

## *Wesley Blaine Owens*

This story was written by Doris Mildred Owens Austin and her memories of Wes.

Wesley was born 16 December 1915, Logan, Cache, Utah at 193 West 4<sup>th</sup> North.

He had the following brothers and sisters:

2 brothers who died at birth:

Marion Wm. Jr., born 21 Sept 1906 at Sugar City, Idaho, died 22 Sept 1906.

Alton Frank Owens, born 22 April 1908 at Sugar City, Idaho, died 7 May 1908

Leland (Lee), born 22 Aug 1909, at Sugar City, Idaho, died 20 November 1939 at Ogden, Utah

Melvin Ray (Ray), born 1 Dec. 1911 at Centra, Utah, died 6 April 1974 at Ogden, Utah

Wesley Blaine, born 16 Dec 1915 at Logan, Utah, died 11 Sept 1997 at Ogden, Utah

Lula May (Lu) (Walker) born 4 Feb 1913 at Siguard, Sevier, Utah

Kenneth Clyde (Clyde), born 3 Sept. 1918 at Springville, Utah, died 20 Aug 1997 at Roy, Utah

Doris Mildred Kennedy Astin born 3 May 1923

In Wes' early years, his family moved many times (see attached report written by Wes). It was the middle of the "Depression" and in addition, there was the farm depression and the Crash of the stock Market. Building Construction and Farming were hardest hit by the Depression and as Wes says, "as these were the only two main trades my father was skilled in, he was out of work and income many times. So the family relocated in many different areas to find jobs. My father was employed part of the time to help build several new sugar factories in Idaho and Utah. Which necessitated moving also."

I continue with my own memories: I must have been about a year old when we lived in Butterworth Court by the railway tracks in Salt Lake City. My father was a machinist and watchmen for the D & RG Railroad. I remember being in a small bed (crib) with my father reading by a lamp. The boys made ice slides in the snow in front of our house by making a big mound of snow and then sliding down each side of it until there was a peak on the top-like a cone.

I remember when I was 2 years old and we traveled across the desert of California. We had an old open touring car, a big black one, and I was very car sick most of the way and they had to stop for me. When we arrived in California, we stayed in a house there, and something had happened to the gas because we had no heat and it was quite cold.

I remember when I was 3 years old we lived in a cement house across from the sugar factory in West Ogden, where my father worked. It had cement floors and my mother wouldn't let me play on the floor because it was too cold. I suppose the boys went to school. I don't remember that.

After that, the family lived at 2645 Grant Avenue. I was still 3 years old. One day a photographer came by with a wooden airplane as a prop. He took a picture of Wes and Clyde and Lu and me (Doris) (and Tip, our dog) with me in the airplane.

When I was 5 years old, I remember the family moving to 331 22<sup>nd</sup> St. in Ogden, Utah across from the Tabernacle Park, where the Ogden Temple now stands. It was in winter and snow was everywhere and in the driveway between our house and Bishop Draper's. Wes and his brothers played in the park - tossed the ball, and ran through the sprinklers when the caretaker turned on the water to water the grass.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward meetinghouse was also on the square, facing Grant Avenue. Wes was active in Scouting. I remember that he built his "treasure box" out of an apple crate and kept his "valuables" in it.

I believe the boys were rowdy - and one time when Wes was about 16 or 17 (I believe) he broke Ray's nose because Ray was trying to give orders, and Wes never did like anyone telling him what to do. He was very "feisty"

One time the boys were fighting and I think Lee was telling them what to do and my Sister, Lu, was tending me while our folks went to a movie. She told Lee to stop arguing and fighting, but they didn't so she picked up a "kewpie doll" - she had been given after going to a carnival (it was made of chalk (plaster?). And hit Lee over the head with it. Then she took my hand and we ran over to a friend's house on the next block until my folks came home.

We lived next door to Bishop and Sister Jesse and Bessie Draper and they were so good to our family. Bishop Draper helped Wes buy a suit when he was in his teens. Wes always helped on 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Dance Nights (I think Friday or Saturday nights). He sold the gum and candy.

Wes kept rabbits at the house on 22<sup>nd</sup> St. There is a picture of Wes, Doris, Tip and the rabbit in our back yard but I don't know who has the original - maybe Gloria? He also made radio crystal sets. He was very clever. He was a good worker and I believe he always had a job of one sort or another. I remember that my mother made the boys work around the house sometimes and mop the floor (we had linoleum floors in some rooms and 8 x 12 rugs in other rooms) and when we had an old wringer washer she made the boys turn the wringer. Wes was not too keen on doing women's work.

