

# **“...and they called me Blanche Irene” \***

## **A biography of Blanche Irene Alsop Cardon**

**by Bartell W. Cardon, Jr.**

*“It matters little what my small influence on the coming generations will be. What does matter to me is that I be received as a link in the long chain of good people who gave the best they had to make the world better for those who were to follow. I have searched my life, and now I strongly feel that my only contribution to past, present and future generations is the fact that I became a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In words, that seems so simple, but in reality for me it was quite a feat”*  
(BIC, p. v).

Blanche Irene Alsop was born March 22, 1900, in the small rural community of Marion, Lynn, Iowa. She lived during an era of tremendous change. The population of the United States was a tad more than 76 million at her birth year, and the average life

expectancy was 47. Approximately 95%

of all births took place at home. Only

14% of the homes in the US had

a bathtub, and only 8% had a

telephone. There were

approximately 8,000

cars in the US and 140

miles of paved roads.

One in ten US adults

was illiterate. Only 6%

of all Americans had

graduated from high

school. About 90% of all

physicians had no college

education. Instead, they

attended medical schools, many of

which were regularly condemned in the

press and by the government as substandard. The flag bore 45 stars, with Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii, and Alaska not yet admitted to the Union. Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California, which at the time had a population of 1.4 million residents and was the 21st most populous state in the Union. There were only about 200 reported murders in the entire country. The tallest structure in the world at the time was the Eiffel Tower (Wikipedia).

*\*This short biography is based, in part, upon Blanche's autobiography entitled, “...and they called me Blanche Irene.”*

Blanche's birthplace reflected most of the characteristics of the time. She described it this way, "Although the frontiers had been pushed to the Pacific Ocean, anything west of the Mississippi River was considered 'way out west.' Iowa, where I was born, was not only 'out west' but regarded as part of the country's breadbasket. Weary farmers tried to feed their families as well as a little part of the world around them. They were bone tired of dropping seeds in holes made by sticks or their fingers in the soil or carrying heavy bags of grain on their shoulders as they threw the seeds into the air to be scattered by the wind. When an inventive mind produced anything to relieve them, they were ready to receive it. My father was one of these. He didn't like farming, but that was all that he knew" (BIC, p. 4).

George Willard Alsop (1872-1923), Blanche's father, was born at the home of his parents Daniel Alsop (1841-1923) and Antha L McCurdy (1850-1877), the second of three children. His mother died when he was four, and he was raised by his spinster aunt, Edith Alsop. "My father is hard to describe. There were so many facets in his nature, yet to me he never was complex. He was probably one of the most hospitable persons I've ever known. No one, friend or stranger, ever came to our home around mealtime that was not invited to stay.... Papa was also not only available to all of us, but also to the neighbors. People liked to have him around as he was always agreeable and a very good conversationalist on many subjects. He never swore or used crude language. He might say 'darn it,' 'Holy Moses,' or 'Why in Sam Hill,' but after that his swearing vocabulary had been used up. I don't think it ever entered his head to take the Lord's name in vain, as he had been raised by gentle people" (BIC, pp. 8-9).



Blanche's mother, Harriet Laurana Good (1871-1968) was born at the home of her parents Henry G. Good (1832-1916) and Margaret Elizabeth Coombs (1841-1923), the fourth of six children. "She was strict about obedience, and when she called I was supposed to respond.... We both were strong willed, but she always prevailed. She never learned that she could have loved me into doing anything for her, but to scold or switch got her no place. I used to wish papa would come to my defense, but then I didn't know that mama was the head of the house, the children and the chickenyard. Papa's domain didn't start until he heard the click of the barnyard gate" (BIC, p. 7). Blanche came to understand that her mother

did love her; she demonstrated that love in other ways than gentle words and physical contact. Blanche turned to her father for the hugs and kisses she desired.

## The farm

Blanche's parents lived on a farm of eighty acres, owned by Henry and Margaret Good, her grandparents. Half of the farm had been inherited by Margaret from her parents, and Henry had purchased the adjacent forty acres. Her birth was in a large, recently completed home on that farm.

Only a few months before moving to the new home, Hattie gave birth to a little son who lived but a few days and was never named, only to be known as Alsop. Blanche came along about a year later (Note 1).

The new home was located on a knoll surrounded by trees, so many that Blanche thought of them as a "forest." There was a big parlor, dining room, kitchen, pantry, and bedroom on the main floor. Four bedrooms filled the second story. The cellar was dark and cool. The attic was of unique importance to Blanche. "From the attic windows we could see all over the countryside to the south of us. I spent a lot of time up there, especially on rainy days, or when I needed peace and quiet so I could daydream. I just loved to daydream!" (BIC, p. 5).



**Home where Blanche was born. George Alsop, "Hattie" Alsop, Blanche (standing by post), Henry Miller, Margaret Miller, Charles Miller, and "Maggie" Miller**

Every member of a farmer family was expected to work, and Blanche found that she was no exception. "At a very tender age, I was given a lot of chores to do. Before I was seven, I was helping to carry water from the well, washing dishes, sweeping and dusting. On wash days, I was washing on the board all the small pieces. I also filled the lamps and trimmed the wicks, which for a while was fun. But the job I hated the most was scrubbing the chamber pots with soap and water and putting them out in the sun. Each bed had a pot beneath it, and the size of the pot depended on the size of the occupant of the bed" (BIC, p. 6).

For diversion, the family would occasionally go to Cedar Rapids to purchase food and other needed commodities. The streets were unpaved, dusty in the hot months and almost impassable in the winter. The sidewalks were of boards, and the streetlights were gas and had to be lit by a lamplighter. The stores were heated in the wintertime by big potbelly stoves, surrounded by benches where the children were expected to sit while their parents shopped.

The Alsop family usually went to town by horse and buggy, but Blanche most enjoyed the winter trips when they went by horse and bobsled. Her father often put sleigh bells on the harness.

On occasion, George went to town for some farm-related item and invited Blanche. That special attention was a joy for her. Her father had a wonderful sense of humor and often played practical jokes on family and neighbors. On one trip, the two of them entered a small shop, and while they were waiting to be served, George went over to the mousetrap bin and set all the traps. When it was his turn to be served, he ordered a dozen traps. However, the clerk had experiences with George's playfulness before, so he took a broom handle and poked it into the bin. Mousetraps went off, flying in all directions. Once the commotion was over, the clerk removed a dozen traps and put them in a sack and handed them to George. Blanche and her father laughed about what had happened all the way home. Hattie, on the other hand, was not overly impressed with the purchase. After all, they had several cats that kept the house and other structures mouse free.

In addition to the cats, there were many other animals on the farm. There was a team of horses to pull the plows, a buggy horse, several dogs, and a larger number of cows and bulls, chickens and roosters.

Although George was not overly enthralled with sowing and harvesting, he did love his animals. Blanche enjoyed watching her father interact with the animals, and she



**Blanche with her dog Trip**

had a particularly fond memory of him placing her as a small child on the back of old Colonel, the carriage horse, and allowing her to go for a ride. He gave Blanche a handful of mane and led Colonel around the barnyard. Her assigned chore of feeding the horses and cows was one of the more pleasant tasks.

Of the several dogs that were at the farm, Trip was considered by Blanche as "my dog." He came into the family a few months after Blanche did and lived approximately fifteen years. Gyp was the original name given the short-haired, brown mutt. Blanche could not pronounce that name at such a young age, calling the dog Trip, a name that stuck.



