

**The Camarillo Sisterhood  
Stories of Women Who Made a Difference at the Camarillo  
Ranch**



**This week: Rosa Camarillo Petit**

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**Thank you Tom and Theresa Marvel for sharing your wonderful  
stories and photos  
and for editing the copy and adding detailed information!**

**May 8, 2020**

**Rosa Camarillo Petit (1890-1986)**

Daughter of Adolfo and Isabel Camarillo

&amp;

**Mary Louise Douglas (1896-1998)****Rancho Rosal**

by

**Beth Miller**

In the western corner of the Camarillo Ranch about one mile from the grand Camarillo mansion, Alfred and Rosa Camarillo Petit built their comfortable craftsman-style home. It was near St. Mary Magdalen Chapel where they had wed. Theirs was the first wedding in the Chapel. They could hear the bells calling them to Mass. They could see the rolling hills leading up to the Conejo Grade.

The couple called their land Rancho Rosal, a clever combination of their first names and also an adept usage of the Spanish word meaning rose arbor. The 143 acres the newlyweds received from her parents were first covered with lima beans but as time passed that crop was replaced with lemon and walnut groves. Roses always surrounded the house and courtyard. Pink roses had filled the Camarillo home for Rosa and Alfred's wedding reception. At Rancho Rosal, the gentle fragrance of the tiny pink Cecile Brunner roses greeted everyone to their home.

The rose garden was the first thing Mary Louise Douglas noticed upon her arrival. Dearest Mimi. Like the roses, she too became a constant and gentle presence. Rejected by her wealthy father's family after his death, Mimi somehow found her way to Rancho Rosal. With help from Lucy Vidosola, the Rancho Rosal cook, Mimi, who was once a daughter of privilege, learned how to run the household and become Rosa's personal maid. Mimi became much more. She was a companion and confidant to Rosa, but she would always respectfully address Rosa as "The Señora." Mimi had found a forever family and a forever home.

A little over one year after they heard their wedding bells, Rosa and Alfred welcomed the first of their four children. Ynez was the first child to be baptized in the Chapel. But all too soon the joy of little Ynez Maria's birth gave way to the muffled toll of the funeral bells. It was the first funeral in the Chapel.

Overwhelmed with grief, Rosa took to her bed. The shadow of grief would always lie in wait for Rosa who became fearful of the dark. Perhaps that was why she sometimes seemed a little rigid, a little too strict. Death would take those closest to Rosa too soon.

Johnny was a blessing for the couple and a loving older brother to his sisters Gloria and Rosita. Laughter and fun among the trees and roses filled the children's afternoons. The roses marked Rosita's childhood birthdays. Every year tiny pink roses from her mother's garden set gently on a towering angel food birthday cake. Little roses for Rosita, her mother's little Rose. The family cook, Lucy Vidosola, made the angel food cake without the use of a mixer. Mimi learned the secret of whipping the egg whites by hand into big gentle clouds. But years later she said that "the Duncan Hines packaged cake mix was the best."

When their mother wasn't home, the three children knew they could always count on Mimi. She would take the children into the garden to tend the roses. Mimi would cook their favorite food, shower them with hugs and kisses, toys and candy. She never scolded and always understood the ways and needs of childhood. To help keep them steadily connected to their vast family, Mimi shared the news of their relatives. Mimi lovingly cared for all of Rosa's many grandchildren.

Rosa and Alfred enjoyed entertaining and hosted many parties. During Prohibition guests would bring their own liquor. Years later Rosa would find liquor bottles hidden around Rancho Rosal. Together Rosa and Mimi made enchiladas for gatherings. The family called them "enchies." Rosa's usual sense of style was not on display in the kitchen. She was ready for work. She simply wrapped up her hair in a bandana and covered her clothing with a work apron. Hours later she and Mimi had prepared cheese enchies by the dozens.

When Rosa's grandson, Tom Marvel, celebrated his fiftieth birthday, Mimi continued the family tradition by making twelve dozen enchies for his surprise party. Mimi was well into her nineties when, by herself, she prepared the many trays.

Although Rosa did not often cook, she closely monitored what was served. She wanted two fresh vegetables served at dinner. Fried foods and ketchup were banned at Rancho Rosal. Rosita and Gloria especially enjoyed the lunch stops during trips to "Los" (Los Angeles) with the FitzGerals. The girls were treated to hamburgers, fries and ketchup with their cousins.

In the late 1960s Rosa had a swimming pool built. Mimi would sit on the edge of the pool while the Señora swam. Even though Mimi couldn't swim, she wanted to stay close by, should something happen, to save Rosa. Rosa and Rosita loved to swim.

Rosa and Alfred enjoyed traveling and took trips to Europe when jet aircraft travel was becoming popular. At the time, travelers dressed "to the nines" and so did Rosa and Alfred.

Johnny was just 35 years old when he died. The shadow of grief again devastated Rosa. Again, sharing their sorrow, Alfred comforted his wife by doing everything he could. Mimi did not leave Rosa's side.

When illness overtook Alfred, Mimi remained close at hand. He was 71 years old when he died in 1960. During Rosa's frail and final years, Mimi took special care of The Señora and slept on a chair next to Rosa's bed.

After Rosa's death in 1986 at age 95, Mimi continued to safeguard The Señora. Every Monday she placed a bouquet roses in the Chapel crypt and said a prayer as she lit a candle so Rosa would not be in the dark.

Roses have long symbolized love. Rosa had opened her heart and her home to Mimi and a lifelong loving companionship blossomed with a forever family in a forever home.

For twelve more years Mimi continued living at Rancho Rosal tending the roses and doting over Rosa's children and grandchildren until her death in 1998 at age 101 ½. Mary Louise Douglas, dearest Mimi, was laid to rest next to Rosa in the family crypt.



*The family crypt at St. Mary Magdalen Chapel*



*Isabel Camarillo with her first grandchild Ynez Maria Petit (1915-1917)*

**Maria de Gloria Petit Longo (1923-2010)**  
**Rosita Petit Marvel (1925-2017)**

Daughters of Rosa and Alfred Petit, Granddaughters of Adolfo and Isabel Camarillo

Rancho Rosal was the childhood home for sisters Gloria Petit Longo and Rosita Petit Marvel. The rancho name was a combination of their parents' names, Rosa and Alfred Petit as well as the Spanish word for rose arbor. Together "Glo" (Gloria) and "China" (Rosita) played in their mother's rose garden.

Together Glo and China rode their ponies and horses all around the rancho. Together they would both pass the strict review of their great-aunt Carmen to become official parade riders of the Camarillo White Horses. They would share the major and minor events of their lives with all the joys and disappointments. They would regularly make the long journey to see each other and have relaxing visits with their parents. There would be long letters and long phone calls.

They would always be there for each other well into their advanced senior years.

The lessons of patience and discipline learned on the long rides around Rancho Rosal would be applied in different ways to their very different lives of accomplishment.

As a child, Gloria was rarely without a book in her hand. She was always the last one to get into the car to drive to Sunday Mass. With her parents calling for her, Glo always answered back, "I'm coming." But with the book firmly held, Gloria continued reading while still clad in pajamas. Mimi came to the rescue, helped Gloria to quickly dress and run to the car. The book would have to wait, but not for long.

Her love of reading would lead her to become a perpetual student earning degrees from the University of Southern California, Moorpark and Ventura Colleges, California Lutheran University (CLU) and the Universidad de Guadalajara. While in her fifties Gloria earned a Master's in Education from CLU. She was fluent in Spanish and she and her husband, George, traveled extensively throughout her beloved Mexico. She taught in several local schools and was also a school psychologist.

Gloria also used her bilingual skills helping juveniles who faced legal problems. She completed an extensive training to be a court-appointed special advocate (CASA), a national organization in which volunteers work with attorneys to speak for abused and neglected children in court. Ever the student, Gloria found the challenging training to be exciting because she knew her work would make a difference in the lives of CASA children.

Throughout her life Gloria believed it was important to “Read everything you can get your hands on. Don’t give up.” Gloria died at age 87 in 2010.

While listening to the chapel bells of St. Mary Magdalen, young Rosita spent hours in her mother’s rose garden. She was praying the rosary, playing with her baby dolls and imagining the family she would one day have. Rosita loved ranch life and had a special fondness for horses. Her first official parade ride on a Camarillo White Horse was when she was just a teenager.

It was while she was visiting a classmate and her family in Nevada that Rosita met the man who made her girlhood dreams come true. Tom Marvel was a Nevada cowboy and rancher who took her to a lifetime in the wide-open spaces of the Silver State. Among the countless head of cattle and horses, they raised seven children. Rosita’s expert riding skills were invaluable. A good part of the summer was spent on the range with the cattle. All the children rode. Rosita did laundry on a washboard, cooked and made certain the children kept up their reading and other academic skills. All the children matured into well prepared students for college.

Her mother’s rose garden remained a part of Rosita’s Nevada life. She planted roses near her home and in her spare time created paintings of roses. A devout Catholic, Rosita continued to pray the rosary every day. Her mother also had a devotion to Mary, the Blessed Virgin and praying the rosary. The word rosary comes from the Latin “rosarium” meaning a garland of roses.

Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were a major part of her daily life. The virtues of calm and patience are indispensable traits for ranch life and especially when delivering a newborn. When the mother went into labor far from her mid-wife, Rosita and Tom delivered their great-grandson. Having always worked together and spent a lifetime birthing countless calves and colts, Rosita and

Tom were the ever skilled team attending to the precious new life and his mother. With a smile and a prayer, they welcomed the newest member of the family.

With several family members by her side praying the rosary, Rosita died at age 91 in 2017.

### **Tom and Theresa Marvel Remember Rancho Rosal**

***Tom Marvel:** Son of Rosita and Tom Marvel, Grandson of Rosa and Alfred Petit  
Great-grandson of Adolfo and Isabel Camarillo*

*He and his wife Theresa have spoken at several docent meetings. Tom also led a docent tour of the Chapel. When the Stay-at-Home order is lifted, they look forward to speaking to the docents again. Tom grew up in Nevada and attended high school at Villanova Preparatory in Ojai and graduated from University of Nevada, Reno. His sister, Suzy, who attended Marymount in Santa Barbara, frequently visited Rosa as well as their uncle and aunt, George and Gloria Petit Longo. Tom was a ranch, mail and commercial pilot for 40 years before retiring as a captain with American Airlines. He is affectionately known as Captain Marvel.*

#### **Tom Marvel**

Rosa and Alfred came to Nevada to visit all of us. We called them Nana and Tata. Adolfo was Big Tata. Other times Alfred would drive to Nevada and bring us kids all back to Rancho Rosal. Many times, Mom drove us by herself and Dad would load up the car, huge suitcases on top and away we'd go often stopping overnight in Bishop where we could stay in a hotel with a swimming pool!

Dad stayed behind in Nevada on the summer with the cattle. When I was older, I stayed and worked the summer range with Dad.

We spent much of the time exploring Camarillo Ranch and Rancho Rosal. Alfred piled all us kids into the Woodie station wagon for adventures around the ranch. Before exploring, he'd herded the horses from the Woodie to the pasture at the base of the Conejo Grade. Then we'd go off looking for frogs and do other fun things...swimming, riding, hiking.

There was fun indoors, too. In rural Nevada, our telephone system still required operator assisted phone calls. While at Rancho Rosal, Rosa taught us how to use a dial phone. Television was a big treat. At home, on the ranch there was only one television station that reached us. The poor reception covered the cartoon shows

with static, but we still watched it! At Rancho Rosal television reception was clear and there was more than one channel.

Mom solved the shopping needs for a large family living far from town. She spent the summer organizing and ordering clothing for the upcoming school year from Montgomery Wards and Sears catalogues. Finally, after weeks the order would arrive in large boxes at our post office in Battle Mountain. Boots were purchased during trips to Winnemucca, Nevada. Rosa took us shopping at Earl Joseph's Shoe Store in Camarillo for Buster Brown shoes.

