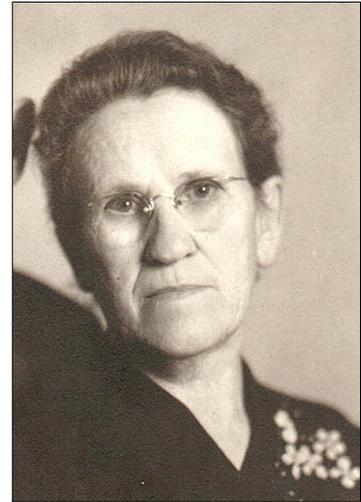


A life sketch of

Nettie Luella Wilkins Randall

1885 – 1973

July 25, 1885 was not just another hot summer day on the Wilkins Farm. It was a day that would bring great joy to the family of Charles Jr. and Ury Welch Wilkins. This was not a new event for Charles and Ury, as this would be the fifteenth child born to them. But each member of the family was precious and this new daughter, Nettie Luella, was no different. She was blessed April 1, 1886.



Nettie was born in South Cottonwood, Salt Lake County, Utah. Her father was fifty eight years old when she was born and was engaged in farming with his sons. It was not easy to make ends meet for such a large family, especially with the difficult years of clearing land, devising irrigation systems and fighting Mother Nature, but Charles and Ury managed the best they could. Often something was made from nothing, food was always prepared to stretch and somehow the Wilkins family was raised.

Nettie's first years were spent close to her mother. As older children married and left the Wilkins home, Ury's workload eased a bit, but her health was not good. On November 8, 1891, Ury passed away. This was an overwhelming loss for Charles and his children. It was not long until he married Harriet Cox, which again brought stability to his family's home life.

On August 11, 1895, John G. Labrum baptized Nettie a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

At the age of 9, Nettie was forced to face more changes in her young life. Her father died March 12, 1896. It was decided that Nettie would go to live with her sister, Mary Jane. Mary Jane had married and was living in Salt Lake City. Nettie helped Mary Jane around the

house when she was not in school. As she grew older, Nettie hired out to do cleaning and household chores. Because of these circumstances, Nettie was not able to attend school regularly. She completed the 7th grade, which was the extent of her formal education.

When Nettie was seventeen years old, she moved to Idaho to live with her brother Jessie. Jessie lived just north of Idaho Falls in the community of Coltman. Nettie again hired out to do housework in order to help with her keep.

Nettie's brother, Henry, was also living in the Coltman area. He and Jessie made every effort to help their sister get acquainted with other young people. The social event for both young and old was the weekly dances held at the Grant Hall. Henry walked several miles with Nettie and escorted her to these dances. It was not long until she met a young man who became a good friend. They lived just a few miles from each other and took advantage of that short distance to spend much of their time together.

On November 26, 1903, Nettie married Charles Aceil 'Ace' Randall. They were married at the home of his parents in Grant, Jefferson County, Idaho by Bishop A. K. Dabell.

Their first home was with his parents, Charles and Harriet Randall. Ace helped his father farm and take care of their cattle herd, and Nettie helped Harriet with the washing and cooking, mending and other household chores.

On September 21, 1904, Hazel Luella was born. Nettie was delighted with this little daughter. Her dream of being a mother had come true.

Charles and Harriet deeded 80-acres of their 320-acre homestead to Ace. This gave Ace and Nettie their own farm. Ace built a three-room house and Nettie added a woman's touch to this basic, humble home.

On June 19, 1907, Ace and Nettie took Hazel and traveled to Salt Lake City where they were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple.

In the fall of 1908, Ace was issued a call to serve a mission for the Church to the Southern States. The idea of him being gone for two years brought many concerns for Nettie.

Determined to exercise their faith and trust that they would be taken care of, Ace accepted the call. Nettie was expecting their second child. The decision was made to have her move in with Ace's parents. They felt they could care for her needs and offer her support. Ace and Nettie rented their home and moved their belongings back to Charles and Harriet's home.

Nettie and Hazel bid Ace goodbye on October 13, 1908. Letters would be the only means of communication for this family for the next two years. As the letters began to arrive, Nettie found comfort in the experiences and opportunities Ace had to teach the gospel and gain a stronger testimony of his own. In return, her weekly letters to Ace kept him updated on the news of the community, his family and Hazel.

Nettie busied herself with chores to help Charles and Harriet. Helping where she could made Nettie feel like she was earning her keep. She had learned to crochet and embroider as a young girl and she loved to create beautiful patterns with her handiwork. Crocheting helped fill many hours when her thoughts were far away in the Southern States.

