

# **11. The children and grandchildren of Benjamin Benton Smith Sr and his two wives Lucretia Ann Gilliland and Mary Margaret Wilson**

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**11. Benjamin Benton Smith Sr** 11 SEP 1867 • Pleasanton, TX - 4 NOV 1939 • Silver City, Grant, NM  
 Lucretia Ann Gilliland 31 OCT 1876 • Kimble County, TX - 11 FEB 1962 • Newberg, Yamhill, Oregon  
 Marriage: 30 Mar 1892 • Dona Ana, New Mexico – Divorce 16 Apr 1909  
 Mary Margaret Wilson 23 JAN 1872 • Bosque County, TX - 19 FEB 1939 • Silver City, NM



Photos of Benjamin, Lucretia, and Ben and Mary's gravestone borrowed from FamilySearch.

One of the final two children of Jesse and Elizabeth was Benjamin Benton, the twin brother of Jesse. We don't have birth certificates to know who came first, but they arrived in Pleasanton 12 years before the family's move north to the San Angelo area. I think I stated it wrong earlier, but it appears as though they moved to Runnels County in 1879 and then in 1880 at the time of the Census, they moved to nearby Tom Green County and bought a ranch. Not knowing where they would be when the Census counter arrived, they were actually counted in both places. I guess if you are a twin you need to be double counted.

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**76. Mae Elizabeth Smith** 25 OCT 1909 • Carlsbad, NM - 24 JUN 2003 • Globe, Gila, AZ  
 Harley Lloyd Wills 14 MAR 1902 • Fort Thomas, AZ - 15 APR 1970 • Globe, Gila, AZ  
 Marriage: 25 Mar 1927 • Graham, AZ



The grave marker from Findagrave is the only photo I have able to find for Mae and Harley.

A little refresher is in order before I dive into Mae and Ben Jr. After Benjamin and Lucretia divorced after Albert's birth in 1905, Ben ended up marrying the widow Mary Wilson Slate whose husband had died in an accident in 1900. She had 4 children, three with Samuel Slate and a 4<sup>th</sup> with an uncertain paternity. These were Andrew Jackson Slate 1893–1943, Rebecca Elizabeth Slate 1896–1988,

Mattie Anna Slate 1899–1933, and Bessie Slate 1903–1986. Based on their ages, when Ben and Mary got married in 1909, they would have been 16, 13, 10, and 6 so it is likely that Ben was their stepfather for a number of years, but so many censuses are missing it is not clear except for Bessie who was living with the family in the first census we find for the family in 1920. In 1910, Andrew was with his grandparents, so he may not have lived with Ben. The two older girls seem to have married about 1915, so if they lived with Ben, it would have been for about 6 years. Anyway, enough background, let's explore.

## **Child of Mae Smith and Harley Wills.**

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259	Harley Newton Wills	1929	2017	Mary and Harley's Child
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**259. Harley Newton Wills** 30 JUL 1929 • Globe, AZ - 26 MAY 2017 • Marana, AZ  
 Fern Mary Gundry 31 AUG 1930 • Globe, AZ - 26 JUL 2023 • Marana, AZ  
 Marriage: 21 Nov 1949 • Nogales, Sonora, México



Harley's photo from FamilySearch. Fern's HS Yearbook photo.

The only child born to Harley and Mae Smith was their son Harley who arrived in the summer of 1929. He appears at home in the 1930 Census and then I have not found the 1940 Census for the family. Records show that in 1949 he crossed the border to Nogales, Mexico to get married to Fern Gundry. Nogales is just across from Nogales, AZ and directly south of Tucson. Fern and Harley appear together in the 1950 Census in Pima, AZ. No occupations are listed because from reading the newspapers we find that Harley was a student at the University of Arizona.

Fern was the youngest daughter of Joseph and Cora Gilman Gundry. Her father was from Utah and her mother was from Canada. At the time of their marriage, her father was the owner and operator of Gundry's Service Station in Globe. She had an older brother and sister and her brother was one of the first engineers at Motorola and passed away in 1975.

