



Rose Marie Reid
AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE STORY



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CHAPTER 1

Elvie and Marie

Rose Marie Reid's link to her pioneer past is an interesting paradox because the name Rose Marie Reid was to become a symbol of the modern future. Yet, as modern as she grew to be, she remained deeply attached to her heritage and the legacy her ancestors left.

Throughout her life, Rose Marie was proud that she was a sixth-generation Mormon. Her great-grandmother, Maria Hadlond, left England in the 1840s to join members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in America, willingly leaving her homeland to help establish a new frontier in behalf of her newfound faith. Maria married Preston Thomas, eventually bearing him ten children.

Rose Marie's own great-grandfather, William Hyde, had personally known Joseph Smith (the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Mormons, as they are frequently known). William Hyde had joined the Church in 1834 when he was just sixteen. When the Mormon Saints were being driven from Nauvoo, Illinois, he accompanied them on foot and eventually joined the Mormon Battalion. Making his way overland across the great Southwest, he reached California with the Battalion in late 1846. Following his return, he journeyed with his family to the Salt Lake Valley in the Utah Territory. There they joined with other Mormons who had left everything they possessed and sacrificed

their former lives to find a location where they could be free to worship God without persecution.

Don Carlos Hyde, Rose Marie's grandfather, was sent by Brigham Young, Joseph Smith's successor, to settle in Cache Valley, Utah, where Don Carlos established Hyde Park.¹

In 1890, Brigham Young requested that several members leave the Church's refuge in the Salt Lake valley and journey to Canada to establish a settlement that would extend the Church beyond the borders of the United States. Rose Marie's mother, Marie Hyde, was seven years old when she accompanied her family to Cardston, Alberta, walking behind a covered wagon.

The meeting and marriage of Rose Marie's parents is a true love story. Her father, William Elvie Yancey, came to Cardston by accident. He had followed his family to Salt Lake from Mississippi, where his parents, Jasper and Sarah Francis Tunnel Yancey, had heard the gospel message from a young Mormon missionary, George Albert Smith, who later became prophet and president of the Mormon Church.

Smith encountered a great deal of bitterness against the Mormons in Mississippi, and the Yancey family was one of only two families in the state who let the missionaries sleep in their home. In fact, they often kept a pile of blankets in a corner of their living room, and as the missionaries slept, Jasper and his brother sat by the door with shotguns on their laps to protect the missionaries from the angry mobs who often persecuted Church members.

After the Yanceys were at last baptized, they sold their farm in Mississippi and traveled west to Salt Lake to join with the other Church members. However, William Elvie was not baptized, and he did not approve of his parents' membership in the Church. Resentful of his parents' decision to embrace a new and unpopular religion, he set out to disprove the doctrine. Instead, he was ultimately baptized into the Mormon faith.

William Elvie followed his parents to Salt Lake, then decided to return to Mississippi when he met the family of Hugh B. Brown (Brown later became an Apostle of the Church). The Brown family was preparing to travel by wagon to Canada and somehow persuaded Elvie to join the trek. As they traveled they taught him the restored gospel, and by the time he met Marie he had gained a testi-

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Marie first met Elvie when her Sunday School class was out for a sleigh ride. When the reins somehow slipped from the driver's hands, young Elvie—tall, straight, and nearly twenty-eight years old with handsome dark reddish hair—gathered in the reins from the sleigh's edge and handed them back to the driver. Marie, only seventeen, looked out from under the blankets in the sleigh and told her friends, "That's the man I'm going to marry."²

Elvie shared Marie's impression. As their courtship progressed, he penned a letter to her from the Clarke Coal Mines on 6 December 1899. "While I am working in those dark halls," he wrote, "my mind reflects upon our earliest acquaintance, of how. . . the fires of love were first kindled in my bosom." Elvie's letters, all inscribed in his beautiful penmanship, bespeak a man of deep and worthy intent. He continued: "My whole being seemed to be inspired with new thought, in fact I seemed to be filled with new life, I became a new being. At this time my heart was filled with exceeding joy and gladness. You were vividly pictured in my mind, and something seemed to speak very loudly in my ear and said 'Elvie Yancey you are certainly a fortunate person to meet your bosom companion.'"³

