

## **THE WAY I REMEMBER OUR BALL FAMILY**

**By  
Mabel Lorene Ball Sonnevik**

It is early in 2007, and I am starting to recall the W. S. Ball family history. I am nearly 80 years old. Some of the family has requested I do this. I realize it is up to me to pass on what I remember. I wish I had more information.

Ours was a blended family since my father, W. S. Ball, lost his first wife, Vivian, in childbirth when their third daughter, Ollie, was born. Laura was the oldest daughter and Lenore was the next oldest.

When Daddy married my mother, Winona Louise Barnum, Ollie was still very young, so Mother started out with a ready made family. To their marriage five children were born, Kathryn Grace, Orville Herbert, Elmer Allison, Mabel Lorene, and Arthur William.

By the time I was born in 1927 Laura, Lenore, and Ollie were on their own. Laura married Lowell Rambo in 1924 and had started their family. Their oldest child, Helen, was born before I was born. They had two other children, Lulu Mae and Richard..

Lenore was single until later in life when she married Herbert Orndoff after his first wife died. Lenore was a family friend of the Orndoffs. I will tell more about Lenore later.

Ollie married Harvey Rathbun. They had four children, Marilyn, Leslie, Elveda, and Ralph.

In spite of the fact that the three girls were on their own, we kept in close contact with them. In fact, after Daddy died in 1957 we started a round robin letter which continued for over 30 years. When Laura died her daughter, Helen, started writing, and when Ollie died, Marilyn took over. Eventually the RR stopped after several more deaths in the family.

Raising a family of eight children was not easy, especially during the Depression. I vaguely remember living in several different houses when I was very young. Daddy sold insurance and real estate, but not "big time." There was the time when he was the custodian of our church, First Church of the Nazarene, in Wichita. It was during that time he was injured while walking on ice to go to church to work. He was hit by a city bus. I don't recall all his injuries, but eventually he received a settlement. With that money he purchased a used car and bought the property at 417 Ellis in Wichita. An addition had to be put on the house to make more bedroom space. The house was never fully finished. Daddy had his desk in the bedroom so he could work out of the home. His health was never good after the accident. During World War II he worked at Boeing in Wichita.

I remember Mother, Winona Barnum Ball, did home nursing. She got her nurses training in Oklahoma before her marriage to Daddy. Another memory I have of Mother is of her baking bread and cinnamon rolls. At times the children were sent out to sell her baked goods. Dumplings were another one of her specialties. Mother also did baby sitting at church on Sundays and she was paid for baby sitting each Sunday. With that money she would go to the small grocery store nearby to buy food for our Sunday dinner. I don't remember going hungry, but we ate a lot of whole wheat cereal for breakfast and beans for other meals. Many times we got food staples like butter handed out by the relief organizations.

There were times either Lenore, Aunt Bertha, or Grandma Barnum had to stay with us, and when that was necessary, a bed was set up in the living room. There was only one bathroom for all of us. When we didn't have a hot water heater, we took our Saturday night bath in a number 2 tub in the kitchen. When the electricity was turned off because the bill wasn't paid, we used coal oil lamps for lighting and for ironing we had heavy irons that we heated on the wood burning stove. Fortunately we did not have to live that way forever. Things got better when Daddy started working at Boeing.

Our family wasn't perfect, but I feel blessed to be born into a Christian family. I have memories of family worship and the family gathering around the old piano and singing hymns. Our lives were centered in the church.

All three of my half sisters were involved in ministry. Laura and Lowell pastored several Nazarene churches. One time in particular I drove with Daddy to visit them in Nebraska. Lenore was a minister. She held revivals and conducted many vacation Bible schools for children in the summer. As I mentioned earlier, she married Herbert Orndoff in 1978. They lived in Colorado for awhile then they moved to Gravette, Arkansas where Lenore lived several years after Herbert died.. We visited her there many times.. It was so sad when she started having alsheimer. She was in several facilities before she died. She was buried in Rogers, Arkansas, where her mother was buried.

Ollie and Harvey pastored several Nazarene churches. Sadly, he got involved with another lady. He lost his license to preach and Ollie filed for divorce. Her later life was spent in Bethany, OK close to some of her children. She worked for years at Deaconess Hospital and had her own house. She died of a massive stroke. I attended her funeral in Bethany. She too was buried in Rogers, Arkansas.

