

Mason, Esta Lee Brennan

Brianne Mason
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My name is Esta Lee Berensen Mason. I was born October 4, 1931 in a mining camp called Kenilworth, Utah located five miles east of Helper, Utah.

My parents were Venice Nelson and James Berensen of Ferron, Utah. I was the tenth child out of 15 children, 8 boys and 7 girls. With a family of this size we didn't have a lot of food to eat so our daily food was bread and water gravy.

My mom would bake 15 loaves of bread every other day. While I was growing up lunch meat was only 25 cents a pound and we couldn't afford to buy it.

Sometimes at our school women would cook chili and serve it for 5 cents and it smelled so good throughout the school house and I would have to run home with my brothers and sisters to have our bread.

In our town we had a boarding house where young miners would live and were served their meals. Next door was our company store, ice cream parlor and candy shop. We had a show house and we could see a free show every Thursday. If we were lucky and could come up with a penny we could buy a sack of candy for the show. We also had a library where we could get books and take them home to read.

The mining camp was a wonderful place to live and go to school. We had all different nationalities in Kenilworth and we are still friends today. We meet every other year for Kenilworth days and have a great time. We had to make our own fun which would be ice skating, sleigh riding, climbing the 3 beautiful peaks and

finally a big rock to sit on and have our lunch. We also picked pretty wild flowers to take home to our moms. We played fun outside games as kids do today and we played a lot of baseball.

Our house had four bedrooms and we had two double beds in each room, it was crowded but at that time we didn't know the difference. We didn't have indoor bathrooms. Our toilet was outside, off we would go rain sleet or snow. My mom would put a big tub of water next to the stove and we would have to each take a bath every Saturday night. Soap was only ten cents a bar but we had to make our own.

Our clothes were all made out of other clothing people had given my mom, she did a great job in making the clothes look like new. Our shoes were worn until huge holes came through the bottom of the soles and we would cut out cardboard to fit inside, it worked until it rained, then your feet would get wet and squish squash as you walked.

When I was 5 years old I kept trying to walk and would fall down it turned out to be the dreaded polio which gave me a club foot it was very difficult to walk. My parents could not afford the surgery, so I lived with it until I was going into the ninth grade and then the Polio Foundation helped me with polio surgery one step at a time.

I had a problem listening with so many children and on one Fourth of July my father lined us up in a row by age and gave us so many firecrackers and matches in a little sack. We had to wait for his help. I was tired of waiting and went to the porch and took a firecracker and match out of the sack and struck the match to light

the firecracker, the match went out so I put the firecracker in my mouth so I could get another match out of my sack and guess what the fire cracker went off. I got lock jam and a badly burned mouth for a long time.

When I was in fourth grade the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and we had two Japanese girls in our class Yasiko and Masako. Our class had began that morning and two gentlemen came to our class and escorted the two Japanese girls out and to this I have not seen or heard of them. My thoughts of them have never faded and I wonder where they have gone.

When I was in fifth grade my teacher arranged for us to go into a coal mine, it was very scary. I always thought of the men who worked in them, mainly my father and brothers and I worried about them. When I was in eighth grade we had a terrible mine disaster and lost a lot of young men. When we heard about it we were all scared because our father was on afternoon shift. Someone was looking out after them because they were just getting their mine clothes on in the bath house when they heard about the disaster and their lives were spared. We watched as they brought all the injured out it was not a very good sight. I think miners should be praised for the work they do, the money they earn is well deserved. Coal serves many purposes and in time to come I think it will become even more important to our economy. Out of nine men in our family working in the mine or tippie, I had one brother get his leg caught in the coal dragon on the tippie, he lost one of his legs. A lot of the men were young when they worked in the mines so they had to stand on powder keg boxes to reach what they had to do,

this was so they could take care of the younger children and put better food on the table which they did and we owe them a lot of thanks.

When we were old enough we would get house cleaning and babysitting jobs and we worked very hard for fifty cents a day and I thought I was really rich.

Christmas time was wonderful, we didn't receive any gifts, but we had a stocking hanging on the stove with an apple, orange, and a few peannuts in it. We had a Christmas tree and that made everything seem so cozy along with the fire my dad would get up early in the morning to make. I look at the toys and items kids receive today and I will take the good old days any time because we had security and a feeling of being safe.

Our school in Kenilworth went to eighth grade, then we went to Spring Glen for ninth grade. This year I had another polio and took my first ride to Salt Lake City, wow what an awesome sight. After getting my cast off I was able to do more dancing and at this time I taught most of the boys in our school how to dance mainly the jitter bug and they all have thanked me many times through the years.

We rode the school bus to Price to finish our tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades. Our high school was the college at that time we all went to school there.

After graduating Joe Mason and I were married in 1951. Four days after we were married he was called to serve his country. He went to Camp Roberts California, for basic training and was sent to Fort Benning Georgia with the 508th Regimental combat team. He was

at Fort Benning for seven months. Then he was shipped to Fort Latton Washington to ship out to Japan. Joe left Yahakoma Japan and landed in Inchon Hilon Korea. He moved up through Soul Korea to the Chuma Valley, crossed the 38th parallel to the main line and resistance at the Infum river, where they secured Old Baldy, Pork Chop Hill, Sand Bag Castle, Marilyn Monroe Stretch. They fought side by side with the Roye Australian Brigade.

After returning home we made our home in Price Utah. He was employed at the Zion bank

We have two daughters and one son, who are all married. We also have 5 lovely granddaughters and one grandson.

We have traveled many places and are always glad to come back to Price. We are both retired and have a great time.