

# Katherine Farrar: very special grandma

By Elane Blanchet

"You always find nice people if you just reach out your hand," says Katherine Farrar, the 82-year-old poet whose verses periodically liven up the Gazette-Times editorial page.

This philosophy appears to have permeated Katherine's life up to her newest chapter, life in Heppner. She came to Morrow County in January, 1976, soon after her husband's death in Junction City.

"People here have never made me feel like a stranger; everyone calls me by my first name," Katherine commented. She likes the way everyone talks to everyone else in the street in Heppner, comparing Eastern Oregon friendliness with that she knew in the Midwest before moving to Junction City from Nebraska with her husband Lester, "an old Packard, a trailer, three girls and a dog", 41 years ago.

Katherine, raised by her grandparents in Nebraska, was a school teacher for 12 years before her marriage, starting in a rural one-room school.

"I still love to have children around me," she commented. "That's why I taught school, because I love children and they seemed to come to me."

Katherine remembers "good, happy times" as a first grade teacher in Fairmont, Neb., and says she still receives Christmas cards from students she taught 60 years ago.

Katherine married Lester Farrar, a farmer, in 1925, ending her teaching career. Drought conditions drove the family to Oregon in 1936, where they settled outside Junction City.

The Farrar's oldest daughter, Mary married Dave McLeod and the couple settled in Heppner, paving Katherine's future move to Morrow County. "I told Lester that if he left me first, 'I know where I'll go, I'll go to Heppner,'" Katherine said.

Though physically slowed down by arthritis, Katherine's lively mind and sharp memory might be envied by a much younger person. "My grandmother lived to be 99 years and 4 months and my great-grandmother lived to 99 years, 11 months," she commented.

Katherine still loves children and feels blessed with 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. "Lester and I were married 51 years", she said. "With four generations in our family, we never saw the generation gap."

When the McLeod family moved recently to Portland after Dave was promoted to the state ASCS office, Katherine said, "I'd made up my mind to stay right here as long as my health holds out. I like small towns, I like it here."



Katherine spends her time reading, doing housework, tending her plants, visiting friends, writing 15-20 letters a week, watching television in the evening and, of course, writing poetry.

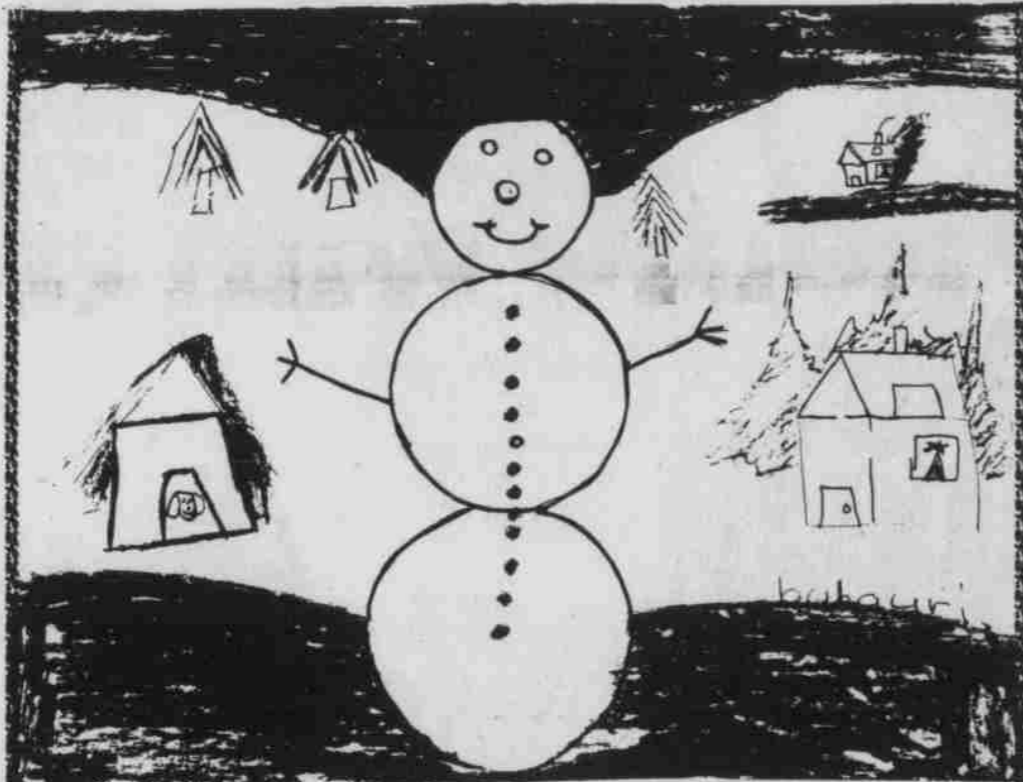
She remembered that she "messed around with poetry as a kid", but the first poem she kept was written by inspiration on a kleenex during a train ride between Arlington and Portland after a visit with the McLeods in 1947. The first one ever published was submitted as a surprise by friends to the paper in Wheatland, Wyoming when she was 79.

