

# Mothers & families



Roberta and Kenneth Moffit on their wedding day in La Grande in 1947.

Courtesy photo

## In praise of moms — one in particular

By Kathleen Ellyn  
Wallowa County Chieftain

There are thousands of moms in Wallowa County that deserve to be honored, but we had to pick just one as an example and lots of folks recommended this lady.

If you don't recognize the lady in the picture it's because Roberta (Makin) Moffit of Lostine has spent 67 years bent over the books making sure the various Moffit business endeavors run smoothly.

There have been a lot of businesses over the last 67 years, and right now there is the multi-level Moffit Brothers Transportation and Moffit Brothers Construction. Pretty much the whole extended family is employed in those businesses, keeping them all in Wallowa County.

You may recognize Roberta's voice on the phone, though. People often remark on it. Her phone voice, even at 88, is still clear and sweet.

Yes, sweet. And her family says that's no put-on — Roberta is sweet to the bone.

Don't think this is just what families say — we asked the daughters-in-law to dish on their mother-in-law and they both said the same thing.

Terri (Kalebaugh) Moffit, wife of Roberta's son Gary: "It was so easy to be in the family, I was so accepted. She's the best mom-in-law in the world. She's kind and sweet and thoughtful."

Patty (Neal) Moffit, wife of the late Jerry Moffit: "She's been an absolutely wonderful mother-in-law. She's loving ... I can't say enough about her."

There you have it. And what "sweet" means is that she's always been keenly interested in everything her family does and needs — but hands-off when it comes to their personal business.

"She never meddles," Terri said. "She's always so sweet and grateful for any time we can give them. That takes a mature individual."

"I love her dearly, I've always felt that way," said Patty. "I think it's unusual for a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law to get along as good as we do. She let us make our own mistakes. There was nev-

er any doubt in my mind that Jerry was a wonderful person because of his mom."

That sweet disposition is one of the things that attracted Roberta's lifelong love, Kenneth Moffit, back in 1947. "She was just easy to get along with," he recalls.

That never changed. "She's been good to everybody," Kenneth says. "She's done an awful lot. She's been super. She's been a good mother and wife, for sure. She has kids in town who think of her as a second mother — they all come to get the cookies."

When they celebrate Mother's Day this year, the Moffit clan is hoping it's just another family gathering in a long line that will extend on forever.

They have reason to hope. "She's really sharp at 88 and still keeps everything going," said son Gary. "She still makes all the bids for the bus tours. She's done that from the beginning of time."

So, no forced retirement for Roberta. She had to take it easy a few years back when she battled cancer. But she came back from that strong and closer than ever to her family.

During those scary times family took turns driving her to Walla Walla for treatment one week of every month and Terri recalls that as a time when she became even closer to her mother-in-law.

Now, Terri is looking forward to a lot more of those special mother/daughter times she shares with Roberta. "I've done her hair twice a week for 32 years and it's a very special time. I love to get her to talk about old times; she has the neatest stories of her heritage and marriage into the Moffits. She's just one of those people you want to do everything for. She's a beautiful lady."

Oh, and ask any Moffit and they'll tell you: Roberta makes the best potato salad in the world.



## Mom's Day movies, the subjective list

By Kathleen Ellyn  
The Wallowa County Chieftain

Want to catch a flick on Mother's Day? You can pick a theme: Good Mom ("I Remember Mama," "Stella Dallas," "Grapes of Wrath"), Bad Mom ("Throw Mamma From the Train," "Mommy Dearest," "Precious"), Crazy Mom (or crazy son in "Psycho") or Wonderful Stepmom/foster mom ("Stepmom," "The Blind Side").

Here's my two cents' worth on Mother's Day movies: Moms used to be fetching young things and fellas came a'callin'.

Just saying. Now that we've got a little experience in life, we appreciate both the freshness of youth AND the wisdom of age AND we're up for a challenge.

So, here is my completely subjective top three movies to watch on Mother's Day and why.

"National Velvet": The book was published in 1935 and the movie, starring Elizabeth Taylor as a child and Mickey Rooney as a young adult was released in 1944.

So, it's ages old. Nevertheless, the story is timeless.

What makes this Mother's Day film is that it has two strong female leads who not only have personal strength, but lead with a mother's heart: Velvet, defends that horse like a mother who won't let her child be sold short; and Edwina Brown (Angela Lansbury) as the mother who understands the desire to challenge oneself in a Big Way. If you've forgotten Mrs. Brown's secret, I won't spoil it by revealing it here.

"Annie": Adapted from the Broadway musical inspired by the 1924 Harold Gray comic strip "Little Orphan Annie," the movie version (1982) stars Aileen Quinn as Annie and Carol Bur-

nett as Miss Agatha Hannigan the lazy, scheming orphan manager. Absentee mothers (and fathers) are central to this story and what constitutes mothering or fathering is examined throughout. If your throat doesn't tighten a few times in this fun film, you've got a rock for a heart. It'll make you appreciate your parents, step-parents or adoptive parents believe you me. Plus, the songs are great and little kids will love watching this with you.

"Grey Gardens": You can pick from two great versions of this true story of an exceptionally eccentric, reclusive socialite mother/daughter duo Edith Bouvier Beale and Edith Ewing Bouvier Beale of East Hampton, New York. I recommend you see the 1975 documentary film by Albert and David Maysles first and then watch the 2009 HBO film starring Drew Barrymore and Jessica Lange as Little Edie and Big Edie.

And yes, these ladies are related to "that" Bouvier family;

Edith Ewing Bouvier Beale is Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis' aunt.

Both films won arms-full of awards and the Edies approved the film wholeheartedly.

They are decidedly odd, the setting shocking and the mother/daughter dynamics have gone right 'round the bend. You may find yourself simultaneously horrified and grudgingly admiring of the way 56-year-old Little Edie persists in casting herself as the bright young designer/performer. And you might or might not be surprised to know that Little Edie's odd fashions inspired a nine-page layout in Harper's Bazaar in 1988.

It's a tragic story of a precipitous fall.

What's heroic about it is that the mangled victims of that fall got back up as best they could and pretended it all away.

Make yourself happy to be waaaay more normal than the Beales. And don't be surprised if this film makes you want to clean the house, even if you just cleaned it.

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