

# **Denzel Arthur and Isetta May Littleford Turner**

## **by Mary Jane Turner Jex**

Denzel Arthur Turner was born on August 4, 1906, his father's 28th birthday, to Alfred Thomas and Sarah Hannah Macklin Turner in American Fork, Utah County, Utah. Denzel is a place name in England and Arthur was after his uncle Bartell Arthur Turner. He was never blessed or named in a church. His brothers and sisters are: Ira William, Ruby Ann, Sarah Louise, Early Jay, Arven Alfred, Robert Lloyd, Irene Elizabeth, Clyde David, George Edwin, and Glen.

When his older brother Ira died in 1914, he was only eight years old, but he took over the job of being the oldest son and he faithfully discharged this duty until he died. He was always the first one called and the first one there when something happened in his family. He was born in an era when children were spanked, both at home and at school. He was a great believer in the power of persuasion and would always try to talk to his children rather than spank them for discipline.

He was left-handed and his teachers in school would tie his arm behind him to train him to write right-handed. He used to say his handwriting was so bad you couldn't read it if "got cold".

He got his first real job when he was only eleven years old. He went to Peter "Pop" Larson's butcher shop and grocery store and told him he wanted to work for him. Pop said the only job he had was driving back and forth to Cedar Fort and Fairfield to deliver groceries, but if he could manage to drive his old Model T Ford truck he could have the job. Den could just barely see over the steering wheel and needed a pillow to reach the pedals, but he drove the truck and got the job.

Whenever he would come in sight of Cedar Fort the people would come out and start calling, "Here comes the kid". This determination to accomplish what he wanted and in doing the best job he could was a driving force in his life. It was also the beginning of his lifelong love for the "Horseless Carriage".

He was small-framed, 5 feet 5 inches tall, dark-complexioned, had very dark brown hair, and the bluest eyes you ever saw. He never weighed more than 140 pounds. He was the hardest worker you could ever meet and was very honest. If he gave you his word on something, it was as good as money in the bank. A handshake closed many a deal for him during his lifetime.

His family moved from American Fork to Lehi and back several times while he was growing up. They would usually end up in the American Fork Third Ward where Sarah's family lived. Den was baptized in a pair of bib overalls in the American Fork Tabernacle on January 10, 1915, by Brazee Hawkins and confirmed the same day by Joseph Storrs as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon). He came from an inactive Mormon family, but they usually had their children baptized, sometimes several at once.

Denzel was seventeen in 1923 when he attended a party and met Isetta May Littleford. She had big brown eyes and was cute because she looked like him. He decided that she was the only woman he wanted to spend his life with, and it was love at first sight for him. Den decided he would have to convince her she couldn't live without him and began to court her. They dated each other for two years and did their courting in a horse and buggy.

They decided to get married in the spring of 1925. They eloped in the first vehicle Den ever owned, a Ford Model T. Truck to Salt Lake City, and were married at the City and County Building on November 12, 1925 by Bishop George Graham. The building had a statue of the Angel Moroni on it and a Mormon Bishop was there 24 hours a day to perform marriages. The following March the statue was removed to separate church and state.

Isetta May Littleford was the daughter of Seth Enoch and Mary Susan Gray Littleford and was born on October 22, 1907, in Lehi, Utah County, Utah. She was blessed on March 7, 1908 in the old Lehi Meeting House by James Allred. Her unusual name was from her mother's friend Isetta North. Her brothers and sisters are: Margaret, Mary Jane, Forestier, Grant, and Jack. She was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on February 5, 1916, in the old Lehi Ward Church by Hyrum Kirkham.

She was a shy, quiet child who was ill much of her younger years. She learned to do English drawn work and was able to read before she ever started school. She received two double promotions and graduated in six years from the eighth grade with her brother Forry.

When they were first married, they lived with Den's parents, Alfred Thomas and Sarah Hannah Macklin Turner, in Lehi at 289 East 300 South. Den had a lively sense of humour and loved to play little jokes on everyone he met. He would laugh and his blue eyes would twinkle with mischief. He could take a joke on himself, and was a good friend and neighbor to those he knew. He always took care of anyone who needed him. Their children are: Margaret June (Mason, Thorsen) born June 2, 1926 at the Seth and Susan Littleford home in Lehi and died on July 12, 2007,

Bessie Faye (Sorensen) born on January 27, 1929 at their home on Locust lane in Lehi, Mable Carol ,born and died on Christmas Day, December 25, 1930 in Lehi. Den dug the grave in the Lehi City Cemetery and Bishop Joseph Smith dedicated the grave.

