



Memories of Grandma

*Byrda Geraldine Payton Knight
March 14, 1914 – June 8, 2004*

**KNIGHT
FAMILY CALENDAR
2011**

Christmas, 2010

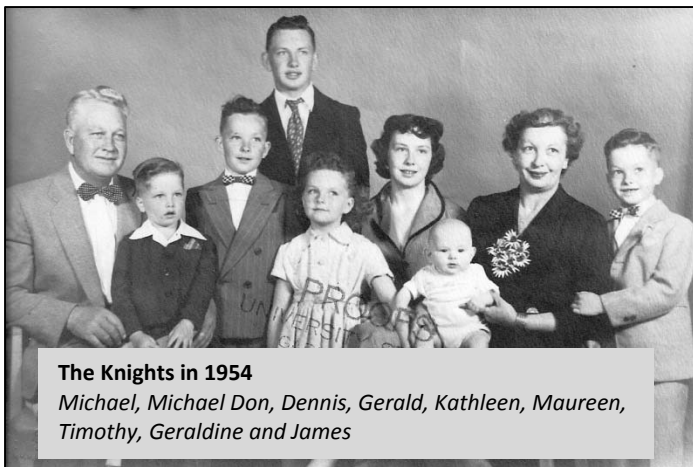
The 2011 Knight Family Calendar is about our matriarch, Geraldine Knight. It comes from my meetings with her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, and other folks she knew as family. I treasure the experience and what has come from it.

She was born Byrda Geraldine Payton in 1914, the second child of a Methodist preacher and his wife in Kansas. Her brother Harry was fourteen years her senior, so she experienced mostly a single childhood. She attended schools in towns on the plains of Eastern Colorado, and graduated from Limon High School. She attended Colorado Agricultural College and graduated with a degree in home economics and nutrition. She married Michael Knight in 1936. The size and scope of the family they bore and adopted is well illustrated in these pages and in all the nineteen preceding family calendars.

This calendar is the companion to our 2008 edition which honored our patriarch, Michael. The stories about Dad made you laugh, because that was his nature. Mom had a great sense of humor, but she wasn't by nature a comical person. Instead, you will find this compilation to be warm and smile provoking.

Everyone I interviewed thought so highly of our Mom, Grandma, Gigi, Aunt and friend that I feared we were making her a candidate for sainthood. Well, she wasn't a saint, but a special person who meant a great deal to many. This edition of the Knight Family Calendar merely puts that on the record. Thanks to everyone for your help and contributions.

Love,
Denny



The Knights in 1954

Michael, Michael Don, Dennis, Gerald, Kathleen, Maureen, Timothy, Geraldine and James

ABOUT THE COVER. *Becky has a special box in which she keeps Grandma's baby book and book of childhood mementos. I scanned the beautifully decorated lid and it made a perfect cover. Mom's picture is from 1962 when she was about 48.*



These pen and ink drawings were done by Geraldine as a college art project.



Christi was visiting in Las Vegas when Kathi and I were first dating, and we decided to take her and Mom down to the Strip. Mom was in a wheelchair in those days, and I was wheeling her and helping her navigate through the throngs on the street in front of Treasure Island. We approached a group of people, all companions, occupying the entire width of the sidewalk. They stood their ground, not about to step aside for a little old lady in a wheelchair. I asked her, "Are you ready for this?", and she said "Go right ahead!" We plowed through the line, Jerri was delighted, and the two of us were pals forever.

Gene

When Jill and I were little, we got into a fight in the small guest bedroom at 1015 Steele. Grandma gently but firmly broke up the squall and put us in separate corners. I certainly wasn't happy about it, but I treasure the moment, because she managed to show us love even in her rare role of disciplinarian.

Vince

Grandma made me lots of clothes. In the fourth grade, she made me a leopard skin reversible cap and coat.

Barbara

Uncle Mickey and Aunt Jerri were visiting us in California, and it was our Dad Charlie's birthday. Aunt Jerri made a beautiful angel food cake, elegantly decorated, with a quart of whiskey in the hollow center of the cake. It was magnificent, and we're sure our aunt enjoyed the irony she concocted, even if our Dad and Uncle missed it.

Kemp Sisters

Mom loved and cherished her seven children, equally but individually, appreciating their differences. Once I asked her which child she loved the best. "Why, of course, you, Kathi". It wasn't long before I heard her tell another of us that he was her favorite. I didn't feel betrayed at all, because I understood she meant it each time, and we were all her favorites.

Kathi

Grandma always managed to make every situation fun, and I think she was a true believer in its value. I was in medical school, doing my monthlies, working really hard. Grandma asked if I ever had time to have fun. She made her point, and I saw to it from then on to make time for fun. I still do, and I love her for it.

Becky

Aunt Jerri could always be counted on to make fun things happen.