I was fortunate to find quite a few articles about Harley. In June 1950 he was an air cadet at UA and was sent off for summer training. Maybe while he away, their first son Harley Landon was born right after the census in June 1950. In April 1951 he was still in school and president of the advertising club and the following month, he graduated and was commissioned in the Air Force. Of course, this was at the height of the Korean War and Harley received his flight training at Luke Air Force Base. During this time, their 2<sup>nd</sup> son, Randall Craig was born in Sep 1951. Harley was deployed to Korea where he seems to have performed very well and in Oct 1953 was awarded the air medal and had completed 30 combat missions. Somehow, they managed to squeeze a daughter into the mix with the arrival of Lucinda Jane in Apr 1953. In Jan 1954 he got orders for an assignment in Japan and I would assume that he was able to have his family accompany him on this assignment,

In 1962, they seem to have been at Seymour Johnson AFB in Goldsboro, North Carolina based on some travel documents I found. That led me to this story from 1963: *Take Capt. Harley N. Wills, for instance, a pilot with the 335<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron. He'd done a lot of hunting in the mountains of his native Arizona, but took up skeet shooting only a few years ago. Now he's one of the club's top shooters - a man who takes the sport seriously.*

I don't know if they moved to California in the 1970's or if their son was just going to school there, but in 1980, son Randall Craig was killed in a plane crash. His obituary reads:

***Randy C. Wills***

*GLOBE – Services for Randy C. Wills, 28, who died June 1, 1980, in an airplane crash near Lone Pine, Calif., will be 2 p.m. today at Palmer Globe Mortuary.*

*Mr. Wills, a Globe native, had recently lived in Beatty, Nevada. He also lived in Globe and Tucson. Survivors include his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harley Wills; grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Gundry and Mae Wills; a brother; and a sister.*

About all I can glean from this is that it looks like Mae was no longer married to Harley Sr in 1980 since he died in 1970). I don't know what would have taken him to Beatty.

Maybe this wedding announcement from May 1970 will shed some light.

***STUTE-WILLS - SAFFORD*** *The engagement of Barbara Jean Stute to H. Landon Wills has been announced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Stute.*

*The future bridegroom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harley N. Wills of George Air Force Base, Calif. He attended Eastern Arizona College. The bride-elect attends EAC. The couple will marry Aug. 1 in First United Methodist Church, Safford, AZ*

From this we learn that in 1970, the Wills lived at George AFB which is north of LA in Victorville, CA. Lone Pines where Randy's crash happened is a bit north of here near Mt Whitney. Son Harley Landon married Barbara Stute in 1970 but they divorced in 1980 in Bell County, TX. He married a Gail Hanley in Bell County in 1982 and was last reported to be in Harker Heights. I have not completely explored Gail, but indications are that she may have been previously married and Hanley is not her maiden name. Harley was last reported to be living in Harker Heights, TX which leads me to believe that he may have had a military career as that is near Fort Cavazos (formerly Ft Hood). There are indications that her maiden name may have been Anders.

In 1970, Harley's father died and his obituary reads:

***Harley Wills***

*GLOBE - Services for Harley "Lloyd" Wills, 69, who died Sunday at Gila General Hospital here, will be at 2 p.m. tomorrow, at Walker's Globe Mortuary with burial in the Globe Cemetery.*

*Mr. Wills was born in Ft. Thomas and had lived here for 46 years. He was a retired state highway department employe and a maintenance foreman in the Globe-Miami area.*

*Survivors include his wife, Mae; a son, Col. Harley Wills of Las Vegas; one brother, Velmar of Phoenix; three sisters, Mrs. Lonnie Ferris and Mrs. Edith McBride, both of Globe, and Mrs. Opal Milton of Kearny.*

We find out that Mae is still alive in 1970 and living in Globe and we find out more about Harley's siblings. We also see that his son is in Las Vegas in 1970, probably at Nellis AFB.

