

## Lurlene Tenney

I. Lurlene Tenney, was born on the 19th day of May, 1891 in a two room Mexican adobe, flat roof house in Colonia Diaz, State of Chihuahua, Mexico. My father's name was Ammon M. Tenney born November 18, 1844 in Lee County, Iowa. My mother's name is Anna Sariah Eagar Tenney. She was born in Mill Creek, Utah on the 29th of May, 1850.

According to the pattern given to us by our church I was christened in Sacrament Meeting, though I have not been able to obtain any proof of this by records kept in the church. These were all gathered up by Bishop Romney at the time of the "exodus" from Mexico in 1912 and sent to church headquarters in Salt Lake City. To my very great sorrow I have no record of anything. What I remember is all I know. I was baptized as soon after my 8th birthday as possible. This was some time in May 1899. --Such a beautiful balmy day, I remember very well, warm and pleasant. Bro Andrew Anderson performed the baptismal rights, I knew this was the proper thing to do, then, as I do now. Then the next Sunday Bro Charles Whiting Sr. confirmed me and made me a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In talking about this with my very best friend, Lucy Johnson, I recall that I said, "And just think-all my sins are forgiven", which meant very much to me at the time.

My school days began when I was seven years old, in our church building, which consisted of one large meeting room and auditorium for dancing and whatever we chose to use it for. Also four small class rooms. My first teacher was a Miss Florence Cluff, who came from Salt Lake City for the purpose of teaching. Never could I love anyone more. She was beautiful to me, patient and good. My school days to the eighth grade were a great joy to me. It was easy for me to learn. I was greatly favored by my teachers and certainly I loved them dearly. --My Dear, Sweet Pearl Whiting, also Alice Whiting, both of whom had been to school in Utah. Oh! It was magic to see the way they combed their hair, kept their shoes shiny and clean, above all (to see) their lovely dresses. Also the Fillerup Brothers, Charles and Erastus-good Latter Day Saints-best teachers who seemed to be interested in each one of us as people. Bro Charles who stayed in our schools for more than 25 years helped me more in my religious training than any other person I know. These two boys married the lovely Johnson cousins, Monita and Lulu. Erastus moved his family to Colonia Juarez where he taught in the church high school. (Academy)

My mother wove carpets for a living, our father having left us in Colonia Diaz. He moved to Colonia Dublan when I was four. The girls and boys both, all ten of us, as we became old enough worked and helped to buy food and clothing for the family. Mother sat at her loom eight hours a day and I remember her telling our friends when they would inquire that if she wove at the loom eight hours, she wove eight yards of carpet and if she was able to sell those eight yards she would get one Mexican peso which provided us with food for several days. My brothers usually worked for farmers around and would get produce for their work. My youngest brother, John, took sick with a sore throat and fever which I am sure we

would call diptheria now. He was very ill for two weeks and finally passed away.

Oh! The desolation of having to leave Johnny out there alone and the bitterness of home without him I was four years old at the time. My Dear, ever faithful mother would tell me when I would cry about Johnny, "He is with our Heavely Father now. Nothing can hurt him." This consoled me momentarily however, when I would try to play with his little red wagon the sting of his being gone seemed almost more than I could bear. Dear Brother John who comforted me when I was hurt, watched over me at all times. If I'd fall asleep he picked me up and carried me into the hosue, spent hours giving me rides in the little red wagon. I was the baby of the ten children. They were all indulgent with me, loved me, but none so much as Johnny.

Well! these happy and unhappy days passed as all times do and one experience follows another until it makes up a life time. -- Believe the next event of interest in the family was when my big brother Levi went away to school. While he was in Logan attending the Agricultural College the Spanish American War started. They were calling for volunteers everywhere. Mother received a letter saying that he had enlisted. This, of course, almost took her breath away. But with her deep courage and ever present faith she steered us through the sadness of what might happen by saying that God would watch over him and bring him safely home which he did after only about 10 months in the service. He was one of the famous "Teddy's Rough Riders" who trained and started to Cuba by way of Florida but at Key West their leader was killed, an accident, and Levi was able to come home.

Then there was the homecoming. --the happiness of everyone for his return. How proud I was of him in his blue suit--so handsome and grand. There was a double wedding in our family. My soldier brother married Clara Acord and my sister, Lois married Peter Kimball Lemmon. Oh! This was joy indeed. I was so thrilled over the plans and preparations. The girls dresses seemed to be the prettiest in the world. Then I had a new sister and a new brother. This takes me up to about 9 or 10 years of age. One sister remained at home with mother and me. This was Rosalia whom I thought was the prettiest, most beautiful girl. She had lovely dark eyes and a pretty olive complexion and what a sweet disposition she had. We loved her so much but as usual a good man saw and loved her and our home was mighty empty and desolate again when Ed Payne took her to Colonia Dublan to live.

When I was about twelve years old the president of the Primary Association asked me if I'd like to be secretary to that association. Of course I was very much honored and chose as my assistant Mynoa? Richardson. As friends we labored together - couldn't either one of us write very well. (What does she mean? W.W.S.) But we did our best and kept the roll books and minutes up to date. When I was older maybe 13 they asked me to be organist in Primary. This was the greatest honor I could have had at the time. You've never seen anyone who worked harder than I did to qualify for this job. --don't remember how long I was organist but I guess it wasn't very long because there was a Geneva Cox who could play the organ much better than I.

I started working in Primary when I was twelve as stated above and I have stayed with it pretty steadily. I believe I have taught all the classes, been president and held most of the offices at various times through my life. (Only last summer I was awarded an honor for having worked in the Primary for 25 years or more. (If she started at age 12, I would think she had worked in it for more than 50 years. W.W.S.) I am grateful for all of this experience. It is in Primary more than anywhere else that I have learned the fundamental principles of the Gospel. I learned that it is something you can lean on and tie to because it was given by our Heavenly Father.