Mary Kay

We had tons of fun at the Loveland picnics. Grandma would laugh, and then scold us when our squirt gun wars got too close and too wet.

Thomas

Mary Ann and I were warmly accepted by Jerri and Mickey, and adopted into the Knight clan soon after Rosie married Jerry. Besides the relationship Mary Ann and I enjoyed with the family, I had the personal opportunity to work with Jerri at Wards in Laramie, and again in '73 and '74, when I was operating a restaurant, bar, store and lodging at Mountain Home, Wyoming near the Colorado border. I had talked Jerri into bringing her culinary skills to cook and help me operate our rustic mountain restaurant. She turned out wonderful steaks and served them with elegant flourish.

Bob

There are logging operations around Mountain Home, and one day some men brought a seriously injured lumberjack into our store. His thigh had been ripped to the bone by a chain saw. Of course he was bleeding profusely. Jerri immediately took command, ordering the men to put him in the bathtub and to bring a bottle of whiskey. She had him drink the anesthesia liberally while she proceeded to get the bleeding stanchied. He was feeling no pain as she closed the wound using a curved upholstery needle. Neatly bandaged, his partners took him back to the camp to sleep the whiskey off. He saw a real doctor in Laramie the next day, who told him that Jerri's work was better than he could have done.

Bob

Grandma was very playful with people, and I think she enjoyed her interactions with everyone. She saw the sunny side of life and was always cheerful.

Christi

In my teens, I was allowed to travel by myself by train to Laramie one year. For my return, Aunt Jerri packed a special box that included enough home-made goodies to last the whole trip home.

Jo Beth

Grandma's craftiness took a new venture when she acquired a bottle cutter. She turned out many works of art, and I especially remember a beautiful cat vase with pom-pom eyes.

Barb

Aunt Jerri was one of the nicest ladies I have ever known. I can't imagine her angry or upset for very long. When I was a child she was one of the few adults who didn't scare me – she was that nice. No family is without their problems and the Knight family was no exception, but Aunt Jerri always found a way to make things right. I believe if God said, "You know, Geraldine, I should have made eight days in a week", Aunt Jerri would have made not just another day but The Eighth Day, and the whole world would have been better for it.

Charlene

Mom was always organized and on top of things, but often someone would spring a project on her that required her to jump into action. I remember once when she had a last minute demand to make a new dress for Kathi. With no time to spare, and working too quickly, she ran the sewing machine needle through her thumb. The needle was still locked in the machine while it was lodged in her hand. The recourse was to loosen the assembly so the needle could be removed and she could be extricated. Dad was in near hysteria, until Mom ordered, "Dammit, Mickey, just get me the pliers." She got herself loose, extracted the needle, bandaged her thumb, and finished the dress on time.

Jim

Grandma was afraid of one of us falling down the folding attic staircase, and she would stand watching when we climbed up. Later we would call for her, and she would be there again for our descent. The attic was a special place, a castle of a playhouse in orange shag carpeting.

Joleen

In Grandpa's garage, Uncle Tim had hidden a scythe which I had taken out to play with. I had it in the bedroom space in the attic, and was carrying it when I fell down the folding attic staircase. Grandma was mortified at what might have happened, and deeply relieved I wasn't hurt. She sat me down and gave me the appropriate lecture. I don't know what became of the scythe, but if it was still around after that, I left it alone.

Vince

I remember Gigi letting me sit on the counter as she was grinding crackers and preparing some kind of a salad or something. She would explain each step. I think that was a foundation for the interest I have today in the culinary arts.

Sean

I liked sleeping on the couch at Grandma's. She would make it up extra special in a bedroll that would keep me happily tucked in all night.

Kevin

I was five, and loved playing with and learning about my collection of toy dinosaurs. Grandma took it on herself to call the wife of Dr. Sam Knight, a distinguished paleontologist at the University of Wyoming, and arranged to take me to their home with my collection. The couple was kind enough to have us for a lunch, after which the ladies had a nice visit while the professor and I went off to review my dinosaurs. He had lots to tell me about my collection, and he had many interesting things of his own around the house to show and talk about. This vivid personal memory I connect directly to Grandma and will never forget.

