

# USU PARAMOUNT IN LIFE OF 100-YEAR-OLD GRADUATE

**S**hortly after Utah State University celebrated its 120<sup>th</sup> birthday in March, one of its early graduates will celebrate her own birthday—100 years, on April 14. Ruth Davis Manning said her greatest accomplishment is graduating from USU with a bachelor’s degree in foods and nutrition and child development.

Mrs. Manning graduated in 1930 (42 years after the university was founded) from the School of Home Economics. Her graduating class had 150 people, 53 of whom were women, and total enrollment at USU was 1,247, compared to more than 23,000 today. She said there was never a question about whether she would graduate from college.

“I was determined to graduate from Utah State,” she said. “And if you’re determined to do

something, you’ve got to do everything you can to get it done. But the determination has to come first.”

Mrs. Manning’s enthusiasm for education and desire to share that love with others is apparent in her children. Her son, Fred, graduated from USU with a degree in elementary education, and he taught at North Park Elementary in Tremonton for 28 of his 32-year teaching career.

“All the children loved ‘Mr. Manning,’” said his sister, Diane Green, who works for USU’s Center for Persons with Disabilities. “He felt one of

his most important responsibilities to the children was to help them develop a love for school, and he did just that.”

While Ruth Manning was attending USU in the early 1900s, scientists were just beginning to understand vitamins and minerals. She said she remembers doing research with rats, in which the students took away certain vitamins from the rats, one at a time, and noted the effects it had on the rats.



Mrs. Manning’s graduation photo from the 1930 USU yearbook, “The Buzzer.”



Ruth Davis Manning graduated from USU in 1930 and says graduating with a bachelor’s degree was her greatest accomplishment. She turns 100 on April 14, 2008.

“The rats would be running up and down their cages, and when we removed vitamin A from their diets, the rats went downhill in just a few days,” she said. “Once we gave the rats vitamin A again, they got their eyesight back and started running around again.”

Mrs. Manning used the knowledge she gained from her education to stay healthy throughout her life. Today, she doesn’t take a single prescription drug, but adheres to a comprehensive vitamin regimen she put together herself. She has also managed to live almost twice as long as was expected for a woman born in 1908.

Health, vitamins and food were always an interest to Mrs. Manning and she had the opportunity to study herbs from Dr. John R. Christopher, a pioneer herbalist who started a company that continues to sell herbal supplements today.

“He taught me that taking cayenne pepper is good for the heart,” she said. “Dr. Christopher would take a teaspoon of pepper and just swallow it. I have to take capsules, but it really helps calm you down if you are feeling stressed.”

After she graduated, Mrs. Manning taught home economics, English, speech and foods at high schools throughout the West for about eight years.

“I loved teaching and working with older children,” she said. She recalled an incident when all the ovens were removed from the high school where she taught. The girls were so upset because they said cooking was the only fun class they had.

After Mrs. Manning married, her dedication to research at USU continued. Her husband, Hugh Manning, and a few other farmers put their money together and bought a piece of ground in Blue Creek. They deeded the land to the Utah State University Utah Agricultural Experiment Station. One of the varieties of wheat developed on this land was named “Manning Wheat” after Hugh Manning.

“It was a high-yield wheat that proved to be very good in mechanical mixing and baking high quality breads,” Green said.

Because of the research done on the farm, Mr. Manning was asked to speak at many meetings regarding farms and wheat.

“He was nervous about speaking, so mom enrolled the whole family in a Dale Carnegie course to better each one of us in public speaking,” Green said.

During the late 1930s, women’s liberation had become a large part of Mrs. Manning’s life. She said she remembered when a group of women from New York City came to Salt Lake City to distribute materials about women’s rights. Mrs. Manning helped distribute the literature farther west to women in Washington.

“In those days women couldn’t teach after they got married so a friend of mine went to Las Vegas to get married and then came back to Utah to teach,” Mrs. Manning said. “No one checked for a marriage license, but people began to wonder who that guy was coming out of her house each morning.”

During her lifetime, Mrs. Manning has witnessed many changes in America. When the first airplane flew over Brigham City, she said word got out in the local newspaper, and everyone was so excited to witness it, they started gathering outside an hour before it was supposed to fly overhead. Mrs. Manning also recalled the introduction of Jell-O. “That was the most wonderful food that ever came out.”

Mrs. Manning’s daughter agrees that after 100 years of varied and exciting experiences, her mother’s greatest accomplishment was graduating from USU.

“My mom instilled the desire for education and continual learning throughout life as a way to better oneself and those around us,” she said. “I do believe that is why her greatest accomplishment was graduating from USU. It sparked her desire to always be learning and achieving a better you.”

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March 2008*