



HAROLD H. WHITMER

June 23, 1909 - 1990



Historical Profile

Harold was born on 23 June 1909, in Alpine, Arizona. His mother Sarah Jane Judd Whitmer (known by all as Jennie) was 25 years old, and his father Angus Van Meter Whitmer was 30 years old at the time. Harold was the fifth of 17 children. His older siblings, Angus, Ralph, and Cecil, were 6, 5, and 2 years old when he was born. An older brother Leland died at birth in 1906.

According to David Keith Whitmer the Whitmer children were raised, “in the lusty 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.

Harold's brother, Chuck was born in 1910 when Harold was 1 year old. His sister, Genevieve, was born in 1912

when Harold was 3 years old, the same year as the sinking of the Titanic. Another sister, Ethel, was born in 1914 when Harold was 4 years old, the same year as the beginning of World War I. Harold's brother, Ray and Harold's future wife were both born in 1915 when Harold was 6 years old. Hessie was born in Luna, New Mexico. In 1917 Harold's brother, Afton, was born when Harold was 7 years old and another brother Ray died that same year at the age of 1 of the whooping cough.

In 1918, when Harold was 8, a terrible flu pandemic struck the United States and the entire world. The Spanish Flu of 1918 infected over a third of the world's population and killed more than 650,000 Americans alone, as the medical community desperately searched for better treatments or a vaccine. With World War I raging at the same time, it made for a very challenging year for just about everyone. Harold's brother, Lawrence, was born this year after Harold had already turned 9.

Harold was 11 years old when the first public radio broadcast aired in 1920. A year later Harold's sister, Mary, was born when Harold was 11 years old. Just over a year later Harold's brother, Vaughn, was born when Harold was 13 years old.

Harold's family were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and according to his 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 parents' bed."

From the age of 14 Harold started working for the forest service and developed a lifelong love for the land.

Harold's sisters, Faye and Fern, were born as twins when Harold was 16 years old. Two years later when Harold was 18, his sisters, Blanche and Bertha, were born, around the same time as penicillin was discovered by Alexander Fleming. This discovery would go on to revolutionize the medical world by saving lives and reducing the need for amputations. This discovery meant that many of Harold's friends and neighbors, who would have otherwise died of infection, would now be able to survive infections.

In 1926, Harold's father's barn burned down and in the middle of the chaos Harold got really scared and went and hid himself. Everyone went looking for Harold way up in the pasture and the hills, and the reservoir. When they couldn't find him, they all became really scared, afraid he had jumped in the ashes and got burned up too. About that time Dad and the boys got there. They had to stay up with that fire all night long. Dad didn't. He was sick a bed. He vomited and everything else. He was so scared one of the kids was in there. And when we couldn't find Harold we was just sure he was burned to death. They found Harold later lying flat under boxes on the runners. When they found him, Angus cried and cried in there.

One Sunday in his childhood Harold came running back to the house to get his mother saying Cecil had shot himself. When asked what he meant, he replied, "Well, he can't walk." Upon further investigation it turned out that Harold had actually shot Cecil. They were trying to catch

the rabbits, and shot the rabbits. Then in order to gather the rabbits Cecil set the gun down and said to Harold, "Now don't touch that gun. It's loaded." Well, Harold had to see if it was loaded, and accidentally shot Cecil. It took three years of drives to Springerville, doctor's visits and surgeries before finally being able to get the bullet out.

Harold's youngest sisters Blanche and Bertha born as twins in 1928 were pronounced dead at birth. Undoubtedly a very difficult time for the family.

When Harold was 20 years old, the collapse of the stock market began a decade-long period of economic hardships in America known as the Great Depression. Beginning in 1930 and extending to 1942, these years would have greatly impacted the nature of the workforce at a time when Harold was most capable of working. Harold was logging in Washington with his brother Cecil at the time. As the Depression got worse, he and Cecil were unable to find work, so they made their way back to Arizona. Cecil started cutting timber and Harold went to work for him. Harold worked for Cecil cutting timber for 16 years.



Hessie Swap Whitmer

Harold would attend dances in many of the towns around Alpine during this time. He and his brothers would ride their horses to the dances. At one of those dances he met a local girl named Hessie Swap and the two of them took to one another. Hessie was Ralph's wife's niece. On 26 September 1935 at the age of 26 Harold married Hessie, who was 20 years old at the time. They bought their first house for \$700 paying \$15 a month.

One year later when Harold was 27 years old, his first daughter Sylvia was born to his wife Hessie on 29 September 1936 after they had moved as a couple to Springerville, Arizona. A second daughter, Alice, would be born 2 years later on 18 June 1938.

Between the births of his two daughters, America was captivated by Amelia Earhart who became the first woman to fly solo in an airplane across the Atlantic Ocean. She became a symbol of great possibilities in a time of great financial difficulties. As a family they also moved back to Alpine, Arizona.

When Harold was 30 years old, World War II began in Europe, just two decades after the end of the First World War. It would become the most destructive conflict in

recorded history. This same year, Harold received his first son, James, into the world on 26 November 1939. A year later in 1940 the family moved to Apache County District 2, part of the Apache Nation reservation. The next year in 1941 James, their only son at the time, passed away. Reports say that at 18 months old, James picked up a bottle of Kerosene and drank from it and died.

3 years later on 28 April 1944 another son, Harold, was born. The family was now living in Eagar, Arizona.

The next decade brought the dawn of the Atomic age and the end of World War II (1945), the Korean War (1950), a polio vaccine in 1953, and the Vietnam conflict stretching from 1955-1975. During this time Harold would see his father Angus Van Meter Whitmer pass away at the age of 76. Harold would have been 46 at the time. His mother Jennie would live another 11 years until 1967 when she would also pass away at the age of 83.

This was a time of great change in culture, in technology, and in global events. Martin Luther King Jr. would lead the nation in a civil rights movement. United States astronauts would land on the moon in 1969. Beginning in 1970 Harold would begin to see his siblings also

begin to pass, starting with his sister Genevieve in 1970 at the age of 61, and his brother Angus at the age of 74.

A decade later, in 1982, he would say goodbye to his brother Ralph at the age of 77. Then a year later, his brother Cecil died at the age of 75 followed by the death of his sister Ethel at age 71. Harold was 75 by this time. Two years later his brother Chuck died at the age of 76. Then finally, at the age of 81, Harold joined his siblings on the other side, passing away in Alpine, Arizona in 1990.

