

# Jean Fosberg Astle Merritt

## *A Personal Life History*

*(As given to her granddaughter Donalyn Merritt Carson in 1986)*

My mother Signe K. Fosberg<sup>1</sup> and her sister Ruth<sup>2</sup> came from Norway in 1902. Grandpa Fosberg<sup>3</sup> was dead, and Grandma Fosberg<sup>4</sup> sent the children to America with a missionary, Lars Halling<sup>5</sup>, of Grover, Wyoming. He and his wife, Stena<sup>6</sup> had no children of their own. Signe was given lots of love and a good home with Uncle Lars and Aunt Stena.

Ruth and mother were pretty girls. My mother grew up in Grover and in 1915, she married my father, Francis Astle<sup>7</sup>. After my sister Atelia<sup>8</sup> was born in 1916, my parents were sealed in the Logan Utah Temple. I<sup>9</sup> was born March 27, 1918. I was born before the doctor arrived. I had a Godfather, Hon Hurd, who wrapped me in a blanket. I always loved him, and he was special.

My mother loved us little girls and made us pretty clothes. Father was a farmer and worked in the canyon. Mother loved to cook and had very pretty flowers which she took care of. We had an orange tree that had real oranges on it. One day when we were away a fire burned our house.

In 1920, a baby brother, Junior<sup>10</sup>, was born. He was so very pretty and dark. When he was 2 years old, he was outside and was attacked by the neighbor's pig. He died from the bites on his ear and face.

We moved down to a big house north of Grover. December 28, 1922, Boyd<sup>11</sup> was born. I was 5 years old. I remember many happy times living down in that home. We had our playhouse in the willows. We had a bum lamb, cows, and horses. I can still see my mother pulling taffy candy. One time she made taffy and draped it on the floor. The home teachers came, but we didn't care; it was very good.

I had lots of aunts on the Astle side. We had lots of good times together. When I was 5, our grandfather John Francis Astle<sup>12</sup> moved to Logan, Utah.

It was a highlight when I was 6 because we got a car, and we moved to town. There we had friends, and we went places in our car. In August, father took us out to Montpelier to a circus. I've never forgotten seeing all of the animals. We stayed all night.

My father hauled freight in the sleigh and wagon. He wore a big bear skin coat, and he always brought us peanut brittle and ginger snaps in the grub box.

When I was seven, Dad moved our family to Logan. It was March and the snow was deep. He put the car on a sleigh and with four horses, we went up Crow Creek. We were wrapped in quilts and took our lunch. We rode inside of the car on the sleigh. We stayed at the half-way house that night. I remember a little white mouse that we tried to catch. We thought it was so cute. The next day we reached Montpelier. There he unloaded the car and put us on the train. We went on to Logan and he returned to the Valley for our furniture. We moved into a house right by the Logan River bridge. It is still there now. While we were in Logan, my Grandma Fosberg came from Norway. She couldn't speak English. She was so good to all of us kids.

Father found work in the sugar factory. My mother also found work. She worked at night. Kay<sup>13</sup> was born May 8, 1925.

It was in February 1926, when my mother left us little kids and didn't come back. Kay was 2, Boyd, 4, I was 7, and Atelia was 9. We were so afraid. A few days later, she called Father and told him she was in California. Dad moved us over to Providence where our aunts took care of us.

When I was eight years old, my Aunt Arstanie<sup>14</sup> took me to the Logan Temple where I was baptized. I still see the beautiful stairs and oxen around the font.

When spring came, Dad found a house for us, and we had a lady take care of us. We had a large garden with corn and large apple trees. We worked hard for being just kids. In 1927, when I was nine, Dad married Laura Carling<sup>15</sup>, and we had a home again. Atelia and I worked picking strawberries, beans, cherries, and apples, and we saved our money so we could get a new coat. Mine was red with a little fur collar. We helped put up lots of fruit. Our new mother made us clothes and we had roller skates. We skated on the sidewalks to school or to the store. We got a new baby sister Thelma<sup>16</sup> in January 1928. We loved her. Mother was very sick for 2 months, but we knew how to cook and clean and wash clothes on the wash board. In the fall of 1928, Dad moved us back to Grover, Wyoming. The house we moved into was big, and some told us it was haunted. It was right by the school and church. I was 10 years old. Dad got a cow and two good

horses. My job was to milk and to feed the cows. It sure was a cold winter. I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of school. Merettie Leavitt was my teacher.

We went to the canyon with Dad to get logs or wood to sell. I loved to ride the horses. My Aunt Ruth died, and her two children came to live with Aunt Stena Halling. Cavelle<sup>17</sup> was my age, and they had a son named Jack<sup>18</sup>. Cavelle and I had many good times together. We were good to go to church and after our play day, we had many bonfires in the road. Kids came over to eat and play “run sheep run”. We would hide then try to run to the fire without getting caught.