It became a Turner Family tradition to tell the children the story about their Christmas Carol. None of the children ever saw her but even the youngest felt they knew her through her story.), Shirley Anne (Moore) was born on February 22, 1932 in the old Greenwood home at 255 South 300 East across the street from Den's parents.

The great depression was on and both fuel and food was very scarce. The snow was deep and broken power lines lay buried under the snow. Wood was wet and hard to burn. It was a long and miserable winter. Den worked when he could but most of the time there was no jobs. The cold was almost unbearable and they put the baby in the oven to keep her warm. Den, Isetta, and all three girls slept together in one bed to keep warm at night.

They began to do a little better financially and so Isetta and Den, with their own hands, built a home for their family at 201 East 300 South, next door to Den's parents. Denzel George (Buddy) born on February 6, 1935 , Mary Jane (Jex) on December 14, 1937, both in this home.

In March of 1938, the family moved to 840 North 400 East in the Lehi Fourth Ward. It was the old home of "Pop" Larsen, the man who gave Den his first job. The family had some farm animals, raised sheep and pigs, and had a Jersey cow they called "Sugar". They owned about a city block and raised lucerne for the cow

as well as having a large garden and fruit trees. Isetta and Den had not forgotten the depression and were growing most of their own food and meat.

Den was a very hard worker and worked long hours supporting his family. Since he was gone so much of the time Isetta had to care for the home, children, and animals. As the children grew older they helped. This was where Den seriously began finding and collecting his historic car Collection.

In December of 1940, Isetta and Den were injured in a head-on car accident with a drunken driver in Lehi. Mary Jane was wrapped in her coat and only suffered a bruised leg. Isetta suffered several broken ribs and black eyes. Den broke his nose and both wrists were cut with glass and he almost bled to death.

In the summer of 1941, Isetta became ill with a goiter and they decided they would have to operate. June, Faye, and Shirley were boarded out with relatives, and Buddy and Mary Jane were placed through the welfare system with a couple in Payson, Utah. By the summer of 1942, Buddy and Mary Jane had been gone from home for almost a year. Den and Isetta went to Payson to get the children and were told the couple had petitioned the courts to adopt them. They went to court and Denzel told them they must return them so they could be a family.

Buddy and Mary Jane were returned to them. Susan LaVonn was born on January 24, 1943 in the American Fork Hospital in American Fork, Utah. She was born three months early and weighed only one pound ten ounces. They kept her in an incubator for one week and then sent her home with her parents to die. Den and Isetta built a homemade incubator and saved this tiny baby. She wore her mother's size 4 wedding ring to gauge her growth and she was fed her mother's milk

from an eyedropper because she wasn't strong enough to nurse. One or the other of her parents were with her 24 hours a day until she was six months old. She is a living tribute to her parents love and devotion for their children. Isetta was told not to have any more children.

Her children told her there was one more blonde, blue-eyed baby named David Lee who was supposed to be part of their family. They would pray together every night about him. In early 1945, Isetta was expecting another baby and was told she should have the pregnancy terminated in order to save her life. She never wavered for one minute about the new baby and knew God would watch out for them. Her faith carried her through and she was happy during the time she was expecting this baby.

David Lee was born on June 19, 1945, in the Lehi Hospital in Lehi, Utah. with the blonde hair and blue eyes the children had ordered. He was sick a lot when he was little but all his sisters and his brother helped his mother to care for him. Isetta and Den felt David was prayed into existence because he was supposed to be theirs. They called him their "bonus baby".

Six months before David was born, Isetta and Den had the first of their 40 grandchildren. Whenever a new grandchild was born, whoever found out first would call the other and say, "Look what you started."

Den and Isetta didn't have much time for leisure, but, once in a while, they would go to the dances at the Apollo Hall or the Latona Ballroom in American Fork. Den was called "Twinkle Toes Turner" and Isetta said he had to dance with every widow and single woman there.

Den worked at almost every kind of job and always said honest work brought honest money. He and Isetta tried to instill qualities of hard work and its rewards in their children and they had to help with the chores in the house and on the farm. They were not rich but they were content and happy with what they did have. He worked for the railroad in Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and Montana. He was a butcher with his father and brothers.

The main part of his working life he worked at his service station, McCord's Service Station, east of the Lehi Hospital. Later, he ran Den's Tire Shop, starting in the building across the street from the Lehi Hospital, then on East State Road, and then he finally built his own building on at 180 West State Road. He had worked as a gravedigger at one time and helped them move bodies from the old Lehi City Cemetery along West State Road into the new Lehi City Cemetery on 4th East. He worked part time in a mortuary in Lehi.