Kathryn was the oldest of the five of us. She had a curvature of the back from childhood. Her life was rocky. She married John Munro and they had four children, John, Don, Helen, and Ron. Kate and John divorced and the children were placed in foster homes. John was able to get the children and took them all to California to live. I

don't remember the details, but Kate ended up going to California and remarried John. Again they divorced. She then married Frank Rich. They divorced also. Kate and her daughter Helen Powels were at our family reunion in Wichita in 1986 after Mother's death. I don't remember the details of Kate's death, but she was buried in one of the plots Daddy bought years ago in old Mission Cemetery in Wichita. Milton and I bought her marker.

Orville was the next oldest. My memory of him was that his life was centered in the church. Orville and Betty married on a Wednesday night after prayer meeting. The ceremony was late in starting because the pianist was late due to the heavy snow storm. They raised four lovely children, Lenn, Daryl, Peggy, and Dennis. Orville and Betty were also heavily involved with the music in any church they attended. Orville played his trumpet and Betty played the piano or organ. They also held services in nursing homes. They had a home in Wichita and kept it even when they moved to Seattle to work at Boeing. They lived in the Seattle area for many years and moved back to Wichita after retirement. While they were in Washington they took Mother into their home for five years. She eventually was put into a nursing home until her death at the age of 90 in 1986. Prior to her living with them she lived a while with Ollie in Bethany, Oklahoma. Orville suffered a stroke several years ago, but he died for cancer. Betty also died of cancer. They both lived in a nursing home for a time at the end. Milton and I were out of town and could not attend Orville's funeral, but we did attend Betty's funeral in 2005. They are both buried in Wichita.

Elmer was the next one to be born. My memory of him is mainly as a teenager and adult. Elmer and Orville each had paper routes. I remember one Christmas Eve they brought a Christmas tree home. No doubt it was one that didn't cost anything. We decorated it with strings of popcorn and home made decorations. Elmer gave me my first Bible. I will never forget it. Elmer mowed the lawn of our favorite sixth grade teacher, Miss Radie Jane Mark. Before finishing high school Elmer joined the National Guard. I remember the family was there to see him off to camp and I cried. He wasn't in very long before he joined the Navy. He stayed in the Navy until his retirement. He met Jan Willows while in the Navy and they married. Most of the time they lived in Seattle, Washington. They raised a beautiful family of four children, Nancy, Ron, Lorrie, and Randy. Elmer was the one in our family we always depended upon to be the decision maker. He was the leader of the Ball clan. It was a thrill to have Elmer, Jan, and Nancy come to Milton's and my wedding in Wichita, Kansas. They even drove to Bethany, Oklahoma to pick us up and take us to Wichita. Elmer stood up with Milton as best man. Milton's sister, Edith, stood up with me. We had a flower girl from the church already picked out. Nancy was so disappointed she could not be the flower girl. Elmer and Arthur wanted to charivari us, but we foiled that plan by staying in the apartment where we had our reception. Lenore stayed in the motel room we had reserved.

One time I specifically remember visiting Elmer and Jan in their home on Par Place in Seattle. I believe he built the house with the help of contractor friends. It was a beautiful home with a big backyard for the children to play in. While Elmer was working, Jan, Milton and I took a Greyline Sightseeing boat trip around Seattle. When the family moved to Florida after Elmer's retirement they stopped by to see us in Pasadena, California. We were able to visit them in Florida a few times. I well remember when Elmer called us in Pasadena telling us he had accepted Christ in his heart. What a thrill that was! What a shock it was when he called us to tell us he had prostate cancer. It was devastating to see our big brother, who had been the picture of health gradually lose his fight with cancer. Milton and I visited them a little while before Elmer passed away in 1990. I flew down to Florida for his memorial service in Altamonte Springs. Elmer and Jan had a favorite spot on Mount Storm King in the State of Washington and that is where Elmer's ashes were scattered. A Ball jar filled with pertinent information was buried by a special tree and a plaque put on the tree. In 1994 Jan passed away with melanoma cancer, and her ashes were scattered in the same area. Most of the family hiked up the mountain and held a service conducted by Randy. Milton was part of that group, but I stayed at the bed and breakfast with Arthur. That night we burned sparklers in memory of Jan. The next morning we did "the ski ballet" according to the specific written directions Jan had written years before her passing. What a way to go and what a celebration! We are looking forward to the Elmer and Jan Ball Family reunion on Lopez Island in June, 2007.

