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NATHAN FORD CLARK, 1899-1978

For Nathan Ford Clark, known to friends and family as Ford, the journey through earth life was a restless one. It started with his birth in Farmington, Utah on May 30, 1899, continued to Hawaii and the far reaches of the Pacific and ended in Arizona where he spent his last years.

Ford was the son of Nathan George Clark and Esther Lauretta Ford and grandson of Ezra Thompson Clark and Susan Legett [Leggett]. His early schooling was in Utah before going on a mission for the Church at age 17.

Hawaii was the scene of his missionary labors, and it held a place in his heart throughout his life. In those days, 1917-1920, a missionary needed to be able to speak and understand the Hawaiian language in order to communicate with natives in the rural areas; so Ford studied and became fluent in the language, using not only the simple vernacular but also the hidden meanings known as "deep Hawaiian." He became so proficient that later in life he taught classes in the language to young Hawaiians who had lost their linguistic heritage.

Most of his mission was spent on the Island of Hawaii, but he also served on Maui and Oahu. He attended the dedication of the Hawaiian Temple at Laie, Oahu in 1919. The modes of travel he used on his mission had great variety -- horse, cane train, canoe, steamer, truck, auto and, of course, he was afoot much of the time. Hawaiians were not known for punctuality and probably didn't have watches in the first place; so he had to ring the meeting house bell to call the congregation and often went door to door to rouse the people out of slumber. Church meetings started whenever enough members and teachers arrived.

Upon returning to Utah after his mission, he entered the University of Utah where he graduated in 1924. During that time he married Montess Brimhall (1923), and they both were called to a mission at the Hawaiian Temple from 1924 to 1926.

They decided to make a home in Hawaii after this second mission, and Ford found employment as a salesman for Wakefield and Sons. He traveled throughout the islands and was noted for late arrivals for ship sailings and mighty leaps to the gangway as it was being raised. The couple had two daughters, June Brimhall Clark Ellis (deceased) and Norma Jean Clark Rosa, but were divorced in 1935. Ford subsequently married Josephine (Jean) Early Ryan (1936) in Hawaii.

Ford was an officer in the U.S. Naval Reserve and was called to active duty just four months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. During that emergency, he reported to Pearl Harbor and his family didn't see him for weeks. He served on Navy ships in the Pacific and rose to the rank of Lt. Commander by the end of the war.

Upon discharge from the Navy, he managed U.S. Navy exchanges at Barbers Point and Pearl Harbor. Jean ran a very successful dress shop "Clark's at Waiakiki" which specialized in New York fashion for Hawaii residents who planned travels to the East Coast, and she made frequent buying trips to the fashion markets in New York. Ford held many callings in the Church including officiator in the Hawaiian Temple.

Jean died in 1967, and Ford sold the dress shop

and his home and moved to Tempe, Arizona in 1971. In 1970 he married Blanch Irene Stits Brakfiend, but the marriage didn't last. They were divorced in 1972. He continued to live in Tempe and enjoyed working the Mesa Temple and gardening in his large lot until his death on July 3, 1978 in Mesa. Ford was buried beside Jean in the National Memorial Cememtery of the Pacific in Punchbowl Crater, Honolulu.