Two things which I remember: He taught me to brush my teeth and encouraged me to do so! He was very skilled at drawing and had some beautiful colored pencils and crayons and it was an honor for me to be the only one allowed to use his pencils and crayons, because I was careful with them and returned them without damage. Another memory I have was that he would take me to the dentist (Grandmother Owens was deathly afraid of a dentist and refused to go, with the result that her teeth just rotted away) (maybe that was why West was so insistent that I brush my teeth). Wes had beautiful, white teeth. The dentist would always give me a quarter (which was a lot of money in those days) with the result that I have never been afraid of a dentist!!

Wes' brother, Lee, worked in the mines in Montana and would come home from time to time, and would take the family to the Ogden warm springs swimming establishment in Ogden Canyon. They really enjoyed that -- the only one who didn't was me, because they would threaten to throw me in (and maybe did a couple of times) and I have never learned to swim.

Wes had a friend named Ralph Mellito.(sp?) They were very close. It was customary at that time for hobos to hitch rides on the railroad cars. These hobos were called "bums" and they traveled all over the country, stopping in some towns and maybe doing odd jobs or just begging for food. So Wes and Ralph decided they would "go on the bum" and see what an adventure it would be. So they packed some food, and went down to the railroad yards and "hopped" a freight. This lasted for a short period of time, maybe a week or two and they had a great experience, and luckily, returned safely.

Wes and the brothers would help my father when he had obtained a job for a few dollars. One of the jobs was unloading coal cars - and the father and boys did this often. A repeated happening that Wes was teased about constantly by his brothers was when a girl who lived near where they unloaded coal, had a crush on Wes and would bring goodies--cookies and pies, etc. to them. But you can bet the brothers enjoyed the treats in spite of the teasing, Wes had to endure from them.

We had a large round table in our kitchen on 22<sup>nd</sup> St. and in the evening, the children would gather around that table and do homework. Wes was a great teacher and a great help to his brothers and sisters when they had to do homework.

We was a handsome young man, and very bright. He should have been a lawyer, which was his dream. He was very articulate, with a very engaging manner. He made an excellent impression on people. He was a good worker. I have heard that he was stubborn when convinced he was right, and I always remember my mother saying if any of the family was being stubborn or difficult, that it was the "Owens' temper."

At the dances in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward, Wes met a lovely, beautiful young girl named Ruby Wilson. She was shy and quiet and they dated. In 1935 they married. They lived with the Owens for a while. They then lived in an apartment house close to Washington Blvd, also on 22<sup>nd</sup> St. I believe they lived in several places, but one place was the hill on 24<sup>th</sup> St. They had bought a new little house and at that time I was going to high school, and sometimes tended the children when they went out. At that time, Wes worked at the Fire Department and also at the Police Department as a fingerprint expert. After that, they lived in a house on Canyon Road, and then made another move when they decided to buy a house and orchard on Canyon Road. In his report on their travels, Wes lists several places they lived. Wes always had a couple of jobs at once. During the time they owned the orchard, he worked as a night watchman at Lorin Farr Park (near their home). He was always glad to help me and my friend, Lucille, with our algebra and geometry. We would ride our bicycles out to the park while he was on duty there and he would try to explain about mathematics.

He studied "pre-law" in high school and wanted very much to be a lawyer. But he could never realize this dream, the times were just not right. But even though finances during the Depression would not allow everyone to attend college, he loved to read and had a great deal of knowledge about many subjects. He remembered what he read and could talk about anything. I know he had a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the Gospel and loved the Lord!

He and Ruby made a great contribution to the Church program. He was a good builder and was called on many times to building missions for the Church. He loved the Gospel and his family. Sometimes circumstances can cause people to get a bit sidetracked, but eventually they all return to what they have been taught and the way they have lived all of their lives. One thing I am certain of: Wes' love for Ruby was a perfect and everlasting love, and he loved his family as deeply as any father can love.

Although you live with someone for many years, if you are quite young at the time, you have impressions but no real in-depth awareness of day to day activities. I wish I remembered more about details of our family life.

I'm sorry I can't be of more help. If I run across anything in my records (I hope to begin researching my accumulation of "stuff" soon.)

