

## CALIFORNIA Jessie Kist Hammond, 100

*Walking with the cows.*

"Motion is lotion," says Jessie Hammond (née Kist) of Scott Valley in Northern California. She says the secret to a long life is to do a lot of walking and to eat your vegetables. Whatever her trick is, it seems to be working. Jessie turned 100 on July 7. At her birthday party in the Etna city park, several hundred well-wishers gathered. Most of them called her "Aunt Jessie" or "Grandma Jessie," whether they were blood relatives or not.

Jessie is famous around Scott Valley for chopping Marlahan Mustard (Dyer's Woad) and her own firewood; taking cows to the mountains afoot; out-farming the hardest-working men; and wearing a broad-brimmed hat, sweatshirt, and smile that won't quit. Even today, she loves walking through her cows and raising her garden. She still lives in the drafty 1892 ranch house on the place she and her late husband, Carl, bought in 1945. They raised Angus cattle and four kids on the ranch, located just outside Etna.

"My husband said black cattle and chopped hay was the only way to go," Jessie says. "So that's what we did."

Though she took to ranch life, she says she started out a "town kid." She was born and raised with four sisters in the rural town of Etna—population today: 737. Her father, also born in Etna, owned a flour mill. Jessie did a lot of fishing with her dad and played lots of sports. She played town team softball until she was 60, and loved tennis. She was a faithful fan at all the high-

PHOTOS COURTESY HAMMOND FAMILY



FROM TOP: Anna, Jessie, Emma, Deanist and Betty Kist. ▶ Carl and Jessie on their wedding day, Oct. 23, 1937, with preacher and friend. ▶ Jessie (in the middle) with tomboy girlfriends. ▶ Jessie (wearing a favorite floppy hat) and her great-grandniece, Kiely, pose in front of Jessie's house. (Photo courtesy Geraldene Christopher.)



school home games until well into her 90s.

Jessie married Carl after her sister, Anna, married his brother, Dwight. (Dwight and Anna's son, Dwight Junior—or "Dwighty," as Jessie calls her nephew—is well-known by *RANGE* readers for his battle with the BLM that landed him in prison. Readers also know he was pardoned on July 10, 2018. Thank you, President Trump!)

Jessie's energy and can-do attitude made her a perfect match for Carl Hammond. "He



never quit," she remembers. "We got married, never went on a honeymoon. He went to work fall-bucking trees."

Carl was an unmatched logger. He won many titles for cutting timber with a crosscut saw. When all the other loggers would go home, he'd keep working, using a crosscut saw rigged up for one man.

Jessie would join him in the woods on weekends as he worked to earn the down payment for their ranch. They bought the Pete Smith ranch in 1945 and eventually developed a prize-winning registered line of Black Angus.

Never fond of riding horses, Jessie has walked hundreds of miles over her lifetime. Well into her 80s, she would trail the cattle by foot to their summer range on U.S. Forest Service ground—a 40-mile trek round-trip. But she would ride the tractor Carl bought her. She liked farming.

"My tractor had 'Jessie' on it and his had 'Carl' on it," she recalls. "And we got two plows so when we did a field it went twice as fast. It worked good for us."

She says she still likes driving tractors. The tip is missing from her right ring finger. "I was cutting hay, and it got plugged up. I didn't shut the stupid mower off. I reached in and chop." She showed it to Carl, who made her go to the doctor. "Otherwise I was gonna come in, wrap it up and go on working."

Carl passed away in 1996, leaving Jessie to carry on running the ranch with the help of her children and numerous grandchildren. Now her two boys own the ranch. But she still has cows.

"Everyone said working alongside Carl would kill me. Now they're all gone and I'm still here. I liked out there working with him," she says, looking out the window. "Yep, away we went."—Theodora Johnson