

Earl and Della Crockett

Della B. Comish was born December 28, 1901. This was a year and a half before her future husband. For years she was uncomfortable with people knowing this. In fact, when Earl died, the double tombstone had until her death, her name but not her birth date. She had a happy family life in Franklin, ID, as the second of seven children born to George and Margaret Comish. She began milking cows at the age of five on their farm. She was always a hard worker and had a great deal of love and respect for her parents.



Reata, Della and Dwayne



Della, Dwayne, Geneve, George, Reata, Cythna and Margaret

Earl Clarkson Crockett was born in Preston, ID May 13, 1903, the eleventh child of Ozro Ozias and Ruth Clarkson Crockett. O.O. had an accident as a young man with lime in his eyes, which did not make raising a big family an easy endeavor. They moved frequently in an attempt to make a living. Earl would later tell stories of their poverty, bread and milk was sometimes dinner, or even “lumpy dick” which was flour mixed with water. Bread and milk in a glass eaten with a spoon was even late in life a comfort food for Earl though.



Earl and his family

Della and Earl met in Pocatello at summer school in 1922. The first two things Della learned about Earl was that he was smart and ethical. He wouldn't take a test for the girl she knew. She asked him on their first date (a picnic), and their romance bloomed mostly by mail after that summer.



Della

Della taught school in Dayton, ID the school year of 1924-25. She would tell of her father picking her up on horseback each Friday and returning alone after the weekend and swatting the horse and telling it to return home. She lived with various families during the year. They felt she was a very special person, because she was the teacher. If they put on a play, she had to be the lead, because she was the most qualified just because of her teacher status.



Earl

They married in 1925 and began their first two years together teaching school in a two-room schoolhouse. She taught the first four grades, and he taught the upper four. They lived in a log cabin with a dirt floor, which Earl covered with wood. In June 1926, Marian Joy was born in Della's parent's home in Franklin, ID.

They had a very fulfilling and gracious life together but it required a lot of hard work to get him through school. They did janitorial work to pay for his bachelors at the University of Utah, while Joy (Marian) slept safely nearby. Della managed an apartment house to raise money in Oakland. Earl completed a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California Berkeley in 1928.



Earl after graduation from University of Utah

His first job, after that, was at the University of North Dakota in 1931. Robert Comish Crockett was born there December 11. It was a friendly place, but in the depression salaries were cut each year.

In 1934, there was a Longshoreman's Strike on the West Coast of the United States. Earl was contacted by his major professor at Berkeley to see if he was interested in a short-term position as special investigator for the Longshoremen's Board. Earl and Della lived in Berkeley and Earl commuted via ferry to San Francisco while watching the construction of the Bay Bridge. The Board was established by Pres. Roosevelt to settle the six-week-old strike. It was finally settled but not before some deaths and a sympathy strike by San Francisco businesses. Earl reported that SF was an eerie place with every business closed.

The University of California helped Earl obtain an Assistant Professor Position at the University of Colorado. Most of Earl's career (23 years) he taught at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Over the years, Earl served as an advisor to three Governors of Colorado, to the Dean, and to two University Presidents, and also served as Department Chair of Social Sciences. When he left the University of Colorado he was serving on 32 faculty committees, and as chairman of many of them.

Both Earl David (May 18, 1936) and Margaret Ruth (March 24, 1945) were born in Boulder. When Dave was three, Earl and Della took the two oldest children on a tour of the Eastern historical sites. Dave stayed with family friends from Church.



Bob, Marian, Dave, Earl, Della and Margy 1945

During World War II, Earl was called to be Principal Economist for the War Production Board. He was supervising the Wholesale-Retail Unit. They were in the Washington D.C. area a little over a year; then they returned to Boulder, CO.



Bob, Margy, Dave, Earl, Marian, Della in 1947

In 1949, Earl and Della took their first trip to Europe. They were gone three months and left the three children (Marian had married Donald Stuart Brereton in 1948), with families who had friends their own ages.



Dave, Della, Earl, Bob and Margy

In 1950, the family moved from their two-story house at 941 Grant Street, into a new house constructed for them with a stunning view of the flatirons at 1380 Columbine.



