

Ella Louise Cathcart Ames McLeod

by Kelley Lee Ames Olsen

Ella Louise Cathcart was born February 13, 1933 at Memorial Hospital in Cheyenne, Wyoming. She was the only daughter of Florence Albert Cathcart and Margaret Louise Steiger. Her earliest recollection of Wyoming was going on hunting trips with her dad when she was two or three years old. He would walk, carrying her on his shoulders. She shot a rabbit with a 22 when she was five years old.

Woolworths was the biggest store in Cheyenne. There were no shopping centers or malls. "The fun place to go was the Union Pacific Depot. You could make little disks on a machine and put your name on them, there were games you could play, and you could watch the trains come in and go out. It was a fun place to go."

She lived on the edge of town. It was a new housing project so all of the houses looked alike except they were different colors. Her dad worked as a meat cutter at Safeways. That's where they bought all their groceries. Across from the Safeway store was the old Pioneer Bar. When her grandfather came up to visit he would spend the day at the bar while her dad worked. Grandpa was a German man in his eighties with no teeth. He was afraid of modern plumbing and "when he had to go to the bathroom he went to the bathroom at the curb and always got arrested. That's

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true!"

She attended the Methodist church in Cheyenne. It was torn down a few years ago. The only other church she remembers in town was a beautiful Catholic Cathedral. Its still there today.

Louise's Grandmother died of cancer and was buried in Cheyenne. She was in the second grade so wasn't allowed to attend the funeral. "I remember it vividly because nobody was sad. She had suffered so bad. It was such a relief to have her finally at peace. But, I just wanted my grandma."

She went to kindergarten at a little school called Park. She attended Alta Vista in first grade. Then a new school, Finsher, was built closer to her house and she finished grade school there. The schools were much stricter then than they are now. "Children were to be seen and not herd. You were told what you were to believe and their was no nonsense to be broached. You weren't to have an opinion of your own in any way shape or form." If you misbehaved you would stay after school and get locked in a closet or any other numerous punishments. "Of course the very worst punishment was a spanking by the principle."

During her grade school years playing pretend was a big thing. "We pretended everything: cowboys and indians, Tarzan and Jane, Bambi and his mother, what ever the movie was on Saturday that's what you fantasized for all week. I , probably see more fantasy there then I do in young people

today." They also played dodge ball; You draw a big circle and one person gets inside. Everybody tries to hit you with the ball, they throw it back and forth and you jumped it or dodged it. Some of the other games they played were jump rope, hopscotch, and flying kites. "Making your own kites and flying them was a big sport."

Sex education was not to be broached in school. "In eighth grade I finally had a sex class and the teacher was fired because he introduced it." They received lectures about how you got pregnant and why you should not. The only type of birth control ever mentioned was to abstain from sex.

Girls were required to wear dresses even on the coldest days. The playground was divided. "There was a boys side and a girls side. You weren't allowed to cross the line. The only time we were allowed to intermingle as far as play was concerned was when we were under direct supervision. When we went out and played a game there was a teacher there." This was hard for Louise since she lived in a neighborhood of boys and her best friends were boys yet at school she was not allowed to cross with the lines and play with the boys.

Louise didn't have any chores around the house. Her mother was a compulsive cleaner and nobody ever did anything good enough for her. "My mother was the type of person that when the Easter Bunny came to our house he left the eggs on

little pieces of wax paper." She was allowed to rake the yard and things like that, but never did any work in the house. "Even God would have taken his shoes off before he came into our house."

While in the third grade Louise had her tonsils out. Not because they needed to come out, but because everyone had there tonsils taken out in the third grade. "It was a very traumatic thing, you had to eat jello for a month before you went in to have surgery." When she went into the hospital they put her to sleep, took her tonsils out and sent her home that night.

Louise also had Old Fashion Scarlet Fever as a child. "It was terrible. I was very very sick, spent six weeks flat on my back in bed and under quarantine." She was the only person in the state of Wyoming or Colorado who had Scarlet Fever at the time.

Often times discipline for Louise meant being grounded to the house. "Which living in a clean house like I did was terrible because you weren't allowed to play with things because you got them out of place." The very worst punishment she had was being threatened that her dad would spank her. Though he never did. Her mother would backhand her. "It was always over some little thing. It was never over the big things. When I look back on it I think it was always the straw that broke the camels back."

