



# **Marvin Ray Tolman**

**18 February 1914**

Compiled by Helen Marie Tolman Smith



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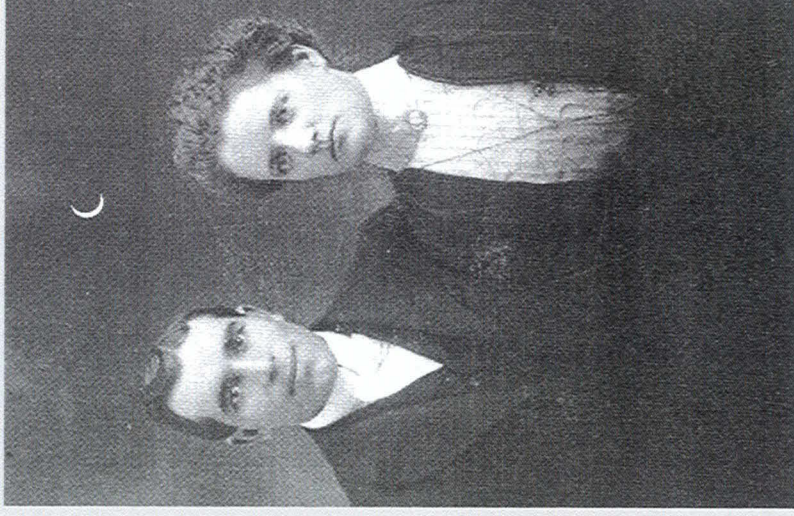
Compiled by Helen Marie Tolman Smith

*“On February 18,  
1914, in Cassia  
County, Idaho, I, as  
Nephi of old, was born  
of goodly parents,  
William Alvin Tolman  
and Hattie Naomi  
Tolman . . . I was  
number six in line  
which put me in the  
middle spot of three  
older sisters and two  
older brothers and two  
younger sisters and  
three younger  
brothers.”*

Tolman children by  
birth: Naomi, Emma,  
Armenia, William, Alma,  
Marvin, Alvin, Wendell,  
Bernice, Hattie and  
Noel.

Photos: William Alvin Tolman &  
Hattie Naomi Tolman.

Marvin Ray Tolman



**Marvin was born on February 18th 1914, delivered by a country  
doctor in a log house with a dirt floor to William Alvin Tolman and  
Hattie Naomi Tolman.**



*“Although the years I was growing-up were referred to as “hard times”, for the most part, I never realized it was hard because we took care of ourselves. We raised what we needed and sold or traded what we raised for what we needed.”*

**Growing up on a farm taught Marvin to work hard by growing vegetables, tending animals, chopping wood and doing his part in his family.**

Photo: Marvin Ray Tolman, about age 2.

*"The ice to make the ice cream came from our own ice house, which after being cut from the frozen canal in winter was carefully stored in sawdust and remained solid through the summer."*



**One of Marvin's favorite snacks was popcorn and homemade ice cream was a very special treat.**

Photo: Marvin and younger brother, Alvin.

*An incident involving his brother, Alma, a horse and the clothesline. "Being the younger brother, Alma didn't care to have me tagging along with him all the time. But one day, Mother made him let me ride with him. He decided he would still have the last say in the matter. With the horse at a full gallop, he ran under the clothesline and I realized too late what was going to happen and was brushed off the horse by the clothesline. My pride was hurt more than anything."*

Marvin: front - far right.