## Religious activities

Blanche's parents were both Methodists, but they did not engage in family prayers, nor did they often attend Sabbath services. They did, however, live by Methodist rules—no dancing, no cards, rest on the Sabbath for both humans and beasts, and strict honesty in all matters. "I learned very early to go to Grandma Alsop with my questions and comments. She read the Bible stories to me very early in life, in fact I can't remember when it all began" (BIC, p. 21). Grandmother Alsop was Baptist; Grandfather Alsop was Methodist. Grandma Good was "Christian," and Grandpa Good was Lutheran.



**Blanche ready for Sunday School**



**Shiloh Methodist Episcopal Church**

There was a Methodist Episcopal Church about a mile from their home, immediately across from the Shiloh Cemetery. Once Blanche was old enough to walk that distance alone, she joined the congregation for weekly Sunday School. Her Alsop grandparents regularly attended and often escorted her home following services. She formally joined the church at age fourteen, being baptized by sprinkling.

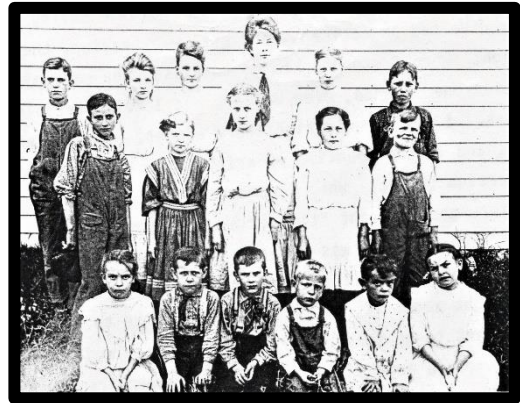
## Schooling

"I just loved going to school, even if it was a long way to walk" (BIC, p. 26). About the time that her sister Bernice Arlene Alsop was born, Blanche began her studies at Center School. The building had one-room with sixteen desks placed four desks in four rows. The front ones were for the youngest students; the last seats were for the oldest, some of whom were adults. The older students were only able to attend when not required to assist with spring planting and fall harvest.

The original school was a log cabin at which Blanche's grandmother Alsop studied as a child and later taught for two terms. That was replaced with the building Blanche attended and at which her mother had studied. "I always saw to it that I was never late, as I loved the opening exercises. We stood by our desks and said the Lord's Prayer, and then grouped around the teacher as we sang a couple of hymns while she played the old pump organ. After we were back in our seats, she read to us for ten or fifteen minutes from books about pioneer and Indian life" (BIC, p. 27).



This is the schoolhouse Blanche attended, rebuilt and now a museum



Blanche, age ten, lower right, with her classmates

Blanche was an excellent student. Her favorite subjects were reading, history, spelling, and geography. And, although some of the older boys sitting behind her would occasionally dip her pigtails in the ink well, she managed to win awards for comportment.

Not all students finishing the elementary grades were permitted to attend high school. It was necessary to pass rather rigorous entrance tests. Blanche worried about the examination, but she found the task rather simple; she was both bright and well prepared. She received high marks and was admitted to Washington High School. It was about this time when her brother, Stanley Good Alsop, was born.

"I was very nervous and excited that first morning as I boarded the interurban to go to Cedar Rapids. The coach was filled with young people that were going for the first time, and although I knew very few of them, we all shared a common concern. It was really a change from a one-room schoolhouse to a large four-story building that covered half a block" (BIC, p. 37).

Blanche's high school experience was not as pleasant as

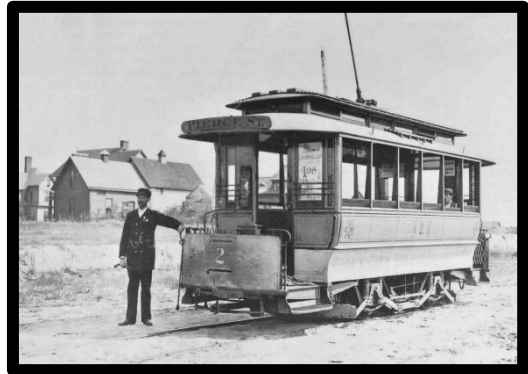


Washington High School

she had anticipated. She found that there was a harsh status divide—rural vs. urban. Although she made several life-long friends, many of the urban students were not inclined to mingle with the rural ones. Blanche did perform well, receiving high marks in all classes. She graduated in 1917. Her high school years roughly coincided with World War I.

### Ralph Bain Collins

It was in May 1917, shortly before Blanche graduated from High School, that she and one of her close friends attended a circus west of Marion. They took a streetcar to a stop near where the event was taking place. The girls enjoyed the performances and were pleased to catch the last streetcar scheduled to go back to the heart of Marion. However, upon getting off at that transfer stop, they found that they had missed the connection which would have taken them near where they lived. The teenagers were apprehensive regarding the long walk in the dark.



Streetcar of the 1910s era

As they were discussing their concerns, a handsome young man came up to them, tipped his hat and asked if he could be of service. Upon hearing their concerns, he volunteered to walk with them, taking Blanche's friend home first and then escorting Blanche to where she was staying. This was Blanche's introduction to Ralph Bain Collins.

Blanche and Ralph saw each other often for several weeks, but that courtship was abruptly interrupted in June 1917 when Ralph, who was not yet seventeen, announced that he was joining the army without his parents' consent. World War I ended approximately 16 months later, with Armistice Day falling on November 11, 1918.



On June 4, 1918, Blanche went to her high school to attend the senior banquet. There were beautiful decorations in the halls and dining area. Music was being played, and there was dancing. A side entertainment event was a fortune teller. One of the teachers supervising that activity asked Blanche if she would like a reading. "I told her that I wanted a real reading, so the gypsy proceeded. She looked in her crystal ball, consulted some dirty cards, and went so far as to feel the lumps on the back of my head. She told me some things that I already knew, and then started talking about Ralph. When she told me that at that moment he was only a stone's throw from me, I knew that it wasn't true, but I glanced at my watch anyway. It was 9:30. Then she told



me the bad stuff, about another girl that was to come into the picture. When I left I thought how lucky I was that I didn't have to pay for that reading" (BIC, p. 42).

As fate would have it, Ralph had just returned from the European conflict, had gone to visit his father and then rushed over to the high school. He attempted to enter, but the outer doors were locked, and he could not find someone to let him in. It was 9:30 p.m., the very time that Blanche was having her reading. Later, when Blanche learned that he had been at the school, just a "stone's throw" from her, she found the information unsettling.

Blanche had developed a close relationship with Ralph's mother while he was away in the service. The father was not as welcoming. When Ralph presented Blanche with a ring on her twentieth birthday, she was able to tell her parents that there would soon be a marriage. Ralph, on the other hand, did not feel that he could go to his parents with that news. He recommended that he and Blanche elope so that he would not have any trouble with his father. The couple took a train to Marshalltown, a little community in the next county, and were married there on April 11, 1920.



**Ring believed to have been given to Blanche**

They returned to Cedar Rapids after a few days and moved into the home of Ralph's parents. Blanche quickly won over the heart of Ralph's father. He was a lawyer, and she went out of her way to assist him with typing tasks and preparations of briefs. Time passed by quickly, and Blanche and Ralph were happy.

Although the Great Depression had not yet taken hold of the nation and world, the country was deep into a major recession. Work was difficult to find, and jobs were often temporary. Blanche was more successful in locating paid opportunities than was Ralph. He did take a position as a linesman for the telephone company in 1922, work that was enjoyable in the warmer months but terribly uncomfortable in the winter.