Times were hard and money wasn’t plentiful, but we were always dressed well and food was good. Leon<sup>19</sup> was born in 1930. I was in the 8th grade. We had to walk to school about a mile. It was cold and the snow was very deep. We had a bunch of cows to milk. Atelia, Boyd, Kay, and I went to school. In December, a little boy, Elmo<sup>20</sup>, was born. Mother was very sick. We had a woman come to help us. We were living in Auburn, Wyoming at the time. We went to church in the Old Rock Church in Auburn. The swimming pool was open and on my birthday in March, we went in the sleigh to go swimming. The snow was 3-4 feet deep. We moved back to Grover, and in November 1933, another brother, Dee<sup>21</sup>, was born.

When I was 14, I had a nice boyfriend. I went to my first dance. When school was out, we moved back to Grover. That year was a very bad drought, and we didn’t raise a very good crop. We had to sell the cows for \$25 a head. I started high school that fall. I was so very small for my age. I was 4 foot 6 inches and weighed 75 pounds. I rode a truck that had a box built on the back, but there was no heat. I just about froze. In the summer I worked out and around to get money for clothes. I started the second year of high school, but I quit after two months. I went to work for Lester Nield’s wife in Afton. I also worked for Mrs. Call. That next summer we moved to Bedford. I didn’t like it. I went out to the Georgetown, Idaho area to work. I was there from February to May. In February my Grandmother Fosberg died. I came home in May, milked cows and worked in the hay field in Bedford. In July I met Lawrence Merritt<sup>22</sup>. I went to a dance with one fellow, but I came home with Lawrence. Not many young men had cars. He had a nice car, and it was a fast one and he also had a big motorcycle. We sure had fun. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, I got mad and ran away back to Georgetown. I left in a long dress and spike

heels. Father was very angry. I went right to work and bought clothes and made me slacks and shirts. I had lots of fun out there. I had a friend Alice Hays. We went with some very nice boys. I worked for \$2.00 a week. In September, Dad called and said mother was ill, and would I please come home to help her. He had moved back to Grover. I went home and the next month, on October 3, a little sister, Frances<sup>23</sup>, was born. I stayed to help around home. Dad gave me a cow and I got the money from the milk. I went with Lawrence some, but winter roads weren't for cars. That winter I went back to Idaho. I wrote to Lawrence. In the Spring I came home and had a nice summer. I went with Lawrence. He loved to dance. We decided to get married on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Mother made me quilts and pillowcases. I bought a new dress and heels. I also bought a new bed and springs before we were married. The day before we were married, July 13<sup>th</sup>, Lawrence came up. We made home-made ice cream, and he took me for a ride on his cycle. In those days we didn't wear slacks, so I wore a dress. My belt got caught in the brake drum of the motorcycle. It tore my belt off and tore my dress. The next day he and his mother<sup>24</sup>, my mother, my little sister Fran and I went to Paris, Idaho to be married. We had a flat tire, and it rained. The road was muddy and awful. Lawrence bought me a wedding band in Montpelier. I was so little I weighed 90 pounds. My ring soon grew too small. We had a nice reception, and we had a dance. We had to pay the orchestra. My Dad gave me 24 chickens, a pig, and 2 cows. Lawrence had bought 5 head of cows, and we moved into his parent's house, and Lawrence's parents and their four-year-old son Richard<sup>25</sup> moved into town. Fourteen months after we were married, our first son Duane<sup>26</sup> was born in April 1937. He was very sick. We took him to doctors all of the time. He died at the age of 17 months, five days before our second son, Robert<sup>27</sup> was born. Robert was born in September 1939. He came along like a little Tarzan, so healthy and strong. Two years later a little girl, Evelyn<sup>28</sup>, was born in April 1941. Robert and Evelyn were so happy together. Robert learned to walk, but when Evelyn learned to crawl, Robert learned to crawl too. Lawrence and I milked cows and put up hay. Lawrence worked around as a mechanic.

About this time, World War II broke out. We decided to move to Layton, Utah where Lawrence worked at Hill Airforce Base. We were making good money, but when

spring came, Lawrence wanted to come home. We moved to Afton, Wyoming, and in May 1945, a son, Lynn<sup>29</sup>, was born.

In 1948, we purchased a 480 acre dry farm at Border Junction and in 1953 the family moved to the present home in Osmond, Wyoming.

*The following was added by Donalyn Merritt Carson at the time of Jean's passing:*

As soon as Jean moved to the place, she started planting trees, flowers, and a garden. She and Lawrence remodeled the home to make it a comfortable place for the family. In 1955, a little daughter, Linda Sue<sup>30</sup>, was born. Linda was loved by her older brothers and sister, and especially by her parents.

Jean was always busy being a full-time mother. She prepared good meals and snacks for her family. She made cookies, canned fruit, and kept a clean house. Lawrence worked long hours, so Jean spent much of her time with the children and did many things with them. She took the kids fishing and worked alongside them. She says, "Our house was always full of kids. They wouldn't stop at one, they'd bring a dozen at a time to play cards. They were the biggest cheatin' bunch that you'd ever see. They changed the rules and made new ones to fit."

Jean helped with the milking. She spent many hours with Lawrence while working on the dry farm which was a family affair. Jean would pack a big picnic lunch, and they would burn sage brush, pick rock, poison squirrels, and plant and harvest their wheat. She liked to enter big bundles of wheat in the county fair, and she usually won prizes for it.

