like her own children. I was then 12 years old. My father still worked at Meeks ranch in the summer and at Logan Sugar Factory in the winter. He did this until I was 16 years old. During this time, two baby girls were born to my step-mother - Jennie Arthema, born the 14th of April, 1918 and Sarah Leora, born the 28th of January, 1920. Also, several years later, she bore a son named Judson Adoniram, born the 14th of May, 1925 and he died 5th of August, 1935 of heart trouble.

When we moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, I came ahead of the rest of the family. I went to my Aunt Charlottes home, and she went out with me to find a job. I went to some of the department stores, but they were so large that it frightened me, and I didn't leave an application. I then went to the Troy Laundry where I did leave my application and in a day was put to work, and I was employed there until I married.

I met my husband first, however, in Preston, Idaho, where he came to see his sister, my step-mother. I was just a 14 year old girl and he was 21 at the time. I remember of dreaming one night that I had married him, and he had taken me way off into a place where they had no modern conveniences and where his people lived. I told him the next morning of what I had dreamed, and he said that I could make it come true if I wanted too, but I just laughed at him. He left our home the next spring, after working with my father in the Sugar Factory. He went back to Wayne County. Soon after, I moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, and my family came about two weeks later. We first lived for a short time in a house on L Street. Then father bought a home out in Highland Park on Dearborn Street. There we lived for a good many years. It was here that I met my future husband again. I was then 18 years old and after a short courtship we were married on the 16th of August, 1922, in the Salt Lake Temple.

Our first home was on the out skirts of Salt Lake City in a place known as Chesterfield, Utah. There we spent our first winter and summer. Alvin worked for a contractor the following winter. Alvin went to work at Bingham in the copper mines and it was that winter on the 17th of January, 1924, that a baby boy came into bless our home. He was a premature child, but in a few months, he had shaped into a beautiful boy. We named him Judson Alvin after his father and grandfather. It was while he was a baby that my dream was put into action. We moved to Wayne County where his brother lived, and I felt like this was surely a country God had forgotten. There I stayed for a few months, and I felt like I couldn't stand it any longer. I was so home sick that I went back to Salt Lake City. After a few weeks Alvin came back too. We lived in with my Aunt Charlotte up until our home was blessed with a baby girl, born the 3rd of July, 1925. This one we named Meleta. When she was three weeks old, we left Salt Lake

City and went back to Lyman, Utah, Wayne County. My husband was working for his brother.

Alvin bought an interest in a sawmill on Thousand Lake with a fellow by the name of Paul Christenson. We lived at the sawmill in the summer and in town in the winter. I then made up my mind to be content, so I buckled down and went to work in the church and did a lot of singing and was chorister of the primary. My husband and I also sang in the Stake Choir. I held a position as a primary teacher also. We lived in Lyman two years, then there was to be a new addition to our home. My father was worried about me, so he came and got me and brought me back to his home for my baby to be born. On the 11th of October, 1927, we were blessed with another little girl, that we named La Juana. As soon as Alvin could, he came to Salt Lake. We stayed and helped my parents to make candy part of the winter, and then we went to Aurora and lived the rest of the winter. When summer came, we went to work out at Johns Valley for a man by the name of Penny. We stayed the summer there, then Alvin went to Wyoming to work on a contracting job and I moved back to Salt Lake. That winter, we helped make candy, and when spring came, Alvin went to work on the gas line.

On July 7th 1929 we had another lovely baby girl. This one we named Conna. After Conna was born, the depression hit, and there was no work to be found in the city, so we were forced once more to move back to Wayne County. Here we could work on farms and get enough to live on, but the wearing apparel was very skimpy. I then was put back into the primary and Sunday School as chorister. It was while we were there that we were blessed with another baby. This time it was a lovely boy, that was born on the 15th of July, 1931 and we named him Milo Vaughn. It was just a short time after Milo was born that my Grandmother Tolman died, which was a big loss to me, as I said before, she had always coddled me. It was during this time that I was put into the Primary Presidency as first counselor, and I still had to take care of the singing. It was in the year of 1933 on the 13th of June that we were blessed with our 6th child, which was another boy. We named this baby Tolman Leon.

By this time the depression was really bad, and there was no money anywhere. It was then that we were due for a new President of the United States, and President Roosevelt was elected. He made some projects, which put the men to work that didn't have a job. Alvin joined the C.C.C. camp, so he could have work while we got started in a new part of the country, which we had seen on our way on a trip to California after oranges with his brother Charles. This little town was Hurricane, Utah. We liked Hurricane very much. The people were friendly and soon we felt right at home. We hadn't been there long before I was working in the Primary and Sunday School and also the Relief Society as chorister.

I really enjoyed my work in the church there. After we had lived there for about a year, Alvin got out of the C.C.C. camp and went to work for Bishop Johnson on the sawmill. We bought a piece of property from Brother Labaren and, with the lumber that Alvin worked for, we built us our home. It was a two room place with one room upstairs. We had to keep the tent, that we had lived in on Robert Callahans place while we were building, outside for a bedroom. The weather never got too cold so it was all right. It was while we were here that we were blessed with our 7th child which was a little girl. We named her Nathella, and she was born on the 26th of September, 1937.

While she was a baby, I helped a very dear friend, whose health was poor. When she would get sick, she would be in bed quite a while. Her name was Annie Covington. When Nathella was about one year old, we sold our place and bought a place by Annie. In fact, it was on some of their property. This time we built a large house with two stories - four rooms and a bath on the bottom floor and space to build three bedrooms up stairs. But, we sold it before it was finished. After we had moved in our new home for which I was so happy, we had our 8th child. This one was another little girl, born the 2nd of April, 1940. Her name is Marcia Drucilla. It was during the birth of this child that I ask my Father in Heaven to please let me live to raise my children, and I would do my best to teach them right and bring them up in the ways of the Gospel. The doctor thought for a while that I would never make it, but our Father had heard my prayers and I came back to life. It was while I was in bed with this child that our youngest boy, Tolman Leon, took sick with quick pneumonia. They were so concerned about me that they didn't notice he was so sick until it was to late to save him, so we laid him away the 13th of April 1940, in the little cemetery of Hurricane, Utah. I wasn't able to go to his funeral, but they took it all down in shorthand and had it typed up, and I read it afterwards. This was a great shock to me. I couldn't figure out why our Father in Heaven would give me one child and then take another one away from me, who was so dear. My father told me that I must not get bitter because our Father in Heaven had a reason for all things, but I knew that this little boy had such a sweet little spirit, and who would know what a blessing the other one would bring. I was still chorister in the Church, so when I got better, I went to work hard to drown my sorrow. After Marcia was a year and a half, my husband left Hurricane and came back to Salt Lake City, Utah to find work. During that time, World War II broke out, and he sent for us to come to Salt Lake, which we did. We moved into an apartment owned by one of my aunts on my mothers side. While we were living here, my father got very sick. He was in bed about five months. He took a stroke and passed away. This was a great loss also.

After this, my oldest son was called into the army and was taken into the far east. My husband and I both worked at the Arms Plant and my step-mother , who I called mother, as she has always been like a mother to me, took care of my baby for me while Alvin and I were working. We sold our home in Hurricane, and bought a new home on Hartford Street and 27th south. It was a nice place, and we were thrilled with it. When the War was over, I quite work and stayed home, and during this time, the Bishop of the Emperial Ward, where we lived, came and asked me to be first counselor of the Relief Society. It was a calling that I had never expected. One for which I will always be grateful to my Father in Heaven. There is nothing to make you love the gospel like working hard in it. Our Father in Heaven was good to us, and our son came home from the war uninjured.

Our moving was not yet over. When our oldest son married, we sold him our home on Hartford Street and moved out to Holladay, in my fathers home, where we could be near my mother, so she wouldn't be alone. She built on to her garage, making it into a nice little home where she could be by herself a little, and we are still living in Holladay. I completed a two year Home Mission. I worked for about 8 years at the Lion

House in Salt Lake and since then, my oldest son and I have been running a cafe on 27th south and 20th East called Durfee's Cafe.

Addition by Marcia Durfee Chisholm:

They decided to close the cafe and Mom went back to work at the Lion House. She was the main cook. Later she was asked to cater upstairs in the Lion House and she did that for a while, but enjoyed the work in the cafeteria more, eventually returning back to the cafeteria.

Dad died while she was working at the Lion House on March 1, 1957 after returning from a BYU basketball game. A sudden death that came as a great shock to all. Mom continued to work at the Lion House until they closed it for a time and then she went to work at the Salt Lake Temple in the laundry room. Later she worked handing out keys.

She retired as an employee of the Church and then worked in the temple as an ordinance worker. She worked in the Salt Lake Temple until the Jordan River Temple was built and then she worked in the Jordan River Temple until just a couple of years before she died. Her love was the temple. She struggled with arthritis and had a knee replaced because she didn't want to give up her temple work.

She started to have problems remembering and we found out she had dementia, mental deterioration because of her age and she had to quit the temple.

For her ninetieth birthday we gave her an open house. All her friends from the temple and the ward came to honor her as well as family members. She enjoyed herself greatly and we were so glad we had the open house, for she went down hill fast after that.

Eventually we put her in a care center in Hurricane. She was only there a few months before she had a stroke and she died soon after on June 19, 1995.

She was buried at Larkin Cemetery in Sandy, Utah (formally Memorial Gardens of the Valley) next to her beloved husband and child.

I remember mother relating to me an experience she had after her mother had passed away. I may not get the facts totally correct for I am just recalling the incidence from my memory. She was 11 years old when her mother died and the oldest in the family. She missed her mother a great deal. One night while she was sleeping, she had a dream. In her dream someone came to take her to see her mother. They came to a veil and the person helped her say the right things to pass through the veil. When she passed through the veil, she was able to see her mother. I can't remember what was said but, I suppose her mother comforted her. When she was sharing her dream an adult (I can not remember who it was) heard her telling what happened and began to question her quite intensely. She wondered why at the time. When she went to the temple for the first time she knew why. Because the veil ceremony was just as she had remembered from her dream when she had visited her mother. It was all very familiar to her. She therefore had a strong testimony of life after death and the importance of temple work.