While in the sixth grade Louise's parents got a

divorce. "Dad was in the army, but before he had gone into the army he had met this women. I thing the most traumatic thing to me was that she was only five years older that I was and she was expecting a baby. At that time when this sort of thing happened the man was forced to marry the women and mom divorced him. The army brought him back in handcuffs. I remember mom taking me to the train depot to see him and he was in chains and he was crying."

While in the seventh grade her mother remarried and the family moved to Briggsdale, Colorado. Her new stepfather, Cleo Kimbroough (Kim) had two sons. Marvin who was two years older than her and Dale who was her age. Her mother and Kim had a little girl Flora May. Kim ran a garage in Briggsdale for about six months and then they bought a ranch. "We became very pore."

Her new school was small. There were several grades within each class. The kids at school all shared a closeness. Everybody got along and they did alot of things as a group. "There was alot of good fun things, sleigh rides, ice skating parties, picnics and baseball games. Things kids could do and really have fun doing." There was always a dance on Saturday nights. These were always well chaperoned, but "the more trips the adults made out to the car the more lenient they got."

Louise was allowed to start dating when she was fourteen. Her brother dated and there was no way for her to

go anyplace unless he took her and the only way he would take her was if she had a date. "Dating just meant a way to go places and have fun."

The boys always had to come in and meet her parents before she could go out with them. Kim is an alcoholic and was drinking heavily then. "He would bring those pore boys in and ask them what their intentions were and it was terribly embarrassing for most of the boys." However Kim was not half as bad as Marvin. "It was by stepbrother who really took care of me." Though Louise had several dates during this time she seldom went out with a boy more than six times. The boys did not behave as Marvin thought they should. He would beat them up and drag her home if she went out with someone he did not like.

While living on the ranch Louise had several chores. She got up at four a.m. to take care of the livestock. After school there were more chores to be done. Work on a ranch never ends. When I asked her if this was a change from her life in Cheyenne she replied: "Yes a big switch. I was required to work very hard and for awhile I felt very put upon. But it had its good points, it was fun."

There was no indoor plumbing on the ranch. Their water supply came from a well dug next to the house.

The bar in Brigsdale was the type you could take the whole family to. It was the same at the Saturday night dances. "On the stage they would have bales of hay and the

kids would be put to bed up on the stage so mom and dad could dance."

As a teenager the fun thing to do was to go on a date to Cheyenne or Greeley and see a movie. "Of course nobody had much money so you maybe got to do that three times a year, but it was fun." At school the classes would earn money all year long and take a class trip at the end of the year. "One of the biggies was to go to an amusement park in Denver."

They lived fourteen miles from school so the kids had a Model A pickup to get back and forth in. Her brother always got to drive. They were only given enough gas to make the trip to school and back every week. If they wanted to go anywhere else they had to figure out how to get the gas. "We tried just about everything and it would run on just about everything; dad's booze, mothballs."

They went bankrupt on the ranch and moved back to Cheyenne her senior year. Kim became a car salesman for Nash (a make of car), the revolutionary car. The seats layed down in it. Her mother occasionally worked at the Palimenee club, but for the most part she was still a housewife.

During her senior year Louse worked at the train depot, behind the convenience counter. She worked six days a week and earned fifty-five cents a hour. "When I did find time to go out it was usually with people who were out of school."

We went to the State Line or to Little Bear and you danced and drank."

Louise was married in March of her senior year. They decided to get married at midnight one night. Colorado had a three day waiting period so they drove to Raton, New Mexico. "We thought we had to have a ring. I was married with a ten cent ring out of Woolworths." They lived in a one room apartment above the old Casses Department store and shared a bathroom with six other families. Her mother didn't approve of the marriage. "Mother thought it was the most terrible thing I ever did. He was very wild, rode a motorcycle and did alot of things she didn't approve of, like drank alot and faught. Probably the worst thing was that he raced motorcycles and to my mother that was a terrible thing."

When her mother found out she was going to get married her mother told her that since she was a virgin she could not possibly get pregnant for two months. "I was back from getting married three weeks when she took me to the doctor and had him fit me with a diaphragm and explain it to me. Unfortunately I was already Pregnant." Louise graduated in June three months pregnant. She gave birth to Edith Louise December 24, 1951 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. "I remember the first thing I said to her (her mother) after the baby was born was nine months three hours and thirty-three minutes."