Both Blanche's Grandmother Good and Grandfather Alsop died in 1923, as well as a favorite uncle. That was an emotional blow to her. During this time of loss, there was an announcement that the first intercontinental telephone lines were to be strung from coast to coast. Ralph thought that he and Blanche should take advantage of the opportunity and join the project. They did not own a car, so they purchased a Harley-Davidson with a sidecar using a veterans' bonus of \$65.00 that was received at that time.



**1923 Harley-Davidson motorcycle with sidecar**



They caught up with the work crew in Beatrice, Nebraska. Life was not easy from that point on, "... for there was no electricity or indoor plumbing where we boarded or roomed.... There was also a problem with food. The lady where we boarded just didn't know how to cook" (BIC, p. 47). The project ended when the cold weather set in.

Ralph and Blanche decided that they would visit the Rocky Mountains before returning to Cedar Rapids. Upon arriving to Denver, they immediately went directly to the mountains. Blanche was greatly impressed, saying "I will never forget how awed we both were by the stillness, the bigness, the beauty and grandeur of this piece of God's handiwork. For the first time I felt a peace I had not known before" (BIC, p. 48). It was there in Denver, just a few days later, that Blanche learned of the death of her father.

Once back in Iowa, Blanche worked fulltime and also gave as much of herself as possible to assisting her widowed mother. Ralph was able to obtain limited employment, but he began to stay out later and later at night. Shortly before Christmas of 1924, a love letter from someone at his workplace fell from Ralph's pocket as Blanche was putting the coat away. Ralph confessed to his infidelity, and he took Blanche to a lawyer to fill out papers of divorce. It was that evening, just a day before Christmas, that he informed his parents of what he had done. Blanche wrote, "There was a terrible row, and I witnessed a mother order her only dearly beloved son out of the house. I felt that I was the one to go, but she asked me to stay" (BIC, p. 51).

It was four months later, on April 12, 1925, that Blanche received an anniversary telegram from Ralph, who was in Omaha, Nebraska, at the time. It read, "Please remember this day with love, as I always will, Ralph.' As Father and Mother Collins were home when it came... I had to share it with them" (BIC, p. 53). Only then did she learn that the divorce had been cancelled, a fact that the Collins assumed she already knew.

By July, Blanche had sufficient funds "to leave Cedar Rapids for good." Although the thought of being out on her own was frightening, she decided to move to St. Louis, Missouri. "I had never been alone before, but I was packed and in my bed for the last night. About one o'clock or so the light came on in my room and there was Ralph. I was never more happy to see anyone in my whole life. It didn't matter to me where he had been or what he had done. He was home. When I told him what I was about to do, he asked to go with me. The next day we started making new preparations to leave" (BIC, p. 63).

Blanche was the first to find employment in St. Louis; Ralph finally found a construction job east of the city which required him to be away a good deal of the time. It was early in 1926 that a letter arrived addressed to Mrs. Collins, a letter that had been forwarded from two unknown addresses. Upon opening it, Blanche found that it was a bill from a medical doctor for services provided to a female. It was clear to Blanche that Ralph had been unfaithful to her once again. She resolved to move on to Denver, Colorado, and Ralph again asked to accompany her.

However, there was to be one last outing together. Ralph "...still wanted me to go on a vacation with him to the Ozarks. I knew each day I had with him now was a bonus. We both quit our jobs. He paid up the car and in due course we started on our trip. I

didn't try to fool myself any longer as I was sure a ghost would be vacationing with us, but this was one vacation I had to go on" (BIC, p. 65).

There was car trouble during the entire time they were away. Although they had planned to drive from the Ozarks to Denver, they only made it back as far as St. Louis. Their car had become unserviceable. Blanche found work, and Ralph moved on. He ultimately migrated to Denver and obtained limited employment. Blanche received a few letters from him, the last one asking her to join him there. She took a bus to Denver and soon found work at the Willard J. Guy Company, a direct mail advertising business.

Ralph only stayed with Blanche a week. Apparently, his intention was to see to it that she was established where she had for some time wanted to be—Denver. He divided what little money he had with her. Blanche accompanied him to the Union Depot and said goodbye as he began his journey back to Iowa. It was the last time they were to see each other, except for a brief encounter years later in Iowa. She was now completely alone in a new city, wondering about her future. Returning to the little apartment, she found a poem Ralph had penned and placed upon her pillow.

If I could take my loving thoughts,  
And lay them one by one,  
They'd make a shining path,  
Where you could walk and run.  
And if I took my prayer thoughts  
And wove them day by day,  
They'd make a shining silken robe  
To wrap you all the way.

But since I cannot make this path,  
Nor weave the robe to fold,  
And since the days are passing by,  
And we are growing old.  
God make that little path for you,  
And weave that robe with care,  
And I will thank Him with a song,  
As beautiful as a prayer.

Blanche accepted shared responsibility for the tragedy of the failed marriage. She wrote in her biography, "I just hope that I am forgiven for that. Through it all he has always remained a very wonderful person, filled with more human kindness than I've ever known, but within whose huge frame was embedded a facet of weakness that neither he nor I knew how to cope with" (BIC, p. 61).

Ralph wrote to Blanche occasionally. Early in 1928, a letter arrived that was "terribly sad and filled with trouble" (BIC, p. 63). He enclosed a picture of himself and another woman. Blanche knew that it was necessary to set him free. She was standing

in the office where she worked, reading the letter with tears running down her cheeks, when Willard, her employer, saw her and inquired the reason for her sorrow. She explained, and he took her directly from the office to his lawyer. The divorce was finalized July 7, 1928 (Note 2).

## **The Great Depression**

Although the Great Depression officially began in the United States with the stock market crash of October 1929, hundreds of thousands of citizens were already dealing with the realities of the preceding deep recession. Blanche had quickly been put in charge of Willard's office, at a weekly salary of \$30.00, so that he could be out soliciting business for the firm. As many of "the girls were collapsing on the job from hunger, Willard suggested we pay them each night, so they would have a good dinner and breakfast at least.... The only drawback was by the time the others with families were paid, there wasn't always my salary left in the till. To augment this, I got a job typing envelopes from six to seven thirty each morning before I went on my regular job" (BIC, p. 61).

Blanche lived in an apartment building, and she enjoyed her time there. For her, it was like a big family. The owner, referred to as "Dad Owens," was much like a father figure to the younger tenants, giving advice and providing support. Once the depression hit, Blanche found herself taking some of the young ladies out for meals. To obtain the added funds, she found employment from eight to midnight two nights each week at a cafeteria. Blanche also hired several of the young women to work part time at the office. "By this time I had missed a lot of meals and knew being hungry was not pleasant" (BIC, p. 62).

## **Bartell Wilson Cardon**

One of the individuals Blanche met at the apartment building was an older gentleman by the name of Jack Payne. One evening in the fall of 1929, Jack invited Blanche to dinner and a piano concert. The tickets for the concert had been given Jack by his employer; the couple did everything else Dutch Treat. They entered the Edelweiss Café for dinner. "When we went to the check stand to check my wrap, Jack found he knew the attendant. Before I knew it, I heard, 'Meet my friend, Bart Cardon.' While they talked for a moment, I made my assessment. All I could see at that moment was a young man, very thin and much too pale. I wasn't interested enough at the time to inquire anything about him. Two weeks later, we went back into the café but someone new was at the stand. Bart had gone to California" (BIC, pp. 64-65).

