

## **Marriage and Early Life of Woodrow B Voyles and Leah Fern Peterson**

Second Edition – James K. Voyles, July 2019

Woody and Leah met on a blind date in Salt Lake City in February 1946. Woody had returned from his service in World War II and resumed working at Western Electric, which was an affiliate of Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph, both part of the AT&T monopoly before it was broken up. Harry Paup and Woody were modifying a telegraph switchboard; Harry turned off the current, Woody fixed it, and Harry restored the current and tested it. Harry was “going with” Leah’s sister Edna, who was a clerk at AT&T. Leah had moved from Vernal to Salt Lake City after high school graduation to work. She obtained employment as a clerk at Arnold Machinery.<sup>1</sup> Both Eddy and Harry knew Woody and thought he would be a good match for Leah. Playing matchmakers, they invited Leah and Woody over to meet and play bridge. Leah and Woody “beat the hell out of” their hosts, and they were a match from then on.<sup>2</sup>

Before they were married, Woody was transferred to El Paso with the phone company, the first of numerous moves they would make in their earliest years together. Woody rented an apartment that he wanted to have ready for Leah to move into after the wedding. He and his buddy Tom DeAtley re-waxed the floors and then polished the wood by putting on thick wool sweat socks and sliding across it. Tom had a room in the same house, which was owned by a Mrs. Tolbert, who lived in a half apartment on the other side of the house. That was Leah and Woody’s first apartment.

Woody returned to Salt Lake and they were married on May 13, 1947 at the First Congregational Church, with Dr. George J. Weber officiating. Their wedding was reported

in the June 5, 1947 edition of the “Vernal Express.” The full article is below. The salient points are:

- The article says they were married in the First Presbyterian Church, but the actual wedding license says the First Congregational Church. Woody’s mother, Annie Lois Malsby Voyles, and sister, Evelyn Knox Voyles, were both members and active participants in the Presbyterian Church. It is a bit of a curiosity that they were not married where the family attended. Going to a different church, however, would be consistent with their approach to religion in raising their children. In Boise, they decided to become members of a religion neither of them had previously attended. They chose the Immanuel Lutheran Church partly because neither of them had been Lutherans.
- It would be interesting to know if they had any relationship with the pastor, Dr. Weber.
- It was a “single ring ceremony,” which means Woody placed a wedding band on Leah’s finger during the ceremony, but the engagement ring was not placed on her finger until after the ceremony.
- Leah wore a white suit with navy accessories, which means they did not go to the expense of a formal wedding dress. I think she may have mentioned to me at some point in my childhood.

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<sup>1</sup> Leah’s move to SLC will be described in a separate history, as will Woody’s childhood and war years. Leah frequently mentioned that she had worked at Arnold Machinery when we passed its Boise location on Broadway across from where Morrison Knudsen’s railroad locomotive yard then stood.

<sup>2</sup> I have several albums and boxes of photos of Leah and Woody, perhaps additional photos will shed additional light on their courtship, marriage, and early life. Eddy and Harry married on July 18, 1946.

- Eddy was Mom's Matron of Honor. Woody's Best Man was Roland Frames, also of Salt Lake City. That is not a name I recognize. They were also the witnesses.
- Leah and both mothers wore gardenia corsages. Woody's mother wore blue; Leah's mother wore black. (Query whether the black was appropriate or meant anything....)
- I do not recall Leah ever mentioning their honeymoon. The article says it was in Zion's and Bryce Canyon on their way to El Paso.

Woody and Leah lived in El Paso until December 1947, then three months in Douglas, Wyoming, ten days in Trinidad, Colorado, and then three weeks in Denver, where he taught a class on switchboards. They moved to Tucson, Arizona in March 1948 and then back to El Paso in December 1948, where they lived until December 2, 1949. They arrived in Boise for the first time on December 4, 1949. They built a house in 1950 at 4222 Cedar Street, which has been renamed Morris Hill Road, near the Morris Hill Cemetery off Roosevelt Street. The house still stands.

