

KAREN FITZHUGH ON GENEVIEVE

Genevieve Whitmer



I remember some fun times with Grandma Genevieve and Grandpa Edwin Reeves Fitzhugh. He went by Grandpa Reeves. My brother, Tim, and I would when often go to Alpine with our grandparents. Grandpa Reeves loved to fish on the Black River and Big Lake. He would set up our poles. Grandma would sit and watch over us while Grandpa walked down the river to fly fish. He definitely caught more fish than we did. We always looked forward to a fish fry that evening.

One of the highlights of our Alpine trips was waiting for Aunt Hessie and Uncle Harold or their son, Larry, to come buzzing down the road by Black River on the mail route. We waited patiently for them to come around the corner as they would honk and wave at us. Sometimes if they were not in too big of a hurry they would stop for a very short visit and off they would go, leaving us in the dust. Fun memories.

We always looked forward to stopping by Uncle Harold's home in Alpine and seeing the mounts on the wall. We would usually dig worms when we were there for fishing bait.

My dad, Billy Ray Fitzhugh, was raised in Silver City, New Mexico. He liked to hunt and fish in Alpine. He even gave my mom a fishing pole as a wedding present. My memories of my dad are few. I remember that he did have a bad temper when he was drinking. He worked for CPS Power plant with Grandpa Reeves. My mother, Jacquelyn Lou Galusha Fitzhugh, finally left him and that's when he killed himself. I'm sure that weighs a lot on her mind. Mom said he shot himself in the eye as a kid. She asked him if he shot himself in the

eye on purpose and he walked away. Aunt Ethel pretty much raised him. One time I was talking to Jennie May and she said my dad was very shy and quiet.

Alcohol was prevalent among my grandparents, my dad and Aunt Ethel and several other Whitmer children. Grandma Genevieve was an unhappy drunk and Aunt Ethel was a happy drunk. Grandpa Reeves was a happy alcoholic.

Sometimes we would go to Grandma and Grandpa's house for dinner. Grandpa Reeves loved to cook for Tim and me. Some of his favorite things were trout, beans and cornbread. After dinner he would take us rabbit hunting in his old truck. Grandma was usually passed out from drinking by then.

Grandma was a saver. Their garage was filled with treasures. She had saved all my dad's school papers. Grandma Genevieve had an old Victorola record player. She would put records on, wind it up and we would listen to Hank Williams and others while we went through my dad's old toys and such. Some fun memories.

When I was little Grandma and Grandpa would come to visit us in the evening. Grandma and I would go out in the yard about dusk. Grandma always smelled good when she came. I think she must have used a half of a bottle of perfume to cover up the alcohol. LOL We played Little Piggy went to market, Here's the Church, Here's the Steeple, etc. This is something I've passed on to my children and grandchildren.

I'm not sure why Grandma Genevieve was an alcoholic. My mother wondered too. She was the oldest girl in the family of seventeen children (four died) with so much responsibility with the younger ones. She may have just felt overwhelmed and that may be why she wanted to go to beauty school. I think Grandma Genevieve probably started drinking when she and Aunt Ethel went to beauty school in Hollywood.

Aunt Ethel had a popular beauty shop in Silver City, New Mexico called Ethel's Beauty Shop. My grandmother worked with her and others. Grandma would cut my hair. I hated it because she would use the razor on the back of my neck. Ugh! I would often go to the shop with my mom when she went to pick up the towels and combs to wash. When my mother was cleaning up the towels in the beauty shop, she often found bottles of liquor. She would just throw them away. I'm sure Grandma was not happy about that.

My mom tells me that she really liked Bill Pringle, Aunt Ethel's first husband, who had a plane. He took them flying. I don't think he was an alcoholic. I am sure the reason they divorced was because of Aunt Ethel's drinking.

One night Cheryl Jane Munn Quinn; Cheryl's sister, Ethelyn Munn, who were Aunt Fern's daughters; and I visited on the phone recalling memories of Aunt Ethel. Ethie said that she was named Ethelyn after Aunt Ethel. Later she decided to call herself Ethie because her friends teased her "Ethel gasoline." When Aunt Ethel married John Shearer, he helped her go from hard alcohol to beer. He always seemed very nice. Cheryl remembers when Bill Pringle, Aunt Ethel's first husband, took our family on plane rides. Ethie told of Aunt Ethel having a case of Vodka delivered in the morning which she uncorked immediately. Aunt Ethel would often try to hide them in the top of the cupboards. Then after she left for work, Ethie would try to find them then hide them not really understanding what they were

except that Aunt Ethel seemed to like drinking a lot. Often Aunt Ethel would forget when she made plans like reservations at restaurants. The person at the restaurant would call her when she didn't arrive on time. Even when she had dentist appointments, the dentist couldn't work on her because she had been drinking hard liquor.

