

Life Sketch of Woodrow W. Longhurst

(Compiled by Shelly Longhurst Crockett, Woody's daughter)

Woodrow Wilson (Woody) Longhurst was born February 10, 1920 in the Mormon colony of Dublan, Mexico to Warren Longhurst and Mary Lovenia Moffett. He is the only child born to that marriage, but has 3 half-brothers and 3 half-sisters, with Woody being the youngest of the family. Due to his mother's ill health, much of his early childhood was spent living in the home of his maternal grandparents along with his mother and his sisters, Della and Bessie.

As a young boy, Woody learned to work in his grandparents' garden and help with other chores. He also began his life-long love of fishing, sometimes stringing his fishing line up through his pant leg and not using a pole so he could slip off for a while without his grandpa or others discovering his activity. As was common for boys in that era, he also got into a few good fist-fights occasionally.

He was baptized on his eighth birthday in a cold flowing well. That fall, his grandparents moved from Mexico to Mesa, Arizona to work in the newly-completed Mesa temple. Woody, Della, Bessie and their mother, Lovenia moved to Mesa with them. Woody generally spent most of the school year at home with them, but spent the summers with other relatives helping with chores.

Just two years later, when Woody was only ten years old, his mother suffered a stroke and passed away in Mesa. For the next three years, Woody lived with cousins in Verdin, New Mexico, and then returned to Colonia Dublan to live with his father. Back in Dublan, he worked in his father's nursery business and attended school at the Juarez Stake Academy. Woody always enjoyed music whether he was playing the harmonica, singing Spanish songs, or whistling a seemingly endless repertoire of tunes.

When Woody was 16, the United States was trying to recover from The Great Depression. His brother, Preston, convinced Woody to join him in the Civilian Conservation Corp as a Forest Service employee. Using a pick and shovel, they worked hard on soil conservation projects in Arizona and helped build a dam in the Gila River Valley. This job lasted until it was discovered that Woody was under age and was fired. He then became adept at "riding the rails" and worked a variety of jobs such as growing produce and trucking it to nearby towns in Arizona and New Mexico.

He and his brother, Preston, went to Durango, Colorado after hearing of possible work at a mining camp. Woody got a job as cook's helper in the boarding house for the miners.

Two days later, the cook had an appendicitis attack and died, so Woody became the cook for the entire camp until the mine closed down several months later.

By this time, Woody was 18 years old and eventually found himself in Tyhee, Idaho working on a Sugar Beet topping crew. Calvin McComber, Sr. invited him to work in his dairy in Pocatello and stay with his family. He also invited Woody to attend church with them at the Pocatello 5th Ward and encouraged him to get acquainted with the bishop's daughters – the Quinn girls. Woody accepted and followed Brother McComber's counsel. He met Rachel Irene Quinn in 1938 and, after many months of courtship, they were married in the Salt Lake Temple on February 23, 1940.

During that time, World War II was in progress. A recruiter from an airline mechanic school in Los Angeles came to Pocatello and visited with Woody while he was working at the dairy. Woody and Rachel recognized that the schooling would prepare him for good job opportunities, so Woody moved to Los Angeles to begin the training. He did a variety of odd jobs to pay his expenses while in school and shortly after completing the training, he began working at Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica, California. At that time, Rachel was then able to join him.

They enjoyed their time in California, getting to know the area, and supplementing their diet with fallen fruit that they were able to glean and fresh fish that Woody caught. Later, Woody was offered another job with an increase in pay at Lockheed in Burbank, California. Their first son, Warren, was born in Los Angeles in 1943.

Being surrounded by airplanes all the time instilled in Woody a desire to fly. A co-worker at Lockheed had joined the Aviation Cadet Corp, which was a branch of the Army Air Corp. Woody was very interested, but was told he would need two years of college before he would be considered. He was very motivated to learn how to fly, so he continued his job at Lockheed and began attending night school until he earned his High School Completion. Then, in order to attend Los Angeles City College during the day, he worked the night shift at Lockheed.

After finishing his second year of college, he was finally accepted for Cadet Training to be a pilot and went to Miami Beach, Florida for Basic Training. Rachel and Warren then joined Woody as he began his series of training assignments in South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, and North Carolina. Woody said, "Rachel and I didn't mind the moving around. We felt we were extremely lucky to have this unique opportunity. The military didn't accommodate wives at all. Rachel and Warren usually lived in the same vicinity as other wives off base – sometimes in houses with shared kitchens and bathroom facilities. I would stay with them on weekends or when I had

time off. Wherever we were, I usually found some good fishing spots. Rachel would sometimes go fishing with me, and other times I went with buddies.”

Woody was eventually assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division, which still exists today. He served in the troop carrier command, which trained paratroopers. He enjoyed this and loved all types of flying.