Love,  
Doris

Wes and Ruby Owens wrote the following account of the homes they had lived in:

## OUR FIRST HOME (Ogden, Utah)

We were married on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1935 in the early hours of the morning--at the Salt Lake Temple.

Bessie and Jessie Draper (neighbors of Wes's) took us down to Salt Lake.

We stayed at their home that night and early the next morning we moved into our first home. It was an apartment basement home rented by Helen and Kendall Robbins. They were friends of ours. Wes helped put up a partition and we started our married life in two rooms (kitchen and bedroom). It was so cold at night that most of our dishes cracked. We stayed there 3 months when I started to have large bumps on my legs and a very sore throat. I went to the Dr. and he said I had Rheumatic Fever and that the Basement Apartment was too damp for me--So we moved.

Remarks: (by Wes) This apt was also damp. We nailed cardboard on the studding and burned cardboard--wood--rubber tires and very little coal. We could not afford fuel. No insulation and very hard to heat. It helped some for my new bride to sit on the sunny side of shed so the sun could shine on her bare tender legs

We shared the rental--water and power bills with these people. After we moved into our next home (apt) in the Spring--the Doctor removed my lover's tonsils to get rid of the rheumatic fever. This was a very rough and painful operation in the doctor's office. He had trouble getting the first tonsil out. By then the local anaesthetic pain medicine had worn off or out, so she told him to go ahead and do the other one. She was certainly a tough, brave little trooper and made no complaints or big fuss--she was incredibly brave.

## #2 HOME - 2210 Jefferson Ave (1935)

My Uncle Lon (Luis) and Aunt Nellie Phipps had a vacant apartment (upstairs) so we rented it (corner of Jefferson and 22<sup>nd</sup> St.) We had to go through their living room to get to the apartment door.

The apartment had a large bedroom--kitchen and bath room (we had to share with the tenants below) My Uncle and Aunt moved out and their son and wife and two daughters moved in.

We had lived there a while when I became pregnant with our oldest daughter, Gloria, (we were happy to know that we were going to become parents). When I was two months along in my pregnancy, I had my tonsils removed. (I was glad to have them out.) A while after that I received the bad news that my dear sister, Pearl, had died. (They lived in Los Angeles). I was so

sad. We had so many good times together. She was so sweet and lovely, always trying to help me. I didn't know she was even sick and in the hospital--only that she was having trouble with her teeth. (She told me in her last letter she wrote to me.)

We went down to her funeral in Salt Lake City. Her face was so swollen that we hardly recognized her. She was so beautiful, and good to me. She meant a lot to me. I miss her so much.

Then four months later (Oct) my dear Mother died of cancer and she had suffered and lost a lot of weight. I love her so very much.

Wes and I spent our first Christmas together (happy occasion). Then in March our first child and daughter Gloria Faye was born. She had dark hair and was a beautiful, healthy daughter. I was only in labor about 1 1/2 hours. She weighed 8 1/2 lbs. She didn't nurse very well in the hospital. I didn't think anything was wrong with her--but when I got home and took her back to our Dr. for a checkup, he found out she was tongue tied. The Dr. clipped her tongue and after that she nursed real well and started to gain weight and was healthy and a contented baby.

In fact, we had sub-leased this part of the upstairs from Mother's Uncle Lon and Nellie Phipps--when they finished building a house on Harrisville Road and moved in. We paid rent to Mother's cousin Clark and wife, Leah Phipps. They had two daughters -- 1 blonde, the other brunette like her father. The mother was a redhead. It was very inconvenient to go through their living-dining room to get to the stairs to our rooms upstairs. One year later, someone remodeled and built outside stairs to the apartment over this duplex.

(Wes' remarks) The Depression was still on and no work. We could not make the monthly payments, so we gave it up. One night my Dad and I brought home a pheasant nest with 6 or 8 eggs and the mother hen, who hatched out the eggs, but we didn't raise any of the chicks in captivity. At this time I was on W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) relief from the Government--one of the "ABC" programs during Franklin D. Roosevelt's time as U.S. President. (He served 12 years) I was paid \$48 (labor) per month for 13 day's work. Later on I was hired as the Material Clerk on the South Ogden Sewer project and paid \$55 a month.

