

# JENNIE M. CAMPBELL'S STORY

*Mary Whitmer*



## JENNIE MONTIERITH CAMPBELL'S STORY

After giving birth to 17 children, Grandma Whitmer had to wear a corset. I saw Grandma cinching up her corset and knew it had to be really uncomfortable.

Looked forward to going to Uncle Harold's house. Loved Aunt Hessie and loved to hear her laugh.

"The Blue" was heaven to my mother but to me it was just another piece of land.

Grandpa was an old grouch.

My mom was at my grandma's much of the time. We cleaned her house. Took everything off the dresser wiped it clean and dusted it.

Uncle Melvin's was missing a finger. When doing dishes, he would say he was up to his stomach in dish water because they had taken a patch of skin from his stomach to put over the area of the missing finger.

Twice a day Dad would milk the cow, bring in the milk. Strain it in a strainer with a filter. This would strain out debris. He then let it sit overnight, skimmed off the cream in the morning which was used to make butter. Whoever drank the milk first had to drink the left-over cream. We did not want the milk first for cereal because you knew it had cream. We often fought over who had to drink the cream.

One time Cheryl and Orson, my cousins, were at our house, I played the piano and we talked. I especially loved playing my favorite song, "Sentimental Journey."

Uncle Ralph and Aunt Virgie, I loved her, she was a pleasant person all the time.

Cecil gave my mother a bad time about adopting kids. He would say "You never know who they came from."

Uncle Harold had a large elk head hanging in their living room. Scary!

Uncle Rex and Aunt Claire. Remembers her more than him. One time their daughter, Barbara, said Claire, her mother had five nanies. Grandma would not believe her.

After Bertha and Blanche were born and died, Faye and Fern took their names for second names.

Aunt Fem lived in Parker where my mother and I lived while my dad was in the army. I admired Fem as the neatest, funniest, and prettiest. Then she married that Marine and we never understood that until later. He was really a great guy.

We always went to Silver City where Ethel gave us permanents. She was the epitome of style and very talented. She owned two beauty shops in Silver City. Her husband, Bill Pringle, was mean to her. Her second husband, John Shearer, was very good to her. One of his eyes did not focus, but that is neither here nor there.

Aunt Genevieve was very focused on her son, Billy Ray. He was shooting rabbits one time and shot himself in the eye which caused problems.

I knew both these aunts, Ethel and Genevieve, and saw them together but not necessarily compatible.

I loved Uncle Lawrence dearly. My mother put me to bed one day without supper because I wouldn't take a nap. Uncle Lawrence knew I was a really naughty girl, but he came to my bedroom window and pulled the screen up and talked to me. When he married Aunt Evelyn, I felt betrayed. He had been my hero.

While my dad was in the service, mom and I lived in Parker. Uncle Von and Aunt Zella left their son, H.B., with Grandma. H.B. and I played together in an old car at the back of the house. (Glad there were no snakes there.)

I always thought Uncle Von was the golden favored child.

Aunt Fem, was the one you wanted to be with, always laughing and fun. I adored her.

## LEE

Aunt Mary said Lyle went W VA and a lady there said the Whitmers were mean terrible people.

If you marry into a family, you are now cousins. Lee dated a sorta cousin at one time. One of Whitmers talk about all the people he was married to but not really qualified to be family member.

Spent time with Larry admired him because he liked chemistry. Smart. One of reasons Mary didn't like Larry M, (he did contract work) if he got a check, Aunt Lenore had to cash check.

Since married to ValleDee, health better.

Larry wouldn't let Wayne in his house.

### Story:

4 years old Grandpa chasing Lee around the house outside. Lee was scared to death. Hit him in head with a dirt clod. (Harold ran from Grandpa. Grandpa had

the hose and he chased Harold in the house.

Lee was really fortunate to get to know them. He was 17 when grandma died. Lived with Mary before nursing home. She would escape the house and walk down the road and he'd run down the road and when Lee caught her she would say we need to get the cows. She would hit at him while cars passed by. Liked to visit her. He would bike there. Really enjoyed. Very cosy, small.

Grandma by the time she was ten he had been to a hundred funerals. He went with his mother. I've never lived in the same town with our grandkids and that is a big loss.

Mom Have mixed feelings about it. I thought she was crazy. Best memory on Christmas Eve Wayne and Kim younger, I got to put together their C. toys. My mother cooking. After that I'd help Mom. She died on C. Eve. Living in house with Wayne. Severe dementia. She and Wayne fought like cats and dogs.