Because of his ability to speak Spanish, Woody and two other officers were chosen to travel to Mexico to train a squadron of fighter pilots to fly commercial C-47's. This was the beginning of Mexican Airlines. The Mexican government treated them well and awarded them honorary Mexican Air Force wings after they completed their assignment.

World War II was over by this time, but Woody had the option to stay in the military. However, as he was returning to the United States as a passenger on a commercial flight, Woody had a strong spiritual impression come to him that he should leave the military, return to Pocatello, build a house and raise a family. Ironically, during that same flight, he was approached by a representative from the Shell Oil Company, who noticed Woody's pilot wings on his uniform. After an impromptu interview, he offered Woody a large salary to be a pilot for Shell Oil Company, flying for them in Venezuela and Panama. Woody really appreciated the opportunity but, remembering the strong prompting he had felt earlier, he turned down the offer.

He fulfilled his required flying time at Hill Field, Utah, completing his military service and returned to Pocatello where Rachel and Warren, and soon-to-be-born DeVon, were waiting. Woody started working as a car mechanic and, when spring arrived, began building a basement house on the property they had purchased on Quinn Road from Rachel's father.

In 1949, he started what would become nearly a 38-year career working at Garrett Freightlines. In reminiscing, Woody said, “Working for Garretts was about the best thing that ever happened to me. It provided a steady income and good insurance coverage that helped pay for the births of the additional eight children, and other financial needs of the family throughout the years.” Woody developed and maintained his philosophy of holding a permanent job and then engaging in other things on the side, if desired or needed.

At Garretts, Woody's foresight prompted him to take additional night courses at Idaho State University at his own expense. When Garretts upgraded their fleet to include refrigeration units, Woody was the only one already qualified and got the promotion as the main refrigeration mechanic. He eventually convinced his foreman that it would

benefit the company for Woody to work the early shift so the trucks coming in for repairs could get back on the road in a more timely manner. This earlier schedule also enabled Woody daylight hours in the afternoon to direct after-school chores for the kids, grow a large garden, fulfill his church callings, and still have time for some outdoor recreation.

Throughout the next several years, Warren, DeVon, Karyn, Connie, Sandra, Loalyn, Shelly, Glen and David were all taught the value of honest labor by working in the dairy, on the milk route, in the store and large garden, helping around the house, and in fulfilling Church assignments. Woody and Rachel taught these things by precept, as well as by example. They also provided recreational activities for the family such as hunting, fishing, ice-skating, boating, water- and snow-skiing, and snowmobiling.

Woody and Rachel purchased a piano and enrolled the children in piano and violin lessons as they became old enough. They felt the culture that music would bring to the family was a much-needed balance to the cows!

Woody was loyal in his service in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was ordained to the office of Seventy and served a mission to the Mexican people in the Pocatello and Tyhee area. His life also included service as a financial clerk, Stake Welfare Clerk, High Councilor, manager of the Stake Welfare Farms, home teacher, High Priest Group instructor, Bishop's Counselor, and Bishop.

Rachel was diagnosed with cancer in 1975 and, after 40 years of marriage to Woody, she passed away in January of 1980.

Due to this change in circumstances, Woody found himself in a different season of life. He later commented that, "Inspiration guided me to another wonderful companion and family. When I first met April Barton, it was revealed to me that I was looking at my future wife. It was a shocking experience for me, but as I had learned to recognize the Lord's guiding hand in my life, I never doubted that it was right.

"April has many talents and uses them to help other people. She really jumped in wholeheartedly at being a mother and grandmother to this large family. She works hard at keeping up on everyone and has a genuine love for every member of the family. She works hard with me in the gardening and store business. April has said to me, Woody, you started all these projects to keep the kids busy. The only problem is, the kids have gone, but the busy has stayed!"

April's children, Catherine, Dan, Sue and John have been a wonderful addition to the Longhurst family, and Woody loved them and their families as if they were his own.

Due to Woody's declining health, April and Woody sold their family home and farm in Pocatello, Idaho in June of 2006. It was a difficult adjustment to move to Orem, Utah, but they have both enjoyed being closer to more of their family. They also recently enjoyed serving at the Missionary Training Center, where new missionaries practiced their Spanish and teaching skills with them.

Not long ago Woody commented, "I love my wife and our joint and extended families. I can say that I have been privileged to have been married to the two best women in the world. I can truly say my cup runneth over! I love life. I find joy in being a part of the Lord's plan here on earth. I love the Lord, have a strong testimony of the gospel and have been happy in serving. I like to be active and usefully productive and it is equally pleasing for me to see others achieve."

Woody passed away on Tuesday afternoon, June 26th, 2007 at their home in Orem, Utah, at age 87. We are grateful to be part of the legacy he has left behind, and we are happy that he is now able to be active and productive once again, as he would desire.