I, Mabel, made my entry into this family on August 10, 1927. I was born at 1818 Ida in Wichita, Kansas. All of us were born at home. I remember living in several different houses, but most of my recollections are from 417 Ellis. My life has been wrapped up in music. Mother washed diapers so I could take my first piano lessons. When I was in high school a few of my friends and I drove to Bethany, Oklahoma to visit a friend at Bethany-Peniel College, now Southern Nazarene University. That sparked an interest in me to go to college. I saved the money I made while working at Dillon's grocery store the summer after I graduated from high school. The folks helped all they could also. I started my college career September 1945 at BPC. I majored in voice. I received voice scholarships for three years. I sang solos, duets, and trios. I was in a trio that traveled for the college in the summers with the president and his wife which helped to pay my school bills. My senior year I taught voice lessons. I gave three recitals in my sophomore, junior, and senior years. In my junior year I had to take German as one of my courses. That is when I met Milton. He had just arrived in Bethany to visit his friend Meredith Hollingsworth. Meredith was instrumental in getting Milton enrolled as a freshman. Also the college was in need of a German teacher. Milton was fluent in German because he studied German in school plus Norway was occupied by Germany during WWII for five years. The administrators at the college took a chance on Milton. He ended up teaching German for three years. Milton and I also took a history class at the same time. We studied for tests together. We started dating by late November, 1947.

Valentine's night, 1948 he proposed to me. At that time he suggested we wait for two years, like they did in Norway. I agreed. We married Thanksgiving Night, November 25, 1948, nine months after he proposed to me. As you can see, we didn't lose any time. I borrowed a wedding dress and a veil. I would have borrowed shoes, but my feet were too big. Milton was given money to buy a new suit by a dear friend at school. We were married in my home church, Wichita First Church of the Nazarene. It was a simple wedding. Many friends attended, but we had a small reception at a friend's apartment. Milton asked Mother if they were broke because of the wedding. She said "No, but we are badly bent." We have laughed over that many times. Their main expense was two baskets of gladiolas. Aunt Bertha paid for the small wedding cake. It has been a wonderful marriage for these 58 plus years. Monday morning, following the Thursday wedding, we were back in class. We didn't have a honeymoon until after we had Margretta and Kenneth. I graduated in May, 1949. Milton graduated in 1953. It took a little longer for Milton because of his teaching along with his schooling.

The superintendent of Putnam City Schools knocked on our apartment door one morning and asked me to come and teach music in the high school and seventh grade science in the junior high which I did. I taught two years until I had Margretta in 1951. Then I taught music in the Bethany grade school until I had Kenneth in 1955.

We moved to Wichita late in 1955 to be close to Mom and Dad. Daddy was in ill health. We lived in Wichita for six years. During that time we both worked at Boeing. I worked for five years and Milton one and a half. He also taught sixth grade for four years. Along with teaching Milton attended Wichita University working on his masters degree which he received in the late summer of 1961. For two years I also was the unpaid choir director at my home church. It was a real privilege.

We both felt it was time to move on. In the fall of 1961 we moved to Pasadena, California. Milton taught five years in Arcadia, California, then he was assigned principal of the brand new grade school named Baldwin Stocker School. He was the principal of that school for 20 successful years. I went to Pasadena College for a year to get my California credential. I taught in the Pasadena district from 1966-86. We both retired in 1986.

During the years in Pasadena I was soprano soloist at Westminster Presbyterian Church for eight years. I sang in our own churches also. I was privileged to be the soprano soloist in the Messiah at Pasadena College as well as in Bethany-Peniel College in my senior year, plus several years after we moved to Wichita.

Margretta attended Pasadena College for one year, then went to Eastern Nazarene College for three years. She graduated with honors. She married Mark Bromley in her junior year. They have three wonderful children, Rachel, Jonathan, and Matthew. Rachel married Greg Croteau, Jonathan married Lorie Oliver, and Matthew married

Nicole Braddock. Rachel and Greg have two children, Ethan and Lauren. Jonathan and Lorie have a daughter, Hailey. That means we are great-grandparents. All three of our grandchildren are professionals. Rachel is a medical doctor, Greg is a high school counselor, Jonathan is a high school science teacher, and Lorie is an elementary teacher. Matthew is a medical doctor and Nicole is a professional speaker. We are very proud of the whole family. Margretta is a medical lab technician and Mark has a doctorate in marriage and family counseling. He does social work.