Lawrence always had nice cars for Jean to drive. She says, "One time we got a brand-new jeep. I was very proud of it. We went to Cheyenne to get it, and I drove it home. I had so many new cars that sometimes I couldn't remember which one I had driven to town."

Jean loved flowers. She always had blossoms in her garden and in her house. She served twenty-six years as a Primary teacher. She taught about ten years in the Sunday School, and she was always a visiting teacher. She served in the Relief Society Presidency with Eva Fluckiger and Dora Hillstead. Recently she was asked what day she would like to relive again, and she said the day that she and Lawrence were sealed in the

Ogden Utah Temple (Jean's son, Robert L. Merritt, was able to act as proxy for the sealing of Duane who died in infancy).

"After Lawrence retired from farming and mechanics, we just took care of the yard and watched the kids and grandkids grow.

"It has been a grateful life. I can't say we ever had a fight. I threw a spoon at Lawrence one time for staying out all night. I think that was the biggest fight we ever had.

"We've been well blessed. We've got 15 wonderful grandkids (and since then two great-grandchildren). We haven't had the best health, but we still made out. Lawrence always looked out for us."

In February 1987, Jean complained of not feeling well. After surgery and treatments for cancer, and an extensive stay in the hospital, she was able to spend three months at home with her family. She wanted to live long enough to see her daffodils bloom.

Lawrence passed away on April 22, 1987. She and Lawrence would have celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on July 14, 1987.

Jean passed from this life on July 30, 1987. She was proceeded in death by her husband, Lawrence, her son, Duane, her parents, a brother, Elmo and a sister, Frances. She is survived by her children, Robert L. of Afton, Lynn A. of Osmond, Evelyn Marx of Geneva, Idaho, and Linda Rothenberger of Afton. She has 15 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Signe Katrine Fosberg Astle (1896-1968) – Family Search ID: K2WC-4CB
- <sup>2</sup> Ruth Judith Fosberg (1894-1924) – Family Search ID: K2WC-4HL
- <sup>3</sup> Johan Alfred Fosberg (1866-1917) – Family Search ID: KVRW-WRJ
- <sup>4</sup> Martha Amalia Andreassen Fosberg (1860-1937) – Family Search ID: LCFM-28W
- <sup>5</sup> Lars Jensen Halling (1866-1941) – Family Search ID: KWJD-14Q
- <sup>6</sup> Kierstena Marie Thomsen Halling (1873-1962) – Family Search ID: K WVH-HM1
- <sup>7</sup> John Francis Astle Jr (1892-1951) – Family Search ID: KWZS-3ZN
- <sup>8</sup> Atelia Fosberg Astle Parry (1916-1992) – Family Search ID: KW63-QL5
- <sup>9</sup> Jean Fosberg Astle Merritt (1918-1987) – Family Search ID: KWZQ-8Y4
- <sup>10</sup> Junior F. Astle (1920-1922) – Family Search ID: K27Y-ZX8
- <sup>11</sup> Boyd Fosberg Astle (1922-1996) – Family Search ID: KWC4-KMX
- <sup>12</sup> John Francis Astle (1869-1951) – Family Search ID: KWCD-P4L
- <sup>13</sup> Kay F. Astelle (1925-2013) – Family Search ID: LD9M-MXL
- <sup>14</sup> Arstanie Elvira Astle Nye (1899-1996) – Family Search ID: KW87-RPH
- <sup>15</sup> Laura Thelma Carling Astle (1901-1971) – Family Search ID: KWZS-3ZJ
- <sup>16</sup> Thelma Astle Beyeler (1928-1999) – Family Search ID: KW8Z-FYP
- <sup>17</sup> Cavelle Young (1918-1988) – Family Search ID: LCT7-FQQ
- <sup>18</sup> Jack Otis Young (1915-1998) – Family Search ID: LCT7-F9L
- <sup>19</sup> Leon Carling Astle (1930-2017) – Family Search ID: KWZS-3ZZ
- <sup>20</sup> Elmo Carling Astle (1931-1980) – Family Search ID: KWZZ-9B4
- <sup>21</sup> Dee Carling Astle (1933-2024) – Family Search ID: KWZZ-911
- <sup>22</sup> Lawrence James Merritt (1912-1987) – Family Search ID: KWZQ-8YH
- <sup>23</sup> Frances Astle Moser (1936-1974) – Family Search ID: K27Y-ZFX
- <sup>24</sup> Barbara Elizabeth Perkins Merritt (1891-1958) – Family Search ID: GHGM-6LH
- <sup>25</sup> Richard Gene Merritt (1933-1985) – Family Search ID: GHP4-DMB
- <sup>26</sup> Duane A. Merritt (1938-1939) – Family Search ID: 9MRQ-Y3W
- <sup>27</sup> Robert Lawrence Merritt (1939-) – Family Search ID:
- <sup>28</sup> Evelyn Merritt Marx (1941-2015) – Family Search ID: KWZQ-8YQ
- <sup>29</sup> Lynn A. Merritt (1945-) – Family Search ID:
- <sup>30</sup> Linda Sue Merritt (1955-) – Family Search ID: