

Florence Macfarlane

Happy birthday

Long-time resident turns 97 today

5-1988

By Ginny Benson
Of the Record-Times

Ninety-seven is Florence Macfarlane's magic number. Why?

She will be celebrating her 97th birthday today.

Fourteen is also a special number.

Florence grew up on the 14 Ranch on the Horseshoe Creek southwest of Glendo. The ranch celebrated its centennial in 1979.

Florence is the last surviving member of the Macfarlane family. Her father, William F. Macfarlane, was from Montreal and her mother, Jessie, was from London.

Her father left Montreal at the age of 21 and settled near Fort Collins. In 1879, he and a group of other men traveled north with 2,000 head of cattle and homesteaded in the Glendo area. Macfarlane built a log cabin and later built a house which has been added to since that time and is still standing. The lumber for the house was hauled from Esterbrook. The 14 Ranch was known as the Loch Sloy Ranch in the early days.

He married his wife in 1888 and in 1891 Florence was born. Florence's brother, William Stuart, died at the age of 51 and another child died at birth.

Macfarlane died in 1943 and due to her mother's failing health, Florence and her mother moved to Wheatland in 1945.

Clark Fritz is the manager of the ranch, and he will be celebrating his 81st birthday on Friday. He still lives on the ranch. As a young cowhand, he arrived at the 14 Ranch at the age of 17 and has lived there since.

Clark is assisted by Dean Cundall, who lives in a house southeast of the main ranch home.

"Clark came here from Fort Collins. He's just like a brother to me," Florence said.

She says that cattle are raised at the ranch and that one year, they tried raising sheep, "but that was enough."

"We always worked together. We used to milk the cows when the men were late and we rode horse three miles to school. The school was on the old Reeder ranch

and they built a four-room frame house and two families went to school there. A school teacher from Canada lived with us and she started me in painting."

When she was 15, she went to Montreal and stayed with her dad's sister where she attended school and took painting.

"I like to paint animals and birds the best," she said.

Although her eyesight does not allow her to paint anymore, her walls are decorated with old photographs of family and the ranch and some of her paintings. Two stray cats keep her company.

"I had a nice life with my family on the ranch. We didn't have cars or anything to go to. I went to school in Canada for one year and then came back to the ranch. It's a real nice place to be in," she reminisced.

She remembers that when her parents were first married, her father's sister was sleeping in a room next to the door when in the middle of the night the horses got out and men were running around trying to catch them.

"She thought it was Indians and she ran into my parents room and jumped in between the middle of them and said 'If I'm going to die, we're all going to die together!'" she laughed.

Florence has many friends and since moving to Wheatland, she was sort of the chauffeur for several of her friends because she was the only one could drive. About five years ago, she hurt her knee in a mishap and is now in a wheelchair.

"I surely miss my car. I never had an accident with it until I hurt my knee."

What was her license plate number?

Obviously, 8-14.

Florence didn't always use this mode of transportation. She remembers going in horse and buggy to the neighbors for Sunday socials.

"My dad had a wonderful garden. He planted apple trees that are still bearing fruit. My mother had a lovely conservatory in the house for flowers."

Florence misses the ranch, but with the company of her cats and the many friends that call on her at her home, she does just fine.

Happy birthday, Florence!