After getting married Louise and Bill were very family

oriented. "Our social time was spent trying to please both families. Spending enough time with each so they wouldn't think we were slighting them."

Bill worked in the baggage department for the Union Pacific the first four years of their marriage. Then he had a mail contract. He trucked the mail between the Post Office and the trains. Louise helped a little with the mail contract, but her big job was taking care of their growing family.

David William was born three years after their first child. Then three years later James Edward was born. "The old saying applied: You married a woman then kept her bare foot and pregnant to keep her home."

Bill and Louise left Wyoming in 1960 and moved to Portland, Oregon. Bill went to work as a mechanic. They had two more children in Oregon. Kelley Lee in 1962 and Charles E. in 1965. Louise was divorced in 1968.

Louise worked as a secretary for a year and a half. She then became very ill with infectious hepatitis. During her time in the hospital she met a colored prostitute. Out of this meeting she landed a job with the Portland Police Department. Louise went from working vice and undercover on the street to a position inside the jail. "I made very good money which is what kept me in it." While in Portland Louise married Tom McLeod. The marriage was dissolved a short time later. Her career in corrections advanced. She

picked alot of college credits during this time and taught several college courses in law enforcement. She was eventually offered the job as Deputy Warden of the Women's Prison in Evanston and moved back to Wyoming to accept that position.

In 1982 due to stress and on doctors orders she left the prison and became a counselor in Chemical Abuse.

HOLIDAYS

"Holidays were big then. The only time you got to eat turkeys was on holidays" Christmas, New Years, Easter, and Thanksgiving always meant a big family gathering. There would be twenty to thirty people for dinner. Everyone cooked and brought food. During Christmas there was caroling. "If you were a person that stayed home the carolers came, you always invited them in for hot chocolate and they would stand in your living room and sing.

MINORITIES

The blacks lived in one section of Cheyenne, the mexicans another, and the whites got all the rest. "In the black section of town there was a little white baptist church and I can remember Sundays in the afternoon we would go down and just park and listen to them sing because their music was so pretty." Most of the blacks worked at the Union Pacific Depot.

The whites and blacks did not mix. In the first grade Louise's best friend was black. Her name was Mary Lou. "I

loved her and I had many black eyes over her. One day my mother came to pick me up at school and I introduced her to Mary Lou and I was never allowed to play with her after that and that's because she was black. "Children were not allowed to mix with other races. "We would have if the grownups had left us alone we had no problems untill mothers started interfering. It was really a sad thing because she was all alone and none of us were allowed to play with her."

FRONTIER DAYS

Cheyenne was usually not a violent town except during Frontier Days. "The town was wide open. The bars stayed open all night and people drank in the street. There was alot of fighting and carrying on." Louise always had to be in by nine o'clock because thats when it started getting rough.

BLIZZARD OF 49

"It was like the world had ended." Their family had went bankrupt on the ranch and her mom and dad were back in Cheyenne. Louise was staying at her grandmothers ranch and their was a neighbor boy down playing. About ten o'clock it got real quiet. It was scary because it never gets quiet in the country. They woke up her grandma. She took them inside and built a big fire. By the next morning the wind was howling and the snow was blowing so hard you could not see your hand in front of your face. "We were very fortunate that my grandmother was with us and she had lived

thru blizzards like that before. She tied lariat ropes around are[✓] waist and sent us out to try and save the stock. You couldn't find anything. It was like an allian[✓] world. The landscape kept changing and your eye lids would freeze shut." The blizzard lasted three days and four nights. They were in a four room house and by the end of the blizzard there was only one room that the roof had not fallen in on. They had burnt all the furnature in the house except two chairs to stay warm. Because all the food in the house was in cans and had frooze her grandmother was afraid to let them eat it so they had been with out food for three days. When the blizzard was over the first thing they did was dig out the chicken house. It was under seven feet of snow. They killed two chickens so they could eat. All of their livestock had frooze except two calfs and two horses and the chickens. There were two hundred herferd hefferds that had drifted down from Cheyenne around the house. "They had lost their calfs during the storm and the after birth or sometimes the calf had froze as it was being expelled and other cattle had walked on that. These cattle were literally disbowled and they were dying. They were all around the house and they were crying. It was a horrible sound." On the second day after the storm a army plane came out and landed. They machine gunned all the cattle and then asked them what supplies they needed. The next day they came back and dropped then supplies. They were snow bound

for about eight weeks. "Many people lost their lives and thousands of livestock died."

