

## Fern Ilene Eddy Dorman



Fern was born on January 6, 1908 in Holyoke, Colorado. “It was a cold, windy, snowy morning with the snow coming down” she said proudly when she was interviewed in 2000. She was the fourth—out of twelve—child of George E. Eddy and Bessie Miller Eddy.

Fern’s mother’s parents (Henry and Clara Belle Miller) had moved to the Woodinville area in 1907. In the spring of 1909, when Fern was 15 months old, her parents followed with their growing family. They lived in Woodinville briefly, then moved to the Robe area, near Darrington. In Robe Fern’s father maintained tracks on the railroad line. Fern remembered the whole family riding the tracks on a pump car (hand car) with push car attached to go shopping in Robe.

Fern’s family briefly moved to Issaquah in 1913, then moved back north to Woodinville, where she started school. School was then a traditional (especially for rural areas) one-room schoolhouse, with 22 pupils in eight grades. Fern attended the Woodinville School for several years, where her grandparents were custodians.

In 1918 the family relocated to present day Sammamish, (but what was then simply called Inglewood Hill), and built a house on 10 acres on 218th Avenue SE between Southeast Fourth and Eighth Streets. However, one night in August, 1921, a wood stove in the house started a fire. The family had to flee for their lives, although fortunately they all escaped. Fern said that she had to carry her two year old brother George down the stairs. The stairway was open, and the fire was so close and hot that it singed George’s hair. Luckily, the house was insured, and Fern’s father was able to quickly rebuild with the help of his oldest son, Floyd. This farmhouse where the

"Eddy dozen" grew up still stands on 218th Avenue today, looking much as it did in the 1920s. The barn is still there too, although it's since been converted into part of an upscale contemporary home for people.

During the Eddy family's early years on Inglewood Hill, their home had neither electricity nor indoor plumbing. Fern said that electricity arrived in 1923, about the same time it began arriving in many rural areas around the country. (Electricity had arrived in urban areas somewhat earlier.) Her family was among the first ten families in the area to get electricity. Fern recalled "You had to have ten families in the area who wanted it, and you each had to buy an electric stove. You could get a Westinghouse or a Hotpoint. We took the Westinghouse because we was (sic) a big family—we baked our own bread, and it had two ovens." Fern didn't say what they did for lighting at night before this time, but in the early 20th Century most families lighted their homes at night with candlelight or gaslight. Kerosene lamps were also used, but kerosene was expensive and not many people could afford it.

Another milestone occurred in 1923: Fern's dad bought their first car. Many of you know that cars were in America by 1900 and were actually becoming fairly prevalent (particularly in the cities) by the early 1910s. However, in the rural areas, many families didn't get their first car until well into the 1920s. This was because of two factors: many families couldn't afford it, and even if they could, there were few roads (graded dirt or paved) to speak of to connect rural areas until after 1920. In fact, at the time the Eddys got their new car, Fern said the road to their house was still dirt and unimproved, although by then Inglewood Hill Road had been graded and possibly even paved.

Fern's family gained some notoriety as a result of their automotive purchase. The car dealer took a picture of the entire Eddy family standing by the car to run in an ad. The testimonial from Fern's mother that accompanied the ad said: "We needed a car very badly as my husband and 18-year old son had been walking to work every day, leaving home early and getting back late in the evening. We also had to hire someone to deliver our supplies. This always cost us \$2.50 a trip". Fern didn't recall during her interviews how much the car cost, but did recall that her father's payments on the car was \$35 a month—probably a rare treat for the Eddy family, as installment payments were still a relatively new concept in the 1920s.

Fern said indoor plumbing didn't reach their house until sometime in the mid-1930s. Although Fern didn't discuss how plumbing arrangements were handled before this, in the early 20th Century most people had an enclosed "privy" in their backyard for use. Of course, a trip to the privy could be a problem at night. Thus most people had chamberpots (often referred to as "chambers") discreetly tucked away in their bedroom for use if nature called in the middle of the night. These "chambers" were emptied and cleaned in

the morning. Water would have been brought up to the house from a nearby well. Bathing was usually done in the privacy of a room by simply using a large tub or bucket. Some enterprising people (especially if they had a lot of boys) built a makeshift shower in a stall in their backyards, using ropes and a bucket much like what you may remember seeing the soldiers using in the popular TV show MASH. At the risk of stating the obvious, it was a lot more trouble then than now to take a bath, thus people typically didn't bathe as frequently as they do today. This explains the term "Saturday evening baths" that you see when reading books of contemporary life in the early 20th Century.

