

## Isabella Wolff – Biography

Our Birth is but a sleep and a forgetting

The soul that riseth with us, our life's star

Has had elsewhere its setting

And riseth from afar

Not in entire forgetfulness

And not in utter nakedness.

But trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God, who is our home.

### **(Ode. Intimations of Immortality by William Wordsworth)**

Isabella Hendry Wolff was born October 13, 1915 in the Hendry home, south of the temple here in Cardston, where the Seminary building now stands. Her older siblings were Melvin who died in infancy, Wilby, Margaret, Mable, Roszella, Hazelle, and Merlin. Her parents were Adam and Mary Ann Hendry. Isabel was a name frequently found in her father's Scottish pedigree. Mother was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the newly built temple. Her older brothers and sisters were baptized in the waters of Lee Creek. Grandpa Hendry came to Canada from Utah in 1888. He saw the beautiful green hills and magnificent view of the mountains near the Canada US border in the Carway/Boundary Creek area, and proved up a homestead there. This is where Mother grew up, spending the summers at the ranch, and the winters in town where she attended school. At that time, the main Custom's House was at Twin Lakes. South of their ranch was "The Gate" to the border. Mom was told that an American Indian was stationed there to keep tally. He wasn't educated to read or write, but he could draw anyone who passed through if a likeness was needed for the records. Many people travelled by on their way across the line, and hospitality was extended to all. They had food to share and a barn to sleep in. Mother said her father Adam was a kind, honest, hard-working man whose handshake was his bond. Grandma Hendry had come to Canada from England after a short stay in Idaho. As a young girl she worked for several families keeping house, tending to children, milking cows, churning butter, and later nursing her mother through a terminal illness. Her mother, Eliza Crooks Perrett was the first woman buried in the Cardston Cemetery. Grandma married soon after her Mother's death, at age 19, and put all her "work experience" to good use. Grandma Hendry was a real lady, well-mannered, genteel, and soft spoken. She taught mother to dress tidily, and always carry a clean handkerchief. When

mother wrote about her mom in her journal she could have very well been describing herself. I quote: "Mother was always busy, she was a real homemaker. Her home was neat and clean and reflected her ability to sew and cook. The personal touches she added were original and thoughtful. Even though she was not forward or pushy about things she still had the courage of her convictions and championed what she knew to be right. She always supported us in all that we did. Mother had beautiful blue eyes with dark bushy brows and gray hair. She had a nose that was prominent, a family characteristic- any Englishman would call it a nose of breeding. Mother's clothes were like her - always in good taste." (end quote)

Isabella's brothers and sisters were very important to her. As the youngest girl she inherited hand-me-down dresses and shoes from her older sisters. She always blamed her bunions from wearing shoes that were too tight. When she was able to, she purchased the best clothing and footwear she could afford. She certainly had a sense of style.

Mother said that being the youngest girl in her family, she was well taken care of and enjoyed a happy childhood. She and Evelyn Pilling Bohne liked ride their horses over the beautiful hilly country and pick berries. Mom remembers fondly one trip the whole family and their friends made, by horseback and wagon to the timbered area near Old Chief. The menfolk cut down logs and the kids hiked, rode horses in the mountains, swam in the icy water, and camped out. I'm sure grandma was kept busy feeding them with meals cooked on the stove they hauled along for that purpose.

In the summer, mother would help raise orphaned, or "pet" lambs as she called them, to be sold in the fall to help earn money for school clothing and books. The one time of year the girls would receive a new dress was July First. This was a very special holiday with fireworks, festivities, and a parade. Grandma Hendry would handsew for each of them a "Dominion Day" dress. Mother and dad taught Robb and I the importance of living in this wonderful country of Canada where we can enjoy the freedoms preserved for us by the men who fought in the World Wars.

Mother attended her church meetings in the old Tabernacle in the First Ward. She writes: "I always thought the arched stained glass windows were beautiful. I particularly remember at early morning Conference the sun shining through the coloured glass and reflecting on the congregation." She was very sad when the decision was made to have it torn down.