Mom made snickerdoodles that I'd like. We have tried to make hers with her recipe but couldn't do it. Period of time I would cook when married.

Grandma would sing to grandchildren.

Leland named after his uncle Grandma's ancestors United Order Her sister was the first white girl born.

## KIM MONTIERITH BROCK

### My Grandma Sarah Jane (Jennie) Judd Whitmer Memories

I was only 6 when my grandmother, Sarah Jane (Jennie) Judd Whitmer passed away. Although I was very young, I have distinct memories of Grandma, because we spent so much time with her.

My first memories are of her home on North 8th Avenue in Safford, Arizona. It was a small place, with small front and back yards, a carport on the south

side, and behind the carport an old wooden garage or storeroom. That was a scary place to me as a child, and I don't remember ever having the nerve to go inside it. We went there because my mom, Mary Whitmer Montierth, helped Grandma clean her house. I played with my little brother Wayne outside while mom cleaned. I remember a big bush in the front yard that always seemed to need trimming.

On Sundays after church, we would go on a Sunday drive with Grandma. We would go to the Dairy Queen and get treats, then drive on the back roads to Thatcher or Pima. We sang all the songs that Grandma loved while we were driving, with lyrics such as "I don't want to play in your yard," "The one little duck with the feather in it's back," and others I think of now and then, but don't remember right now. My dad, Alton Montierth, and mother would sit in the front, and Grandma usually sat in back with us kids. After our drive, we would take her back to her home on 8th Avenue.

My next memories of Grandma Whitmer were when she lived with us. I think her mental health was deteriorating, and she could no longer live alone. She came to our home for a short time before the family ended up putting her in the Mt. Graham nursing home on 20th Avenue in Safford.

When Grandma lived with us, my job was to alert an adult when Grandma tried to escape out the back door. We had a normal door lock in the doorknob, and my dad installed one of those locks that had a chain and had to be slid over.

Grandma learned to unlock both these locks, so my dad installed two latch type locks way up high. These locks were a sort of hook attached to the doorframe that you could insert into an "eye" attached to the door itself. As a 5 year-old, I couldn't reach these locks, but Grandma soon figured out that if she got the broom, she could use the handle to push the hooks up and

out of the eyes and get the door open. So, I had to keep watch, and when she went for the broom, I had to run get my mom or dad so that Grandma wouldn't escape to wander the neighborhood and get lost or hurt. (I imagine a deadbolt installation was a little to complicated for my dad to accomplish, or that would probably have been a better solution.)

As a side note, these very same locks became helpful when my mother, Mary, slipped into dementia in her later years. She also had the same tendency as her mom to want to escape and wander. She also would go outside in the extreme heat and refuse to come back inside. My brother, Wayne, moved in with her in her last years and took good care to make sure she was safe, even when it meant being stern with her regarding the locked door.

My latest memories of my Grandma Whitmer are of the time she spent at the nursing home. My mom went to see her every day, and often took me. I remember climbing up on her bed and getting a lot of attention from her, as well as from the other patients and the nurses. I have never been uncomfortable around elderly people or nursing homes because my memories of going there to visit Grandma were happy. She always loved to see me, and I was probably too young to realize if she even remembered me or not. She loved to touch my long, blond hair and always smiled when I came. I remember skipping down the hallway to her room, and my mom helping her eat her dinner.

My memories of Grandma Whitmer are of a happy, smiling grandma who loved to sing with me. Even though she passed when I was young, I feel I knew her and knew she loved me. All my other grandparents had passed away by the time I was even born, so she was the only Grandma I ever knew. Interestingly enough, my only daughter was born on Grandma Whitmer's birthday, January 31. So, I named my daughter Savanna Jane, after her Great-Grandma Sarah Jane (Jennie) Judd Whitmer.

“Grandma and Grandpa Whitmer are buried in the Pima, Arizona, cemetery. My mom, older sister Jennie and her son, Ryan, my brother Wayne and I would go there a few Saturdays each year to clean up the gravesite. Us kids weren’t much help and usually ended up drawing hopscotch in the dirt and playing instead of helping. This past spring (2020), my husband and I went to Safford to take care of my parent’s gravesite. On a whim, when we drove through Pima, I tried to find the cemetery to look up my grandparents’ gravesite. I hadn’t been there in decades, probably 40 years or more. We found the cemetery, and I led Fulton straight to my grandparents’ gravesite. It was in decent shape, but needed some raking and trimming. We were on our way out of town, so we decided next time we went down, we would take care of that gravesite also. If anyone is ever wanting to take a trip there, I’d be happy to go down with them and show them the gravesite.”