WORLD WAR TWO

"It was fun at first. It was exciting." Everyone donated to the war effort. They collected paper and metal. People went without things that were rationed. "It was like everybody suddenly came together and were standing for one idea." The real trauma of war was not felt until the war had ended. "Probably the most traumatic thing for me was when I was thirteen and I went to the movies and saw a news reel about concentration camps and they were horrible. I can remember people throwing up in the isles and crying and sobbing and I was to." Louise's grandfather died while she was in the third grade. It was at the beginning of the war. His youngest son was on a battle ship in the harbor of San Francisco. "They wouldn't even let us tell him that his father had died." It was not until after the war was over that they found out that he was one of the first frog men and he was leaving on a secret mission. Once aboard he was not allowed to talk to anybody. A frog man was under water demolition, The American public did not know that such a thing existed until after the war.

"Out of the war came a different America." The men that had fought and died in the war were children. "You could no longer tell high school students that they didn't have a right to a opinion. They learned that if they could

fight and die for a country they certainly had a right to an opinion." Several marriages also dissolved after the war.

"Marriages had been based on the fact that men were going out to see and these weren't good sound reasons." During the war women had held down jobs that men had traditionally done. Women did not want to give up this right when the men came back. "It was the beginning of the female movement. I have rights to!"

BEST MEMORIES OF WYOMING

"Anytime that I've been in the mountains by a mountain lake. Those are all favorite memories. The beauty, the wide open spaces, being able to look up at the sky and feel like you can pluck a star. These are the things that keep me in Wyoming."

FUTURE

Louise thinks that the women's movement will eventually mellow out. That there is a place for women in today's society. "I think there has to be a meeting of the minds, that women and men our people. And that when they join to have children it should be a shared responsibility."

I will end this history of Ella Louise Cathcart Ames Mcleod with her last words of advice to family and friends: "Every person has to be there own person whether male or female. If you always live by what is right to you, you'll

be alright. And remember that nobody can turn there back on
God and survive."

NAME: Ella Louise Cathcart Ames McLeod

PRESENT ADDRESS: P.O. Box 1244 Pinedale, Wyoming

- 1.-Present profession or occupation: Clinical Coordinator / Counselor
2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates): D. Warden 79-82 - Corrections 68-79
3. Date of birth: 2/13/33 Place of birth: Cheyenne WY.
4. Date of moving to Wyoming: 1/79 also born in WY
- 5.-Full name of parents (give mother's maiden name)
Margaret Louise Steiger
Flourance Albert Cathcart
6. Names of brothers and sisters (and to whom married):
1/2 Sister Flora May Kimbrough Thomas Harrington
1/2 Brothers Richard, Peter, Charles, Jerry, Paul see next page
Step Brothers Marvin & Doyle Kimbrough
7. Schools attended (give dates):
see next page
8. Places of residence in Wyoming (give dates):
Cheyenne 1933-1947 - 1950 - 1959
Evansville 1979-1983 Pinedale 1983 - now
9. Military service (dates, awards, area served, rank, etc.):
10. Political offices held (give dates):
11. Political affiliation:
Vote for the person
12. Religious affiliation:
Catholic
13. Marriage (spouse's name, date and place of marriage):
William Dale Ames 1951 Rafan N. Mexico
Thomas Kay McLeod 1970
14. Children (names, dates of birth, grandchildren, etc.):
Edith Louise 12/51 Charles E 7/65
David William 4/53 Laura Ann Bales 10/79
James Edward 1/59 Shawn Michelle Ames 10/79
Kelley Lee 9/62 William Ames 9/79
Brevard 10/82
- 15.-List of clubs and societies of which you are a member:
American Correctional Association
Wyoming Association of Abuse Specialists

Louise McLeod
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6, Richard - Mona
Pete -
Charles - Janet
Marvin - Mary
Dagte -

7, Kindergarten - Park 1938 Cheyenne
Alta Vista 1st, Cheyenne 1939
Fincher 2-6 Cheyenne 1940-41-42-43-44-45
Cheyenne Jr. High 7 1946
Briggsdale School Briggsdale Colo 1947-1950
Cheyenne H.S. 1951
1960-1978 - Attended college courses at O, Portland St
Chenuta.