The winter was filled with sweet meetings between the young couple, who met at the bridge, on the pond, and sometimes at home with Marie's parents. By spring, they were ready to marry. Don Carlos, Marie's father, announced the marriage for Thursday, 29 March 1900. The newspaper reported a lovely wedding, complete with "Wagnerian music" and the Wolseys, a local family, singing a lilting tune to "guitar accompaniment" in their "usual pleasing style." The couple reportedly started their marriage "as in a bower of roses."⁴ Their only regret was the absence of a temple sealing, so coveted by young Mormon couples to ensure their marriage for time and on into eternity.

After their marriage, Elvie continued working in the mines. To save money, letters were often hand-delivered by friends and neighbors going back and forth to town. To deliver a letter for Marie, her

father once entered the Black Diamond mine, where he was struck by the blackness of the mine. Elvie, however, could make \$5.50 a day, which was enough to pay the bills and prepare for their first baby.

The letters between them are revealing. Marie, for example, was fairly self-conscious. Though she was always regarded as a beautiful woman, she felt that she was plain of face. Elvie's response to her concerns was, "I never cared much for fashion plated or drugstore complexions. I believe that Marie looks well enough for me."⁵ Throughout their separation, Elvie deeply missed Marie. "I dream of my Darling almost every night. . . ."⁶

Knowing that Marie was expecting their first child, he wrote: "I know that should you get hurt now you would never be strong and healthy again, but perhaps an invalid as long as you may live. You can't be too careful any how." His concerns were not only for her health, but for the child as well: "Cultivate in yourself whatsoever you desire to see in your offspring; for the thoughts, actions, desires, and appetites of the mother is inherited by her children. Be very careful that you never get melancholy or vexed, take plenty of exercise, practice music, read good wholesome literature or something that is ennobling and elevating to the mind, for one's posterity is influenced by every thought of its mother." Elvie often waxed eloquent, as in the following: "When should a child's education begin?" The philosopher's answer, "Two thousand years before the child is born."⁷

That their love was growing and maturing can be seen in Elvie's words just before Christmas. "When I wrote you the little poem 'Love is like a tree' I, at that time, thought that I did really know what love is. But I had no conception of it then as compared with the present time."⁸

Separation was so hard for the young couple that it was not long before Elvie decided to leave the mines and homestead a dry farm. The home on the farm was little more than a shanty, and the country was so vast and sparsely settled that people leaving from Elvie's land could travel two thousand miles without seeing a fence. The plains looked like an ocean of waving grass. Elvie Jr. recalled a time when he looked out at his father's lake and thought it had dried up because it appeared so black. As he ran to see what had happened,

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Marie Yancey and daughter Rose Marie

the whole surface of the lake began to move, then exploded into a
black sky of flying ducks and geese.

The winters were extremely cold, and came so quickly with
their violent hailstorms that often the beautiful wheat crops were
entirely wiped out when not yet ripe enough to harvest. At the same
time, the growing season was so short that it was impossible to grow
a variety of vegetables or fruits.

After giving birth to three sons, Marie at last presented Elvie Sr.
with a baby daughter on 12 September 1906. They named her Rose
Marie Yancey. Elvie Jr., a young boy of four at her birth, would
remember for many years "how beautiful [Rose] was sweetly lying
in Mamma's arms; how proud Papa was, after having three sons, to
have a lovely daughter."

Life was hard for the young family. Elvie Jr. recalled that "[hav-
ing] very little income, [Father] tried to make some money on the

*Rose Marie and Marion Yancey*

side doing carpenter work. One time Father went off doing carpentry, and Mother insisted on doing the harrowing. I remember Mother hitched up the horses, and she was seven months pregnant. One of the horses got frightened and started to run away. She got tangled in the lines, and was dragged for some distance. She started having labor pains, and Father came home and took her to Cardston. There Marion was born."