Margy with Jan and Bob, in the backyard family home in Boulder at 1380 Columbine

In 1952, Earl obtained a position with the University of Maryland Overseas Division teaching servicemen in Germany. He left in early summer, Dave and Bob stayed at CU with summer jobs, and Della and Margy went to stay with Grandpa (George) Comish in Franklin, ID. That August, all except Earl, including Marian with Lynn and David from the East Coast, met in Salt Lake where Bob married Janet Ruth Romney.



Comish cousins with Margy 1952



Dave, Della, Marian, Margy, Bob, Jan,
Gordon, Elizabeth, and Gordy Romney, Bonnie Romney Brown and James Brown in 1952

Della, Dave and Margaret then left to join Earl in Stuttgart, Germany. They lived there and in Munich and Wiesbaden. Dave lived at a boarding high school for American Servicemen Dependents in Heidelberg, and Munich. They traveled as a family as much as they could and returned to Boulder at the end of the school year.

In 1955, Earl had a Sabbatical he spent working on a book (never published – not his fault) in Florida and Vermont. Della and Margaret went along. The family stayed on Merritt Island with Earl's sister Elva and her husband Leo Reddish who were farmers in the summer in Idaho. Across the street his sister Jenny and her husband Morris also had a winter home. After three months in Florida the Crocketts drove up to a cabin on yet another island on Lake Champlain in Vermont. Lynn and David Brereton learned to swim in Lake Champlain down a ladder, off the cliff outside that cabin.

In 1957 Earl was contacted by Brigham Young University, they were looking for an Academic Vice President. After much thought, since the family had loved living in Boulder, Earl and Della decided to move to Provo, UT. Earl worked hard, as expected on his new job. It was often challenging and he likely missed teaching, but he was an excellent administrator, compassionate listener, and very good speaker. He cared very much about the faculty, worked hard to encourage academic freedom and in his copious free time (not really!) he was on the Northwest Accreditation Committee, much of the time Chairman. The yearly family vacation was planned around which ever University faced the accreditation analysis.



Marian, Dave, Bob, Margy with their parents,
the last time the family was altogether the summer before Bob died.

Earl and Della traveled to Europe several times in their lifetime, with the last long trip another University of Maryland Overseas Division adventure, this time spent in Naples, Madrid, and Harrogate, England. Geneve and Margy joined them during the summer in Harrogate especially for trips to Scotland, Ireland, London and the Isle of Man particularly to see sites where ancestors had lived.

After returning to Provo, UT, Earl returned to teaching Economics there for a few years in the Economics Department.

Della worked in the Church during the latter years as Relief Society Stake President of the BYU First Stake. She had previously served on Primary and Sunday School Stake Boards and various teaching and counselor positions. She was also active for years with the League of Women Voters, and various art and literary clubs and the Faculty Women's Club at CU. She had a love of art, history, and music and took university classes throughout her life. She entertained regularly faculty members from all departments (4-6 couples at a time) for dinners both at BYU and CU. At BYU, the couple entertained the whole faculty (likely about 500 plus spouses) by giving multiple parties. Thereafter, they gave a yearly party to meet the new faculty.

The couple learned many skills for entertaining and dealing with academia from Dr. Frederick and Mrs. Bertha Bushee. They took Earl and Della under their wings soon after their arrival in Boulder, CO. Many treasures valued by the Crocketts were left to them by the Bushees when they died in the 1950s.

Earl served as a teacher in Sunday School, especially the Gospel Doctrine class, and High Priest Teacher, Sunday School Superintendent in the Boulder Branch Presidency and Chairman of the Boulder Ward Building Committee. Both Earl and Della worked in the Provo Temple at the end of their lives. Earl died December 2, 1975 a few months after their fiftieth wedding anniversary for which he wrote the book, Fifty Glorious Years. He died in his sleep from his third heart attack. Della lived two years longer dying of uterine cancer, but several grandchildren lived with her during those two years while attending BYU. She died February 26, 1978.

Earl and Della were a team, and a good one. Early on, they decided to never argue in front of the children, and they never did. Don't think they ever even said a cross word to one another in front of the children. Earl would confide in Della, in private, and she might pass on his frustrations and accomplishments, but Earl was not a complainer or a braggart, and Della was his staunchest supporter.



Mark Crockett, with Della and Earl on their patio in Provo.
Earl and Della would sit there together talking most evenings watching the sunset.

Submitted by Margaret R. Crockett, daughter, 2013