Kenneth has been a blessing to our family. He graduated from Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, California in 1978. He graduated with a major in business. He was married for a short time to Jenny Watts. Fortunately, they had no children. Then he was blessed in meeting Carol Thielenhaus. In March Kenneth and Carol celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. When they married Carol's two young sons stood up with them. Mark and Michelle Thielenhaus and their two daughters, Emily and Crystal live in Homer, Alaska. They are officers in the Salvation Army. Tim, Evelyn, and Bryden Thielenhaus live in Novato, California. Tim is a computer whiz. In 2003 Kenneth and Carol moved their business of making plastic caps to Olathe, Kansas from Santa Rosa, California. Carol had retired from teaching prior to helping Kenneth with his business. They merged their business with a similar business in Olathe, Kansas.

Milton and I both retired from our teaching assignments in California in 1986. By June of 1987 we moved to Oklahoma City to be close to Milton's family, old friends, and our church. We spent nearly 17 years there. It was a good move for us. After Kenneth and Carol moved to Olathe, Kansas, we decided it was time for us to downsize and move to a retirement home in Overland Park, Kansas in April, 2004. Again, it was a good move. Carol's mother is across the hall from us here at Silvercrest Retirement Community, and Kenneth and Carol live 30 minutes away. How convenient for them when they come to visit all of us! We feel it was providential that we moved when we did. A few months after we moved here Milton lost his ability to walk. He ended up in the hospital. He had surgery for a herniated disk, but that was not the problem. It was the result of two medications he had been taking for many years. He was in the hospital for a month. Thanks to the prayers by many, good therapists, and determination, Milton is walking again with the aide of a cane.

We are very happy here at Silvercrest. We have made many friends, and it's wonderful to be close to Kenneth and Carol. They are so caring and loving.

I have told the most about our family, because that is what I know best. We have had a good life together and we give God the glory. What more can you ask when you have two wonderful children and their beautiful families.

Arthur was the last sibling to be born in November 1929. I don't have many memories of our early years. Dad and Mom did send him to John Brown Military School when he was young. Later he too joined the Navy and was stationed in the Seattle area.

He and Elmer were closer in those days. Arthur's life was a little rocky in those years. He married Irene. They had a son, David Arthur. Irene and he divorced. He married another lady, Marilyn, after that. In his later years he lived with Irene again. His son, David, had a weight problem. He was very obese. He passed away while living in Oklahoma City. We attended his funeral. Art had lived with David and his wife, Cathy, some of the time. Occasionally, we would see each other. Arthur started smoking at a very young age. It took its toll on him and he suffered physically because of it. We kept in touch through the round robin letters for thirty years. He eventually was in a Veteran's Hospital in Spokane, Washington. We called each other occasionally and we always sent Art and Irene our annual Christmas letter. This past Christmas the letter was returned because he was no longer there. I have made numerous attempt to make contact with him and/or Irene, but have been unable to do so. I remember Art loved to play his organ. He played by ear, and he was quite good at it.

As I bring this report to an end, I want to let you know who were the siblings of Mother and Daddy. Mother had one brother, Ted Barnum. He and his wife, Flo, lived in Denver, Colorado. They had one son, Teddy. Daddy had four siblings, Walter, Grace, Edna, and Bertha. Uncle Walter and Aunt Lizzie Ball lived on a farm near Cheney, Kansas. Aunt Grace and Uncle Ralph Iliff lived in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Aunt Edna and Uncle Wayne Stitt lived in Dodge City, Kansas. Aunt Bertha Ball lived in Wichita most of her life. I remember she and her father, Grandpa Zopher Ball lived in a small house together until his death. She worked in various people's homes or she lived with our family. After Mother and Aunt Bertha broke up house keeping at 417 Ellis, Aunt Bertha went to Dodge City and lived with Aunt Edna and Uncle Wayne until her death. As I mentioned before, Mother went to live with Ollie in Bethany, Oklahoma, until she went to Washington to live with Orville and Betty.

Each family has a unique history. Much more could be said, but I have attempted to hit the highlights. I trust this history lesson will be helpful to all of you. Some day some of you might want to pass this on to your children and grandchildren.

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