Jack Payne's wife and children were at last able to join him in Denver, and they rented a house there. It was a large home, and Blanche was encouraged to move in with the family. Jack's eldest daughter was married in the spring of 1930. The simple ceremony was conducted in the front room of the home. Only the immediate family and Blanche were in attendance. Following the service and the departure of the bride and

groom, the group was engaging in small talk. Blanche described what happened next, “The doorbell rang and there was Bart and a friend. They were tired and hungry and looked terrible. He hadn’t had a haircut for a long time. He asked Jack if he could borrow fifty cents so he could get his hair cut and look for a job. Jack didn’t have any change, so I gave it to him. That was my first investment in my second husband, but of course I didn’t know it at the time” (BIC, p. 68). Once Jack’s married daughter moved out of her room, Bart moved in. Soon, Blanche and Bart were dating.

The beginning of Blanche’s conversion to the tenets of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can be pinpointed to a Mother’s Day weekend in 1931, when several



couples were invited to spend time at Estes Park, Colorado. Time was spent getting the large cabin ready. Firewood was gathered, and the invited guests waited for the arrival of the owner couple, delayed due to pressing business. “It started to snow heavily by the time our hosts arrived. While we were waiting we sat around the huge fireplace and talked. Finally the conversation turned to religion. I asked Bart the difference between being a Methodist and a Mormon. He answered that his church had the authority to marry for time and eternity. That answered a lot of questions for me, and as soon as I heard it, I knew that Mormonism was true from the way I felt inside. I also knew that somehow I wanted to be part of it. After that we had long conversations about the Gospel. ...Many times I

have thought about that wonderful weekend, and have always felt that the Gospel came to me in the most wonderful place in the world – high in the Colorado Rocky Mountains” (BIC, pp. 67-68).

The courtship led to a decision to marry, and a date was set. Willard, the day before the marriage, took Blanche out to lunch. They went to the Gypsy Tea Room, and following their meal, “...a gypsy waddled over to our table with a pot of tea. When it came my turn for a reading, I drank the tea and all I could see was a blob of tea leaves. She looked in the cup, said I was about to be married and that I would change religions. That was too much for Willard and he said, ‘ho, ho, ho, you’re too smart for that.’ I wanted so much to tell him that he was completely wrong, but I didn’t” (BIC, p. 68).

Blanche and Bart went to the LDS mission home in Denver and met with President Woodruff. They were married July 11, 1931, at 11:00 a.m., with Mrs. Woodruff and two sister missionaries as witnesses. As Blanche was little informed regarding Mormonism, the place of the wedding and who performed the ceremony would have been Bart’s idea, thus indicating that he was not particularly antagonistic towards the Church at that time, or it could simply have been that it was a financial decision, given that there would have been no marriage costs at the mission home. The couple then headed for a short



honeymoon at Miniature Village up Turkey Creek Canyon, but they had a flat tire along the way. Having to purchase a new tire took all but two dollars of their money, making it necessary to return to Blanche's apartment without the honeymoon.

The national economy was worsening, and Blanche found that she was being put on piece work and on call. Bart's work at the Ford Motor Company ended, and he went onto Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), cleaning streets. To make matters even more challenging, Blanche was pregnant with their first child. She put it this way, "Our menu got skimpier all of the time. Finally, we were reduced to almost a full-time diet of navy beans, bread and butter. Those were the days before electrical refrigeration. We tried to keep at least 25 cents worth of ice in a little wooden ice box in our kitchen. This had to last a week, which it never did, so before the week was out even our beans got a little sour. Finally, one night we saw an ad in the paper stating that the Western Auto Company was holding an open house the next day. Refreshments would be served. We hurried down the next day, giving ourselves plenty of time, or so we thought. When we got there, the line went almost around the block. By the time we got to the refreshment table all that was left was some warm punch. I put my fingers in the cookie tray and scraped up some of the crumbs" (BIC, p. 69).

Bartell Wilson Cardon, Jr. (initially referred to as Junie) was born April 21, 1932, at Denver General Hospital. Bart was working two or three days each week, at most. Although he wasn't there for the delivery, he arrived soon after. Blanche's description of that meeting is a demonstration of her compassionate nature. "Bart had been called back to work the night before, so he asked the doctor the next morning if he should plan to go to work. The doctor was brusque and told him unless he planned to have the baby, he should go to work. He took me to the hospital about six thirty as he had to be at work at seven that day.... Bart arrived at the hospital about four-thirty. I had just received my dinner tray and on it was steak, vegetable, potatoes and gravy and milk. He had worked all day with nothing to go home to so I told him I had an upset stomach and asked him if he would eat my dinner. That night at nine, they brought around milk and cookies. I asked for seconds" (BIC, pp. 70-71).

Bart was unable to provide sufficient income to sustain the family. Changes had to be made. There was correspondence going on between Bart and his father that ultimately resulted in the decision that Bart would return to Logan, where he was to work part time in his father's office. Blanche "was very much for it, as I was anxious to really study the Gospel.... Bart was the only Mormon I had ever been around and was acting no differently than anyone else. I felt that wasn't quite right. Also his friends, I thought, were of poor quality. I was putting up with profanity, vulgarity, liquor, something entirely foreign in my entire life" (BIC, p. 72). One of Bart's friends had recently been in an armed robbery and was sent off to prison.

While Blanche and Bart Jr. visited with family for a month in Iowa, Bart moved their few belongings to Utah. His parents were in California when Blanche and Bart Jr. arrived in Logan, so they had the large home to themselves for a time. When the parents returned in the second week of January 1933, Blanche found that Father Cardon "was all

that Bart said he would be, warm and friendly” (BIC p. 73). Her description of Father Cardon was accurate, for he was known both inside and outside the family for being emotionally stable, never overreacting to situations, always gentle and kind. Blanche described Mother Cardon as “reserved.” It may be that Mother Cardon was on her best behavior, for she was known for her strong opinions and occasional emotional reactions to people and situations. Blanche felt that she was not regarded as part of the family, and it was her supposition that the distancing had to do with her not being a baptized member of the Church.

A representative of the Sorosis Society, a professional women's association or sorority, which later took on the name Pi Beta Phi, phoned Father Cardon's office requesting that a couple be found to live at their house during the summer, June through August, 1933. Bart took the information to Blanche, and they decided to move to the sorority house at 33 North 200 East (BIC, p.74).



**Blanche Irene Cardon, Blanche Cardon, Sarah Sophia Cardon, Sybil Kenner, Karma Cardon, John Pitzer, Rula Pitzer, Joseph E. Cardon Virginia Christensen, Bart Cardon Jr., Charles Christensen**

At the end of the summer, Bart located a duplex at 233 North 300 East. It was reasonably priced and had most fixtures, although they had to use the oven to heat the

house. The other tenants were students at the college, and they tended to steal coal from the family's limited supply when theirs ran out (BIC, p. 74).

The next Logan residence was what Blanche referred to as the "Reese home" at 35 North 100 East (BWC, p. 7). Ronald Alsop Cardon was born June 6, 1934, at the Budge Clinic (hospital), while the family lived in that home. "Bart was very nervous, as the doctor had told him he could be in the delivery room with me. After I had been prepped, he was given a watch and told to clock my pains. I was given no medication and was in great pain. He wasn't prepared for that.... He shook and perspired, and I felt sorry for him as I knew his ordeal was almost as great as mine" (BIC, p. 76). Ronnie, as he was called, was a "...beautiful, warm, cuddly baby boy with lots of black hair and blue eyes" (BIC, p. 76).