Leah told me she had an illness and was unable to have children for seven years. I do not recall if she ever told me what the illness was. They finally welcomed Michael Kevin into their home in Boise in 1954, and then Terry Lynn in 1957. They were both born at St. Luke's hospital, where Woody would log countless hours as a volunteer in later life. On Cedar Street, they were neighbors with lifelong friends Dick and Beverly Gasparotti. We grew up as friends with their children Rick, Roy, and Ann. They were also neighbors with the Ugaldes, who were Basque. All three of the Voyles boys later worked with Millie Ugalde in the receiving room at Sears in downtown Boise. Millie checked in and priced mostly clothing; the boys

each worked the loading dock and checked in and priced hardware and housewares. Kevin got the job when he was 16 through Junior Achievement contacts. When Kevin left for college, Sears hired Terry. When I turned 16, Terry moved to the warehouse, and I got the receiving room job. Chuck Young ran the receiving room and liked the fact that we actually worked. Frequently, he thought he would need to call in extra help the next day to get all the work done, but we had the reputation of working steadily through the evening shift and getting so much done that he would call off the additional help. Another memory of Millie Ugalde is that Leah said that in accordance with Basque tradition, Millie dressed her husband in pressed white shirts every day. A large Basque population settled in and near Boise, and they had several cultural landmarks in Boise, including restaurants and a large Basque cultural center where they held dances and other events.

Woody and Leah moved to Pocatello sometime after Terry was born in 1957. I was born in Pocatello in 1959. Woody and Leah then transferred to Gooding, Idaho, which is along the Snake River between Boise and Pocatello. Sometime while they were living in Gooding, his supervisor at the telephone company said they had transferred enough and asked Woody where he and Leah wanted to settle. They picked Boise over Salt Lake. So, after about a year and a half in Gooding, they moved back to Boise in 1961 or 1962, where they bought the house at 2108 Palouse Street.

With three growing boys, they needed more space. Mom and Dad purchased some property south and west of the Boise train depot and started clearing the land. He hired a man named Harley Wade to draw up plans and begin construction. Before beginning construction, however, they learned that a Simmons family two doors down would be moving away. The house had just the additional space they wanted: a family room. They scrapped the building plans, sold the cleared land, and we moved to 2112 Palouse Street. Woody remembered the

move being in 1963; I think it was later because I was already in first grade. I recall making several trips back and forth with our Radio Flyer wagon full of stuff over to the new house while Dad moved the big stuff.

### **James' Memories of James Voyles of 2108 Palouse Street**

The first thing I remember is life is looking out the doorway of the home through the screen door. I was sick and wanted to go out and play with the children who were outside in the sunshine. At least one of the children playing outside was Jane Miller. We grew up together and Jane has been a lifelong friend of our family.

One Christmas, we got a toy train that we set up. Dad was playing with it; he loved trains and planes. I don't think it was the big train set we had that was attached to a board that we played with later at 2112 Palouse, although it could have been.

One evening, Mom was washing a Pyrex glass bowl in the kitchen and cut her hand. She lost a lot of blood. Dad was wrapping it up trying to stop the bleeding, and they went to the emergency room. It cut so deeply that it severed the tendons and required extensive surgery to repair her hand. They pulled tendon from her arm into her hand and reconnected it. It did not heal properly, and she could not move her left ring finger the rest of her life. She was in the hospital for a few days, and children were not allowed to go up to rooms back then. We had to wave to her at the hospital window. That may have also been the time where we had a woman in to help while she was in bed (although this may have occurred at 2112). The woman made us cookies. She used a spoon to form the cookie dough, slid the dough onto the cookie sheet with her finger, and then licked her finger and started forming the next cookie on the spoon. After witnessing how the cookies were formed, Mom would not let us eat any of them; she sent all of them home with the woman. They looked so

good. And now I wonder why I'm a germaphobe.

One time, I wanted to play catch and Dad was being slow. I became angry and threw the ball at the car, breaking the frame around the back taillight of our brown, two-toned 1957 Ford station wagon, a real beauty. Rather than playing catch, we spent the next couple of hours going to car parts stores to find a replacement and fix the taillight. I taught Dad a lesson I will never forget!



