



# GENEVIEVE WHITMER

*October 24, 1912 - October 23, 1970*



## Historical Profile

Genevieve was born on 24 October 1912, in Alpine, Arizona to her Father Angus Van Meter Whitmer (33 years old) and her mother Jennie (28 years old) and was also known as Geneva throughout her life. Genevieve was the seventh of 17 children. Her older siblings, Angus, Ralph, Cecil, Harold and Chuck were 9, 8, 5, 3, and 2 years old when she was born. Another brother Lealand Claude died shortly after birth of whooping cough on 8 August 1906.

According to David Keith Whitmer the Whitmer children were raised, "in the lousy rugged and amazingly beautiful White Mountains of Alpine, Arizona where the mountains reach 8,000 feet in the sky of neverland. Alpine is now a resort but in the early 1900s it was a very small place where farmers raised their cattle, vegetables and did whatever it took to feed their families. The Whitmer children knew the Blue well, a place where the cattle grazed in the winter. All the children were raised riding horses. It was a place where everyone had to work and work hard. Seventeen children were born here. Four died.

Genevieve's future husband Edwin Reeves Fitzhugh was born 7 months after Genevieve in Dallas Texas. One year later World War I would begin and sweep across Europe. Genevieve would also welcome a little sister into the family. Ethel was born in 1914 and then a brother, Ray, was born in 1915. Two years later Ray died of pneumonia on 3 May 1917 when Genevieve was only 4 years old.

1918 brought the flu pandemic to the world, and the birth of another brother, Lawrence, to the Whitmer family. Then in 1921 a little sister Mary was born, followed by Von, a little brother, in 1922. Then in 1925 twin sisters Faye and Fern were born into the family. 3 years later in 1928 twin sisters Bertha and Blanche would be born but not survive the birth. These were the last of her siblings to be born to her parents. Genevieve was 16 at the time.

Genevieve's family were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and according to her younger sister Fern's account, "Church and religion was our whole life. We all got up and went to Church. I don't know if I learned a lot. My parents were so busy I wasn't given much time. Church

and Sunday School on Sunday, Relief Society and Mutual on Tuesdays, Primary Wednesdays. Dances on the weekends. Family prayer sometimes around my parent's bed."

One year later the collapse of the stock market would bring about the Great Depression beginning in 1930, greatly impacting the Whitmer family sending several of her siblings throughout the West in search of good work and requiring her large family to work together to make ends meet. Even though she was of age, marriage and family would be delayed as the primary focus became caring for the needs of the family.

On 15 November 1936, 24-year old Genevieve married Edwin Reeves Fitzhugh who was just a year her junior. They were married in Silver City, New Mexico.

New Mexico was known for its desert climate, rugged wilderness, and for being a land of enchantment.



Oil and gas production, agriculture, and mining were main industries in this mostly rural state during Genevieve's time there. As advances in air conditioning made living in the desert more bearable the population grew accordingly, rising from just under 200,000 in 1900 to nearly 700,000 by 1950.

Almost 2 years into their marriage on 20 September 1938, the young Fitzhugh family would welcome their only son into their family; young Billy Ray. Genevieve was 25 years old at this time. Shortly thereafter, they would watch as World War II began in Europe just two decades after the end of World War I. It would become the most destructive conflict in recorded history. The United States tried to stay out of the war as long as possible but after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt declared that the U.S. would enter the conflict. Genevieve would have been 29 years old at the time the U.S. entered this war that would define her generation as the Greatest Generation.

The next two decades of life for Genevieve would bring civil unrest as the United States would experience nationwide protests regarding their involvement in The Korean and Vietnam Wars and a new rivalry and long cold war with the rising Soviet Union. These events created a great deal of uncertainty for young families such as Genevieve and Edwin had.

At age 43, and just as the U.S. was entering the Vietnam War, Genevieve's father passed away at the age of 76. 12 years later and during the heart of the Civil Rights Era Genevieve would lose two more loved ones to death beginning with her mother in 1967 at the age of 84, and then that of her only son in 1968 at the young age of 29. This must have been heartbreaking to see her only son pass and it was only 2 more years before Genevieve herself would pass away on October 23, 1970 in Silver City, New Mexico, 9 years before that of her husband.