That birth, however, was immediately followed by serious health issues. Blanche was terribly weak and could barely walk. Initially, the diagnosis was rheumatism. Then, she developed a sore throat which turned into quinsy, which led to a tonsillectomy. That was followed by what her doctor described as "problems incident to childbirth." The treatment was "36 hours of radiation" (BIC, p. 78). Blanche would not be privileged to have more children.

"When Ronald was about three months old, Dad said he should be blessed. This was the first I had heard about blessing babies. As we made preparations, I should have asked more questions. Junie had never been blessed, but somehow I got it in my head that blessings were for small babies.... I suppose Bart didn't want his father to know that he had not seen to it, and I suppose Dad naturally supposed that it had been done.... So on September 2, 1934, we went to the Fourth Ward and Ronald was blessed by his grandfather. That was the only time that Bart went to church while we were in Logan" (BIC, p. 77).

Later in September, the family packed and moved again, this time to the "little red house" at 235 East 400 North (BWC, p. 7). While there, Blanche worked at the Budge Clinic for several months and paid off her financial obligations pertaining to Ron's birth and some of Bart's bills related to an earlier appendicitis hospitalization.

John Pitzer, Rula Cardon's husband, was in the military and was to be transferred out of state in 1935. Arrangements were made for Bart and Blanche to live in their home, located at 82 North 200 East (BWC, p. 8), while they were away on assignment. That home was one house south from the southeast corner of the temple grounds and across the street and up the block from the Sorosis House where the family had resided during a past summer. John's orders were delayed, so Bart, Blanche, and the boys found themselves, temporarily, living in the Cardon cabin up Logan Canyon. Once John's orders did arrive, Bart and family moved into the Pitzer home, the seventh and last location where Blanche and the family would live while in Logan.

It was about this time that Bart obtained part-time work as a clerk at the State Liquor Store, three nights a week, working from six p.m. to one a.m. "In 1936 [Bart and Blanche] took over a barbeque business across the street from the Capital Theater on Main Street. This was bad from the very beginning. The former owner had skipped out

with a lot of bills. We were to take over those accounts and pay on them each week. We were able to make a little money, but not as much as we expected or had been represented to us" (BIC, p. 79). They acquired another barbeque in Tremonton and sold it four months later for a profit of approximately \$700.00.

"Business at the barbeque was dropping off and by early 1937 when our lease was up we learned the property had been sold and the building was to be torn down. We still owed some of the original bills we had assumed. Bart felt if we rode it out we would really be in debt, so again we mutually agreed to go to Denver where I would be able to work. None of the family knew about the plans, as Dad would never approve of our leaving under such circumstances. Once again we packed up our few possessions and early one morning left Logan. I felt badly about leaving without saying goodbye to anyone. I'd never done that before. I was sure that I would be blamed for part of it at least" (BIC, p. 80).

Blanche was able to secure some secretarial work within days of arriving in Denver, but after a few months she developed severe and untreatable (at the time) eczema on the hands and was bleeding on the typewriter and documents she was producing. She was unable to continue that work, having to give up her position shortly before Christmas. Unfortunately, Bart was still unemployed.

Bart wrote his father early in January of 1938 requesting monetary assistance. A check was sent immediately (JEC, p. 33). Blanche noted that, "Evidently there had been correspondence going on between Dad and Bart that I was not aware of, as after the holidays he came to see us.

It ended up that I should take the children and go to Iowa and stay with Mother. I didn't want to do that as she couldn't afford to keep us" (BIC, p. 81). Regarding the visit, Father Cardon recorded his views of it in this fashion, "This was a beautiful trip and especially that I could be with Bartell and family" (JEC, p. 34). Then on February 11, Father Cardon wrote, "Received telegram from Bartell that Blanche wanted to go to Iowa if I could send them the money. Sent \$50.00.

They will leave tomorrow" (JEC, p. 34). Blanche wrote, continuing from where she expressed not wanting to go to Iowa, "However, that was the way it ended and the next



**Stanley Alsop,  
Blanche, "Hattie" Alsop, Bernice Alsop,  
Ronald and Bart Jr.**



day we were on the train east. I don't know what Bart did, the plans for him were never discussed with me. However, my first letter from him some three weeks later came from California. That was a total surprise" (BIC, p. 81).

In the latter part of August 1938, Blanche received a message from Bart indicating that he had found work as a bus driver with the Key System and that she and the boys should travel to Oakland (BIC, p. 83). Blanche stopped in Logan on the way. "Everyone seemed glad to see us, and very kind. On the second day we were there, Dad came home for lunch and said, 'Blanche, you and I have a date this afternoon.' I was pleased to think that he wanted to take me someplace, so I said, 'Where are we going dad?' He replied, 'To get you baptized in the Logan High School pool.' I was very surprised and so very relieved. At last they thought I was ready for baptism" (BIC, p. 83). Blanche was baptized on September 29, 1938, by Grant Humphreys and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Father Cardon. He wrote about the event, concluding with these words, "Very pleased about this" (JEC, p. 37).

The next day, Father Cardon and his daughter, Blanche, drove Blanche, Bart Jr. and Ron to Ogden, Utah, purchased their train tickets, and said goodbye. Blanche picked up the story, "That night after the lights had been turned off in the coach and the boys were resting, I tried desperately hard to see what this new land looked like that I was plunging into. As I watched the ever-changing shape of a far off mountain range, I made two commitments to myself and my Heavenly Father. One was that I would do the best I could to live my new religion and secondly when the battles came that I must fight, I'd stand my ground and fight them. I had no desire to run anymore.

"We arrived in Oakland during the mid-morning. Bart was working and couldn't meet us, but Orval Lynch was there. He was the only married friend that Bart and I had in Denver. I was surprised to see him. I didn't know he and Catherine were living in Oakland. The four of us had shared food in Denver before Junie was born and I considered them the nicest of all of our friends. Bart came to their home after work and it was so nice to be with him again. I told him the first possible moment I could that I had been baptized. All he said was, 'What did you do that for?' The wind whistled through his teeth as it always did when he was a little disgusted. He never inquired about it later and I never volunteered to speak of it again" (BIC, p. 84).

Their first California residence was at 2210 East, 10th Ave. Apt. 205, Oakland, California. Bart was working for the Key System, driving buses. Bart Jr. was enrolled in the public-school system. For a time, Blanche remained home tending Ron. "Times were hard for those of us who were not connected with defense work in some way. Although I had hoped when we arrived in Oakland that with a little planning it wouldn't be necessary for me to work, it was soon evident that if the boys or I needed anything, I had to provide it. Bart said he was doing all he could on his salary, and that was true at the time. So long as he was in our home his attitude never changed. He paid the rent and gave me \$30.00 a month for food. I bought our clothes, made up the extra that had to be spent for food, paid the baby sitter and the \$3.00 we spent on one evening a week out to a dinner and a show" (BIC, p. 86).

The apartment had only one bedroom, and more space was needed. From there the family relocated to 2200 Jefferson Street in Berkeley. A Denver friend, Earl Fireoved, arrived at the door one day and soon was a boarder. The flat worked well for the family, but the owner put the property up for sale, and another move was necessary. They moved into a two-story home in Berkeley, situated on Rose Street. Earl Fireoved also boarded there.