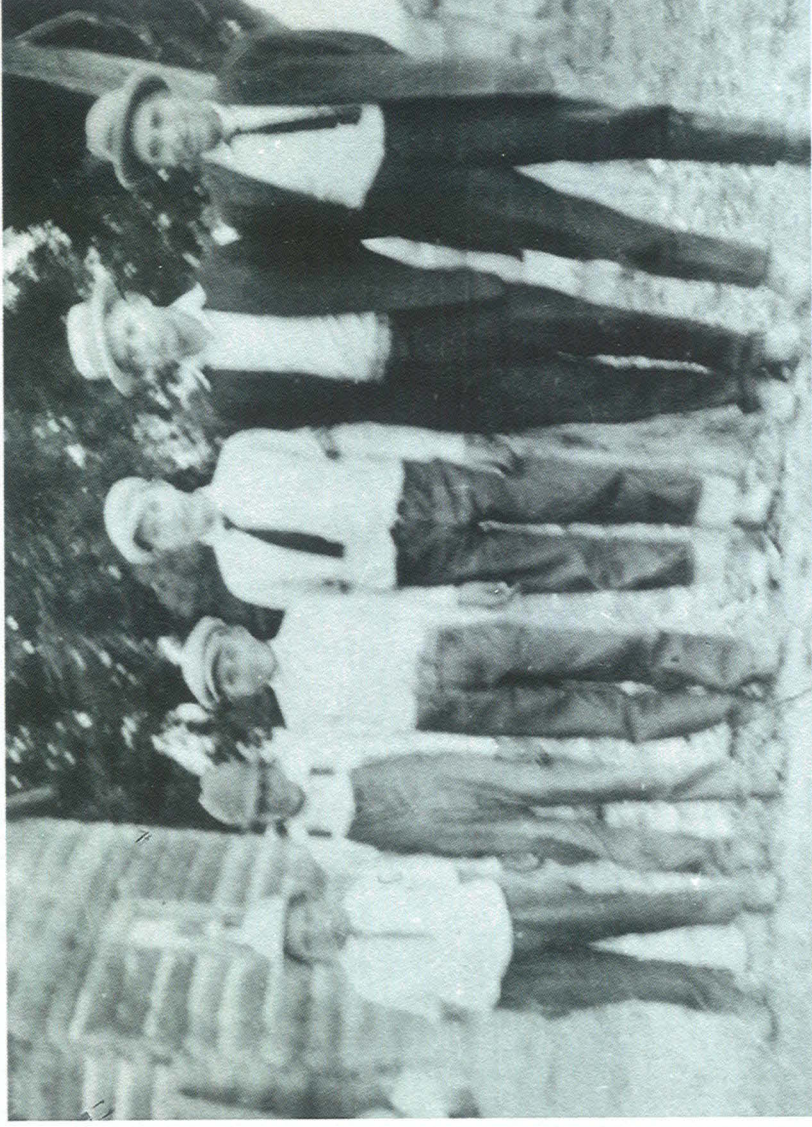
**Marvin and his family were very dependent on the horse for transportation and work. Horse and buggy was the main way of traveling to town, to church and sometimes to school.**

*“Since most of the fields were not fenced, we had to be sure to keep the cows out of the (crop)fields, especially the alfalfa. One day we became so involved in our favorite past time of swimming that the cows wandered into the alfalfa. We were fortunate that they didn’t bloat, but we did learn a lesson in responsibility.”*



**As a youngster, one of Marvin’s jobs was to herd animals in the field. He didn’t mind herding cows, but he didn’t like herding sheep.**

*“When I went to school the teachers were allowed to punish us when we disobeyed and usually it was with switch or willow. When I was going to get a spanking, I would hook my legs around the legs of the desk and the teacher couldn’t get me out. So sometimes, I got out of my due punishment.”*



**Marvin and his brothers and sisters walked to the one-room school in Marion Idaho.**

Photo: (L to R) Tolman Boys:  
Wendell, Alvin, Marvin, Alma, Bill  
and Grandpa William A. Tolman



*“One outstanding  
football  
experience was  
playing football on  
a lighted field for  
the first time; at  
the high school in  
Jerome, Idaho.*

*I also enjoyed  
Seminary, for  
which we received  
high school  
credits. I think it  
was special that we  
had our own  
seminary  
building.”*



**In high school, Marvin really enjoyed shop, agriculture and seminary classes. He played on the football team, as a guard or tackle.**

Photo: Seminary Graduates,  
1931-32. Marvin Tolman; back  
far right

*“During my high school years I dropped out of school for one year when Bill went on a mission to Scotland. The whole family was proud to have him go and we all wanted to do what we could so he would have the money he needed. We raised potatoes for a company to help earn the extra money needed. I helped in farming the potatoes. It was a testimony to me that the Lord will provide if a young man is willing to go and serve Him in the mission field.”*



**One year Marvin didn't attend high school, instead he stayed home, working to help earn money for his brother, Bill, who was serving a mission in Scotland.**

Photo: (L to R) Marvin- 3rd, Bill - 5th.