Kevin

We hadn't told Mom about the plans for her 90th Birthday celebration in Colorado until Becky's beautiful hand-crafted invitation came for her in the mail. It gave her new life—something new and exciting to plan for. *Maureen*

I drove Grandma and Mom from Las Vegas to Denver for the celebration of her 90th birthday in Denver. Purposely, I chose to take an out of the way route through the Four Corners area and Southwestern Colorado, because I wanted to mine Grandma's memories and incredible knowledge of the areas. Every town, road and river we came to brought another story. I loved every minute of it, and I kept her in the front seat the whole trip. Mom stayed in the back seat, enjoying the dialog. *Vince*

I had not seen Gigi for about six years when I came to her 90th birthday party. She was still the same, and I realized then how much I had missed her. I remembered the family picnics at Loveland and seeing Gigi. *Sean*

Whenever I think of Geraldine I picture her holding Christopher. Kevin and I made a trip to Las Vegas with our new baby exactly with that purpose in mind. Although I didn't have a lot of years to enjoy her, I took to Geraldine right away. She is in my prayers daily. *Kenna*

Before Thomas was born, Mom made blankets and curtains for his new nursery. Everything was used by Robert eight years later. *Denny*

Grandma never seemed to age. At her 90th birthday party she was every bit as young and the queen of the family that I remember from my childhood. At the end of her life, she was in pain and uncomfortable, but she managed to remain sparkly and really didn't seem old even then. *Becky*

I remember how she would get on a project and continue around the clock. It seemed like she worked 72 hours nonstop for Maureen's wedding. Dad would make a spontaneous decision to take the family to California, and Mom would be up all night. *Mick*

I have a habit of working in the middle of the night, particularly when my creative juices are flowing. At those times, I think of Grandma, knowing it is a blessing and an affliction that I get from her. *Kevin*

Mom didn't seem to need a lot of sleep, and she would do much of her planning while lying awake at night, making lists. When she arose, she was always ready to spring into action. *Jim*

Mom experienced many TIAs, beginning I think even in her sixties. A TIA (transient ischemic attack) is a "warning stroke" or "mini-stroke" that produces stroke-like symptoms but no lasting damage. When I was there during an episode, she would tend to walk in a circle to her right *Jim*

Jerri and I were having a nice lunch with a group at a restaurant in downtown Laramie. Jerri leaned over to me and, very quietly and calmly, told me she was having a stroke. Against my better judgment, she wouldn't let me call for help or even say a word. "Just help me down, and help me to the car." I wanted to call the ambulance, which she wouldn't hear of. I drove her to the hospital, but first we had to stop by the house and pick up Mickey. *Mary Ann*

Grandma was resilient. She suffered from TIA strokes over the years, but she took them in stride and seemed to bounce back every time. *Christi*

Once when Grandma was in the hospital (St. Anthony's in Denver) she had me run to the store and buy a full kit of makeup for her. When I brought it she promptly ordered me and everyone else out of the room. She wouldn't let any visitors in until she properly had her face on. *Becky*

She was in the hospital and she sent me to her house to pick up a pretty nightgown to make her feel more presentable. *Christi*

Grandma was Martha Stewart before television invented her. *Becky*

Grandma's touches always made things extra special. *Christi*

I don't think I will ever love a house as much as I did Grandma's house at 1015 Steele in Laramie. I loved how she decorated; I loved the neat, manicured yard, the bird feeder and the flowers. I remember once when we left after a visit to go home to North Platte, I don't remember ever being so sad to leave someone behind. *Jill*

Aunt Jerri came to California, and I commented on the beautiful coral dress she had brought for dress up occasions. She told me she had sewn it by hand because her machine was broken. I looked at the stitching, and I could see it was painstakingly neat, but it was definitely her work. *Jo Beth*

(Denny) You know, your Grandma was famous for making lists. (Becky) Really? That's me. I'll make a list and put 'brush my teeth' at the top just so I can cross it off. (Denny) Well, that was your Grandma. *Becky*

In addition to her lists, Grandma would visualize the end result of every project and she knew just what she had to do to achieve it *Becky*

Grandma made me a hot pants outfit that didn't go over too well at St. Laurence School. *Barb*

Mom was a defender of modern dress styles at school. When St. Laurence School opened, she went to battle with Monsignor and the nuns over what she thought were overly modest girls' gym uniforms. *Maureen*

Grandma's way of decorating influences my choices today. I always envision what Grandma would do. *Jill*

In my mind, she was a strong, independent woman, and I admired the way she conducted herself in life. To me she was an icon. *Jill*

She had lots of personal grace. *Charlene*

I always thought that, among all of my friends, I had the very best grandma. *Barb*

Over my lifetime I have had step-mothers and mothers-in-law. Of all of them, Jerri is the one I called Mom. *Gene*

Sometimes in my teens I would go over to Grandma's, ostensibly to help care for her, but she was really caring for me. *Joleen*

I loved taking a bath at Grandma's in her teal bathroom. I felt so fancy using her special bath soaps. *Joleen*

I see Grandma in my aunts, uncles, cousins and my son Ian, but I especially see her in my mother and in my daughter, Cameron. *Christi*

When I get old, I would like to be like Gigi. Even though she was older, she was always young. She was fun to talk to. *Samantha*

I look at Grandma as a role model. *Christi and Janetta*

I like an occasional gin and tonic, as did Grandma, so I always think of her when I squeeze the lime and take my first sip. *Kevin*