Blanche and the boys “attended the Berkeley First Ward when we could, but it was a long walk from our home. Two lady missionaries were living close by our home. They started a little primary on their own and Bartell and Ronald attended” (BIC, p. 85). Bart Jr. had his eighth birthday in April of 1940. “Bartell had been taught about baptism and he was anxious to have it done. I had hoped his father would suggest it, but he never did. After waiting three months, I made the arrangements. I asked him to go with us, but he said he couldn’t get off work. The three of us went to the Oakland First Ward, which was the stake center at the time, to have it done on August 31, 1940” (BIC, p. 85).

Blanche continually found work. “I had been working fairly steady at anything I could get, sometimes in Oakland and sometimes in San Francisco. I finally got a steady job with the Andrew-Breeding Company in San Francisco, another direct mail advertising company. In the meantime, to be closer to San Francisco transportation, and to Bart’s work, we decided to move to Oakland and found a lower two bedroom flat, partly furnished, at 609-35th Street” (BIC, p. 86). Blanche would live at this location until 1954. It was the residence that her two sons considered as their childhood home.

## **World War II**

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941. “Being on the West Coast during the war was rather exciting. There were war related activities all around the area. Several naval bases, army and air force garrisons, as well as industrial plants and other war related processes were nearby. People were streaming in from other areas of the nation to work, especially from the southern states. Blackouts were introduced almost immediately. If Japan could bomb Pearl Harbor, then it was likely that the Japanese could reach the West Coast. Antiaircraft guns were placed all along the San Francisco shoreline. Restricted areas and secret military operations popped up everywhere. Japanese submarines were reportedly spotted sitting just off the coast. Invasion scares and rumors were frequent, at least during the first year of the war” (BWC, p. 33).

The family was part of the Oakland First Ward, where Bart Jr. had been baptized the previous year. Blanche, Bart Jr. and Ron were warmly received. “I had no more than attended a couple of times when I was made a Sunday School teacher. Although I was very hesitant to take on such a responsibility, it was the best thing that could have happened. I really had to study and learn the Gospel. All the time I was in that ward, I held a job teaching either in Sunday School or Genealogy. At that time MIA was held each Tuesday night and I attended. It wasn’t long before I found myself as an M-Man and Gleaner teacher. I was also made the secretary to the Girls program, which I enjoyed very

much. When gas rationing came on during the war, Primary was moved to Sundays and I became a Sea Gull teacher. I also was a visiting teacher for the Relief Society and enjoyed that. In those days in California, one held four or five jobs at one time and thought it normal" (BIC, p. 87).

"In 1942, Ronnie became eight. I only waited a month before I made arrangements to have him baptized. Bart told me again that he could not get off work, so the three of us went to the ward for his baptism" (BIC, p. 87).

Sometime during those initial years of the 1940s, as best as it can be determined, Bart met a woman at work, and a relationship developed. From that point on, Bart began a steady process of disengagement from the family. He continued to work at the Key System as a driver, until at least 1943. At some point, probably early on, he began to work at a nearby smoke shop during his off hours. There was a small café with an adjoining area featuring pool tables and such things. The Key System drivers tended to go there during their breaks and were the principle customers. Being away from home for twelve or more hours meant that Bart had little family contact.

Blanche considered Christmas of 1943 "...probably the best that we ever had as a family" (BIC, p. 88). Bart offered her "anything" that she might want, a fur stole, resetting her ring, or the like. He took the 24<sup>th</sup> of December off and escorted Blanche on a dinner date. For the first time since they had lived in California, Bart was available on Christmas morning for opening presents. Blanche did not know it then, but Bart was preparing to leave the family.

Early in the spring of 1944, Blanche was sorting clothes to do the laundry. A check book was in one of Bart's shirt pockets. It indicated that he had more than \$4,000.00 in his banking account. That was a huge amount of money for the time. Although Bart later claimed that the money was being held for his boss at the smoke shop, and although Blanche did want to believe that explanation, there was a nagging doubt.

In May, Bart encouraged Blanche and the boys to join him on a vacation. "This was the first time since we had been married that we were to have a vacation together, and I could hardly wait. We rented a three room cottage on the seashore. It turned out to be perfect for our needs" (BIC, p. 89).

"July 19<sup>th</sup> came on a Wednesday. It was Bart's day off. He suggested he come to San Francisco and we do the town. I worried about my three dollars not being enough to cover the expenses, but he brushed my fears away. When he arrived at my office, which was the first time he had ever been there, I introduced him to the bosses and my co-workers. He was impeccable in his manner and dress. He wore a new suit that I had never seen before. We went out to dinner at the Red Barn, and it was all very nice. When we were ready to leave he threw a couple dollars on the table for a tip. I suggested I look in my purse for smaller change, but he said there was plenty more where that came from. By the time I got home that night, I felt as though I had been out with a stranger. He had started his shock treatment. Two days later on the 21<sup>st</sup>, when I came home from work, the real shocker was on the mantel, a seven-page letter, sealed in an envelope, was waiting" (BIC, p. 90).

Bart Jr. wrote about that event, "July 21, 1944, was black Friday for our family. I came home from school in the early afternoon and noticed an envelope placed on the mantel, propped up against the mirror. It had my mother's name on it. For some reason, I had a sense of foreboding. When mother came home, she opened the envelope and began to read the letter. She sat down in the overstuffed chair and was soon in tears. My father had written to declare himself free of the family. Mother told Ron and me of the contents of the letter, and we joined her in tears. Soon, we were all sitting at the kitchen table writing notes to my father, begging that he reconsider, that he not leave us" (BWC, p. 47). Blanche summed up the event in this fashion, "So the three of us learned together the hard way the decision that had been made and carried out in our behalf. I am sure he did what he thought he had to do for his own happiness. ...but I thought his method unnecessarily cruel" (BIC, p. 90).

Blanche, the following Monday, decided that it was necessary to find employment closer to home. She terminated her work in San Francisco and located a position at Grayson's in downtown Oakland. Grayson's was a lady's apparel store, and she became a saleslady. Her hours were from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. That work schedule permitted her to be home to see Bart Jr. and Ron off to school each morning (BWC, p. 47).

"Bart came to the house once in a while. On one of these occasions he asked me to apply for the divorce and I said that I would. However, he had not been gone very long before a sad faced little man came to my door and served me with a writ. He said he was sorry and disappeared. Bart had sued me for divorce on grounds of incompatibility and wanted joint custody of the boys which was all right with me. I felt maybe they would see him more often that way. He appeared very generous as he gave me my two bank accounts, the bonds I had purchased with my own money, and our few pieces of old furniture, some of which I had paid for. All he wanted was the car, and I didn't even know that we had one" (BIC, p. 91). The divorce was finalized October 28, 1944, Bart's birthday (Note 3).

### **Continuing as a single parent**

Bart Jr. wrote, "My brother and I were too young to understand all the ramifications of separation and divorce, but we did recognize that there were new pressures coming in upon our mother and upon us. Even so, we did not fully comprehend how difficult it must have been for her. For example, she was to receive a monthly check of \$35.00 from my father to assist in child support. She received a few checks; they ceased to come after only two or three months had passed. From that point on the entire weight of maintaining our home fell upon her shoulders" (BWC, p. 47).