On June 24, 1909, another daughter was born. Nettie was overjoyed and sent a letter to Elder Randall telling him of his new daughter named Alta May. Being the mother of two kept Nettie busy and made her even more anxious to have her family back together.

The fall of 1910 brought Ace home to Grant and his waiting family. Nettie was excited to get her family moved back into their home. Making the house a home was a priority for Nettie and she enjoyed baking and keeping house.

Later that fall, Ace heard of a young man who had been abandoned and left in Idaho Falls. Ace met the young man and brought him home. Nettie and Ace opened their home and hearts to Walt Winters. This young man, who was eleven years old, became a son to the Randalls. Walt was always treated as a member of the family. Although Nettie and Ace never legally adopted him, he was known as Walt Randall all of his life.

Nettie was an active member of the Church and served in many capacities. She was a dependable and busy member of the Relief Society and served as counselor for several years. She was a Visiting Teacher most of her life, which was always a joy to her. Nettie had the

opportunity to serve in leadership positions in the Mutual Improvement Association (MIA), a program for young women in the Church, and in the Primary.

Nettie and Ace welcomed another member to their family on November 8, 1911. They were thrilled to have a son and named him Charles Milton. This was a wonderful time for the entire family.

Nettie often thought back on her young life and remembered how it felt to not have the love and support of parents. She was determined her children would always feel loved and secure. It was a natural thing for her to welcome complete strangers into her home. Ace was always bringing someone home and Nettie would make them supper and find them a place to stay. Offering others the warmth and security felt in her home seemed to be a need Nettie never tired of.

Ace helped organize and operate rodeos for many years. His involvement always brought an increased number to Nettie's table. Harvest was another time that Nettie could expect extras in their home. She was always happy to share what she had and was blessed with the ability to make anyone feel welcome. Sometimes work crews of fifteen to twenty men would arrive at noon ready to eat. Nettie was a wonderful cook. Nettie's mornings were spent cooking and setting up make shift tables to accommodate the workers. Hours of work over the hot stove seemed well worth it as she satisfied their appetites and graciously accepted their 'compliments to the chef'. Fried chicken and baking powder biscuits were the menu usually served. Breakfast was always eggs and unsalted bacon.

At one time, Nettie became acquainted with the new teacher of the Grant School and soon invited her to live with them. This teacher, Dora Erickson, became a renowned educator in Idaho. Dora and Nettie, in spite of their age difference, became good friends and remained close all their lives.

In a tribute sent to Nettie, Dora wrote:

Your house was immaculate and the hospitality that you extended to me was indeed a balm for 'a little girl' somewhat bewildered by the great responsibility I had assumed.

Your husband was serving in the Bishopric of the Grant Ward. What an enthusiastic worker he was! You were an ardent supporter of him in the great work. Do you remember the Grant Community Drama Club? We made many presentations all over the valley and you went with us many times.

Your home was a gathering place for all the young people in the ward. Many happy times were enjoyed there. I often wondered how you fed so many of us and put up with our foolishness.

Nettie's brother, Heber, lived with Nettie and Ace for ten years. A room in the wash house was converted into a bedroom and was a cozy place for him to keep his things and sleep. Other members of the family, as well as hired hands, friends and occasionally complete strangers, shared this room and a place at the Randall table through the years.

Nettie's baking was second to none. She could accurately gauge the wood burning stove to produce baked goods of perfection. Her home always smelled of fresh baked bread, cookies and cakes. She kept her home tidy and clean. Making her home a pleasant place for her children and Ace was important to her and she worked at it constantly. For many years, she made do with her three-room home and her outdoor plumbing. An old wash board and hand ringer was the only convenience she knew through years of mountain high loads of wash. Hours at her treadle sewing machine produced items of clothing, patchwork quilt tops, and mending.

Five years after their son Milt was born, Nettie gave birth to another daughter. On February 18, 1916, Ora was born. Nettie was very sick and required surgery that left her in bed for the following six months. Nieces came to stay with Nettie and helped take care of the new baby, as well as chores around the house. Nettie's determination to get well so she could again care for her family resulted in a full recuperation and as soon as possible she was back to managing her home without help.

For fifteen years, Ace spent the spring, summer and fall in the Roberts area tending herds of cattle. With Ace gone, most of the time during these busy months, Nettie was left to

manage not only the house and children, but also the day to day chores of tending the chickens and small animals on the farm, as well as weed and water their large garden. Life was busy and she used many opportunities to teach her children the value of work. Long, busy days were Nettie's regular schedule. It was always a welcomed event to have the cattle trailed back to Grant and to have Ace back home.