I think the reason I decided to move back to Laramie after college was to spend more time with Grandma. *Vince*

It was a big decision for both Mom and I when we decided to sell our houses and move together to Las Vegas so that we could be closer to Maureen. Moving to Las Vegas was a lot of fun. It was like a renewal for both of us, and especially for Mom, because she was able to focus so much energy on setting up our beautiful new home. *Kathi*

Kathi and I would enjoy taking Mom out for rides to see the booming neighborhoods of Vegas. One time, after completing a circle of several blocks, I proceeded to make the loop again, and again. I'm sure Jerri knew right away that we were cruising the same territory, but it took several laps before she finally showed her exasperation. *Gene*

Gigi would take me for walks around the yard at Grandma's house in Las Vegas, and she would tell me about the birds, flowers and other things in the yard. Sometimes she would be in her scooter. *Samantha*

Grandma would take me for walks around the football field catty-corner from her house. There were always interesting things to see or talk about, including the wildflowers. Sometimes she would let me help in the yard. She would show me how to 'deadhead' the roses and would talk about and explain all the different flowers. *Joleen*

I planted a cherry tomato plant in a pot for a school project. It got pretty large, and Grandma had me plant it in her garden. It was full of green fruit when a frost warning came, so we uprooted it up and hung it upside down in a room at my house. The tomatoes ripened, and we made spaghetti sauce. It was pretty good. *Stormy*

The Knights and Kemps went to Disneyland one summer. There were thirteen of us in the entourage, and little Timmy was entranced by everything in sight. Tim suddenly was missing, and Aunt Jerri and Uncle Mickey scrambled in opposing directions to find him, while our Mom and Dad kept the rest of us in tow. Moments later they found him gawking at the submarine ride, totally enthralled. *Kemp Sisters*

Our dad and Uncle Mickey were both railroad men, so our families had the privilege of traveling by rail using a pass. The adults would always dress up for even the shortest train trip. *Kemp Sisters*

Grandma and Grandpa had a new pop-up camper trailer and we took it for a try-out at Happy Jack. Grandma created a porta-potty by wrapping some army blankets around a pair of trees. Inside those walls she put a folding camp stool with a hole cut out of the seat and a bucket underneath. *Barb*

Jim and Mick took a bunch of the cousins camping in the RV, including Mike, Jenny, Amy, Becky and me. On our return, Grandma made me take a bath, which I resisted, and then a nap, which I fought even more, but I quickly fell asleep and woke hours later to the smell of dinner cooking. *Kevin*

Aunt Jerri and Uncle Mickey were visiting in California one summer when our Mom was teaching summer school. They stayed at night with our Grandma Josie, but would come over during the day and cook for us while Mom went to work. *Kemp Sisters*

Mom and her friend Charlie went with us in the RV for a trip to Jackson one year. As she liked to do, Mom was the banker, keeping close track of the shared expenses. I have to admit I got a little aggravated with her when she stewed about what couldn't have been more than a 2 cent accounting discrepancy. *Mick*

I remember Grandma playing cards in bed, and sometimes I would play, too. One time, Becky, Jill and I went with Grandma to Jack-in-the-Box in Loveland, then back to the hotel and played cards with her *Christi*

Grandma took Uncle Tim, Nick, me and Charlie to the swimming pool at Laramie High School and left us for an afternoon of fun. Charlie at age four and I at five weren't old enough to go in the big pool, so we had to use the wading pool outside. After awhile we had our fill of that, and went inside to watch the big kids, but we couldn't find Tim and Nick. I figured Grandma had come to pick them up and forgot about us, so I took Charlie by the hand and we walked all the way back to Grandma's house. It was more than a mile across town, through the UW campus, across Grand Avenue and over to Steele. I looked for landmarks I knew, including a particular building on the campus, a crabapple tree, and the dentist's office. Grandma was mortified when we showed up at the house. Tim and Nick hadn't gone anywhere, of course, and they were still waiting at the school when we all dashed back in the car to retrieve them. *Barb*

I know Grandma always wanted to be properly made up. I don't really think it was vanity, just a lifetime commitment that she would always do her best and look her best. To me, she was always just right. *Becky*

Doing dishes at Grandma's was always fun after big family events. *Becky*

I loved doing the dishes at Grandma's house after a big family get-together. *Christi*

Breakfast at Grandma's was always big and delicious. *Jill*

When Mom faced a decision of any kind, she always made it a positive, an opportunity to move forward. *Kathi*

Grandma never said anything bad about anyone, never a negative *Barb*

She liked a running joke, and for at least 20 years, when I would ask what she had for me to drink, she would always offer me dirty dish water. *Kevin*

The smell of bacon reminds me of the great breakfasts at Grandma's. It was so pleasant to waken to the enticing aromas wafting into the attic where we often were allowed to spend the night. *Kevin*