*(Earl Joseph was the first mayor of Camarillo.)*

In rural Nevada fresh produce was not always readily available during the winter. Before we made the long drive home, both Rosa and Adolfo gave us large parcels of oranges, lemons, walnuts and our favorite: a large lug of apricots from Moorpark.

*(A large lug is a two-layer wooden box which can hold, depending on the size of the fruit, approximately 84-108 apricots per tray pack. The City of Moorpark is named after the apricot that grew throughout the valley.)*

Rosa, with her hair covered with a bandana and wearing an apron, spent days with Mimi making the apricot jam. They would leave a pit in each jar of jam to enhance the flavor. Back in Nevada, Mom would make the jam. *(Today Rosita's children carry on that tradition.)*

Mimi planned for our visits making certain that all our favorite foods and cereals were well stocked. She took care of all us and made certain Mom had a chance to rest. Mom would always tell us to be on our best behavior and not embarrass her!

When it was time for us to drive back to Nevada, Mimi would hold the youngest child until the last minute. With tears flowing down her cheeks, Mimi finally handed the baby to Mom. I have no doubt that right there she began counting the days until we returned.

During a winter visit to the 25 Ranch, Glo noticed just outside the house, that the entire length of the clothesline was covered with frozen diapers. When she told my grandmother, Rosa immediately had a dryer delivered to Mom. The dryer

arrived but wasn't used much because of its high energy demands on the ranch power plant.

Glo and George were close to all of us. My sister Suzy and I went to high school in California. She went to Marymount. I went to Villanova. Glo and George came to our school events. I'd visit my grandmother and stay awhile. I remember her telling me how nice I looked in a suit and tie.

When we had children, our children called our mother, Nana. They called Rosa, Big Nana.

*Isabel Camarillo died in 1936 before Rosita and Tom Marvel's children were born.*

*To the Marvel children, Adolfo was Big Tata. Rosa was Nana to the seven Marvel children. They called Alfred Tata or Tot.*

*When Rosita's seven children had children, Rosa was called Big Nana. By that time, Adolfo had died. Alfred passed away soon after.*

*When Rosita had grandchildren, she was called Nana. Her husband Tom Marvel was Papa. When Rosita's grandchildren had children, great-grandmother Rosita was called Nana Rose and her husband Tom was Papa Tom*

## **Theresa Marvel**

Mimi's father's family rejected her after his death, but she remained very proud of her father's U.K. background and as such was always interested in the British monarchy. At breakfast she'd read the newspapers looking for news of the Royal Family. Any mention of Queen Elizabeth II always led Mimi into a discussion about the queen's charities, activities and how elegantly she dressed.

On the occasion of Mimi's one hundredth birthday, Tom and I wrote a letter to the queen telling her about Mimi's background. Mimi received an official letter embossed with the royal crest from the Queen's secretary who sent congratulations to Miss Mary Louise Douglas on the occasion of her one hundredth birthday.

Since Mimi was an American and not a British citizen, the birthday greetings could only be sent from the Queen's secretary. Nevertheless, Mimi was very excited and proud to receive the beautiful official greetings from the royal secretary.

Mimi loved playing the piano. She enjoyed playing for the children and continued taking lessons well into her nineties and even walked to her lessons! She was fond of learning and playing difficult pieces.