What were some of the other characteristics of life on the Eddy Farm like in the 1920s? Fern's father, like many men in the area, worked at the Weber Point Sawmill, then known as the Sammamish Mill. A few men farmed on the site, and Fern's dad did too. Fern said the family raised "pretty near all of our vegetables. I remember helping mother can. We'd put the vegetables in half gallon jars. Us girls had to do the dishes". She also remembered being sent to pick huckleberries in Inglewood Canyon, where she said "they grew bigger than anywhere else." Fern also learned to sew, using her mother's treadle-driven sewing machine. She always wore hand-me-downs, so it was a big day when she made herself a dress—"black and yellow plaid gingham, as I recall". Later in life her husband bought her an electric sewing machine, but she never used it, preferring to stick with the treadle-driven machine. In her spare time, Fern said she would play horseshoes and baseball with her brothers and sisters and on occasion, with their neighbor's kids.

After moving to Inglewood Hill, Fern began fifth grade in a one-room schoolhouse called Inglewood School. In 1920 or 1921, Inglewood School was merged with the Redmond School. Fern attended seventh and eighth grade in what she refers to as the "gym building"; during Fern's eighth grade year in 1922-23 the red brick schoolhouse which is now the Redmond Community Center was built. In February 1927, just before she was to graduate, Fern quit school. She said simply "I decided it was time to quit." By this time, too, she had met her husband-to-be, Sam Dorman.

Two months later, on April 4, 1927, Fern Eddy married Sam Dorman. She'd first met Sam when she was in second grade, but didn't meet him again until much later. Fern said it wasn't love at first sight. "I thought he was a sort of odd-looking guy" she said. "Real light-complected." Sam's father, who was Finnish, worked in the coal mines in the Issaquah area (probably on Cougar Mountain), but his doctor told him never to let Sam join him in the mines because the doctor thought Sam might have "weak lungs" and would contract tuberculosis, a common and often fatal disease early in the 20th Century. Thus, when they met, Sam was working at the

Snoqualmie Falls Mill. He had a knack for carpentry and construction and helped build many homes and barns in the Pine Lake Area, and also helped build the Pine Lake Community Club.

After their marriage, they lived in a one-room cabin Sam built near the mill. Their first child, Mamie (now Mamie Boyd of Duvall) , was born in 1928, and a second daughter, Lorna, was born in 1929. (Lorna died in 1995). They moved around Washington several times in the late 1920s, but by 1930 were back in the Sammamish area. Here they had two more children: Ella Mae (now Ellie Brauer of Snohomish) in 1931, and a son, Laurence (now retired in Shelton) in 1935.

Fern's life as a young mother of four children in the 1930s wasn't easy. The Dormans drew all their water from a hand-dug well in the pasture behind their house. On washday, the kids all had to pitch in to help carry water into the house to be heated on the wood range. Fern said she always kept a large garden—30 by 60 feet—and always canned whatever the family didn't eat right away. Food was stored along with in an above-ground "root cellar" that Sam had built with dirt-filled walls and roof at least a foot thick. Keep in mind this was before refrigeration.

Fern said items like butter, sugar and flour were rationed in the area during the Second World War in the 1940s. However, since her family lived on a farm, they didn't want for food. Even out here on the Plateau, blackout laws were in effect due to fears of a Japanese aerial attack: Fern recalled that at night Sam would put sheets of plywood over the windows to comply with the blackout laws.

The Dormans got their first telephone in 1947. In 1949, the Dormans moved their house across 212th Avenue SE from west to east side to a new 10-acre site, which they cleared. At the new site, water was piped from their well to a spigot attached to a big maple tree in the middle of the backyard. The house never did get indoor plumbing. The family continued to use their wood range for heat and cooking until 1952, when Sam installed an electric stove and oil heater.

The Dormans were charter members of the Pine Lake Community Club. The Club met in members homes and at the Beaver Lake Community Club for more than 10 years. In 1948, the Pine Lake Community Club built the clubhouse which it still operates at 21333 SE 20th Street. Sam, son Laure and other club members helped build the structure, with Sam acting as supervisor. The Pine Lake Community Club was the focus of the Dorman's social life outside of family. Otherwise, Fern said they stayed home most of the time. She never did learn how to drive a car: "I never wanted to", she said.

The Dormans sold their home on 212th SE to the Lake Washington School District in 1971. After they had moved, though, the District concluded the site was too small for a school and traded it for other property. The site itself is now the site of the Pennington Development, though as mentioned above the house and barn still stand. The Dormans moved to Duvall, and lived there until the late 1990s. On November 14, 1997, Sam died—seven months after his 70th wedding anniversary to Fern, and two weeks after his 90th birthday. Fern stayed at the house in Duvall until 1999, then went to live with daughter Ellie.

Fern Eddy Dorman passed away on March 20, 2001, at Ellie's home in Snohomish. On March 25, 2001, friends and family gathered to celebrate Fern's life at the Tualco Grange, in Monroe.

Fern lived all of her life more or less in the open country. When she was interviewed for this article shortly before her death, she was asked if she would ever have liked to have lived in the city. "Oh no", she said with a chuckle. "I like my open space."

---compiled by Barbara Brachtl

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