

Hail and Farewell

(Reflection from a cabin in Skull Valley,
built over an old Indian camping ground. Circa 1945)

By Delia G. Gardner

Think not on my brittle bones mingling with dust,
for these are but a handful added to those gone before.

Think, rather, that on this borrowed hilltop,
one lived joyously, and died content.

In this dark soil I found reminders,
saying, "You, too, will pass; savor for us the wind and the sun."

From the smoke-blackened earth I dug
a frail shell bracelet, shaped lovingly, skillfully,
for a brown-skinned wrist, now dust.

The broken piece of clay was a doll's foot and leg,
artfully curved, made for a brown-eyed child.

Pottery shards, saying:

"Yours for a little time only. Take delight in this, as we did."

The tree will die, the vine wither and rattle in the wind.

For I broke a law of Nature.

I carried the water to the hilltop.

Never the less, for those things after me,
there will be these things I have loved:

Morning sun rays slanting across the hilltop,
lighting the great trees in the green meadow;
wind; the great blue sky; peace of the encircling hills;
and the flaming glow of sunset.



den was a source of joy and she shared gold fish and plants from the pond in her yard as well as tips from long experience in growing things in this mountain climate. Once, Delia Gardner dug up a tiny blue spruce in the forest and planted it in her yard, where, against all odds, it still thrives today.

She inspired others in loving intellectual pursuits and conversation, but also welcomed people from all walks of life into her life and home for a cup of coffee and great conversation, or an abundant meal or a top-notch party. It was not unusual to find the Indian rugs rolled up from the hardwood floors for dancing in her spacious living room.

In her later years her family celebrated her birthday with a party at the family farm in Chino Valley, with a lamb roasted in a pit and all the fixin's, reminiscent of her young years in Skull Valley, where special times would have been celebrated with the products of the sheep ranch and her mother's garden.

By Elisabeth Ruffner

Delia Gist arrived as a girl of 15 with her family to Skull Valley, where they homesteaded a sheep and goat ranch. She went to university a few years later but soon returned home to operate her own homestead adjoining her parents' place.

Delia built her own house on that land. She wrote a poem about the place and the people who had lived there before. At her request the poem was read at her funeral. The words epitomize her gentle, introspective nature.

Yet, all who knew her felt the steel behind the quiet demeanor. In a marriage

of more than 64 years to her Prescott-native husband, Gail Gardner, a young cowboy on his own spread in Skull Valley when they met and married, Delia spent the rest of her life in the home where her husband was born. She never knew a stranger, and welcomed all into her home with grace.

Delia Gist Gardner spent her life as helpmate, mother and grandmother, with a passion for genealogy. She was a co-founder of the Prescott General George Crook chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Delia Gardner loved her home, which she referred to as being furnished in the mode of "early Fred Harvey." Her gar-