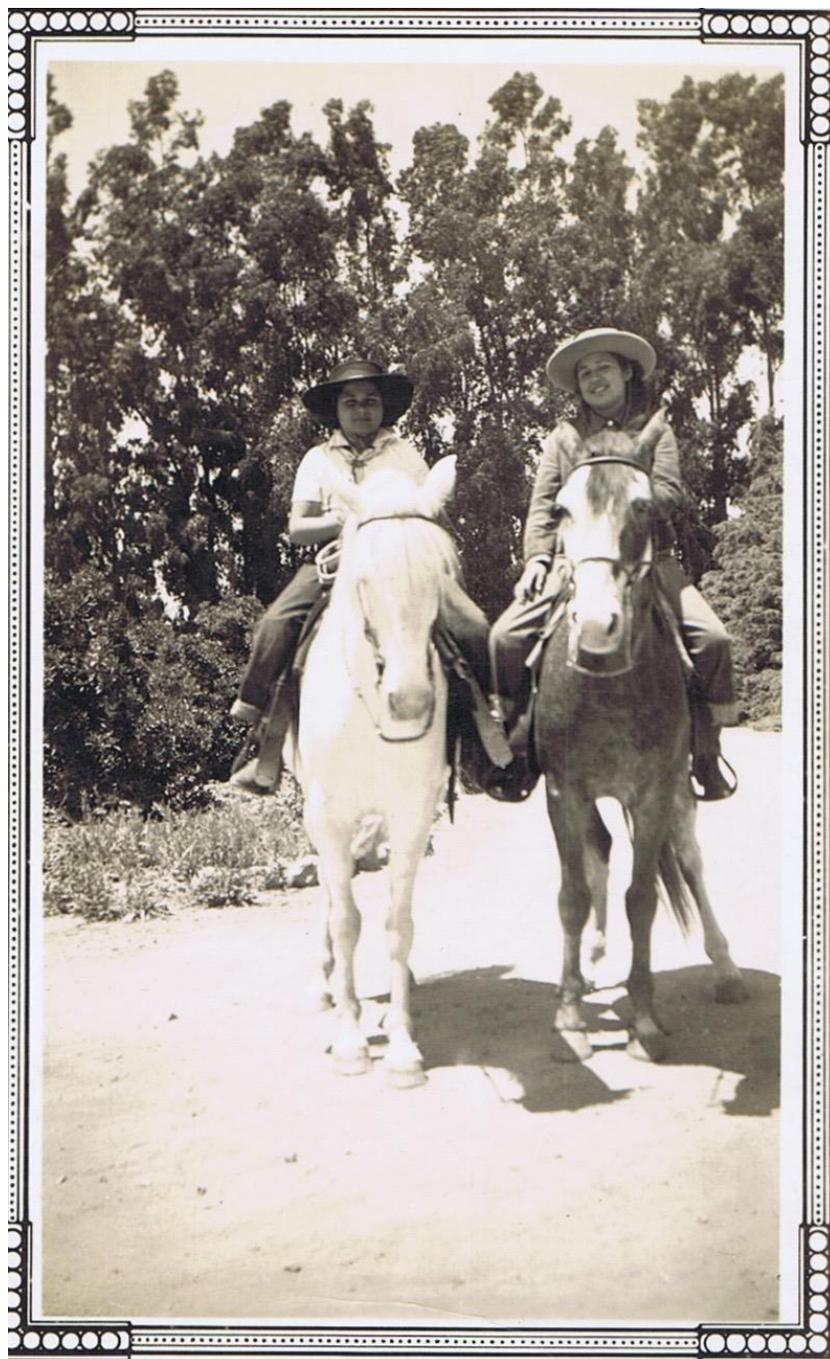
Once I talked Mimi into helping me make orange marmalade to give as gifts. We worked hard for hours. I spent days looking for pretty jam jars to put the homemade marmalade in, only to find out that nobody like marmalade! Gloria said marmalade was the only thing that Mimi could never make. It was apricot jam that everyone loved!



*One of Rosita's rose paintings 1973*



*Rosita and her doll*



*Rosita on Cloud (left) and Gloria on Strawberry riding in the Rancho Rosal walnut grove*



*Aunt Carmen with her nieces Rosita (center) and Gloria in 1939.  
Rosita is dressed for her first Santa Barbara Fiesta*



*December 28, 1945 St. Mary Magdalen Chapel  
The bride Rosita, left, with her maid of honor Gloria*



Circa 1949 - The "25 Ranch" in Battle Mountain, Nevada. L-R: Rosita Petit Marvel and daughter Susan Gloria Marvel (born 11/25/1947) – Rosita's sister, Gloria Petit Longo – and Rosita's son, Thomas Petit Marvel (born 10/18/1946).