Den and Isetta loved to tell their posterity about the “Good Old Days”. Many years later, when he was setting up his tire shop on West State Road, he dug up the body of a young mother and her baby. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers came along and decided to place a monument right in front of Den's Tire Shop. Cars and trucks had trouble getting in and out of the shop and so his friend Haydee Adams started a petition to have them move it. She came out to the tire shop and gave cookies and coffee or punch to anyone who would sign the petition. After a long, drawn-out process they finally solved the problem by moving it east to another location and making a mini park to go with it.

Den also ran a wrecker service and spent many nights out hauling people wrecked or stranded from the Point of the Mountain when the Highway Patrol called. Many nights Isetta was up helping Den get ready to go out and many times he would bring stranded travelers home for the night and Isetta made them a hot meal.

Whenever Den sold anything in his tire shop or service station on credit, he wrote up a ticket. When he mailed his statements he would often tear up these tickets when someone was having a hard time financially. He said they would come and pay him when they could. Often they would return, but sometimes they never did pay him. Often, he would be called out in the middle of the night for someone's family emergency and he always went out to help them.

Buddy and David worked in the service station and the tire shop and sometimes the girls would pump gas while their father ate his lunch or dinner they had carried from home. Den said he always sold more gas when they were pumping gas. Den liked to take Isetta and the kids for their annual trip to Salt Lake City to Hogle Zoo, Liberty Park, the Salt Lake City Airport, and riding the rides and wading in the Great Salt Lake at Saltair Resort.

He loved family reunions. Den was a collector. He collected antique cars and at one time the whole yard at the 4th East home was full of them. He liked to take the balloon-top Tourister out on Sundays and watch people do a double take as he gave his family a ride in one of his "pet cars".

In 1947 he won the beard growing contest during the Lehi Roundup. The Salt Lake Tribune newspaper came out in 1948 and did a big write up on him. He had a

car called the "Bucking Ford" which was free-wheeling and his son Buddy drove it in the Lehi Roundup Parade every year until he left home to go in the service.

Den collected coins and was a Merit Badge Counselor for the LDS Boy Scouts in two wards for 26 years in Stamp and Coin Collecting and Woodworking. Den collected old and new lamps of all sizes, colors, and descriptions. He had all the old lamps from the great grandparents on both sides of the family. He also collected old newspapers, magazines, and any old artifacts from bygone times.

When the Lehi City Hall burned down in 1925 he contractd to tear it down and they gave him the bell in the bell tower for salvage. He saved it for over 40 years and then gave it back to Lehi City and it now hangs in a cradle in front of the Lehi Fire Station.

He collected neighbors and friends and everyone who got to know him considered him to be a close friend. Those who never took the time to really get to know him missed out on a choice experience. He collected memories and good times and Didn't like to look back on any bad times that had happened to him.

Isetta sewed, crocheted, embroidered, did handwork of all kinds, and made quilts and gifts for her family. She sang beautifully but never publicly and knew how to yodel. She was an artist and painted portraits on velvet in oil and did lots of freehand work in pencil, chalks, and colored pencils. She tinted pictures for people around Utah county when all pictures were black and white.

She was a poet of some renown. Her poems covered all subjects and they had comedy, tragedy, humor, and history in them. Many have been published in

magazines, periodicals, and newspapers under pen names to protect her private nature. She was modest about her talents and shared them freely with those she loved. She resisted any attempts to capitalize on her poetry because they were parts of her personality and were treasured as such.

Den and Isetta moved to 523 North 200 West in Lehi in 1966. The home and yard was a lot smaller and easier to maintain. They enjoyed visits from children and grandchildren and became Grandpa and Grandma Den. After Den retired in 1968, he sold the tire shop and dug wells with David. Den developed emphysema in 1968 and had it for the last 16 years of his life. Isetta was a devoted helpmate and nursed him 24 hours a day through his last years.

His daughter Susan took over a lot of his care and eased the burden on her mother as much as she could. David and his son Joe took care of the repairs and the yardwork. Den finally became too ill to get out any more and their trips to K-Mart and Kentucky Fried Chicken on Sundays for a picnic gradually came to an end. Until his health became too bad, he put an oxygen tank in his car so he could drive and still have his "lifeline" with him.

Den was a man in love with his wife since they met. He was the father of eight children, 40 grandchildren, and had 28 great-grandchildren when he died on July 7, 1984 at the Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in Provo on July 7, 1984. On the ride there he kept telling Isetta how much he loved her. Their marriage was solemnized in the Provo Temple in 1985.

Isetta lived on for 10 more years and died on October 12, 1994. She had lived through two broken hip surgeries and a gallbladder operation. They are buried in the Lehi City Cemetery in Lehi, Utah next to their daughter Carol.