On June 10, 1925, Hazel married John Helm. This was the beginning of a new stage in Nettie's life. After concentrating all her efforts on caring for her family's every need, it was a different experience to see her children start lives of their own and leave the nest.

Walt married Leone Waters on April 27, 1929, Alta married Charles Sherwood on August 22, 1934, Ora married Victor Oswald on November 26, 1937 and Milt married Violet Oswald on August 16, 1938. As each child married, Nettie and Ace welcomed the new couple into their home and shared all they had with the newlyweds until homes of their own could be established. Milt and Violet built a home on the corner and Milt continued to farm with Ace. Walt and Leone eventually purchased a home just down the road and farmed a parcel of land there. Ora and Vic bought a farm on East River Road, which was within a mile of the Randalls. Nettie liked having her family close and saw them all most daily.

These years were filled with many good times. They also had times filled with sorrow. On December 25, 1939, Nettie had gathered with her family at the home of her daughter Ora. A typical day of food and laughter was well under way as this close family wiled away the hours celebrating Christmas. Not long after family members had left for their homes, Nettie and Ace were advised that their daughter Hazel had been involved in a car-train collision. Hazel was killed instantly; a devastating ending to a perfect day. It was like a flashback in time for Nettie. Hazel's three year old daughter was left without a mother. How well Nettie knew what would lie ahead for Patsy. Once again, Nettie opened her home and her heart. Patsy was taken into her grandparent's home and raised as a daughter. Nettie tried to afford her all the love and support possible. Out of this terrible tragedy a special bond developed between Patsy and her grandparents.

Nettie was an interwoven part of the lives of those who knew her. Her genuine hospitality touched many that stayed in her home and was felt by many who associated with her. She had a quiet manner that preferred to stay busy and in the background. When there was a need, Nettie was working on it. She was generous with all she had and willing to go the extra mile for anyone.

It was an exciting treat for Nettie to go to town shopping and socializing. This was often a two or three day trip. Going by team and wagon took most of the first day, shopping and visiting was the schedule for the next day and then the drive home was made late that night or the next morning. She loved to visit and catch up on the news of her friends and family.

Nettie made many close friends in Grant. Her activity in the Relief Society provided activities and opportunities to nourish those friendships. Nettie looked forward to the annual Relief Society Campout. Ladies from Grant traveled to Pine Basin where they slept overnight in the lodge. Recipes were exchanged, patterns and quilt ideas were shared, and singing and stories were all part of the agenda Nettie looked forward to. Best of all were the friendships forever cemented after a weekend together.

Nettie loved to have her family near. Holidays and birthdays were especially important, as she knew the daily demands would minimize and the family would be together. Living within a mile of most of her children gave her an advantage when grand children joined the Randall family. Daily she was in touch with one or all of the families. Grand children were often in her home throughout the day, taste testing her fresh baked goods, admiring her latest crochet project or just fulfilling the need to be close to Grandma. Nettie had a special place in her heart for each of them and they knew it.

Nettie had the uncanny ability to recognize who was approaching by the sound of their sleigh bells. During the long, cold winter months, travel was only possible with teams and sleighs and each sleigh had bells attached. It was an instant contest to see if Grandma dared wager a guess as the tinkling of sleigh bells could be heard in the distance. It was always a relief that no money had been bet when the company arrived, proving once again that Grandma was right.

Nettie had learned at an early age to harness the horses and drive the wagons or buggies to provide transportation for her self and others. She was accustomed to harnessing the team to the buggy and keeping up with weekly schedules as needed. When the horse and buggy was replaced with the automobile, Nettie had no interest in learning to drive. Through the years she depended on others to do the driving. Family and neighbors saw to it that she had rides to Church and town.

In 1950, Ace started to experience trouble with his health. He suffered a heart attack in 1953. A weakened heart, followed by several strokes, left him weak and unable to work. Nettie could only offer support and encouragement at a time when there was little else that could medically be done.

On November 26, 1953, Nettie and Ace celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. A small party was held at Ora's home. The day was spent with family and close friends who dropped by to congratulate the couple. Nettie enjoyed reliving memories she and Ace had made through their fifty years together.

The winter months that followed kept Nettie close to home taking care of Ace, baking, cleaning and crocheting. Her concerns grew as Ace suffered another heart attack and then a brain hemorrhage on March 24, 1954. He was left bed ridden and struggling with memory loss. Nettie spent her time trying to meet his needs and make him comfortable.