The Kemps and Knights went camping and fishing one year at a place along the Wyoming/Colorado border. We all had so much fun. We caught many fish and our Moms put on a big fish fry, the best ever. *Kemp Sisters*

Grandma was positive, and she wasn't a worrier. I think she always had a plan. *Becky*

She was proud of us when we were doing well, and reassuring when we had difficulties. *Becky*

Gigi was always happy and was always happy to see me. *Sean*

I was 7 when Gigi died and I will always miss and remember her. *Samantha*

I remember sitting with Grandma and we would both fall asleep on her black Spanish style sofa. *Barb*

Grandma took us downtown in her spiffy yellow Impala just to see the lights. I especially liked seeing the neon grandma rocking in her chair. Mom told me the sign was there when she was a little girl, and she and Uncle Jerry knew it then as "Grandma Knight". *Barb*

In Mom's last months, she would tell me she was "ready". She gave me specific instructions on how she should look at her burial. But typically of Mom, all of this became a positive opportunity to move forward. One Saturday, Mom and I went to Dillard's to shop for her dress. She knew just the style and color (coral) she wanted. At the store, Mom and I joked and laughed, and she told the lady she wanted 'something to die for'. Mom got a kick out of it when I observed that, for purposes of something to wear in the coffin, she just needed to shop for her top half. *Kathi*

Mom's last days were emotional and inspiring for Kathi and I, and I think our memorial calendar is a fitting place to talk about it. There is no question in our mind that Mom made the decision for herself that it was her time. The fact that she passed away on the anniversary of Dad's death had to have been her plan and her prayer. Kathi and I were so privileged to be with her in her final days. On Wednesday she had a wonderful day, full of vitality and humor. Kathi had been over and we had all been laughing and enjoying the day. On Thursday she seemed fine, but asked me a strange question, "Did you call Kathi?" When I asked why I was supposed to call Kathi, she said, "Well, it's time for me to go." It was stated in a matter-of-fact, almost exasperated manner, as something I should have known. On Friday she had a massive stroke and was mostly comatose until she passed away days later on June 8, 2004. *Maureen*

I remember waiting to meet Geraldine for the very first time while she put her makeup on. I admired that she cared how she looked. *Kenna*

Grandma would have me do her hair, and I remember how soft and beautiful it was. She would urge me to brush harder, but I was always careful. *Christi*

One thing I always liked about Gigi was, even though she was old, she always wore makeup and jewelry, and her hair was beautiful. *Samantha*

Gigi was always pretty. *Sean*

I remember the Cinnabar fragrance, of course, but once when I was in high school she wore a perfume called "Youth Dew". I bought some for myself so I could smell just like Grandma. *Christi*

I remember sitting on Gigi's lap and her beautiful scent. *Samantha*

I remember being there as a little girl to watch her do her makeup and put her nails on. It was a very impressive thing, particularly the three phases of Cinnabar: first lotion, then powder and finally perfume. Grandma had it down pat, and I think that's why it stayed so perfect all day, and the fragrance was always there, but just barely. *Joleen*

Grandma gave me my first eyelash curler. *Christi*

Mom and I got along well, and she put up with my regular agitating. I must say, however, that she never liked me calling Kathi "Runt". *Gene*

The first time I met Kathi's mom, my hair was shoulder length. I had a family reunion coming up, and I was letting my hair grow just for the joy of aggravating my aunts. It worked on them, but it didn't seem to bother Mom at all. *-Gene*

Grandma told me, when she was a little girl growing up in the small family of a Methodist preacher, she was fascinated with big Irish Catholic families. Well, she grew up to be the matriarch of one, and I'm proud to be a member. *Jill*

When Mom was a student at what was then Colorado Agricultural College, and is now Colorado State University in Fort Collins. She had an instructor in one of her classes who happened to be a nun. The sister was not permitted by the state college to wear her habit while teaching, so Mom would help her change before and after class. She was amazed at all of the buttons involved and the complicated structure of the habit. *Jim*

It was my birthday, and Mick decided to make a big dinner for me. Jerri came over to help, and they had a great time, laughing and cooking, while I waited in the other room, hungry and feeling a little left out. *Mary*

Waking up at Grandma's house was so wonderful. She always made the best breakfast in the world. I loved poached eggs and so did she, so we frequently had delicious Eggs Benedict. Sometimes, even as a little girl, she would let me have some of her coffee, which was really always just a splash of coffee in a cup of warm milk. Breakfast with Grandma involved watching the birds at the feeder outside the window by her kitchen table. She would identify the birds and tell me about them. *Joleen*

I treasured receiving birthday cards from Grandma, each with a personal letter and a reminder that she would light a candle on my birthday and keep it burning for the whole day. It was so meaningful to me. *Vince*

