



Ruth Vinyard

September 18, 1924 - June 13, 2012

I was born Sept. 18, 1924-that makes me almost 73 (when written) years old and I'm proud of it-glad to be here. I was born in Leadwood, MO. a town of about 250, south of St. Louis. This was a lead mining area. In a radius of about 25 miles there were several other towns just like ours. These mines are all closed now. They were underground mines-after the 4:00 whistle in the afternoon you would see the men walking home-tired, dirty and carrying the empty lunch pail, still wearing the hard hat with carbide lantern attached. I always thought that was such a sad sight and I was so glad my Dad did not work in the mines. If you saw the movie "How Green was my Valley" and remember the Tennessee Ernie Ford song "I owe my soul to the company store"-that was typical of our town. One of my grandfathers worked in the mines for 60 years from the time he was a boy. My other grandfather had a nice farm on the edge of town, he was also a blacksmith and vulcanized tires-remember that word? Vulcanized? He and that grandmother raised 10 children so our town was full of Penberthys'. I was raised in a Christian home; my Father and Mother were very active in the church. In our town there were 4 churches, ours being the Church of God, there was also Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal. When I was about 13 there was a revival being held at our church and I accepted Christ into my life. This was during cold weather so we who were to be baptized had to wait until summer. We were dressed in white, held hands and walked out into the river while the church people sang. I remember my mother whispering to me-"now Ruthie don't you giggle"-I always

giggled when I was nervous. When I was young I had flaming red hair and a million freckles. I was a real daddy's girl then when I was 10 my brother was born. At this point my story shifts from "I" to "we". My husband, Mel, and I went to school together and started dating when I was in 9th grade. He was 2 years ahead of me in school so until I graduated he went to a nearby junior college. When I graduated I went to St. Louis and got a job and Mel entered Washington University. I was a good student and loved school and really wanted to go to college but my Mother saw the handwriting on the wall and said "you're just going to marry THAT Melvyn Vinyard" (here I digress a bit). (It seems that Mel was always THAT Melvyn Vinyard-in high school I couldn't have a bicycle unless I stopped going with THAT Melvyn Vinyard, consequently I always had to borrow my cousin's bike. It wasn't that my Mother disliked Mel, she did not like his father because he was in politics and sort of ran our town and besides-they went to the Methodist church). After about 2 years at Wash. University Mel enlisted in the US Air Force during WWII. After his indoctrination period in Santa Ana, Calif. I, for the first time on a train, went to Los Angeles then to Santa Ana where we were married in the base chapel in August 1943. For us those cadet years were such an adventure, we met so many wonderful young people and the government perks were great. Although it was frowned upon for Cadets to be married or to have a car on base. At some bases cadet wives were required to work in order to have base housing so at two training bases I worked on planes as they came in off the flight line. We were based at Bakersfield, Calif., Merced, Calif., Lincoln, Nebr., St. Paul, Minn., Ardmore, Okla., and Hayes, Kansas and Mel received his commission in Pecos, Texas. Then he trained as pilot on B-17 bombers. At age 21 he was flight captain and had a full crew and was preparing to go overseas to the European theatre when his command and crew were kept in the States as instructors. From B-17's his crew advanced to B-29 bombers as instructors. We were 10 months in Roswell, NM then to Hobbs, NM El Paso, Texas and Tampa, Fla. After getting out of the Air Force we went back to St. Louis where I worked until Mel graduated from Wash.

University. (In my life I have worked a total of about 4 years). At one point as a cadet we had a three day pass spent in San Francisco and we decided that we wanted to live there in the future. As companies came to interview the Washington University graduates Mel accepted a job with a company that would send us to S.F. We loaded everything we had into our 46 Ford convertible and started the next phase of our lives. We loved San Francisco and lived in the City for 2 years. While there I got my first driver's license, a written test then a drive up Telegraph Hill and angle park on the hill-now THAT was a time to giggle but I didn't dare. We moved down the peninsula and bought our first house and our first son was born there in 1951. We had now been married 8 years, I was 27 years old. 15 months later our second son was born and now we had moved to Sacramento, Calif. My husbands' job was wherever the company wanted to open a new office we went and stayed until it was running smoothly. From Sacramento we moved to Boise, Idaho for seven years then moved to Portland, Oregon. From Portland to Los Angeles, our home was in Pacific Palisades where our sons graduated from high school. One son went on to Univ. of Colorado then later graduated from UCLA, the other son graduated from Stanford. They are both healthy and very successful. From Pacific Palisades we moved to northern Calif. To Menlo Park which was the home office of Mel's company. Later, from Menlo Park we moved back to the Los Angeles area, this time to Rolling Hills on the Palace Verde Peninsula. We moved to Albuquerque in 1983. In all our moves my husband and I owned 10 homes and 2 vacation homes, one at Lake Tahoe, Calif., the other here in NM-Angel Fire. The longest we lived anywhere before coming to Albuquerque was 7 years in Boise. The company made moves easy for us and our boys adjusted easily. I was always interested in sports and was pretty good at the ones I pursued. I liked volley ball in school then later in my life I carried a good average in bowling. For many years we played golf-I was pretty good with a 15 handicap. I have not played golf since my husband died 4 years ago-we had such fun games, our abilities were about the same