Blanche decided that she needed to locate a full-time position that was permanent and predictable. "The following February, in 1945, I started working for the Retailers Commercial Agency. It was a credit company and a one girl office at the time with a lot of responsibility and pressures. I worked very hard to make good on this job. I was about 20 years past the age limit for hiring when I started with them. Had it not been for the



post war conditions and the poor salary that I accepted to start, I would never have been considered for the job”(BIC, p. 92).

World War II ended in September 1945, and the nation began the process of normalization. Life settled into somewhat of a routine. Blanche made certain that Bart Jr. and Ron had breakfast each morning and were off to school during the week; she then traveled by streetcar to her work in the downtown area of Oakland. She often added to that schedule some evening and occasional Saturday employment. Saturdays, when home, were devoted to chores; Sundays were for attending church services and taking Bart Jr. and Ron out to dinner and an occasional movie between Sunday School in the morning and Sacrament Meeting in the late afternoon. She somehow managed to find time for weekday church and social meetings.



**Bart Jr., Blanche, Ron  
at 609-35<sup>th</sup> Street**

During the summer of 1946, Blanche and her two sons traveled to Marion, Iowa, to visit with her mother and other family members. The visit was pleasant and provided her the opportunity of introducing her two sons to family and friends.

Several years passed, and Blanche was invited by the bishop of her ward to his office. To her surprise, she was called to be a stake missionary. “Even though I had been a member of the Church for ten years or better I still felt very ill equipped to accept such an important call.... He assured me that I knew the Gospel well enough and that I would have the Spirit of the Holy Ghost to call upon at any time that I needed him. We were called for two years and supposed to go out twice a week or until we had a credit of 416 hours. I was set apart on February 27, 1949, and it took me until January 11, 1953, to complete my calling” (BIC, p. 94).



**Blanche and friend on way to Salt  
Lake City for temple endowments**

my research for family names” (BIC, pp.96-97).

There were two unique experiences in 1949 that had special meaning to Blanche. She received her Patriarchal Blessing on May 25<sup>th</sup>. Then, on October 19<sup>th</sup>, she received her own endowments, having traveled with a friend, Francis Mayo, to Salt Lake City for that purpose. “After this experience, I was filled with a great urge to do genealogy work. I started in earnest

Soon, Blanche found herself living alone. Bart Jr. graduated from high school in 1951, went off first to naval service on Guam, followed by a mission to Argentina. Ron graduated from high school in 1953, joined the marines, and found himself in Korea. Those were sad events for Blanche. "I was heart sick, not for him [referring to Ron] as he was young and needed his chance at life, but for me. I knew from then on home and even I would never be the same to my children. I was rapidly getting old and there could be little else ahead for me but loneliness" (BIC, p. 97).

With her sons no longer at home, Blanche moved to a smaller apartment in August of 1954. The new location was in a much nicer neighborhood and closer to her primary workplace. Blanche and her sister, Bernice, had brought their mother from Iowa to live in their homes a few years earlier. Hattie Alsop lived with Blanche during the summers and in Southern California with Bernice and her husband during the rest of each year.

Ron married Irene Nelson in 1956, had two children (Steven Ronald and Elaine Irene) and settled in Southern California. Bart Jr. married Kathleen McDonald in 1960, had five sons (Joseph Edward, Steven Craig, David Alan, Peter Wilson, and John Philip) and moved to Minnesota and then Pennsylvania. Blanche had ongoing interactions with both growing families over the years, sometimes traveling to their homes and occasionally being visited by them. She assisted daughters-in-law following the births of several of her grandchildren, and she was often included in family vacations.

On March 31, 1965, Blanche retired from her company. Although she had held positions of responsibility, she had not been given the same privileges as the male employees, and that included pay levels and favored retirement benefits. Consequently, she continued to work part-time to meet Social Security requirements.

Blanche was contacted by her sister-in-law, Sybil Kenner, around Christmastime of 1966. Sybil encouraged her to move to Utah so that they could be closer to each other. That invitation came at a good time, for Blanche was finding it difficult to get to her church meetings due to poor bus schedules and was having a challenging time with her genealogical work. She spent her sixty-seventh birthday on a Greyhound bus moving to Salt Lake City, Utah. That was March 22, 1967.

An apartment was quickly located downtown and close to the genealogical library. Blanche was delighted to find that rents were much lower in Utah. Consequently, she did not have to work part-time to supplement her rather meager retirement income. Her time at the library was fruitful, and she collected hundreds of names for temple work.

She was now living just a block from her ward, and she "took advantage of all the spiritual and social events" (BIC, p. 104). The manager of the apartment building where she resided at 56 South 300 East asked her to develop a Family Home Evening class. She contacted the forty or so tenants and set the first meeting. The response was far greater than she had expected, and in a short time she and her neighbors were having a good deal of fun together. Later on, in 1973, Blanche moved to 63 South 400 East, a much nicer apartment only a block away and still in the same ward.

Hattie Alsop, Blanche's mother, died September 8, 1968. Although Hattie was 98 years old at the time, Blanche found that she was not fully prepared for the loss. She flew

to Pasadena where a funeral was held for the family and Hattie's friends from the local Methodist church she had attended. Blanche and her sister, Bernice, then escorted the body to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for a funeral and burial at the Shiloh Cemetery. Hattie was placed next to her husband, George, and her two children who died as infants.

It was during the time in Iowa that Bernice and Blanche decided to take a Hawaiian vacation together the following year. Blanche flew to Pasadena for their May 9, 1969, flight to Hilo, Hawaii. Shortly before she and Bernice were to leave for the airport, Blanche received a call from her son, Ron, indicating that Bart had just died. "For the moment it seemed I shouldn't go on my trip, but I realized I had no place whatever in this. I did what I could do to help Ronnie, and we left for the airport as scheduled" (BIC, p. 106). The vacation was her first in years, and it provided a time of distraction from her many cares.

That peaceful escape from the realities of life was short lived, for upon returning to Salt Lake City, Blanche developed what she referred to as "a nervous condition." It was no wonder that she found herself in that situation, for in a rather short period of time she had retired from work, gone through a major operation (gall bladder) alone, moved to another state, lost her mother, and was notified that her former husband had died.

Bart Jr. and his family came to Utah the summer of 1970. While there, they were joined by Ron and his family. The two families spent approximately ten days vacationing up Logan Canyon, spending the nights at the family cabin. Blanche spent her days with them, but her nights were in a comfortable bed at the home of Sybil and Cecil Kenner.

Shortly following that family activity, Blanche had the opportunity of accomplishing a task she had been wanting to have done for some time—being sealed to her parents. On July 8, 1970, "Kathy took mother's name through for me. Afterward she and Bart were proxies for my mother and father, while Cecil and Sybil were proxies for Lucille and my little brother. Finally it was done, and those of us that could be, were sealed together as a family for all eternity. It was a beautiful ceremony, and words cannot express how I felt after all the years of waiting to be sealed to my parents" (BIC, p. 108). Her health began to dramatically improve from that moment on.



**Joseph, Blanche, Elaine, Steven, Steven R.,  
Bart Jr., David, Kathleen, Irene, Ron  
at cabin in Logan Canyon**

## The last ten years

Bart Jr. and his family moved to Logan, Utah, in 1977. Blanche was encouraged to relocate there also. Sybil Kenner found a comfortable apartment immediately east of the Logan Tabernacle where the genealogical library was located. Blanche liked what was offered, and on May 1<sup>st</sup> she moved into Apartment 2 at 28 ½ North 100 East. From that point on, she had family immediately available to her.

