

I Am From...

I am from Gary and Alberta; Aroe and Ellen; Ken and Vada, and Evelyn; and Gwendolyn.

I am from red sandstone, yellow cottonwoods and silver-grey sagebrush.

From guitar players, harmony singers, moonshine-runners, upscale small-town storeowners, nurses, homemakers, and would-be graphic designers who drove busses instead.

I am from “cold cereal” only on birthdays, Shepherd Pie on Sunday (which I always refuse to eat and have to go hungry), and Mormon Gravy which shouldn’t even count as gravy ‘cause it is only flour and milk, salt and pepper.

I am from families of six or nine children and when you tell me that there are only four in your family, you are really telling me that your family doesn’t go to church.

I am from “I’m gonna wring your neck,” and “Quit crying or I’ll give you something to cry about.”

From Sunday school in the morning for two hours, Sacrament Meeting in the evening for two hours, and some kind of “go to church” every other night of the week except Monday, which is “family night” and we all pretend for a very long hour-and-a-half that we love each other and can get along.

I am from stormy skies building over the San Juan range and Quaking Aspens answering the dust of the high mountain, one-lane road we travel in the back of Grandpa’s pickup.

I am from women who are always angry or sad and men who are the bosses because they hold the Priesthood and that is the way God wants it.

I am from, “Go out to the garden and get me some peas for dinner,” which means we can sit in the warm red dirt and eat ourselves sick on peas in the pod as long as we bring some back for Grandma.

I am from, “Girls can get an education, but don’t use it unless your husband dies.”

I am from Mother’s Day and all the mothers are asked to stand up in church while the bishop counts slowly from one to whatever, and the women sit down if they don’t have that many kids until Sister Knapton is the only one left standing and she gets the bouquet of roses because she has nine kids, and that family is so very poor and I think that something is not right about all of this, but I can’t put my finger on what it is...

I am from Mom saying I can’t go barefoot until the snow is off the mountains, and I wait and I wait until it is almost school time again, and I realize the mountains always have snow on them and this is one of Mom’s tricks and I’m gonna go barefoot anyway, even though I know I’ll get a spanking.

I am from family reunions where Grandpa and all the uncles keep hugging me and there are so many uncles and it ALWAYS feels creepy, and no one else ever notices or thinks the jokes are too dirty, and maybe I’m just “too sensitive” like everyone always says.

I am from Sunday afternoons and lunch is over and Mom and Daddy always take a nap and we are supposed to play quietly, but how can you be quiet any longer when you already sat through church and you are just busting to giggle, and when Daddy has finally had enough he tears into all of us with a belt until we all learn that having fun hurts and not to do it anymore.

I am from time with Grammy and crocheting while she watches her stories on TV, and she asks me what I would like to eat and I really have a choice and she really listens, and the stars come through the windows at night and I feel peaceful.

I am from Dad telling me he has taken out a second mortgage on the house to pay for my wedding and I don’t know what wedding he is talking about and he tells me that he knows the guy I am dating is serious and I say I have known that for some time, but that I am not ready to

be married, and I am only 17 for Pete's sake and shouldn't I be the one to decide who and when I will marry if I marry at all, which I am starting to think is not for me, and I am starting to see how everyone else sees my future as a good little Mormon girl in Utah.

I am from leaves turning, a cool morning breeze promising a season of change, and the mountains I love in my rearview mirror.

Lori Weatherholtz

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