

Willis Wood
Let Us Know Each Other Better

By Marie Hill



Willis Wood

Each Sunday as we enter Sacrament meeting we receive a warm welcome, not only from the Bishopric, but from a special assigned greeter. Brother Willis Wood - today is your day! Hats off to you!

Willis Wood was born in a one room log cabin located in the River Bottoms, 13 June 1902. He was the third child of Wellington Wood Jr. and Elizabeth Ferris Wood. This couple was blessed with nine children; six boys and three girls. Willis, the third child, had one older brother and an older sister, Mary; however she died at the age of 15 from a fall from a horse.

When Willis, was four years old, his father came home from town reporting, "The Bishop asked me to fill a mission. I told him I couldn't go as there would be no support for my family." Sister Wood, then with five children, said, "You get on your horse and go tell the Bishop you will go." All he needed was the support of his good wife. He left and filled a two year mission, without purse or script.

After his return home, Willis, then six, enjoyed riding with his Dad to herd the cattle. His father, being a farmer and stockman, always had plenty to do and his children were taught to do their share at a young age. Willis, has always been grateful he was taught to work and the value of honest work. He enjoyed the farm, loved horses, and he says riding herd on the cattle was his favorite task.

He remembers well when they moved their home down the lane some distance, and the following year, a wet one, the hill sloughed off and covered their old property entirely, including a saw mill. He says they did dig out the saw but that was all they salvaged. How glad they were the home had been moved.

He attended the Spanish Fork schools; the children from that area being brought to town in a large covered wagon. It was just good sport for the boys to jump of the wagon and run

behind it quite frequently, and he is certain that it contributed to their physical fitness. After finishing school, he started in electrical work, which became his lifetime profession.

Willis courted and won a lovely young woman, Mabel Ellis, also born and raised in Spanish Fork; being one of ten children born to George and Catherine Snell Ellis. Willis and Mabel were married 18 June 1930 in the Salt Lake Temple by Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the Prophet. They made their home in Spanish Fork.

Willis worked for some time as a city electrician along with the late William Huff. Then for a three year period he worked at the Power Plant and he and Mabel lived there during that period. He worked for the Strawberry Water Users Association and spent a great deal of time at Strawberry especially in the spring and fall of the years.

Their lives were enriched with a son and daughter, Willis (Bill) and Fern; a boy for Dad and a girl for Mom, or vice versa.

Willis and Mabel enjoyed fishing together. They loved Fishlake and enjoyed many special experiences there. Their fondness for Strawberry instigated building a cabin jointly with friends Dave and Leanoire Warner and many, many enjoyable days were spent there.

Willis worked on the construction of many interesting projects: Geneva Steel Plant, the Missile sight at Green River Utah, also in Denver Colorado at the Ticon Missile sight, and five years at Flaming Gorge where he witnessed the first and last bucket of concrete poured on that dam. He found each job challenging and interesting. Mabel would usually go with him and they would live in their travel trailer. He retired from his work in 1967, and they enjoyed some extensive trips they had long thought about including a trip to Alaska with their trailer. Two other couples accompanied them with their outfits. This trip was a dream come true.

The gospel has always been his way of life, and no matter where he worked they both served diligently in the Church. Willis was very active throughout his Aaronic Priesthood days. He served in his Elders' Quorum Presidency for several years in both counselor positions and then as President. He served as Secretary in the High Priest group, also as Secretary in the Senior Aaronic program. He was called as one of the first workers in the Provo Temple; served as an usher when the cornerstone was laid, also during the Open House, and then worked at the veil during the very first session. He worked for several years until Mabel's poor health necessitated him giving it up. He has been a Home Teacher all through his life.

Mabel filled many positions in the Church including President of First Ward Relief Society - she was President at the time the ward was divided and the Twelfth Ward created. She continued as the first President of that ward. Wherever she followed Willis, she worked in the Church. When her health failed, Willis cared for her faithfully, setting a fine example for all who were associated with him. She passed away 18 September 1978. He has been alone in his home since that time, maintained it well.

Civic wise, he was a member of the Spanish Fork Fire Department for 32 years, filling many positions in that organization. Upon his retirement he was presented with an engraved watch, a priceless possession.

Their son Bill filled a full-time mission in Idaho Oregon; graduated from the BYU and is married to the former Nancy Colette of Salt Lake City. They live in Fremont, California where Bill has filled two Stake Missions. They have three daughters and one son.

Fern, now Mrs. Robert C. Weddle, is a Golden Gleaner, also graduated from the Y where she served as a Relief Society President, following in her Mother's footsteps. They now live in San Diego, California and have four daughters. Brother Willis has made many trips to California (both with Mabel and alone) to visit his children and grandchildren.

He is a stalwart son of our Father in Heaven; loves the gospel and lives by the precepts. He is a super Home Teacher along with his companion, Brother LeRoy Hill - they come to our home! We look forward to their visits and enjoy the time they spend with us.

Brother Willis - we wish the best for you as we pay tribute to you today!