On May 23, 1954 Ace passed away and was buried in the Central Cemetery at Grant, Jefferson County, Idaho. This was an inevitable moment in time Nettie had always dreaded. She did not like to be alone. Patsy was still at home, which was a blessing to Nettie during this difficult time of adjustment. She continued to quilt and do handiwork projects with embroidery and crochet. She made most of her grand children afghans during these long days.

After Patsy was married December 2, 1955, Nettie was uncomfortable spending her nights alone. The plan developed to have grand children take turns staying with Grandma. The rotation began and many great memories were created as the evenings with Grandma were spent watching TV, story telling and playing Chinese Checkers until bedtime.

The years that followed were filled with many wonderful times, but they also had their sad times too. On May 11, 1961, Milt died suddenly from a heart attack. On April 23, 1966, Walt died. These times required faith and courage, which Nettie proved she was made of.

In 1965, Nettie's family honored her with an 80th Birthday Party. Invitations were sent, and friends and family members attended her Open House. She was overwhelmed at the outpouring of love and concern for her. Many tributes were made in honor of this wonderful lady.

At some point during Nettie's life she experienced significant hearing loss. She was able to acquire a hearing aid, which did help her stay in touch with happenings going on around her. There were times when she was grateful for the help of the hearing aids and times when it was to her advantage to turn them off. When a thunderstorm would roll through, she could turn them off and sleep like a baby. Nettie was always frightened by the thunder and the dark. At times when Ace needed her help herding the cows or some other chore she did not care for, she could turn them off and innocently ignore his call for help. You might say she learned to live with this disability very well.

After Ora was born, Nettie had difficulty with her legs. The condition was called 'milk leg'. At first just one leg would swell and ache, but eventually both legs were affected and caused her a lot of discomfort. She felt fortunate that she otherwise experienced good health and was able to care for herself and her home. As Nettie got older and it became more difficult to take care of the daily chores, the decision was made to sell the farm and move to Idaho Falls where she could be checked on often. This was another difficult adjustment for Nettie. What she wanted and what she needed did not allow her many choices.

After the move to Idaho Falls, it became a challenge to keep her busy. Family and friends were good to spend time with her, but she was never really happy or content to be away from Grant.

As another year drew to a close, Ora took Nettie to her home for a few days to enjoy the holidays. On New Years Day, January 1, 1973, Nettie passed away at the Oswald home in

Coltman, Bonneville County, Idaho. She was buried next to her companion in the Central Cemetery at Grant, Jefferson County, Idaho. The family's loss was incomprehensible as this loving matriarch moved on.

Nettie always felt especially blessed to have such a wonderful family life. Having been orphaned at an early age, she had gained an understanding of the need to belong and feel loved. This was something she longed for herself and wanted to give others....and she did.

Nettie was a genuine lady. She was never fully dressed and ready for church or town unless she had a dress hat on and a broach pinned to her clean, pressed dress. Picking out an appropriate hat was sometimes a tedious, time consuming procedure for her. Hat after hat would be tried on, adjusted, and then set-aside in order to try on another until the perfect hat was found. Nettie loved her hats. Her long hair was faithfully brushed and beautiful at night when it would fall over her shoulders and down her back. In the daylight, it was neatly wound into a tidy bun and held in place with long-teethed hair combs or pins. Nettie was not ready for a day until she had a front apron on and a spatula or large wooden spoon in her hand. She was gentle yet firm, quiet yet understood. She easily earned the respect of all that had the opportunity to make her acquaintance. Her gentle, friendly manner seemed to draw everyone a little closer.

At a *'This Is Your Life'* program in Relief Society, Nettie had the following tribute made to her:

As we look at you today we see the thoughtful brow of one who thinks through her problems, who weighs both sides of a question before she ventures an opinion.

We see lips, which speak gently and kindly and get firm when the occasion demands.

We see eyes, which are warm with understanding and affection and which at times can fairly dance with merriment.

Poise and graciousness are an inseparable part of you because your concern is always for others before yourself.

Within you is the place where loveliness keeps house.

Nettie's life included epidemics, wars, economic depressions, personal loss and sadness, but it was also filled with good health, peace, prosperity, personal growth and great joy. Her life was one of complete devotion to her God, her friends, family, her companion, children, grand children and great grand children. Generations yet to come will be blessed because of her example and the many contributions she made.

This author of this Life Sketch of Nettie Luella Wilkins Randall is unknown. Names, dates and some events have been added and verified from stories, documents and other records collected and kept in the Family History Library of K. Oswald.