*Rosa (left) with Mimi holding Rosa's grandson, Tom Marvel at the Marvel home in Nevada.*



*Rosa (left) with her sister Carmen who is holding Tom Marvel at Rancho Rosal. Note the roses.*



*Rosa and her grandson Tom Marvel at Rancho Rosal*



*Gloria, Rosa and Rosita at Rancho Rosal*



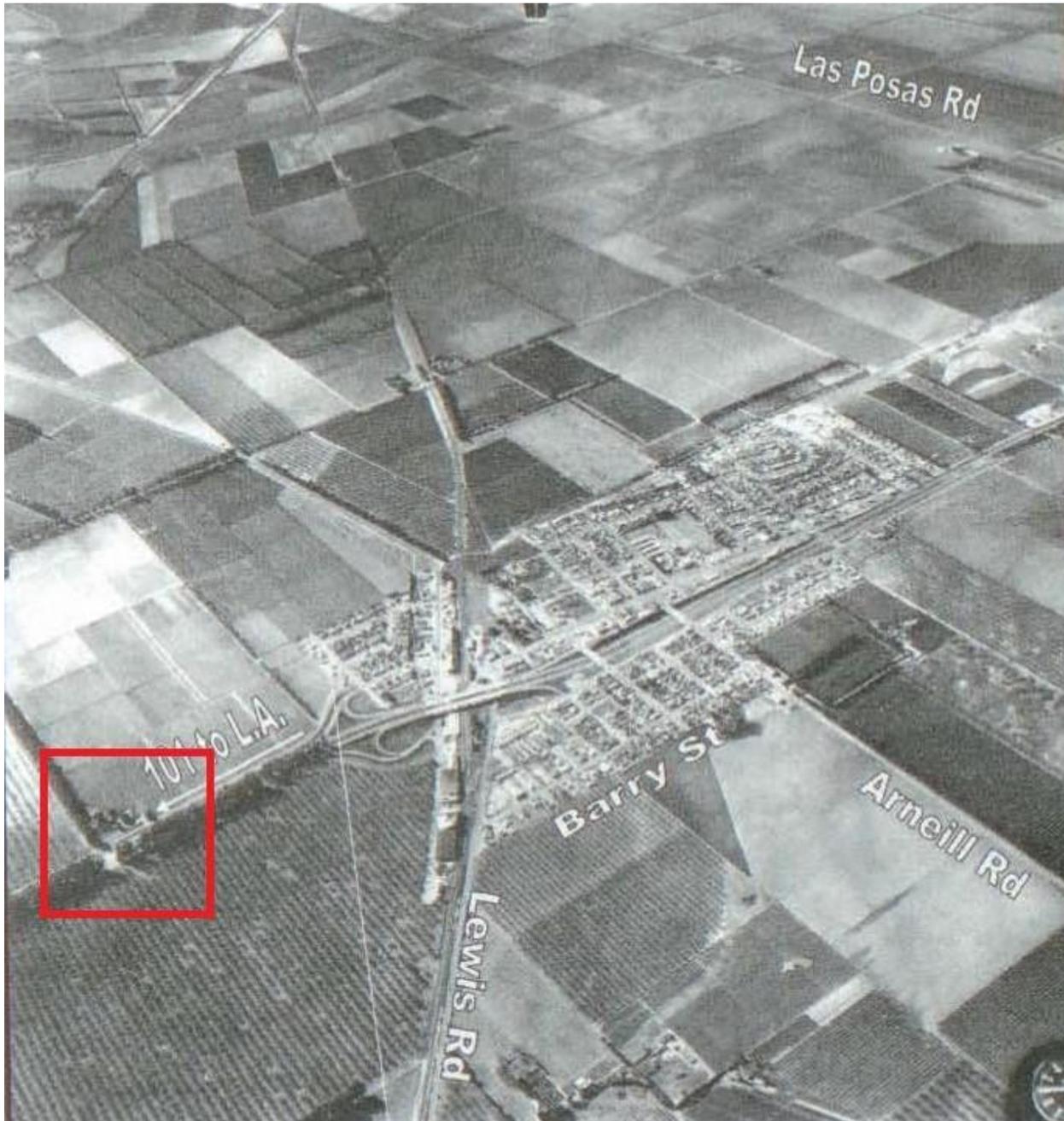
*Gloria, Rosa and Rosita circa 1970s*



*This photo of Rosita's children was used as a Christmas card. Photo greeting cards took time and planning. After the film was sent for development, the photo was selected and sent for card printing. Weeks passed between each step. All this had to be done months before Christmas.*