Mom's parents taught her good work ethics. She believed that any job worth doing, was worth doing well, and she impressed that on me several times over the years. If she felt inadequate or incapable, she went by faith, and got the job done.

Mom and dad had a simple wartime wedding ceremony in 1941, at the family home in Cardston. Her best friend Trix McMillan had married dad's brother, Dr. George Wolff, and that was how she became acquainted with dad. After a honeymoon fraught with flat tires and a breakdown on muddy roads, they made their first home in Medicine Hat where I was born. They then moved to balmy Vancouver which mom enjoyed, but she yearned for the Prairies. When Grandpa Wolff was ready to retire he asked dad if he wanted to run Wolff and Son Machine Implements, and they settled back in Cardston for good. Robb was born during the coldest winter on record and our family was complete. When I started to go to Primary mom became more involved with the Church. She taught in various organizations and was a councilor in the Second Ward Relief Society with Thora Jensen. She and Sue Smith were Visiting Teaching Companions for several years.

Mom was a great hostess and entertained for family birthdays, and all the holidays. Rodeo time was a highlight of the year. In the early days it was an outdoor event with friends and neighbors participating in a branding competition before the Rodeo began. It was lots of fun for all the families to get together. As a Rotarian, dad was involved with the Parade and always showed his support by entering an antique car or two. Mom and the sisters would cook a big backyard fried chicken picnic and it was such fun to all be together. After dad passed away mom missed him so much, and especially at this time of year. She was not one to dwell in the past and adapted her life accordingly. When they moved up to the westend of town, from their creekside home, she began attending the temple. Dad joined the church after being friendshipped by some wonderful people, and gaining a testimony by reading the Book of Mormon. This was an especially happy time for mom. She has always been a prayerful individual and a woman of great faith.

She knew when it was time for her to leave her home and the garden which she loved, and join with friends and helpful staff in the Chinook Lodge. Robb and I knew it wouldn't be home without mom, but it was the right thing for her. She has enjoyed this past year, lonely for family to come down and visit her, but participating in the activities in the Lodge and grateful not to have to cook and look after a big home. She still did her own washing and ironing, cleaned her room and had a flair for decorating. The past few months she became too ill and tired to "do for herself". She said she knew she was sick because food just didn't appeal to her. Mom was appreciative of friends, family, the handi-bus drivers, and the Chinook staff right until the end. When Christmas came she couldn't rest until she had a little something for everyone.

For mom's 90th birthday last year we had a surprise celebration in July. We presented her with a book full of tributes written by many of her posterity. The cover of the book was made from the dress she wore for her fiftieth wedding anniversary. She was very touched by all the sentiments and kind thoughts expressed by loved ones far and near.

Mom was blessed with a long healthy life. Now she has gone to join my dad, almost exactly nine years since his death. She is at peace after suffering with debilitating health problems this past couple of months. Her last words were Good Night. She was so appreciative of the tender care given her by the nurses and Doctors, they seemed to sense what a great lady she was. It is so hard to lose a mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend, but we are strengthened by the great legacy she has left us.

No man is an island, entire of itself.

Every man is piece of the continent, a part of the main.

If a clod be washed away, Europe is the less, as if a promontory were,

As if a manor of thy own or thy friend's were.

Every man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind.

Therefore do not send to know for whom the bell tolls,

It tolls for thee.

**(MEDITATION XVII., *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* by John Donne)**

May we be ever mindful of each other and follow mother's example of always looking for the good. At the end of the day may we reflect on the words of one of her favourite hymns - Have I done any good in the world today, have I helped anyone in need? ..... Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure, a blessing of duty, and love.

As I was walking down the golf course hill one morning last week, I saw two colts frolicking in the pasture. I thought, mom would be so pleased, she always felt sorry for a horse penned up all by itself. She said horses are sociable creatures and very unhappy when they are alone. Mom will be no longer be lonely as she has joined her beloved companion, for time and all eternity.

I leave these words with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Judy Hawthorne  
February 15, 2006