

Ruby Irene Rickerson and Charles Jackson Wyly



Ruby Irene Rickerson; B 10 Sep 1896, Denver, CO; D 21 Aug. 1961, Phoenix, AZ.

Grandmother Wyly lived with us, yet I have difficulty recalling much about her life. This may be because she did not have much of a life of her own as she was never entirely well. Also, I think she tried to intrude as little as possible into the inner workings of our family. I feel she and Mom were close and discussed much in private that was not shared with us kids.

One of my earliest recollections is of the construction of her house in the back yard. It was a pre-fabricated house and they brought it in pieces and put together it in a few hours. It sat on cement blocks so that the irrigation water would not flood it. It had a sink and a toilet, but no shower. There was a cement block that served as the front step that I frequently moved to look for insects and Ground Snakes (*Sonora semiannulata*).

One example of the nature of our interactions is the following little event that for some unknown reason sticks out in my memory. I must have been about eight. Mom came into the house from the garage and told Grandma and me that the pilot light had gone out on the water heater and she had tried to light it. But the gas was leaking so bad there was an explosion when she struck the match. I remarked, "I am glad we don't keep anything important in the garage." Grandma pointed out, "But Bobby, your mother was in the garage." I guess she felt I should think about things a little more.

Grandma was put in charge of teaching us kids some table manners, but I think I learned very little. When Dad would make disparaging remarks about the "boys in the mill" and their union, she would make brave to express her opinion that laborers would have nothing if it were not for the unions.

Most nights Grandma would wash the dishes and Bill, Linda, or I would dry them and put them away. She would often talk to herself while standing at the sink. I think she was very lonely.

Grandma had to come into the bathroom in the main house to bathe. I recall her trying to be as unobtrusive as possible as she carried her clothes, towels, and other bathing things though the house to the bathroom. It must have been stressful for her.

She had tuberculosis, which in Arizona in those days was viewed as equivalent to leprosy. A person from the health department would visit every so often to check up on Grandma and see that she was not contaminating the rest of the family. She kept her dishes and silverware separate and put them in the kitchen window. We had lots of TB skin tests and x-rays. Mom said that if Grandma had gone to the sanitarium when she first contracted tuberculosis, the disease could have been cured. But, Grandma did not want to leave Bob and Roberta alone so young, and as a result she had the disease for the rest of her life.

The tuberculosis was in remission most of the time, but I recall that she had a relapse sometime when I was in grade school. She was admitted to the sanitarium and Mom went to visit her every day. We kids were not allowed to go in, but we found a great fox hole in back. Now I recall that the hole was full of Kleenex! I guess that's how medical waste was disposed in those days.

She took instructions and converted to Catholicism so she could attend mass with the rest of the family. When her sister came down with cancer in San Pedro, California, Ruby went and lived with the Bradfords to help Uncle Barney take care of Aunt Pearl.

She loved to listen to opera and to watch Liberace on television. Eventually her lung problems led to an enlarged heart and she developed cancer. Mother took loving care of her. When I came home from college I was afraid to go out and visit Grandma Wyly who was very ill in bed in her house. But when I made brave to visit, she was extremely happy to see me and exuded the most warm, loving, and gentle feelings. That is how I remember her.

Charles Jackson Wyly; B 29 Sept 1895, Los Angeles, CA; D 30 Apr 1936, Phoenix, AZ.

I never knew Grandfather Wyly. He died in 1936 in Phoenix, Arizona, at the age of 40. At the time, his wife Ruby was about 38 years old, Roberta was 16, and Bob was 17. Since my mother, was born in Seattle, I presume Charles and Ruby lived there in 1919, after Los Angeles and before Tucson.

Other than a few records, my only source of information about Charles comes from what Mom told me. She said that Charles had a different form of tuberculosis than Ruby had. Charles was a house painter. During prohibition he made wine and Roberta and Bob stomped the grapes with their bare feet. The family moved from Tucson to Phoenix seeking work for Charles.

He is buried in Greenwood Memorial Lawn in Phoenix.