

JOHN "JACK" ALBERT WOOD

John "Jack" Albert Wood, was born to John M. and Sarah Elizabeth Watts Wood on July 2, 1897, in Murray, Utah.

In high school he was editor of the newspaper in sports, manager of the baseball team and captain of the basketball team.

The first job he had was helping the Murray City Surveyor. He especially remembers surveying the roads in Murray City Cemetery.

Following graduation from high school, he went to University of Utah to become a dentist. This was in 1918 and the U.S. Army was drafting students from the university into the Army according to the alphabet and sending them to Fort Douglas for training. His close friend Elmo Gillen was one of the first to be called into the Army. The flu was taking many of the boys at Fort Douglas and Elmo said to him as he was leaving, "I am afraid this is the last time I will see you." Shortly after his induction, he died with the flu. Jack was a pallbearer at the funeral.

He did not go back to school the next year and received a position with the National Cooper Bank at Salt Lake. A lovely young lady by the name of Blanche Jenkins would always catch the same street car at 48th and State Street in Murray going to the University of Utah the same time he would catch it going to the bank. They always sat together, and he thought she was something special. On June 14, 1922, they were married.

He originally chose to be a farmer but his experience as a farmer was short lived. He proved a success as a farmer by having two thousand dollars in the bank, but a terrible cloud burst came one day and caused Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins considerable worry about their daughter being on the farm. They came over to the farm and took her to their home and said he could go into business with them and that they really needed him. They owned Jenkins Mortuary in Murray. He thought it over and decided it would be best. Farm life was not for Blanche.

In 1924, Jack and Blanche moved to Los Angeles so he could go to Embalming School. Following graduation they moved back to Utah to work for Blanche's father. Their stay in Murray was short lived. In October of 1925, C. E. Dinwoody, owner of Dinwoody Mortuary in Idaho Falls since 1911, passed away at the age of 49 years. They learned the business was for sale. They made an offer which was accepted by Mrs. Dinwoody.

From Jack's life history, "On December 1, 1925, I came to Idaho Falls to take over the Dinwoody Mortuary located at 242 Broadway. Blanche's father stayed one day and left the next day for home in Murray. What a lonesome feeling I had not knowing anyone in the state of Idaho and homesick. Blanche and son, Jack Jr. followed me to Idaho Falls by train five days later on December 5, 1925. I told her not to get off the train until she saw me. The railway station was swarming with Indians. She waited until she saw me, and I helped her off the train and she said, "Where are the Indians you said were here?" I forgot to tell her that they are down at the railway station in Blackfoot. She was glad to see me. Our coming to Idaho Falls was surely inspired by the Lord, and thanks to Him and the good people of Idaho Falls and surrounding areas for their love for Blanche and me."

The first call he had was for a baby belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Arthur ^MWisikin at Ucon, Idaho. The family came with Bishop Robert Andrus and his wife, the president of the Ucon Relief Society. Again as recorded in his life history, "Mrs. Andrus looked at me and she could see I was lonesome and a stranger. She smiled at me and said, "You are homesick, and would you feel better if I told you I was your mother's cousin?" I put my arms around her and was overjoyed. From that day on she has been Aunt Vinie. Mr. Miskin asked me if I would speak at the funeral service of their baby. I was told before I left Murray I was to do whatever they asked me to do. I had never spoke at a funeral and was very young and had no experience as a speaker. I said I would. After the funeral was over, Bishop Andrus came up and put his arm around me and said, "Brother Wood, you did fairly well but there is great room for improvement. Since that time I have spoken at many funerals, and I have always remembered what he said."

Jack and Blanche moved the business to its current location on Elm Street & North Ridge in 1928. Blanche received her funeral director's license and assisted Jack in many ways. Together they served and loved the community of Idaho Falls.

Jack became Secretary of the Idaho Falls Lion's Club in 1931 and was a charter member for over 50 years. He and Blanche were active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and served faithfully in many callings.

Jack & Blanche had four children: Jack Jr., Ralph, Annette, and Robert. Jack Jr. and Ralph decided to go into funeral service and received their training at the San Francisco Mortuary College. They both served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, then joined their father in the business in the late 1940's.

Ralph's eldest son, Marlowe, and Jack Jr's eldest son, Jon, joined them in the 1970's, after completing their schooling at San Francisco Mortuary College.

John "Jack" A. Wood Sr. passed away May 20, 1990, in Idaho Falls, Idaho. To this day, the funeral home is still wholly owned and operated by the Wood family. Since his death a granddaughter, Deborah Wood Martin, and two great grandsons, Brian and Stefan Wood, have also joined the business in carrying on the family tradition of compassionate funeral service.

By Deborah Wood Martin