I believe I was 14 when I graduated from grade school, the eighth grade. There was one year that was perfect. I was really someone. I was busy, happy, a little bit in love, I think, with Fred Whiting who was generally rated the worst tease in town. Well, he teased me so much that at times I wondered what was the matter with me. I always thought I was smart enough to keep even with anyone but Fred knew just what to say and what to do to make me feel frustrated. This went on for years. One moment when he was there I was in heaven the next I'd be so mad at him because he teased me so much. He graduated a year after I did from eighth grade, (Fred and John Whiting took turns helping their father on the farm which necessitated them missing half a year of school at a time.) Fred was a year older than I but due to this work on the farm he was behind me in school. My mother was ambitious for me to go to school so I attended the Juarez Stake Academy one year. Of course, I met many new people, made many friends and enjoyed myself very much. After this year or before the close of school my brother-in-law wrote me that if I'd come home I could get a job in the Union Merchantile store in my home town. (It was very difficult for Lurlene to stay at the Academy. Her mother tried to make a living for them while they were there but she couldn't make it work. W.W.S.) I was very happy to do this as my mother was getting too old to be able to work. I was glad to take over the responsibility of providing for her as well as myself.

From the time of going home from school (the Academy) until we were forced to leave "Old Mexico" we had very happy times. I was 17 years old. We, mother and I had built a new house down in the field east of our old one. Having sold the land and old house we used the money to build another adobe house which had a good shingle roof and real honest to goodness windows and doors. (Ammon had bought a shoe store building for them to live in when they first arrived in Colonia Diaz) We moved what little furniture we had from the old home into this new one and I made it my pleasure to add to furniture and to add all the things it takes to make us a comfortable home - such as a pump on the back porch. It seemed to me at the time that this was a most wonderful thing as indeed it was because at that time we didn't know about pipes, faucets, etc.

While we were struggling to get furniture in our house I recall that my sweet sister Rosalia came to visit us. I proudly bought her a new cot or couch, one that could be let down at night but could be made to look really nice in the daytime. She and her baby LaVon slept on it. Shortly after this my mother became very ill and all the children came home. How I enjoyed them, especially my oldest

brother Am who was so tender and sweet with our mother. She had a bad time for some months but finally recovered her health.

During the years that I worked in the store I taught the kindergarten class in Sunday School with Winnie Johnson Whiting and Verna Susan Black. These girls were cousins and very lovely people. There were in those days no picture shows in Mexico. We, the people, the members of the ward had to make our own entertainment. We had dances every Friday night as long as I can remember. In those dances we were not allowed to round dance. The position for round dancing was considered all together too familiar. We square danced and thought we were having the best time imaginable. Our dances were opened and closed with prayer, we always had a dance manager who looked after each boy and girl as they felt they needed looking after. We were more like a big family. Everyone was interested in everyone else.

Another form of entrainment which we had was the "Play" or theatre. This, I think, afforded more development and talent than any other one thing. We were careful to choose good clean plays and everyone sooner or later had a chance to take part. I loved it and shall never forget the evenings spent rehearsing and the fun we had. We also took pride in our music. There were so many nice, good voices in our little home town. We would sing everywhere we went, church parties, hayrack rides, walks for crowds in the beautiful moonlight nights. I have said all along that Arizona does not have as lovely moonlit nights as we had in Mexico. We also had the national holidays which we celebrated-such as El Cinco de Mayo, Sixteenth day of September, (Independence Day, from Spain W.W.S.), maybe some others which I can't recall. We used to go out to certain lakes too. Half of the town would go one week, the other half stay at home to do the chores. Everyone had cows, chickens, horses, gardens to irrigate and all the many things to care for on a daily basis that it takes to maintain homes and families. The next week those who had stayed home would go and vice versa, etc.

I saw the first automobile while I was working in the store. Mr. Alfred Boyd owned the car. He and his wife came to take me for a ride in it. It seemed incredible, I couldn't believe it. While I worked in the store I learned to speak the Spanish language pretty well. Most of our trade, Mexican trade, came from La Ascencion, a little town about five miles south and across the Rio Grande River. My Heavenly Father was good to me during that four years I worked in the store. The Mexicans would get small pox and died like sheep from it. Sometimes half of the little town of La Ascencion would die. I remember one epidemic they had when there were so many who died they didn't have enough people left to bury their dead. They would come over to the store and leave big scabs and scales as big as silver dollars on the counter. Yes, my Heavenly Father certainly blessed me and kept me from harm.

Most of the time during these four years while I was working in the store I was engaged to Fred Whiting. He was away at school in the winter and was working in the summer. We corresponded and I shall never forget how thrilled I was when I'd see him coming up the sidewalk toward the store.

Oh! The ecstasy of those long winter evenings at Christmas time

when we would walk or go for drives with the crowd and what grand fun we'd have holding hands, on the sly of course, and singing songs. Then, the goodnight kiss and early to bed, 11 o'clock, because we both had to work the next day. And the plans we made. When he would have all the schooling he could afford and I would have everything arranged and ready to go to Salt Lake City where we would be married in the temple. This arrangement was brought about sooner than we either one expected or hoped for.

Villa was on the war path and we were frightened all the time. With the men guarding at night and trying to tend to their crops during the day it was a very bad and sad time. We loved our town, our homes and our friends. We were terribly saddened when on July 1912 my brother Levi who had been in Dublan and Juarez brought the official word from Stake Presidency headquarters at Colonia Juarez that we were to pack a few things and move into the United States or at least across the line.