Her first poem appearing in the Gazette-Times was boxed on the front page in the Sept. 2, 1976 issue, entitled "School—Very First Day." It had been submitted as an 81st birthday surprise by Mary McLeod. Katherine's poems have since been an irregular feature in the Times.

Katherine insists that she is "just an ordinary person" but a card she recently received from a small great-granddaughter in California may describe her more accurately. It was addressed to "A Speshl Grandma".

## The Toy Box

The lonely toy box,  
Sits in the corner  
Sometimes gathers dust  
The tin soldiers creak with rust.  
The big red drum has a broken stick.  
Can't go, "Boom! Boom!  
Boom!"  
To lead the soldiers in gay Parade,  
Around the room.  
The big big humming top  
Wants to spin round and "roun"  
Wishes for tiny hands to push up and down  
The once proud train is broken apart  
Engine can't "Toot!"  
Can't even start.  
The dump truck  
That hauled so many loads of sand  
Longs for the touch of a small boy's grubby hand.  
The girl toys are lonely too.  
All feel so alone and blue.  
The pretty tea set with pink roses painted on.  
Is asking "Where have the tea parties gone?"  
The dollies are there, and stare!  
Tears in their eyes and tousled hair.  
No one to comb that tousled head.  
No one to tie a pony tail—  
With ribbon red.  
The ABC blocks so carefully placed  
Wait hour by hour  
For busy hands  
To build a tall, tall tower  
Add to these  
A worn story book or two.  
Read many times by Grandmother through and through,  
Ah yes—  
A lonely toy box!  
What precious memories it brings,  
Of tiny tots and cluttered playthings.  
by Katherine R. Farrar



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## Hospital Notes

During the week between Tuesday, Dec. 13 and Tuesday, Dec. 20, eight patients were admitted to Pioneer Memorial Hospital.

Heppnerites Brian Siminoe, Mike Saling, Tom Kinney, Heather Nelson and Elvira Irby were admitted and dismissed during the week, as was William Hoffman of Port Hill, Idaho.

Herman Havekost of Ione was still a patient on Tuesday.

After taking an extended vacation, the Morrow County stork dropped off two blue baby bundles at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in recent days as early Christmas presents.

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Lewis Cecil of Heppner are the proud

parents of a son, Raymond Lewis, born on Wednesday, Dec. 14, at 5:48 a.m. He weighed in at 9 pounds 4 1/2 ounces and joins brother Craig in the Cecil home.

Grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Cecil of Pendleton.

Great grandparents include Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Welch, Salt Lake City, Utah; William Jones, Pendleton; and Ruby Hastings, Milton-Freewater.

A son named Brandon Jason joined the family of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Wayne Staley of Heppner on Friday, Dec. 16, at 3:20 p.m. weighing in at 7 pounds, 1 1/2 ounces. A big sister welcomed little Brandon home.

Grandparents of the new

Staley addition include Charlene Smith, Axtec, New Mexico; William E. McDonald, Durango, Colorado; and Mr. and Mrs. Carroll Staley, Los Angeles, Calif.

Great-grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Bushnell, San Diego, Calif.; Mr. and Mrs. Ralston Ray, Hesperus, Colo.; and Mr. and Mrs. John H. Smith, Farmington, N.M.

Brandon has one great-grandmother, Mrs. Granny Ward, San Diego, Calif.

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