Marion, born three years after Rose Marie, was her dearest and closest friend. The two sisters loved each other enormously. "She would help me and care for me. She was a great teacher," said Marion. "I loved her dearly . . . because she made everything seem right for me. She was so bright. She helped me with my studies, but mostly she'd tell me I was beautiful, that I was smart, that my hair was the prettiest. I knew all along that she was the beautiful one, but she made me feel that I was. And I think she really thought it was true. . . ." ¹⁰

Even later in life, it was painful for the two to be apart. Rose Marie often wrote Marion from New York and other distant locations, pleading, "Please come for Thanksgiving" or for Christmas, or what ever the occasion was. ¹¹

Growing up, the two girls slept together in the same bed every



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For the two to be apart. Rose Marie, New York and other distant locations for "Thanksgiving" or for Christmas, together in the same bed every

night until the day Rose Marie was married, and Rose Marie often read Marion stories. Said Marion, "We would always fold ourselves together, and I would snuggle into that sweet, nice, warm sister. She would put her arm around me. She acted like that was the loveliest privilege in the world."

As a girl, Rose Marie loved to read. "She read nearly every book in Cardston," said Marion. Since electricity was so expensive, lights were only allowed on at certain times, and the family rule allowed no electricity on in the bedrooms. But Rose would quietly turn on the light so she could read, shading the light with the blanket so Marion would not be disturbed.

Throughout her childhood, Rose was given tasks sometimes beyond her years. When she herself was not even four years old, she was caring for her brothers and sisters, both older and younger than herself. Said Elvie Jr., "We knew we were to take care of her, but it wasn't long before she was taking care of us."

On one occasion, Rose and Marion went sleigh riding with a neighborhood friend. The older girls were so busy talking that they didn't see little Marion start down a steep hill. As Marion gained momentum, she grew frightened, and a stray dog who chased after her down the hill scared her even worse.

As Marion screamed in terror, Rose raced after her, but she couldn't catch the sleigh until Marion at last came to an abrupt and painful halt by running into a barbed-wire fence. The barbs went through her clothes, and she carried the scars throughout her life.

Rose Marie was brokenhearted as she took Marion back to their mother. She felt that somehow it was all her fault, and that she had failed in her responsibility to care for her sister.

Rose also took Marion to school on her first day. Marion, however, was so frightened that she ran home at recess and made up a story about the boys tripping her. When Rose Marie came home at noon, Marie told her to go back to school and tell the teacher what the boys had done to Marion.

"I was scared to death that she was going to tell the teacher and I'd get whipped for lying," said Marion. But Rose Marie understood Marion's fear and simply stayed by her side at school. Rose Marie's protective instincts for Marion, and for others, continued throughout both of their lives.

As she grew older, Rose Marie hurried to complete her school studies early in the year so she could spend most of her time helping her mother and father make a living for the family. She always knew her support was sorely needed. It never occurred to Rose that she worked harder and longer than most other children. She matured quickly, and in spite of her naturally buoyant nature, she grew up with a reserved side to her personality. At times, she was deeply contemplative.

From a very early age, Rose Marie learned to be prayerful about her world. One year on the fourth of July, the family could see a violent hailstorm advancing across the valley. The children were frightened, for they could see the storm approaching. Elvie was away doing carpentry work, so Marie gathered the children together. They knelt in prayer and asked that the storm be stayed. Together they watched as the storm approached. It came right to their fence, then turned and passed exactly along the fence line, never touching their crops. These early experiences influenced Rose Marie so deeply that she always depended on prayer to direct her life. Through the years she came to understand and completely trust in God.