## KIMBERLY MONTIERTH BROCK

Kimberly Montierth Brock’s memories of my Whitmer Aunts and Uncles.

### Uncle Ralph:

I never knew whether to be afraid of Uncle Ralph or not, until he looked at me sideways with his sparkly blue eyes and snuck me a grin. He was SO gruff and tough, but just a big softy at heart. He and my Aunt Virgie would come visit us in Safford, and I LOVED them! Uncle Ralph had his boots and big cowboy belt buckle and hat and looked like he walked right in from the range, even though they had to drive from their home in Cortez, Colorado, clear to Safford.

And then there was Aunt Virgie. I thought she was the most beautiful lady I’d ever seen. Her hair was perfectly white. She wore dresses like I saw the Apache ladies in town wear, but Aunt Virgie’s were gorgeous - full skirts and embroidery work- sometimes a spotless white

blouse, and ALWAYS her gorgeous turquoise jewelry! Squash blossom necklaces, rings, and bracelets - so enchanting to a little girl. She also had twinkling blue eyes and the sweetest smile. I loved her soothing voice and manner. She seemed like an angel to me.

When they came to visit, my parents would bring the dining room chairs into the living room to form a big circle. Some of the other local aunts and uncles (Rex and Claire and Afton and Lenora) would come by and I loved to sit and listen to the grownups talk. When it got boring, any kids/teenagers that were there would wander off and I would follow them around. I had a secret crush on my cousin, Milford. He was one of the few Whitmer cousins even close to my age - most were many years older than me.

We got to visit them at their ranch in Colorado several times in my childhood. I liked seeing Uncle Ralph and their boys work the ranch. They seemed so rugged and tough. I remember being in the kitchen with Aunt Virgie, Lois, my mom and probably some of the older boys’ wives and watching them work and talk.

### Uncle Cecil:

Uncle Cecil and Aunt Stella lived in Mesa, Arizona, right down the street from the LOS Temple. We visited with them every time we came from Safford to do school clothes shopping at the stores in Mesa. I remember Aunt Stella would always fuss over us being comfortable and make sure we had something to eat, usually sandwiches and ice cream. I remember Uncle Cecil being pretty gruff also. But he always had funny things to say. I remember they had birds in their house that were always making a lot of racket.

### Uncle Harold:

Uncle Harold and Aunt Hessie lived in Alpine, Arizona. We visited them quite a few times. I remember Uncle Harold being jolly and laughing a lot. Aunt Hessie also fussed around when we visited to make sure we weren’t

hungry and were comfortable. I remember they had a huge elk head on the wall of their living room and Uncle Harold would tell us his rear end was outside. I liked visiting there because their son, Larry, was also not too much older than me, and he didn't mind me following him around outside. I remember their stories of delivering mail down on the "Blue" - which meant taking the mail to the Blue River area south of Alpine.

Larry stayed on in their home for many years before he moved over to Luna, New Mexico. When I was grown and took my kids to Alpine each summer, we often saw Larry and got to visit a little bit.

#### **Uncle Rex:**

We visited Uncle Rex and Aunt Claire on Sundays after church when they lived in Morenci. I remember the drive from Safford to Morenci. It was up a mountain, and in the spring, the foothills before heading up the mountain would be covered with yellow and orange poppies. We would wind our way up through Clifton and around the U-turn to their home on the hill in Morenci. I remember Uncle Rex being quieter than some of the other uncles. Aunt Claire was always welcoming. She had a soft, wispy voice and I always felt like she was floating from room to room. She was sweet to me and I liked visiting with them. After they moved near Wilcox, I felt like we didn't see them as much.

#### **Aunt Ethel:**

Aunt Ethel was a big part of the lives of our family. The story is, when my parents adopted me from California, they didn't have a vehicle that would make the drive from Safford, Arizona, to Van Nuys, California, to pick me up. Aunt Ethel loaned them her car and provided diapers and clothes for me as well.

This generosity continued throughout my life. She made the drive from her home in Silver City, New Mexico, to our home in Safford many, many times during my life. She always brought Wayne and I clothes

(and they were usually too small - she underestimated our growth spurts!). It was always a party when Aunt Ethel came ... first with Uncle Bill, who I vaguely remember as a big smiling man, and then later with Uncle John. John was very debonair to a little farm girl from Safford. He dressed very well, often in a suit. He wore a hat, had shiny shoes, and smoked a cigar on the front porch when my mom wasn't paying attention. After Uncle John passed away, Aunt Ethel still showed up in Safford, driving herself, although now that I'm older, I realize that probably wasn't too safe of a venture.

