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'Little Rose,' last grandchild of Camarillo's founder, dies

Rosita Marvel remained proud of her family's roots

By Anne Kallas
Special to the Acorn



BEAUTY AND GRACE—Rosita Camarillo Petit Marvel, at left, always made sure she looked her best, daughter Suzi Barnes said. In the vintage photo above, Marvel, center, is pictured with sister Gloria Petit Longo, right, and aunt Carmen Camarillo Jones.

Rosita Camarillo Petit Marvel, the last surviving grandchild of Camarillo founding father Adolfo Camarillo, died Jan. 17 in Elko, Nev. She was 91.

According to her eldest daughter, Suzi Barnes, Marvel is best remembered for her grace. She was a lady who always wore red lipstick and made sure she looked her best.

"She loved her red lipstick. She was always fixed up. I don't care how sick she was, she would always dress and wear her jewelry," Barnes said from Elko. "She was completely comfortable in her skin. She would always have a smile on her face. She focused on her faith and her love of God."

Marvel was born in Camarillo on April 9, 1925, and grew up on Rancho Rosal, where the elementary school of the same name is now located.

According to Beth Miller, a docent at Camarillo Ranch House, Marvel was named Little Rose, or Rosita, after her mother, Rosa Avelina Camarillo. The name also reflected a lifelong love of the fragrant flower that both mother and daughter shared. Rancho Rosal was noted for



Courtesy of the Camarillo family

the roses all around the house, including a rose arbor.

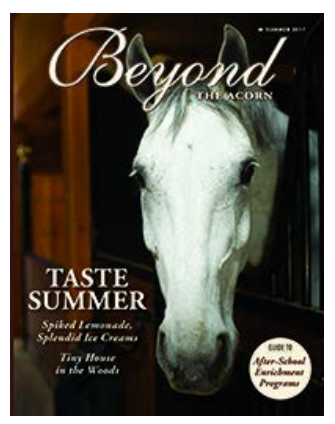
Marvel's mother was one of seven children of Adolfo and Isabel Camarillo. She married Alfred Petit, son of Justin and Frances Petit, and the couple built a ranch on land they were given as a wedding present by Adolfo Camarillo.

"Rosita's birthday cake would be decorated with tiny pink tea roses. They were her favorite," Miller said. "Even when she went to Nevada, she would grow roses. And if she wasn't growing flowers, she was painting them."


Marvel married Thomas Jenkins Marvel on Dec. 28, 1945, in Camarillo's St. Mary Magdalen Chapel, which was built by Adolfo's brother, Juan Camarillo.

The reception was at Camarillo Ranch, and the couple soon moved to Nevada where Thomas Marvel had a ranch. The Marvels had seven children, all of whom were brought up knowing about their Ventura County ties.

"She was very proud of her background," Barnes said. "We kids




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used to spend at least a month at the Camarillo Ranch in the summer. We were pretty well informed about the Petit side and Camarillo sides of our family.”

Rosita Marvel was brought up around horses, often riding with her aunt, Carmen Camarillo Jones. Together with Marvel's sister, Gloria, and various cousins, they would ride the famous Camarillo white horses in parades around Southern California, including the

Tournament of Roses Parade and Santa Barbara Fiesta, Miller said.

Those skills translated well to ranch life in rural Nevada, Barnes said, adding that her mother's horse-riding fun soon gave way to the everyday work of raising seven children.

“We would spend the majority of our summers at cow camp. She would drag all of us out there,” Barnes said. “We all rode horses. I can't imagine how much work it was doing all of that laundry on a washboard. But she was always such a lady. Even though we were out in the desert, she was doing all the things you do on a ranch.”

Niki Chopra Richardson, public relations director of the Camarillo Ranch Foundation, said members of Marvel's family still come to Camarillo to celebrate the late Adolfo Camarillo's birthday and visit the family's 1892 Queen Anne Victorian home, which is open to the public.

Marvel's husband of 70 years, Thomas, died in October 2016. She was also preceded in death by her parents, Alfred and Rosa Petit; sisters Inez Petit and Gloria Petit Longo; and her brother, U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. John Petit.

She is survived by her seven children (Tom Marvel, Suzy Barnes, Mike Marvel, Sally Freeman, Joe Marvel, Pete Marvel and Amy Seifert), 28 grandchildren and nearly 40 great-grandchildren, plus numerous nieces and nephews.

[Return to top](#)



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