I loved how grandma's birthday cards always had a little letter, always in her beautiful penmanship. *Barb*

I remember the joy of helping Grandma clean and dust, and helping with the dishes. *Barb*

Mom would be in the chair in her bedroom while Kathi was at work. I would hear groaning, but when I went to check on her, she would insist everything was fine. One day I was at my desk and heard her moan, so I hid beside the door and waited for the next one. I stuck my head in the door and she was leaning over to the side to see if I would respond. *Gene*

Grandma gave me my first eyelash curler. *Christi*

I got to stay with Grandma when she broke her leg, and I had her to myself for the whole week (or two). I would help in the yard with the flowers and lawn, and inside, too. *Christi*

I remember Grandma's tea cup collection and all of her beautiful decorating touches. *Christi*

I remember her jade and turquoise jewelry, and her red lipstick was always perfect. *Janetta*

Grandma would invite me over to eat when I was in college. She would get her good china out and make it a special event. *Christi*

I remember the beautiful yard at Grandma's house and the lawn swing under the crabapple tree, from which Grandma made delicious jelly. *Jill*

I would go with Dad to Grandma's to help with the yard, and it would be my job to gather the millions of crabapples before he could mow the lawn. It was a job, and I really didn't like it very much, but then I got to help Grandma make and jar the delicious crabapple jelly. Sometimes Grandma would send me out to wash the crabapple mess off the garden swing that we all loved so much. I remember the swing as always being yellow, but it always seemed freshly painted, so I don't know if they just had a stock of yellow paint or what. Jud did tell me he painted that swing once. *Joleen*

I had admired the violets around her tree, which seemed to her to be spreading. Jerri dug some up and helped me plant them around a tree at my house where they continue to thrive. *Mary*

Grandma would send me with jars of jelly and other goodies to her neighbors, the Beeches. Sometimes the Beeches would be invited for dinner, and Grandma always made it a special event. She would also have me deliver goodies to Mrs. Rettinger, her basement tenant of many years. Mrs. Rettinger, a war refugee, always seemed a little mysterious to me when I was little, but I got to know and enjoy her later when she came to stay at Spring Wind, the care facility where I worked. *Joleen*

I had been in the hospital with Ian. When I came home, Mick and Mary had cleaned the house, and Grandma had assembled and decorated a beautiful bassinet for the baby. *Christi*

It was quite a long drive to Grandma's from the Denver area, but I always enjoyed the trip and learned to watch for familiar landmarks. Seeing the Monolith cement plant meant we were getting very close. *Kevin*

In the summer following Jim's junior year in high school, one in which he had struggled, Mom decided to 'incentivize' him by creating a special room for him in the attic while he was away at his summer job at the Trail Lake science camp near Jackson. She completely designed the room on paper, with bed, cabinets and bookshelves to be built in to the small space available. Without a way to cut the wood herself, she carefully measured every dimension and had the pieces cut at the lumber yard. Everything assembled perfectly the first time. *Mick and Jim*

I admired Jerri's organizational skills, particularly her ability to take any kind of food and make a feast of it. I remember the lovely shrimp cocktails on a shell which she would prepare for each place setting at her beautiful Thanksgiving and Christmas tables. *Mary Ann*

Grandma started the parish pantry at St. Lawrence O'Toole in Laramie. She would let me help her shop for groceries to stock the pantry. She knew a lot about the families who relied on the help, and she would always be sure to have certain food and items stocked with her clients in mind. I remember she told me she needed to buy a certain size of Pampers because she knew the needs of a particular family. Grandma took a lot of pride in the pantry, and I know Grandpa helped her with it, as did many other members of the church. I'm sure there many who still remember a particular kindness or personal touch that Grandma included with the bags of groceries that she or Grandpa would deliver.

Jill

Grandma would let me help her at the Church Pantry. I would play grocer and help her assemble a box for a needy family, and she would tell me about the pantry and the various things they stored there, and the reasons some things were important. Grandma would get calls for food help at all kinds of weird hours, and she was always ready to go.

Joleen

I always admired Grandma's commitment to the community and especially the work she did in heading up the parish pantry.

Christi

One thing that really bugged Mom was how the Laramie newspapers treated minorities in their crime reports. When a Caucasian was involved, the papers would read, "a local man was arrested...." When a Mexican ran afoul, he would be named along with his alleged crime. Mom would call and chide the editors when she encountered this.

Jerry

Mom enjoyed serving as head of the parent-teacher organization and later as president of the Altar & Rosary society, but I think she got the most pleasure being part of the county Democratic Committee during the Kennedy campaign. She got to meet Teddy Kennedy when he came to Laramie and other dignitaries as well.