Many favorite stories of Rose Marie's childhood were her experiences with prayer. She often told of the time she and her little friend got lost, and the two knelt down beside their doll buggies. They told Father in Heaven that they were lost, and asked if he would please take them home. When they stood up, they knew exactly where to go. Another time, Rose Marie felt something terrible was going to happen to her family. She climbed out of her bed and told Heavenly Father "that He must not let it happen!" She later learned that her mother had been on the verge of total collapse because of her heavy workload. Rose's prayers had strengthened her mother, helping to avert a tragedy. Rose always told about the time the family needed money so badly that she prayed and prayed they would be able to sell their horse. The horse had a terrible temperament, but it was all they had to sell. A man came and offered them \$100 for the horse, bad temperament and all. The amount was exactly what the family needed.

Her grandparents recognized Rose's goodness even at this early age. Grandma Hyde always told Marie that she must prepare for

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Rose to die young, because a child that good could not be expected to live. Marie actually believed for quite some time that her daughter would die. Years later during an interview, Rose Marie laughed and said, "I guess I got bad enough to live."¹²

Marriage for eternity is greatly desired by faithful Mormons, and is considered such a sacred ordinance that it is only performed in a temple of God. For years it was something that Marie and Elvie had longed for. In 1908, they were finally able to take their four small children—Elvie Jr., Oliver, Hugh, and little Rose Marie—and return to Salt Lake City for this important sealing ordinance. This time, instead of riding in covered wagons, Marie rode on the train with her family. Rose Marie was only a toddler at the time, and the family in Utah was charmed by her, calling her the most beautiful child they had ever seen. Elvie Jr. was deeply touched by the beautiful temple and the sealing ceremony where the family was dressed in beautiful white clothing. He recalled meeting new relatives and was impressed with the pears and apples he could pick off the trees in Utah, something he had never before seen.

Another sacred ordinance for Mormons is baptism. According to Mormon doctrine, children cannot be held accountable for their choices until the age of eight, so baptism in the Mormon Church is never performed prior to that time. Children preparing for baptism are taught the sacredness of the experience so that they will always remember and cherish the promises and covenants made during the baptism ordinance. Young Marion remembers when she walked with her family down to Lee's Creek, just outside of Cardston, to witness Rose Marie's baptism. Marion held Rose Marie's little umbrella that had been given to her as a gift, and Rose Marie went under the water and came up looking as beautiful as she had before going under. Years later, Marion could still remember the umbrella and "how beautiful Rose looked."

Rose Marie's years in Cardston were filled with good experiences. The summers were rich with the beauties of wild geese, mountain grouse, deer and elk, and the fields were full of waving grass and a hundred varieties of flowers. Rose Marie would often go out into the wild flowers and sit for hours to think. The family was happy although they were poor, fruit and vegetables were scarce,

and the winters were unbelievably cold and long. But it was here that Elvie and Marie began their family; here they nurtured and loved each other. In the future finances would improve, but there was never a happier time for Rose Marie. Later, she would intentionally block out some painful parts of her life, even when interviewed by historians. But she always loved to tell about Cardston, because it was a happy memory.

Notes

1. Family History of William Hyde, n.p., n.d., p. 45.
2. Marie Yancey, Personal History, n.d.
3. William Elvie Yancey, letter to Marie Hyde. William's letters to Marie are dated 22 October 1899 through 9 January 1900 (Clark Coal Mine). Hereafter referred to as Yancey Letters.
4. *Cardston News*, 30 March 1900. (Rose Marie frequently collected news clippings, but she did not not always note dates or page numbers.)
5. Yancey letters.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. William Elvie Yancey, Jr., typed manuscript from interviews with the authors, 29 August 1988. All subsequent comments from William Elvie Yancey are taken from this source.
10. Marion Yancey Heilner, typed manuscript from interviews with the authors, 13 February 1988. All subsequent comments from Marion Heilner are taken from this source unless otherwise noted.
11. Rose Marie Reid to Marion Heilner, letter dated 13 February 1954 (New York City).
12. Rose Marie Reid, Oral History, p. 24.