### #3 HOME (1936) between 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> Street

When Gloria was about 6 months old, we bought a small lot on 624 Healy St. and Wes built a small, long one-room house. It was quite comfortable (but plumbing and toilet was outside).

There was a ditch that was in the back of our property. We walked everywhere (we couldn't afford a car) or a baby buggy. So we had to lug Gloria everywhere we went. She was heavy. One time, Doris left her bicycle with us and I learned to ride it. We lived there about 2 years. We had a nice garden space, and grew a lot of vegetables.

I remember Gloria had a cold one time and it turned into croup. She breathed so loud she could be heard out by the road.

#### #4 HOME (1938)

We moved to 39<sup>th</sup> and Childs when Gloria was about 2 years old and I was pregnant with Ralph. It was a Duplex house--with a living room, bedroom, kitchen and bath. It was a comfortable house, but we didn't live there long.

Harness had ten acres of tomatoes (about the size of the Tabernacle Park on 22<sup>nd</sup> St.(Washington to Grant Avenue in size). There was no market for tomatoes so he could not sell any of the many tons of good tomatoes--going to waste. So he said to me, "You have a family and can use some tomatoes, and if you want to bring out a small sack and take home 6 or 8 of those tomatoes to your wife and kids, you can. " I told him, "No thanks" 6 or 8 tomatoes would not do us much good. I have never known a more stingy person, especially among the rich. So I would walk to his home on the hill and when his maid got him dressed and fed--his coloured chauffeur would drive us out to one of his farms (he had 4 or 5 farms around Ogden. He bought them cheap, and when the poor farmer could not make the payments on the loan. Harness had Japanese farmers on them now. He said that they made him more money than white farmers. Harness had a can of bent, rusty nails, and he would sit and straighten them out and I would drive them in the new lumber. I used to build or remodel his farm buildings. He was really a tightwad--a skinflint!!

#### 5<sup>TH</sup> HOME (1938)

When I was about 8 months pregnant with Ralph, we moved to 2041 Quincy. It had a kitchen and living room combined-- bedroom and bathroom--with a screened in side porch (where we did a lot."`of washing for other people to make some extra money).

Ralph was born in that house (Grandma Owens was there to help take care of me and our new son.) We appreciate her for the time she took to help us out. She was a wonderful mother-in-law, and a very clean woman, and a good cook and housekeeper.

Ada and Frank and family lived just around the corner from us, so we visited each other once in a while.

#### 6<sup>TH</sup> HOME (#60 Wilson Lane) (1939)

When Ralph was about 6 months old we moved to Wilson Lane into another one-room house (across from where Wes' brother, Ray and family lived. We had a lot of rabbits there, so we ate them quite often.

We bought a used buggy for Ralph. It was in pretty good shape. One morning I noticed he had bumps on his face and body. We looked in the lining of the buggy and found bedbugs. We immediately got rid of that buggy.

It was lucky I was able to nurse him--he was a healthy baby.

### 7<sup>TH</sup> HOME (331 22<sup>nd</sup> St.) (1939)

When Ralph was 1 year old (+) we moved in one room of Wes' parents' house. We had to use an outside toilet. (Note: the toilet was just behind the back porch, but it was a flush toilet in a little "out house" and not the kind with a wooden bench with holes in it - it was connected to the city sewer.) (The room was large with high ceiling and a large front window, situated at the front of the house. As you entered the front door of the house and came into a little entry hall, one door led directly to the room they occupied. The door across the hall led to the living room of the house and there were stairs leading upstairs, directly across from the front entrance door.) I remember having a lot of pain in my chest at one time and the doctor said I had pleurisy, so they wrapped my chest up for a while. It was quite uncomfortable.

We lived across from the Tabernacle and the Third Ward, so I would take Gloria and Ralph over to play in the park. It was so green and beautiful. Oak trees were planted all around the square on the parking just outside the sidewalk.

Jessie and Bessie Draper lived next door to us--they were wonderful neighbors.

### 8<sup>TH</sup> HOME (240 21<sup>st</sup> St) (1939)

The house we lived in with Wes' parents was sold, so we moved to another house where there was one apartment downstairs on the main floor on one back side (we lived in) and on the other (front) side another apartment -- also an apartment upstairs. We had to go through a screened porch to get into our kitchen and living room combined, with a study, bathroom and a long bedroom.