**Leah Peterson  
Is Now  
Mrs. W. B. Voyles**

Leah Peterson, former Vernal girl and daughter of Mrs. Dan Adams is now Mrs. Woodrow B. Voyles, and a resident of El Paso, Texas. Miss Peterson exchanged her nuptial vows in a quiet ceremony on May 13 in the First Presbyterian Church in Salt Lake City. Dr. Weber officiated in the single ring ceremony.

A flower-banked altar made an impressive setting for the wedding. The attractive bride chose a white linen suit with navy accessories and wore a corsage of gardenias. Mrs. H. C. Paup attended her sister as matron of honor and Roland Frames of Salt Lake was best man.

Mrs. Adams wore black with gardenias and Mrs. Voyles wore blue with a gardenia corsage.

The couple spent a honeymoon in Zions Canyon and Bryce's Canyon before going to El Paso where Mr. Voyles is employed by Western Electric.

The new Mrs. Voyles is a graduate of the Uintah high school and has been employed by the Arnold Machinery Company in Salt Lake for the past few years.

Mr. Voyles, a son of Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Voyles of Salt Lake spent 4 years in the army air

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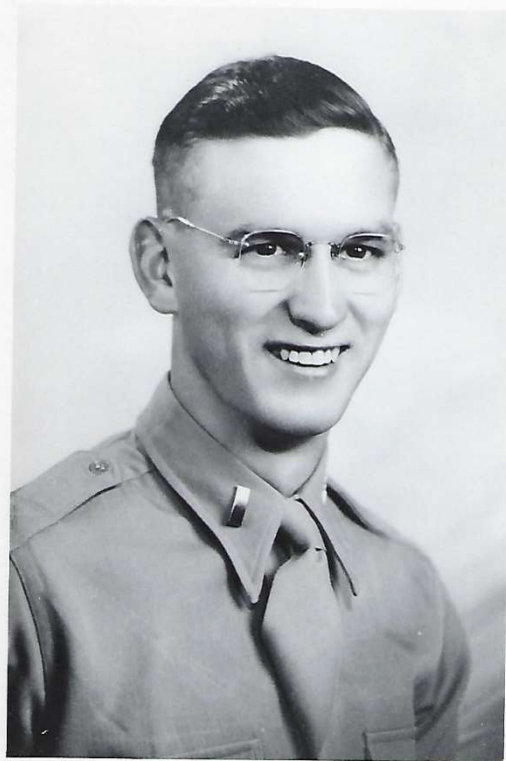
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Woody's picture upon his commissioning as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Signal Corps during World War II.



Leah as a young woman; date unknown.



The young married couple in El Paso, 1949



L to R: Annie Lois Malsby Voyles, Evelyn Knox Voyles, Earley B Voyles, Mildred Voyles, Leah Fern Peterson, Woodrow B Voyles. The picture says they were in Richland, Washington (in Leah's handwriting). No other record of this trip.



A photo of the building of the house at 4222 Cedar Street (now Morris Hill Road) in Boise in 1950.



Millie Ugalde holding Michael Kevin. Later, all three boys would work with Millie in the Boise Sears shipping and receiving room.





Michael Kevin Voyles with Evelyn Knox Voyles, probably at the home on Cedar Street in around 1955-1956. They had a close relationship throughout their lives until Evelyn passed away.



Woody holding newborn Terry in 1957 at the house on Cedar Street.



Kevin as a wee one. Leah said she had to be careful when she was cooking because he liked to put things in the oven.



Terry Lynn Voyles in October 1957.



James Kent Voyles born in 1959 in Pocatello, Idaho.



Michael Kevin, James Kent, and Terry Lynn in Pocatello or Gooding, Idaho in (probably) 1960.



Beverly and Dick Gasparotti in later life, neighbors on Cedar Street and lifelong friends of Leah and Woody. This picture is in the family room of our home at 2112 Palouse.



Same crowd at 2108 Palouse.



Michael Kevin and the first family pet, a dachshund named Banje. He lived to be 15. In later years, he always growled at Kevin. Dachshunds and not good dogs for small children.



Christmas at 2108 Palouse Street, Boise. Woody, Kevin, Banje, James, Terry. The Christmas tree was real with tinsel. In those days, the lights were backed by aluminum stars to keep the heat reflected away from the tree branches.