Fern's parents celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> in 1973 and that announcement reads:

***Gundry's fete golden wedding***

*GLOBE - Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gundry, 260 S. East Street, celebrated their golden wedding anniversary last Saturday with a buffet supper given by their children. The Gundry's were married in Globe in the Methodist Church, March 1, 1921. They were both children in the Globe area.*

*They have three children, Courtice of Phoenix, Mrs. In 1973 I found this wedding announcement for their daughter. John Blair of La Habra, Calif., Mrs. Harley Wills of Victorville, Calif. and nine grandchildren.*

*Gundry is a retired Texaco service station owner in Globe. Mrs. Gundry has been active in St. Paul's Methodist Church and a Past Noble Grand of the Rebeccahs.*

This places the Wills back in Victorville at George AFB in 1971.

***Lucinda Jane Wills***

*WILLS-KAUFMAN - GLOBE-Col. and Mrs. Harley N. Wills announce the engagement of their daughter, Lucinda Jane, to Jeffrey Ray Kaufman, son of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Kaufman of Los Angeles. The couple attends the University of Arizona.*

This suggests that Harley may have retired from the Air Force between 1971 and 1973. In 1980, their son Randall died in that California airplane crash. There is some suggestion that Randall may have married and divorced in Texas, but I'm uncertain about that as the reported divorce was several years after his death, so it's probably a different person.

Beginning in the 1980's I see a lot of stories about Harley being back in Arizona and in particular, playing a lot of golf and quite well. This article from 1993 demonstrates his skill. This was when he was 64. *Wills sets El Con record Harley Wills of El Conquistador Country Club set a course record with a 4-under-par 68 off the monster tees at the Eloy-Tohono Golf Course while competing in the inaugural Central Arizona Two-Man Championship. The team of Tony Franz and George Abel won the event.*

It seems that find Lucinda's marriage and to Jeffrey Kaufman must have fallen through because in June 1974 she was getting a marriage license with Donald Scott Norris. Per Alvy, they had four children who I will try to find, but when researching Scott, I discovered that he was a big baseball star at the University of Arizona at the time that they were married and he was drafted that year by the New York Yankees. It looks like he played a little, but apparently didn't make the cut and he passed away in Mar 1989, but I have not been able to determine the cause. He was born to Stanley (born Nirenberg changed to Norris) and Lena Creech Norris and he had two older brothers, William and Randall born in 1945 and 1947. His father died Dec 1987 and his mother in 2008 and Lucinda (called Cindy) was mentioned as surviving daughter-in-law.

Alvy lists the following children as having been born to Donald and Cindy.

Dena Melissa Norris, born 29 Jan. 1980; Cara Lissette Norris, born 25 Aug. 1982; Dylan Scott Norris, born 27 Nov. 1984; and Kyle Martin Norris, born 1 June 1988. I plugged these children in and have pretty well confirmed all of them through residence data. Dena appears to be married to someone named Holzworth and living in Katy, TX. Cara is married to someone named Mathieu and lives in Michigan. Dylan has moved between Phoenix and Tucson but appears to be in Tucson now. There is an article about him in Bioscience HS in Phoenix in 2007 and aspired to be a biologist. Kyle appears to be in Red Rock, AZ currently. Several of these children share a common address of 4731 Red Wolf with Donald and Lucinda.



I have already mention Harley Landon and Randall Craig so everyone is accounted for as best I can.

Harley died in Marana, AZ a town adjacent to Tucson on the north side. Per his Findagrave entry, not only did he serve in Korea, he also flew missions during Vietnam. He achieved the rank of Colonel in the Air Force. I have not found an obituary. Fern died in the same place in 2023 and again not obituary has been located.

#### **Children of Harley and Fern Gundry Wills**

644	Harley Landon Wills	1950		Harley Jr and Fern's Child#1
645	Randall Craig Gundy Wills	1951	1980	Harley Jr and Fern's Child#2
646	Lucinda Jane Wills	1953		Harley Jr and Fern's Child#3

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This concludes the study of the Wills Family. Thank you for your service.

I look forward to hearing from you at [rbills\\_houston.com](http://rbills_houston.com). Any additions, feedback, corrections would be appreciated. Rich