Soon after Blanche settled into the routine of her new life in Logan, she found it necessary to deal with increasingly poor vision. The solution was to have cataracts



**Blanche in front of her apartment on 100 East**

removed from both eyes. Bart Jr. took her to Salt Lake City for the procedure. The task was accomplished, but in those days it was necessary to have the eyes covered and the individual remain relatively inactive for twenty-four hours. Blanche and Bart Jr. spent their waiting time at a hotel. The bandages were removed the day following surgery. Blanche was both amazed and joyful with the outcome.

Several years passed. Blanche was engaged in useful activities and had established a cadre of friends in her apartment complex and ward. She served a two-year mission at the Family History Library and was also deeply engaged in her own research efforts. Unexpectedly, she suffered a stroke resulting in partial paralysis of her right side. Kathleen and Bart Jr. brought her to their home for care. Blanche's first response to the stroke was a sense of loss and hopelessness, but

that did not last long. She launched into a determined regimen of physical exercises designed to overcome the weaknesses of her right arm and leg. For hours each day, Blanche walked back and forth in the dining area, holding onto the horizontal railing to the side of a stairway leading to the basement. More hours were spent sitting at the dining room table writing. Within weeks she was walking with more confidence, and her handwriting returned to its former beauty.

Bart Jr. and Kathleen thought that Blanche needed to be living where her needs would be better met. A new apartment facility, Spring Hollow, had recently been erected at 1360 North 200 East, and it had built-in emergency management resources. Also, the apartment complex was within a few blocks of where Kathy worked, and it was easier to get to from the Cardon home. Most of the residents were elderly, and there was a branch of the Church that met in the apartment commons. Blanche looked at it and felt that it was better than where she was staying. Her new apartment was on the second floor and had a nice view.

During her decade in Logan, Blanche experienced much of what she had always wanted. She wished to be near family, have opportunities to enjoy life without financial worry, and to have a sense of permanency. She now lived near a son, daughter-in-law, grandsons, and members of her former husband's family with whom she had a close relationship. She was invited to family meals and gatherings, sport events in which grandchildren participated, mission farewells and homecomings, graduations from high school and college, and so much more. She was active in her ward, and her genealogical activities had her in direct correspondence with distant relatives in



**Blanche's apartment left of flagpole on second floor**



**Kathleen, Bart Jr., Peter, David, Ervin McDonald, John, Blanche, Ruby McDonald, and Steven at Cardon family gathering**

Europe. Also, she was within striking distance of her other son, Ron, and his family in Southern California.

Gypsy fortunetellers cast a fascinating cloud over Blanche's life. During her teen years, Blanche was told by a fortuneteller that she would marry Ralph Collins and that another woman would come on the scene and disrupt their lives. There was truth to that. In Blanche's early thirties, another Gypsy foretold that she would marry Bart Cardon and change religions. Those

things did occur. There was a third encounter with a Gypsy of which some of the family were aware, but it was only in 1981, as she was preparing her autobiography, that Blanche shared a key part of that prediction for the first time. She and Sybil, shortly before Blanche moved to California, visited a fortuneteller on a whim. Blanche was told a number of things that happened soon thereafter. The one thing that Blanche did not communicate to the family until later was that she was informed that she would live to be 87 years of age.

Blanche's 87<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 22 passed, and the clock began to tick prophetically. Bart Jr. and Kathleen decided that they would be particularly vigilant during the following months. Blanche was in good health, but she was ending many of her projects; her life history was published, she was passing her genealogical records on to Bart Jr., and she was saying goodbye to people.

Bart Jr. and Kathleen were out of town on August 14, 1987. The manager of the Spring Hollow apartments noticed that Blanche had not brought in her morning paper. She knocked, but there was no answer. As Steven Cardon was the designated grandson to look in on Blanche during that week, the manager called him. He arrived and entered, finding her sitting in a favorite chair, as if sleeping. Sometime during the night, midway through her eighty-seventh year, Blanche had slipped away peacefully and silently (Note 4).

### **Summary**

Blanche Irene Alsop was born on a farm in a rural area of the United States of America. Hers was an era of remarkable transition which included two world wars, the Great Depression, and dramatic advances in science and technology. She was part of what is often referred to as "The Greatest Generation."

Her life was difficult. She had a high school education, but her natural abilities would have taken her into higher education had circumstances provided the opportunity. She entered into two marriages; both ended in divorce, not of her doing. There were years of financial struggles and much loneliness.

She valiantly surmounted her trials, was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and she became a blessing to both the living and the dead. Her countless hours devoted to genealogical work resulted in literally thousands of names going to the temples. She raised two sons as a single mother, both of whom she nurtured well. Blanche was loyal to family and friends and was always a good neighbor. Her last decade was passed surrounded by people who loved her, and she loved them.

Blanche ended her autobiography with these words, "Even though I had to pay a great price, I've been greatly blessed by the Gospel, not only healthwise, but with peace and contentment with the things I was allowed to have, for which I am so grateful. I am also grateful that I have always been busy, so that time has become a precious commodity" (BIC, p. 113). Blanche was the perfect example of "enduring to the end."



## References and notes

BIC       ...and they named me *Blanche Irene* Autobiography of Blanche Irene Alsop Cardon  
BWC       *An Angel at My Side* Autobiography of Bartell Wilson Cardon, Jr.  
JEC       diary notes of Joseph Emanuel Cardon

Note 1: There were five children born to George Willard Alsop and Harriet Laurana Good.

Alsop                               1898-1898 unnamed and died within days of birth

Blanche Irene Alsop   1900-1987

Lucille Elizabeth Alsop 1903-1903 lived several months

Bernice Arlene Alsop   1907-2003

Stanley Good Alsop    1915-1988

Note 2: Ralph Collins was married at least three more times, had several children, and was unsuccessful in business affairs. He wrote Blanche a long letter in the mid-1950s recounting his troubled past. She later heard that he had remarried and was managing a motel in Eldora, Iowa. Blanche wrote, "I hope that time has healed his wounds and that he now has peace and happiness" (BIC, p. 99). He died a few days before Blanche.

Note 3: Bartell Cardon, following his divorce with Blanche, married a woman seventeen years younger than himself. They struggled financially, and he was continually seeking monetary assistance from family and friends. They adopted a young girl by the name of Brenda. He died of conditions related to alcoholism.

Note 4: Funeral services for Blanche Irene Alsop Cardon were held at the Allen-Hall Mortuary Chapel in Logan on Tuesday, August 18, 1987. The Family Prayer was offered by brother-in-law Fred Thompson, daughter-in-law Kathleen McDonald Cardon veiled Blanche's face, and the coffin was closed.

Sister-in-law Blanche Cardon Thompson provided the prelude and postlude music. Grandson Peter Wilson Cardon offered the invocation. The Obituary Tribute was read by granddaughter Elaine Cardon Sobotka. S. George Ellsworth, a family friend of many years, was the main speaker. Joan Griffin, a family friend, provided a vocal solo (*My Redeemer Lives* by Cecil Gates) accompanied by family friend, Janice McAllister. Ervin Stevenson McDonald, father of daughter-in-law Kathleen McDonald Cardon, offered the benediction.

The pallbearers were grandsons Joseph Edward Cardon, Steven Craig Cardon, David Alan Cardon, Peter Wilson Cardon, John Philip Cardon, and nephew C. Reed Neilsen. Grandson Steven Craig Cardon dedicated the grave in the Logan City Cemetery. Blanche was laid to rest in the main Cardon area of the cemetery.