Denny

Joe, a boy down the street from us on the west side was being raised in a tiny trailer by his grandmother and alcoholic grandfather. He and a boy across the street were playing with a loaded gun, and Joe shot his friend. The hospital, battling to save the boy's life, contacted Mom, who had a rare but suitable blood type. She went immediately to the hospital, and they took more blood from her than they really should have, but it was life-saving. She was sent home and ordered to rest, but Mom was so concerned about Joe that she instead fixed a nice dinner and had him and his distraught grandmother as guests that evening. It was ironic but so like her to have helped save the life of the victim and yet go out of her way to lift the spirits of the shooter, all within a few hours.

Jerry

My friend John got new dress pants for our high school graduation, and Mom hemmed them for him. John stepped out of the graduation procession to give Mom a hug. It was a little embarrassing to me but Mom beamed at the honor.

Jim

Our then small family moved to 718 Spruce during the Second World War, a time when Japanese-Americans were being shunned. The Shibatas were our new neighbors across the street, and Mom made it a point to visit with Mrs. Shibata whenever she saw her working in her yard.

Jerry

The day we got Janetta from Catholic Social Services she came to us with a couple diapers and little else but a pair of shoes that didn't fit. I called Mom, and she asked, "What can I do." She immediately organized the whole family into providing lots and lots of baby clothes and all kinds of things a baby needs. Janetta was embraced without qualification by Mom as her own grandchild and adopted in the same way by the entire Knight family.

Mick

When my mother passed away, Mick called Jerri and she was there immediately, at 3 or 4 in the morning.

Mary

I was probably about 6, and Denny and Jim were in the boy's bedroom working on a scout project. They were melting wax into walnut half shells and inserting short wicks to make candles for gifts. I watched the whole process and wanted to take part but I wasn't allowed to touch anything. After they made several candles, they left the room with all the supplies still there. I knew from watching exactly how to do it and decided to go ahead on my own. Burning my fingers, I reacted by throwing everything down, landing in a pile of laundry which quickly burst into quite a large fire. I watched the flames in disbelief, suddenly realizing why I wasn't allowed to make the candles. I am sure the house about to be engulfed.

Mom burst into the room, picked me up and carried me to safety. She threw water on the pile, quickly quenching the flames which were just reaching the ceiling at that point. Within seconds the entire episode was under control.

What happened next is what defines for me the person Mom was. She didn't scream or yell but calmly explained to me that I should always listen to my older brothers and sisters, and never play with fire. She never panicked during the entire ordeal but stayed very calm and helped me to overcome my feelings of guilt and embarrassment. *Mick*

Mom made a beautiful Easter Bonnet cake that greatly impressed Nick, and he described it to his teacher, Mrs. McCue, promising one for her. Mom was a bit stunned, but she honored the commitment. *Maureen*

Grandma made humongous valentine cookies and decorated them with lovely sentiments. I remember the beautiful decorated valentine boxes she would make for us to take to school. Some years she would create them from oatmeal boxes. *Barb*

Grandma came to see our Taiko performance at the University of Wyoming and Robert and I were so proud to have her there. *Thomas*

Mom, for all her accomplishments, could never learn to ride a bicycle, and Dad would tease her about it. One year, we made a trip to Lakeside amusement park in Denver, and we took advantage of the swimming pool there. Mom, Maureen and I were having great fun in the pool but Dad was afraid of the water. Mom cajoled and teased him, but his only response was, "...well I can ride a damn bike." *Jerry*

We were at Lakeside Amusement Park and Grandma took me over to ride the Red Baron, with a machine gun for every rider. I would take aim at Grandma, and she would dramatize being shot on every go-round. *Kevin*

I really couldn't afford a new dress for my wedding, and was going to borrow one. One day Grandma invited me over and she had me follow a little trail of bows she had laid, leading to a beautiful new wedding gown in the bedroom. Grandma found it at a bargain in a little town in Nebraska, or so she told me, but I think it came from a fine Fifth Avenue shop. *Christi*

Mom worked hard on decorating for Christi's wedding and reception. It had a Scottish theme, and she used heather and wheat in abundance. She needed stalks of wheat, so she pressed Maureen to drive her to Colorado to gather it. When they came to a secluded wheat field, golden and ready for harvest, Mom made Maureen crawl under the fence and cut enough to fill the need. *Kathi and Maureen*

On my sixth birthday, Grandma made me a birthday cake with orange flowers. For some reason on seeing it I hated that color and refused to eat the cake. She wasn't very happy with me and I don't remember her making me a replacement. *Barb*

Mom had a special remedy for childhood colds. Will we ever forget the smell of Musterol? Mom would apply dab of it at below our chins before she tucked us into bed. *Jerry and Denny*

Mary and I went upstairs at 1015 Steele where Mom would lay batches of goodies out during the candy season. There were some mints laid out on the bed. They were beautiful and looked delicious, and I decided she wouldn't miss just one. I popped it in my mouth and it was soap. I complained later to Mom, and she laughed. She had finally come through with her threats to wash my mouth out with soap.

