

## Ollie LaVenia Frank Hawkes

*Written by her daughter Nena Rey Hawkes*



Ollie LaVenia Frank

She was 5' 2", a slender woman who bobbed her silver hair behind and to the side of her head. Her eyes gleamed with vitality; a ready smile quickly bloomed into laughter. Her clothing, most often, her own creation and design, bore a distinctive flare, and her hats added a simple touch of elegance to a refined woman. She was appropriate in appearance and manners but never relaxed enough to be found napping in a chair or heaven forbid in church. She chose the firm formal chair for sitting, always on the edge and with proper posture.

Her daily attire was one of her colorful home made dresses with heels and hose. An excellent seamstress, she began sewing many of her own clothes at the age of twelve. When working in the house or the garden, she wore a special apron to keep her dress clean. Heels and hose were commonly worn even while doing daily tasks. Walking into the house when she was sweeping the front room carpets was a delight. She “cracked” her chewing gum to the rhythm of the vacuum as she moved it back and froth across the carpet. Hearing the gum “pop” left an assurance that all was well.

Our home and the flower beds were maintained with her meticulous caring touch. The house was cleaned weekly and in between. Everything was kept in its proper place. She expected us to keep our rooms clean, clothes hung up, beds made and dishes washed after or between meals and snacks. She insisted the lawn be mowed on Saturday so it would look nice for Sunday. She swept grass off the sidewalks while Dad did the mowing. When we were old enough, we helped sweep and mow the grass.

The vegetable garden located in the rear of the house took up the space from the driveway to the barnyard fence. The vegetable garden and the flower gardens were weeded regularly. The rose garden was Mother’s favorite; it ran from the city sidewalk west to the walk in front of the house. She taught us how to cut the roses to initiate new blooms and even briefed us on the art of smelling a garden rose. To smell the rose’s fragrance, we were to bend over and put our nose close to the flower while holding the bloom underneath and between the first two fingers. It worked!

She clothed us in home sewn apparel, managed a clean, clutter free-house, comfortable and charming enough to feel good about inviting friends home. She taught us how to walk and sit properly and instructed us to never leave the house with pins in clothing, gum in our mouths

or hands in our pockets. She taught other important things, too, so we would be acceptable and accepted.

We learned to pray, kneeling beside her as she sat in a chair, practiced our memorized church talks before her while she patiently corrected and encouraged. When we performed in public, she and our father were there to give approval and compliment our efforts. Our day began around the breakfast table kneeling in prayer. The same ritual was repeated prior to the evening meal. At each of these occasions, Dad called on someone different to lead the family in prayer.

After school, the first word we uttered when entering the house was “Mother”, the answer “I’m here” was comforting. She was always there. Once I heard a person ask her if she regretted not pursuing her promising musical career. She laughed and replied, “No, I always considered being a mother was more important.”

Mother recognized the uniqueness in each of her children. Pat loved butter, so she always received a pound of butter from Santa Claus. I liked the fact she allowed me to have a raisin pie for my birthday rather than cake. I detested cake and especially most everyone’s favorite – chocolate cake. And she also said it was ok if I didn’t want to have bows on certain dresses and blouses. Because she was often ill during some of the early years of my young life, our father prepared our breakfast. I had long blonde hair until I was in the 7th grade. I couldn’t braid my hair so Mother had me stand to the side of the bed while she sat on an edge of the bed and gently brushed and braided my long hair just before I left for school. Along with this morning ritual, she made a quick check to make certain my blouse was tucked in and I was not leaving the house chewing gum.

Forever the teacher, she had little sayings to remind us of lofty ideals. “Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anyone else expects of you.” “Be a hard master to yourself and to all others be lenient.” “To have a friend, you must be a friend.” “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” We had to make certain our clothes were in the closet and not lying under the bed nor on the floor or the bed and that the bed was made before we left for school. If we had bread and jam for a snack, we had to clean-up before we left the kitchen.

A woman of immense feeling for others, she cried when the world cried. She empathized with the pain and sorrow of those she did not know and those she knew – her children, grandchildren, siblings and neighbors. Her journal records the great sorrow she felt at the untimely losses of two brothers and a sister. Also noted was the fact she was allowed to stay home from school if someone in the family was ill. She worried so much her mother allowed her to be close-by. These events had a lasting impact and caused her to identify with those who were hurt or grieving even though they were not acquaintances.

On the other hand she spoke of the cheerful, happy events of her growing up years and writes, "I had a truly happy childhood." Our family worked sided by side in the "beet-field and in the hay-field and we loved each other as most large families do." She also often talked of her brothers and sisters and remarked, "It was fun growing-up in the Frank family." When we quarreled with each other, she declared, "I never remember arguments with my brothers or sisters during my years at home."

Sunday's, we children walked to church without either parent because both had church assignments. Mother always looked for us from her perch at the organ during prelude music. A smile crossed her face when she caught our eyes. During the week she played the organ for Relief Society, too. For many years, I went with her to Relief Society and sat with her on the organ bench as she accompanied the singing – I was too young for school or to stay at home.

Mother became Primary organist when she was eleven years old. She really enjoyed the trust and by the time she was 12, she was Sunday School Organist and eventually became choir organist, too. At one time, when she was choir organist, seven members of her family sang in the choir including her father. She loved to play for her father too as she enjoyed listening to his beautiful singing voice. Her love affair with music was an integral dimension of her life. At the age of five, Mother would hear a piece of music she liked and as soon as possible she would run home as fast as she could to go and play it on the piano. Soon after Mother began taking piano lessons, her mother learned that Mother was playing the music by memory or ear, rather than note reading. It was the teacher's practice to play the music lesson for the next week just at the conclusion of the lesson. Her mother advised the teacher not to play the music or she would not learn to read the notes. The teacher followed the directions, and Mother soon learned to sight read the notes.

Several prominent choir directors lauded Mother as best accompanist in Cache Valley. She never turned down a request for those who asked her to play be it for a funeral, for a vocal number, or for a piano or organ solo. People loved to hear her play her testimony, and I think the genius of her talent was her unique expression. She was honored when asked to accompany Jessie Evans Smith when Joseph Fielding Smith was the visiting general authority at a Stake Conference in the Logan Tabernacle. In her long musical tenure in the church, she played organ and piano solos for hundreds of funerals. Mother served faithfully as an organist and pianist in all of the church organizations throughout her entire life. It was not until her early seventies that she was released from her church musical responsibilities. Some months before her death, she played the piano and remarked that her fingers could still move with ease across the keyboard.

During her late forties, Mother served as Primary President. Through these years, she helped several Primary children receive special assistance at the Primary Children's Hospital in

Salt Lake City. One young man with a speech problem received special help. As Primary President, her deep concern for each child in the ward was evident.

Civic responsibilities played an important part in her life. She worked as an election judge for years and participated as a volunteer in the Republican Party. I remember so well standing on the corner of main street and center street in down town Logan handing out flyers to support John Dewey for President of the United States. When Dad attempted to dissuade her from voting for a woman that was running for Mayor of Logan City, she told him she would vote for who she wanted, “furthermore you will never know for whom I cast my vote because you can’t follow me into the voting booth.” He laughed at her comments. Other times he said, “I wouldn’t want a woman that agreed with me on everything.”

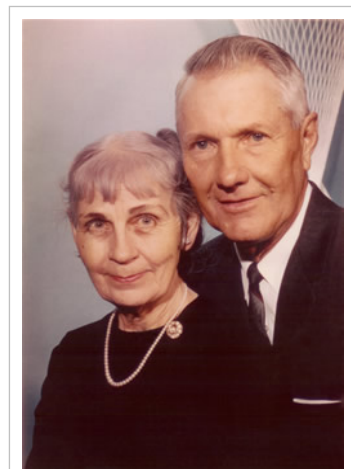
Because music was so important to Mother, it became a very important part of our family’s life too. Dad bought her a piano soon after they were married; later on he gave her an organ. She taught each one of us to play the piano. She was always in demand to give group and private piano lessons which she did for many years. In addition to her accompanying singers, she and Lou played piano and organ duets in churches all over the valley.

Our family sang, to her accompaniment, around the piano on Sunday evenings. Dad sat in a chair and whistled along. Mother and Dad often chuckled about how music was so important to her, yet he could not carry a tune. However, he loved music and supported her musical interests and made certain she had everything necessary for her to continue enjoying and perfecting her talents.

Bud delighted in embellishing his stories to get a rise from her, and she never disappointed him. After he got the reaction, he added the part that calmed her nerves, and then she laughed. Nerves and worry were her worst enemies. Her “high strung” nature helped us quickly learn to close doors carefully and to make choices that would not cause her undue concern.

We have fond memories of her excellent culinary skills. The food Mother made and sent to Ward bazaars always ended up back on our table. Dad would either go to the bazaar early and bought the food item or he sent one of us to buy it before anyone else got the chance.

Mother’s sweet-tooth was encouraged by Dad. He encouraged the vice by hiding candy in drawers and other places around the house. She must have developed a ‘sweet tooth’ in her youth as she often spoke of the Taffy Pulls the Frank family had on Sunday afternoons.



Ollie LaVenia  
&  
Herbert Jones Hawkes

Her interior decorating skills were notable. She could “make something out of nothing.” She covered lamps, covered chairs with needle-point, and sewed the curtains for all the windows in our house. The radiators were even covered by a special fabric to keep dust off. At Christmas time she decorated the house in a special way. Bells were hung on the door, special candles and reindeer and Santa’s adorned the shelves. My favorite was the white Christmas tree she decorated with beautiful assortment of her costume jewelry.

She sewed the long white dresses on the day we received our Name and Blessing at church. She did the same for her grandchildren. She made all of our temple aprons including the handwork on the apron. She beaded dresses and purses, and embroidered on our scarves, our bandanas, and our dresses. She did this from our youth to our adulthood. She made our formals and even bleached sugar and flour sacks to make our gym shorts and summer dresses.

Mother used a straight forth manner to correct us regardless of our age. One time, Pat had to undergo a serious operation; her surgeon was affiliated with the McKay Dee Hospital in Ogden. Pat figured if she told Mother she was going on a vacation, Mother would not worry about the operation. When Pat came home from the hospital, she called to tell Mother she was home from vacation and would visit her the next day. The next day, Pat was still in a lot of pain, however, she walked fine going into visit Mother, but she was bent over with pain as she stood up to walk out to the car. Unknowingly, Mother called out as she left the house, “Patricia stand-up straight, you are walking like an old lady!” I don’t think she ever told Mother about her operation. We still laugh about the event.

She was fascinating to her twenty-four grandchildren. They loved the individual attention showered on each of them as she treated them in gracious charming ways. Shauna Rey Potter Rich remarked, “Grandmother Hawkes was an intriguing person, all the grandchildren were fascinated with her.” Sue Potter Self, another granddaughter remarked, “My grandmother Hawkes was a superior interior designer. I believe she was years ahead of her time. Looking back on her home, I was amazed at all of the things she did to decorate, and the theme she was able to carry forth throughout the house. In my younger years, I really didn’t pay much attention to this, but I have recognized her amazing genius since my own training in interior design.” (Sue and her husband Drake Self own a store in Logan called ‘Interiors at the Sofa Source.’) Mother possessed some exceptional talents. She had a creative nature about her and insisted that we need not look or act like everyone else. She wanted to be different, and she wanted us to realize that acting and looking like everyone else was not the most important thing in life. We were to hold our head-up and walk tall and straight. These were hard realizations for teenagers.

Each grandchild believed they were Mother’s favorite. She knew what to say to make them feel special, and they returned their love. Her grandchildren enjoyed looking into her closet. They admired her clothes, her shoes and her hats. They loved the times she spent playing

the organ and piano to entertain them. The little girls loved the Christmas tea parties she held for them, she seated them at a child's table and served them small cakes and punch.

She was a wonderful Mother, Mentor, Friend and Exemplary woman. She was reserved; she was not too much of anything, and the best of everything. Our home was richly blessed by the warmth of her love, laughter, and caring ways. And each birthday, as long as she was able, began with an original and distinctive piano rendition of "Happy Birthday to You." She was a bright light in our lives. We miss her and love her!

#### AND THAT WAS MOTHER!

*Ollie Lavenia was born 2 July 1899 in Nounan, Bear Lake, Idaho to Louis Frank and Ella Elizabeth Haderlie. She was married to Herbert Jones Hawkes in the Logan LDS Temple on 10 March 1926. She passed away 1 March 1978 in Logan, Cache, Utah.*