*This Christmas card was addressed to Mimi.*



*Location of Rancho Rosal 1958*

*Today the area is the Village at the Park home development and an elementary school.*



*Rancho Rosal School opened in 2007*



*The logo is based on the actual Rancho Rosal brand. Tom and Rosita Petit Marvel and family donated several Rancho Rosal items that are on display in the school office.*



*Sally and her mother Rosita Camarillo Petit Marvel in the Santa Barbara Fiesta Parade*

**In Memory of  
Sally Rosita Marvel Freeman  
1952-2020**

At the Santa Barbara Fiesta Parade, Carmen was concerned about the performance of a young Camarillo White Horse. Sally's older sister Suzy was unavailable, but Sally was ready to take up the reins. Sally had learned at an early age how to communicate with a horse and understand its body language. She knew how to watch for clues that the horse might react to something he perceived as alarming. At the end of the parade, Sally simply said the horse was fine.

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Sally Rosita Marvel Freeman (Mustang Sally) was born on December 8, 1952 in Battle Mountain, Nevada and passed away on April 14, 2020. She was one of seven children to Thomas Jenkins Marvel, a Nevada rancher and cowboy, and Rosita Camarillo Petit, granddaughter of Adolfo Camarillo whose namesake adorns the city of Camarillo, California.

She grew up on the Martin Ranch and The 25 Ranch in Nevada where she was instilled with toughness and grit from her father, along with a sense of style and a strong Faith in God

from her mother. It can be said that she packed so much life into her 67 years here on earth that she might as well have lived twice.

There's no easy way to describe Sally in a few short sentences. She was raised to be a tough, fearless cowgirl, a better hand than most cowboys. She roped her first mustang when she was 14 years old and went on to become a renowned cutting-horse trainer. She was truly gifted on a horse and no one will ever forget the way she could ride. Sally was as competitive as they come and she spent many years with her kids and grandkids training their horses and practicing with them as they competed and succeeded in high school, college and professional rodeo. But horses weren't her only interest. She also started her own fashion line and later helped her youngest daughter Quincy, start a successful western brand: Rodeo Quincy, whose merchandise is in over 300 stores.

Sally was a stunning beauty with a style all of her own, a trend-setter. She had a wild, yet classic style, always wearing her trademark red lipstick and high-heeled cowboy boots. She was the true meaning of "guts, grit and lipstick". There wasn't a head that didn't turn when she walked into a room. But even with all that beauty, it wasn't her style that made the lasting impression, it was the way she made people feel. To know her was to love her and her endless generosity knew no bounds.

Sally made the Central Valley of California her home with the love of her life and husband Bill Freeman with whom she shared many wonderful years on their cattle ranch in Reedley. She leaves behind three children - Pete Holman, Holly Crawford and Quincy Eldridge and two step-daughters Molly Freeman and Elly Kelly. Sally's surviving grandchildren Billie, Lily, Lefty, Teagan, Luke, Reese, Carter, Blaze, Crew, Pistol and baby Sally -due to arrive this September, will miss their Nana dearly.

She also leaves four brothers: Tom, Mike, Joe and Pete Marvel and two sisters: Suzy Barnes and Amy Seifert. One of the greatest gifts that Sally left her family was her strong faith in God and her love of the Catholic Church. Remembrances can be made in Sally's honor at St. La Salle Catholic School in Reedley, CA. There will be a celebration of life to be announced after the COVID crisis. Vaya con Dios our sweet Sal. You will be forever loved and missed.

