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### Grace Iliff

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Our Iliffs come from around Springfield. It was in his early days, serving briefly in various churches in Ohio, that William Taylor Gilliland met and married Grace Iliff. She was two years older, and he outlived her by two years; they had exactly the same 80-year lifespan. It was her death in their retirement home in California, plus a wish not to be seen in his years of decline by those who had known him earlier, that prompted him to leave the home and lodge with various of his children; first with us, and the following year with Bernice. This pattern of disengagement his daughter, Mom, would later repeat.

Grandma Grace was short, and when we knew her, fat. Once when the two of them stayed with us for a week, Grandpa, using the set of woodworking chisels from the chest in the basement, made for Phyllis (as she then still was) a cabinet for her doll dishes, with cupboard doors and a drawer and all.

Grandma liked to have her hair brushed, which I recall doing at great length. She was a skilled knitter, and she taught me how to knit in more than one color, a skill which I somehow seem to have let get away from me.

Most pastor's wives dread the reassignments that disrupt their lives and require them to form a whole new circle of acquaintance. Not Grandma G; she would say now and then, "Will, time to be moving on." Was she just restless? Had she disendeared herself to the ladies of that congregation? We knew not.

Her chief trait was laziness. This left Mom, in her early days, pretty much in charge of the household, and especially the kitchen. Presumably it was a useful apprenticeship for future marriage, but glamorous it decidedly was not.

That role was reserved for her older sister Dorothy, the beauty of the family. But Dorothy did blaze a followable trail. She got a job as clerk at Bullocks Wilshire, the prime Los Angeles department store. Mom eventually followed, in due course, as a clerk at Bullocks Wilshire.

There were in all five children in the family. The two girls came first, then Bill (William Allen), who ran an attractive plant store, called Gilliland Gardens. The fourth, Mary Bernice, was the comic of the group. She was also very able. In her Denver years she might have an office job at some school, while her husband, Bill Mitchell, would be working as a janitor at that same school. Auntie Ber at one point even had her own bridal shop in Denver.

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The fifth and last was Bob (Robert Burdette, named for a famous Baptist preacher of the time). Of the five, he most preserved the basic doctrinal rigidity that ran through the family. He was also the longest-lived, and in his last days he was in touch with me. He would E-mail me pious things on various holidays.

I finally had to ask him to stop.