Mick

Aunt Jerri gave Jo Beth her recipe for English Toffee. I still use it for Christmas every year.

Patty

For one Christmas (about 1980) Grandma made special gifts for all of the grandchildren, and then created beautiful gift boxes for them. My gift was a beautiful photo album which of course I still have today. I think the boys each got busts of an Indian which she had made in a pottery class. The gift boxes she made were just as memorable and are keepsakes in their own right.

Becky

One year for Christmas, Grandma made a ceramic bust of an Indian for each of the grandsons. It was beautiful and I think we all still have ours. She had written the names of famous Native Americans all around and over the white gift boxes.

Vince

All of us grandchildren have memories of the special gifts she would hand make for us at Christmas. One year, the boys got a petrified wood sculpture wound with wire. I was always jealous of it, and I don't quite remember what the girls got that year. Uncle Jim tells me he helped with the project that year, and in fact he claims credit for the idea.

Jill

Every year I get Grandma's ornaments out to trim the tree.

Christi

In addition to the special Christmas gifts, Grandma would make each of us a special ornament each year. My favorite to this day is a jelly jar lid painted with a picture of the Baby Jesus in the manger. I always put it in a special place on my tree.

Jill

The Christmas stocking Grandma made for me is pink, and it is adorned with the same beads Grandma used to make my mother's wedding dress. So I always think of them both when I hang my stocking at Christmas.

Christi

I was in college and I loved to go to Grandma's house and help her make batches and batches, and trays and trays, and baskets of all kinds of Christmas goodies. She would have everything laid out in her second



bedroom. Each piece would be individually wrapped to be packaged and distributed.

Jud

One year Grandma made gingerbread men cookies, then shellacked them as tree ornaments. Charlie and I snuck behind the tree and tried to eat one, but it was impossible.

Barb

Mom's batches of goodies during her candy season were never really safe from the occasional raids of whoever happened to be in the house. I'm sure she had to make extra batches to replace missing inventory before she made her grand distribution.

Mick

Mom made great efforts every year decorating for Christmas, and often drafted one of us to help. One year she made giant candles out of cardboard tubes. We electrified them and they enjoyed a prominent position on the front steps.

Mick

Our family tradition on Christmas morning would be to go over to Grandma's first. My aunts and uncles and cousins would be arriving about the same time and we would have Grandma's cinnamon rolls.

Joleen

I know all of us in every corner of the Knight family associate Grandma with Christmas. I remember going to the Greyhound bus depot in Denver to collect boxes full of wonderful presents and goodies. Grandma always found the bus a very efficient way to transport packages, usually with delivery within hours.

Kevin

Grandma let me help her with the candy making project. I would spend the whole evening and she would have candy spread over her whole kitchen and beyond. She had her recipes available, but she never used them, and she always had her candy thermometer out, but never used it either. She would use the method of dropping a bit of the substance in cold water to see how it set. It was always just right.

Joleen

I would often spend the night with her after a candy session. She would let me sleep in her big comfortable bed – the most comfortable place in the world. Her blankets were always so soft. A night with Grandma when we weren't making candy would be one of games. We would play word games, dominoes, Scrabble and Mahjong. Sometimes she would find a crossword puzzle we could do together.

Joleen



Christmas

By Cameron Clay, Christmas 2008

In the Spirit of my Great Grandmother, Byrda Geraldine Payton Knight

The miraculous colors of gold, green, red and blue are beautifully wrapped so your eager eyes cannot see the desirable precious gift inside. Christmas time, Christmas time is here.

A beautiful evergreen stands tall like a broad athlete who just won a competition. Gold, red and blue ornaments against the proud evergreen are a perfect match, like pancakes and maple syrup. Christmas time, Christmas time is here. Outside a white luminous blanket covers the cold earth trying to keep it warm but failing. Christmas time, Christmas time is here.

Smiling faces are all around and the sweet sound of laughter as sweet as honey. The bells and carols are perfectly harmonized making it even sweeter to hear. Christmas time, Christmas time is here.

Cinnamon drifts all around in the air making hungry mouths water. Inside is so warm and looking outside seems to make it warmer. The excitement of children brings smiles to faces. For it is time, time to open presents. The rustle of ripping paper sounds just like a thunderous ocean. Christmas time, Christmas time is here.

Finally, it is time, time for the Christmas feast. Everyone eats the turkey, pudding and mashed potatoes like a chipmunk preparing for winter. Ahhh... the sweet sensation of hot chocolate with a pinch of cinnamon is the perfect Christmas drink. With a sign of delight it is known the Christmas feast is over. Feeling tired now everyone drifts happily to sleep thinking of what a great memorable day it was. Christmas time, Christmas time was here.