



Honored Citizens

Lila Mae & Max Johnson

In the meantime, Lila Mae was growing up during the depression. Her father had recently been released from the Navy and they had moved to Nevada. In Pioche, Nevada, she started school in a one-room schoolhouse with a very special teacher who taught her to love school. Several Midway families lived in Pioche at the same time and worked in the mine as well. When Lila Mae was nine they moved to Seattle for a year and then to Salmon, Idaho. When she was in 9th grade they moved to Butte, Montana, then back to Seattle to live with an aunt and uncle. Her little sister was born, and her mom was able to buy a home. She attended Jr. and Sr. high school in Seattle.

Lila Mae's mom insisted she go to Utah to visit family. This took place in 1947 and there she met Ruth Anna and Max Johnson; she and Ruth Anna become good friends. After she went home to Seattle to finish high school, they wrote to each other until Ruth Anna's tragic passing the next summer.

She had fallen in love with Max during that summer, but he was very shy, so she had to chase him until he caught her. Lila Mae was just 16. Max told her to go home and "grow up"! She tried to do just that, and they wrote back and forth to each other for a couple of years. In October of 1949, he came to Seattle and proposed and they were married in May, 1950, in the Salt Lake Temple by Spencer W. Kimball.

Max had begun to build a home before their wedding. They moved in and completed it together and have lived there ever since. It began as a small four-room home, but over the years they made many changes and additions as the family grew.

Max and Lila Mae were blessed with five biological children. One child lived four hours and two others were stillborn at seven months. They decided to adopt and were able to adopt seven children of Indian (Lamanite) and Spanish backgrounds and one little girl of Irish descent. They had 13 children from Mexico come and stay for one year each and five children from the Indian Placement Program have lived with them at various times.

Max has worn many different hats. He worked at five different occupations and finally at age 39 went to Salt Lake and worked for Wheeler Machinery for 28 years, commuting from Midway to Salt Lake every day. He retired at age 66 and has been working at other things...never slowing down. He is best known now as a school crossing guard. Lila Mae currently works at the Dairy Keen and enjoys that. She is known throughout the valley for her wonderful Swiss braided bread.

Both Lila Mae and Max have been involved in community and church activities. Both have been members of the Swiss Chorus. Lila Mae sang with the Choralettes for a few years and played with the Swiss Handbell Choir for ten years. They both love music. Of course, Lila Mae's collection of dolls (about 1200) is known to more than a few in the valley.

Their ties and roots and commitment to Midway run deep, and we are proud to call them our 2008 Swiss Days Honored Citizens. Thank you, Lila Mae and Max, for many years of service to your community.

Max and Lila Mae's roots lie in the Heber Valley. Max was born in the Heber Hospital on October 24, 1927. He was the first son of George W. Johnson and Jennie Luella Pyper, the grandson of Nels J. Johnson and Mary Ann Orgill and James T. Pyper and Clarissa VanWagoner. All of his ancestors were descendants of converts to the LDS Church from many lands who came to America and arrived on the Midway scene beginning in 1859.

Lila Mae was born on October 14, 1931, to Lorin Dee Ross and Freda Maud Frye in a house on Midway's Main Street owned by her grandparents, Robert Bell and Ella Gertrude Alexander.

Max's family, consisting of two brothers and two sisters, lived in Lakeview which was near Provo, but in 1933, when Max was beginning first grade, the family returned to Midway. They lived first at 243 East Main, but then bought land on North River Road and moved there in 1939 and did subsistence farming – "you want to eat – then you must raise and grow the food"!

Max attended Midway schools for eight years and then moved on to Wasatch High School in Heber. During his senior year, he went to Provo every afternoon for classes at Vocational School in auto mechanics. He graduated from high school, turned 18 and six weeks later he was drafted into the army. Max was sent to Maryland for training, but then the war ended. He stayed on for the rest of his service time teaching arc welding. He attended church in Wilmington, Delaware.

After his discharge, he returned to Midway, bought some welding equipment, started his own business, and continued his farming.