We also spent time in her home in Silver City and met good friends of hers there. She was a social and popular person. I remember her scratchy voice and laugh. She was full of mischief and loved to take us to Mexican food in Silver City. I wish I could remember the name of the restaurant where we always ate. She took us to her shop - she was a hair dresser. When I was about 7, she chopped off my long, thick, blond hair into the style of the year- a "pixie" cut. I'm not sure I have forgiven her yet!! I remember looking in the mirror and thinking I looked like a boy!

Aunt Ethel was always so glamorous, with her red hair fixed perfectly, makeup, stylish dresses and fancy cars. I loved every minute I spent with her. She and my mom were always very close, and I remember them talking on the phone many evenings, since our house phone was on a shelf right outside my bedroom door.

#### **Uncle Afton :**

Uncle Afton and Aunt Lenora were the ones I was probably closest to. They moved to Safford from Clifton/Morenci sometime when I was pretty young, and that's when I got to know them best. Uncle Afton seemed as gruff as most of the other Whitmer uncles I knew, but I knew he was a softie at heart. I have seen him get super mad at kids or animals, but he never got mad at me! Aunt Lenora was such a down-to-earth person. She always made me feel welcome and loved. She was like my second mom.

I remember their home south of town on Highway 70 right before you head up the hill and turn to the cemetery. I spent so much time there, playing with their farm animals and square dancing in the evenings. I would never admit back then that I liked to square dance, but I secretly loved it! I remember having watermelon busts there. I remember going up those outside stairs to the attic room.

One time, when my parents had to be out of town, they left Wayne and I with an aunt on my dad's side. I knew this aunt very well, and had spent enough time with her, but I did NOT want to stay at her house while my parents were gone. I remember crying and telling my mom that their house smelled funny and they ate weird food. Mom left us there anyway. I must have been a little brat, because after about a day and a half, Aunt Lenora came and rescued me from the other aunt. I was SO happy to leave and go stay with Uncle Afton and Aunt Lenora for the rest of the time my parents were gone.

My parents and Uncle Afton and Aunt Lenora played cards together many evenings. I sat around and listened to them laugh and visit. When they moved out to Cactus (or Lonestar?) even further south of town, we would go out for barbecues and other family get togethers. Uncle Afton would play and sing, and some of their kids and grandkids lived out there also. We ran around and played in the washes for hours out there.

I know my parents both loved Uncle Afton and Aunt Lenora and were grateful to have them as family, as well as friends.

#### **Uncle Vaughn (Von):**

I vaguely remember Uncle Vaughn. He came to visit us in Safford once that I remember, with his wife Zella and daughter Debbie. They lived somewhere in the Southern United States, and I don't remember any other time I saw them. My mom talked to Uncle Vaughn on the phone many evenings, though.

#### **Aunt Fern:**

We got to travel to California to visit Aunt Fern and Uncle Melvin in Lompoc, California, a couple times when I was a kid, and I thought it was SO exciting to get to go to California. They had a beautiful home and kids that weren't that much older than me. Cheryl and Ethelyn were gorgeous teenage California beauties to me, and their brothers, Gary and (Cheryl- what was your other brother's name?? Sorry) were handsome, suntanned California boys.

Aunt Fern showed us so much hospitality, and Uncle Melvin always joked with us. We went to the beach and other sites. They had a wall and garage or carport in the back that we would walk and climb on.

My mom was close to her sister, Fern. They spoke on the phone often, and my mom enjoyed her talks with Aunt Fern.

#### **Aunt Fay:**

I don't have many memories of Aunt Fay after she married and moved north of Phoenix. We didn't visit her ever, that I remember, and I also don't remember her coming to visit us. I have re-connected with her son, William, recently, and he remembers coming to Safford with his mom so she could help with Grandma. He stayed with us, but I don't remember that visit. Mom was also close to Fay, and they spoke on the phone in the evenings also.

#### **Uncle Don, Uncle Lawrence and Aunt Genevieve:**

I don't really remember these Uncles and Aunts. Don's family lived far away, but I do know Don's children and they came to visit us in Safford a few times. Lawrence lived far away also, and I don't even remember his kids. Aunt Genevieve passed away when I was ten, and I don't remember her at all. But I love her grand-daughter, Karen Fitzhugh Smith. She was the one cousin that was closest to my age (even though her dad and I were the first cousins) and we hung out at a couple reunions.