

## **The Legend of Chief and Boots**

Father – Mother; Grandpa – Grandma  
George Wills and Beth Durfey

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They were born in 1918, in the aftermath of World War I. Later, in the 1930s, they would survive the Depression and in the 1940s, serve and live through World War II.

They were born in the time of the horse-and-buggy and would live to see automobiles and airplanes. Although they grew-up far from each other, both of their childhoods were spent in a rural/country setting. These happy childhood homes, surrounded by family and friends, would become a part of them, never to be forgotten.

Chief, a handsome boy, was born in Dykes, Missouri. He hunted rabbits and squirrels and dried walnuts on the roof of his family's barn. He traveled far distances to school and loved to play marbles with his friends. His skill at the game callused his knuckle, leaving a scar, which remained with him into adulthood. In early adolescence, he was thrilled with an exciting adventure in the Model T Ford during his family's move to Wyoming.

Boots, a beautiful and insightful girl, also enjoyed the adventures she had with her father in their Model T around her childhood home of Beaver Dam, Utah with her five sisters. During these days, she always created quite a stir with her mischievousness ways. Once she split her lip after falling onto a rock; and on another occasion, cut a large gash in her forehead while sledding down a snow hill. Like Chief, both incidences would leave a scar that she would carry with her for the rest of her life.

As all children must grow into men and women, Chief and Boots left their enchanting childhood days behind and chose the Navy as their new adventure. This choice brought them to Southern California, where they would meet and fall in love.

Despite Chief's rowdy nature and fame with the ladies, he was a good navy boy and worked hard in his assignments. Within the course of these assignments, he sustained many injuries, which would eventually land him in a military hospital where he met Boots, a Navy nurse, for the first time.

Chief was taken with her at first sight, but Boots did not initially return his affections. The other nurses thought he was handsome with his dark hair and dreamy brown eyes. Boots could discover nothing exciting about him. Chief was determined to have a date with her and even bet a man he could.

Boots was raised in a religious home and taught to be a lady with good manners, but she was a strong woman and had no problem expressing her negative feelings for Chief. She shared these feelings on their first date in a bar lounge. Boots felt 'a bar' was unacceptable and was horrified that he would invite her to such a place. Over time, however, Chief began to win her over with

his witty nature. He made her laugh at his jokes in spite of herself. She began to see a more gentle and playful side to this handsome sailor.

They enjoyed each other's company and were often found together walking in the parks, dancing in the halls, and sitting and talking on the pier. One of Chief's favorite times during their courtship was teaching Boots to spit off the bridge.

They were falling in love and this brought complications. Boots wanted to marry someone of her own faith and Chief was not. She was troubled by the compromises she felt she would have to make in marrying him. So with a broken heart and tears in her eyes, she told him she couldn't see him anymore. But Chief was in love with Boots and was not going to give up so easily. He devised a plan to see her again and when he did, he told her of his love then walked away. At this moment she knew she could not let this man walk out of her life forever – so she ran after him, and they were reunited.

And so they were married – on December 18, 1943. The pair was quite a sight: Boots looking perfectly lovely, while Chief was limping and bandaged from a recent car accident. Boot's five sisters were hesitant about the union, but Chief won them over as well.

They lived peacefully for several months before realizing that due to a marriage license mix up; their marriage was not actually legal. Boots' was horrified and Chief amused, but they got the logistics settled and embarked, OFFICIALLY, on their lives together.

Boots resigned her Navy position, and for the next thirteen years, Chief was sent on several assignments, taking him away from her months sometimes a year at a time. During one of these assignments, although apart, they were happy to receive their first child, a boy they named Barrie, in the fall of 1944. They were also apart for the next two births, another boy, Oakley, and a girl, Sue Ann. In 1950 they shared the birth of their third son, Rick, together which brought their family to four.

While overseas, Chief read the Book of Mormon and several other Latter-day Saint books. He felt and knew in his heart the LDS faith to be the truth, and on September 21, 1949, was baptized. On October 30, 1950, Boots claimed her dream when they, with their children were sealed together for time and all eternity in the Salt Lake Temple. In the next few years, they had another girl, Becky, and boy, Lan, to complete their family at six.

The years continued on in happiness, joy, and love. They enjoyed teaching their children the Gospel of Jesus Christ and watching them grow in righteousness. They were happy to witness the marriages of all their children in the temple to begin their own eternal families. They welcomed and loved each addition of in-laws and eventually precious grandchildren.

In 1974, Chief and Boots returned to the country-living they cherished so much as children.

Now that their own children had grown and Navy life was behind them, they settled in a beautiful valley in Eastern Oregon and built a handsome ranch house. This became a place of laughter and memories not only for Chief and Boots but for their entire family. It was a place that would always be cherished and long talked of by grandchildren.

As each season came and went, new beauty filled the memories of The Ranch. Boots sat on the porch watching the Hummingbirds or waiting for the anticipated arrival of her children and

grandchildren. She taught them songs and told stories of her childhood. Chief spent hours in his garden watching for unwelcome gophers or reading romance novels.

The family played all over the mountains: hiking up to Rick's Bear for the big kids and the Picnic Rocks for the little ones. They played dress up in the attic, tinkered with the dirt bike and journeyed up the dirt road to the Spring always stopping at the Rock Gardens. Sometimes their expeditions would take them up the road to the old logging cabins. These excursions often ended with chalk fights and inscriptions left in the mountain to be remembered for years to come. Others enjoyed the peaceful relaxation of fishing in Cumming's Creek. Regardless of the day's adventures, every evening ended in reminiscent laughter and the search for kerosene lanterns and flashlights just before Chief switched off the generator. The Ranch was then left in the serenity of the starlit night. For years Chief, Boots and their family delighted in life at the Ranch, but as it always does, change came.

Sadness was felt by all, Chief and Boots especially when it was time to leave their beloved Ranch and settle in a more suitable situation for their aging years. However, as they always did, joy was soon found. They began yet another stage of their lives, closer to their family.

As the years passed on, their faithfulness and endurance were wonderful examples to all their family. They journeyed through the joys and trials of life compassionately together until the spring of 2005 when the family joined to lie to rest their beloved Boots. With heavy hearts, they remembered Boots famous saying, "It never rains but when it pours." and thought of all her teachings and goodness. As they sang "Green Trees Around Us" at the gravesite, they knew Boots was not far away but had moved on to create another adventure. The family will wait for the moment when she kisses their faces in heaven and says, "You are the one I have been waiting for."

Chief kept their love alive, worked countless hours on the family's history and tending to his garden until 2006 as the military gun salute sent him to the waiting embrace of his beloved Boots, never again to be parted.

The Legend of Chief and Boots, their memory, lives on as their six children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren still gather each year to sing the songs, laugh, and bear testimony of the Savior. Their legacy of love and righteousness will continue forever through their family.