Aunt Ethel was a great aunt. I thought the world of her. Tim and I spent a lot of time at Aunt Ethel's. We loved her very much and she was fun! Even when she was drinking. LOL One Christmas season, I was at her house. Aunt Ethel handed me this big bag full of toys. She said, "I bought something for all the nieces and nephew. I need you to decide who gets what and wrap them." I was so young. I really didn't know many of my cousins and who to give what. I am not the best gift wrapper, so I can imagine what it looked like when all done as I was about 7 years old!

After my dad died, my mom remarried. His name is Leonard Zumwalt. We moved to Duncan, Arizona. Aunt Ethel, Aunt Claire and Uncle Rex would come to my school and take me out of class. They would give me cards with money.

After my grandma died, Grandpa would pick Tim and I up in Duncan and we would go visit Uncle Afton and Aunt Lenora. We visited Aunt Mary and Uncle Alton. I loved them so much and loved to visit with them.

After my grandpa passed away, I had lost contact with most of the great aunts and uncles that I was so fond of. Once I was in high school, I had this hunger to rekindle my friendship with some of them. I happened upon Uncle Afton and Aunt Lenora giving square dance lessons in Duncan. I had not seen them in several years. After

that, many times when they were going to square dances or camping or family reunions, they would invite me to go with them. They were much like grandparents to me.

Aunt Mary and Uncle Alton reached out to me. Aunt Mary always sent me cards. When I went to college at Eastern Arizona often I would go over and visit Aunt Mary and Uncle Alton. Aunt Mary always had a fresh pan of cookies. They came to my graduation and so did Uncle Afton and Aunt Lenora. It meant a lot to me. I really became close to Aunt Mary. Jennie May, Aunt Mary's daughter, approached me once, and thanked me for being so close to her mom. I told her that "Aunt Mary is my link to my grandma's family. She would tell me about what was going on with other family members." Aunt Mary was a big quilter. She made Norm and I a quilt when we married. Eventually, I noticed it wasn't around. I found it at my daughter, Courtney's, home. She said that she loved that quilt and she loved Aunt Mary.

I remember something good about Aunt Genevieve. When I was little she and Grandpa Reeves would come to visit and she and I would go out in the yard about dusk. It smelled so good. We played with hand puppets, Little Piggy, Here's the Church, Here's the Steeple, etc. That's something I've passed on to my grandchildren.

I was also fortunate enough to have a quilt made by Great- Grandma Jennie Whitmer. I remember going to Aunt Mary's house when I was little. Great-Grandma was staying with her. She didn't say too much because she was busy watching TV. She liked soap operas and wrestling.

Aunt Fern used to send me letters after the family reunion at Mt. Graham. We exchanged addresses and wrote for a number of years. At one point Norm and I sent our son to the Utah Boys Ranch in Utah. He was struggling with some problems. I told Norm I would really love to look up Aunt Fern. She invited us over for dinner. It was after Uncle Melvin had died.

I rode horses and rodeoed a lot as a teenager .. My step-dad was working on a construction job over by Sunizona, Arizona. It was summertime and he was staying at a dude ranch with a travel trailer. It gave me a place to put my horse.

Somehow I got a hold of Uncle Rex and Aunt Claire. Aunt Claire liked to ride horses too. We rode several times in the hills around their house. When Aunt Claire and I would go out riding, Uncle Rex would have lunch ready for us when we got back. When I went to Alpine, if Uncle Rex and Aunt Claire were there at their cabin, we would stop for a visit.

It was always so nice at funerals because I saw my family. I know that Heavenly Father had much to do with my having these relationships with my great aunts and uncles. Most people would never be able to do that in my situation. I know that this family had a big influence in my desire to join the Church and I am very thankful to all our ancestors and cousins that have been examples to me.

It is a great sadness that none of my children are active in the church. I pray daily that somehow their hearts will soften and they will have the desire to return. I'm very excited that one of my grandsons who has been living with us for 8 years, has been ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood and has the desire to serve a mission.

My husband, Norman Smith, and I have been married for 42 years. We have lived in the same little house in Duncan, Arizona most of this time. Currently, I am the Justice of the Peace in Duncan. We purchased a cabin up in the mountains of Alpine. I feel most at home there because of the spirits of my ancestors who are surrounding that beautiful mountain.