Gail was born there (2 weeks early) and came "breach" quite an experience. We lived close to a coal yard. One day Gloria and Ralph (2) walked over there. Ralph got close to a wheelbarrow and somehow caught his thumb in it and it was cut off at the tip. A neighbor took me and Ralph to a doctor, but he couldn't sew the tip back on. To this day it reminds him of a lesson he learned there.

While we lived there, Wes' brother, Leland (Lee), died.

Before Gail was born, Wes' mother gave me a baby shower, then that night Gail was born 2 weeks early, guess it was because I had done a lot of walking. Gail was blessed in the Third Ward. Grandmother Owens helped me all the time I was in bed after the birth of Gail.

Wes was working at Shupe-Williams Candy Co.

### 9<sup>TH</sup> HOME (845 Sullivan Road) (1939)

This house was down over a hill and close to a park. I would take Gloria and Ralph and Gail to the park and they enjoyed swinging, etc. We had rabbits and chickens and our children enjoyed feeding them.

### 10<sup>TH</sup> HOME (903 16<sup>th</sup> St.)

This was a 3-room house with a back porch.

An older couple lived next door - they were friendly and good to us. Ralph and Gloria had a lot of playmates while we lived there.

Sometimes we would all go to the Lorin Farr Park about a block away, where there were a lot of swings and slides.

### 11<sup>TH</sup> HOME (1630 24<sup>th</sup> St.)

This was our first new home and we really loved it. Wes worked hard helping to build it. It had a large living room, kitchen (with a breakfast nook), two bedrooms, one bath and a full basement. Wes would walk up there from 16<sup>th</sup> st to work on it till late at night, working so hard so that we could have a comfortable home.

We loved the smell of a new home and enjoyed it so much. But other homes were built close by and we decided we needed more ground. We had 3 children and one more expected. So we sold it and moved down on Canyon Road.

### 12<sup>TH</sup> HOME (851 Canyon Road)

So we sold that home and moved to an older home with 1 1/2 acres. We had a cow and horse there and also a dog and chickens.

This home had a living room, dining room, kitchen, bath, large back porch, hall and an upstairs with 3 bedrooms and a study. It had a big yard and lots of room for our growing family.

We lived close to the Lorin Farr Park again and I would take our children over there often to play on the swings, slides, take tap dancing lessons, and just enjoying themselves. Rodeos were often performed there (every year).

Our second son, Bob, was born there and Wes' mother took good care of me and Bob for 10 days. She was a wonderful mother-in-law and I love her very much. Wes would help me a lot when he was home.

Our 5<sup>th</sup> child, Betty, was also born there, and Betty and I were well taken care of again by the same wonderful loving Dad and Grandmother.

### 13<sup>TH</sup> HOME (852 Canyon Road)

We wanted more ground, so we sold our remaining one acre (we had sold 1/2 acre to a man who built a home on it) and moved again to 8 1/2 acres and a larger home, just around the corner.

This home was made into two homes for a while when Wes' parents lived there with us. After they left, Wes fixed it so that there were 6 bedrooms in it.

We had nearly every kind of fruit on this 8 1/2 acres, but strawberries. We were able to sell our fruit. A few times we gave some away.

We had cows and horses there. Our children would be taken on a sled through our fruit orchard and down 12<sup>th</sup> St. to Lorin Farr School, where they would walk a few blocks to school.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> son, Rod, was born at the Dee Hospital while we lived in this house.

In the summertime, Gloria, Ralph and Gail were taught how to twirl a baton (girls) and Ralph to play the drums. They were in a number of parades. I would make their costumes. They enjoyed it. Gloria and Gail also took tap dancing lessons.

(Added note: Wes built a "stage" in one corner of (I think) the living room, and the children would entertain with their talents. They were bright and happy children and would perform at Family Home Evening.)

## 14<sup>TH</sup> HOME (South Cole Rd.)

We moved to Boise in August 1950 (in time to cultivate the grain) We had bought a 40-acre farm which belonged to an Eldon Grunder. It had a long living room and dining room combined, bathroom and kitchen and 1 bedroom. Downstairs there were two rooms (where our children slept). It had a floor furnace--it was hard to keep warm unless we stood over the floor opening.

Our 7<sup>th</sup> child, Bill, was born in the Atal's Hospital? A few months after we moved to Boise. He was our largest child (he had a little respiratory trouble for a while.)

The former owner wanted this farm back, so we sold it back to him and moved again the day after Christmas.