and we usually had a wager on the game-who would do the shopping or clean the garage. I guess the sport I liked best was skiing, my husband was always on the ski patrol and we skied as a family. I skied for 42 years, quit at age 65-afraid to chance breaking something and I got tired of dressing in so many layers of clothes to keep warm. I always loved the feeling of being really close to God-when you get off the lift on top of the mountain and stand there before you start your run, you look out at the panoramic view, just sky and trees and clean white covered mountain-it's so quiet, you can't help but thank God for creating such beauty. I will tell you that I finally did get my own bicycle, when our sons got their first two-wheelers at ages 4 and 5 Mel surprised me by having new bikes for us also for Christmas. Then we rode as a family. I thank God that I have had such a good life, a happy marriage that lasted almost 50 years, 2 wonderful sons and now a 9 year old granddaughter. I recently gained two lovely college age step granddaughters. At two points in my life I feel the good Lord was really watching over us. While stationed at Hobbs we felt fortunate to get a new apartment, (2 rooms) it was in a row of storefronts that had been converted. We moved in on Saturday and had made a date to go to breakfast Sunday with the couple next door. Sunday morning that couple heard nothing through our paper thin walls and got no response when they knocked on our door so they called the landlord to open the door. Mel and I were unconscious so they immediately got us to the base hospital. The problem was a faulty gas water heater. After 2 days we went home and thinking everything was ok we decided to fix lunch so I opened a can of tomato soup and when I turned on the stove to heat the soup there was a big explosion and soup everywhere. We quickly gathered up what we could and left that place-soup dripping from the ceiling-and moved in with friends. Another time I think God was holding us especially in his care was our helicopter crash in Alaska. My husband's company wrote insurance on small planes and helicopters among other high risks and we were in Anchorage with 2 couples of our friends for a helicopter convention. The last day those companies wanted to entertain us so a large 10 passenger Sikorski was

loaded with gear and food and drinks and we were off for a day of sightseeing and the guys to fish in the beautiful streams. There were 2 of us gals along (one lady in our group hated flying so she would not go on the helicopter so we laughingly told her "if we don't come back-take care of our kids" never dreaming how true this might be). We set down twice by beautiful streams and the fellows fished, we ate lunch, it was a beautiful clear sunny day-but cold-it was October and we had all dressed warmly in ski pants, parkas and boots. After we took off in the afternoon to head back to Anchorage the pilot headed toward Mt. McKinley and I was taking pictures through the windows. Suddenly I heard a loud May Day, May Day and my husband was yelling for me to sit down and buckle up. Our helicopter was slipping sideways toward the ground, half upside down. This helicopter was equipped with pontoons and by some miracle we landed-right side up in a lake, surrounded by muskeg and trees. After catching our breath and finding everyone to be ok we decided to make the best of a bad situation so we ate more lunch. Our radio was out but our pilot thought someone may have heard our May Day and he knew his office personnel would be expecting us back before dark. We prepared to spend the night if necessary but after a few hours another helicopter, that had been further north to rescue some hunters, had heard our May Day and was searching for us. We were frantically waving two flashlights into the sky. That helicopter hovered over us and over a loud speaker told us to hold hands, walk quickly over the muskeg (which is a heavy grass that grows in water) and climb the rope ladder. We were drenched from that helicopter blowing up water as it hovered. We were all so emotionally exhausted, so uncomfortable in cold wet clothing-we and the hunters all smelled so bad, later the lights of Anchorage seemed so bright and beautiful. On the tarmac waiting and cheering were the people from the convention and our friend Nancy who was so happy to see her husband-and us-the parents of all those children. My husband retired at age 52 so we had wonderful times together until he died at age 69. We traveled extensively. We had spent a lot of time in England because his company worked closely with Lloyds of London. We now went to

most countries of the world and on several cruises. In our travels my favorites were Morocco and Egypt while Mel especially liked Thailand and the eastern block countries of Europe. We both really enjoyed 3 weeks in New Zealand. We never had a bad experience while traveling, no lost luggage or illness but we did get awfully tired of green, tough meat-and potatoes-and cucumbers our 10 days in Russia and we were very nervous when our bus broke down and had to be worked on all night so we could leave Russia before our visas expired. We met wonderful people, found the cultures of the different countries so interesting and had countless unusual experiences. Now I am content, in a lonesome sort of way, to count my blessings, enjoy my pretty good health, my home, my family and all my good friends. The friends in the Young at Heart Choir are so dear and singing with that group is so spiritually rewarding as well as being fun on trips. You members of this Golden Circle Class have been so supportive and caring and the love is so constant. I love you all-God bless you!

Tribute Wall

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“ Aunt Ruth, in my mind you are still that redheaded aunt that brought new stories into my life. Your conversations with my mother meant so much to her in these last years.

Linda Vinyard - September 30, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ On behalf of the French Family of Companies we want to express to you our deepest condolences.

Joel Chavez - July 05, 2012 at 12:00 AM