*"I attended college for one and a half years at Idaho Southern Branch (U of I) and majored in Agriculture. I was quite active in wrestling and was really quite good at it. At college, Bill and I 'batched it' in a basement apartment belonging to Uncle Joe and Aunt Ella Tolman. One of our main meals was a big pot of bean, because it was easy to fix and lasted a long time. We even made our own bread. We earned our way by taking care of a golf course; mowing lawns and changing sprinklers, and in general preparing the greens. "*



**Marvin went to college and work at the golf course to earn money. He lived with his brother, Bill and they ate lots of bean soup, homemade bread. It was during this time Marvin learned to like peanut butter.**



**After leaving college, Marvin worked at the Palace Meat Market. He met and started dating a cute girl from the Wendell Idaho, Helen Christensen.**

*I was just learning the meat business, when a customer would come in and ask for something with which I wasn't acquainted (such as chitterlings\*) I would just go in the cooler and then come back out and tell them we were out of it."*

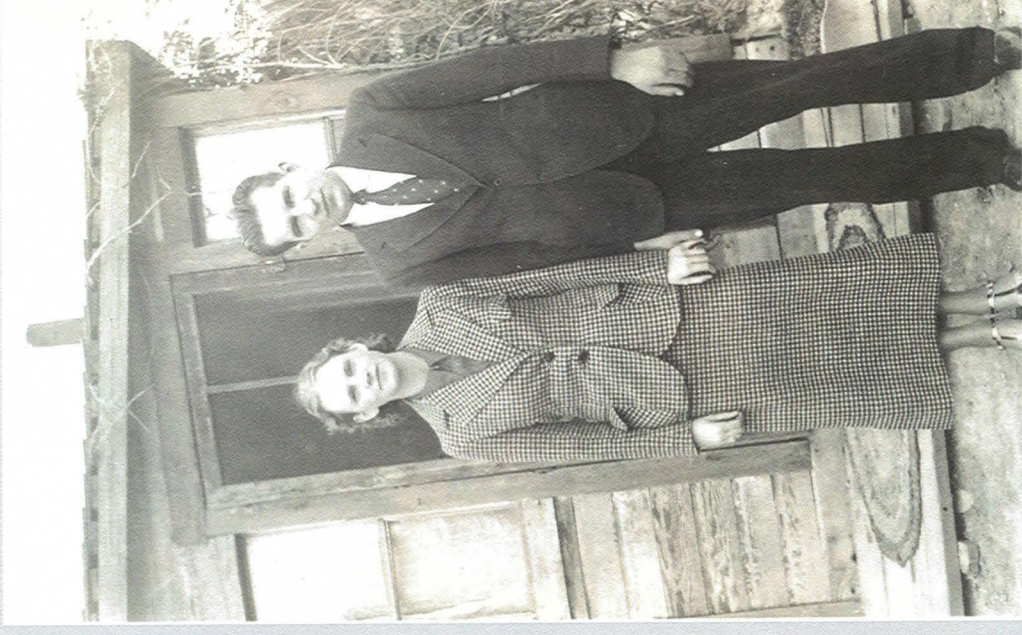
*\*Chiltherings or Chitlins, are pig intestines.*

*Chiltherings can be cooked in a broth with lots of onions or deep fried.*

Photo: Helen Christensen, about 1932.

*“About this time Helen moved to Pocatello. We dated and were married 19 August 1936 in the Salt Lake Temple. I worked full time at the Palace Meat Market making \$15.00 a week. We rented a house for \$15.00 a month”*

Marvin Ray Tolman and Helen Christensen; born 7 July 1916 in Bear Creek, Glenco, Idaho.



**Marvin and Helen were married on 19 August 1936 and made their home in Pocatello Idaho.**

Photo: Helen Christensen and Marvin Ray Tolman



Except for the first home in town on Lincoln Street, the family lived in 3 different houses, 3 miles south of Pocatello Idaho on South Main Street Extension.

Photo: Back - Marvin Ray Tolman Helen Faye, baby Lola, Helen Christensen and Merlon Ray, taken in front of William Alvinin and Hattie Naomi Tolman's house, about 1945.

Marvin and Helen's young family began to grow. Marvin worked with his brothers in a business venture, Tolman Acres, which included a grocery store, dairy farm, dry farms, some real estate and at the end, a car dealership. Eventually the business ended in bankruptcy.

*“Our home was  
blessed with  
four children:  
Merlon Ray  
Tolman, 23  
October 1938;  
Helen Faye, 8  
July 1940; Lola  
5 October 1944;  
Boyd Marvin, 17  
October 1947.”*



**Marvin and Helen had four children: Merlon, Faye, Lola and Boyd. The children they were blessed to have Grandma and Grandpa Tolman's house just over the rise and the Tolman cousins were their main playmates. Family hunting camp was an annual event.**

Photo: Helen Faye, Lola, Boyd  
Marvin and Merlon Ray Tolmann,  
about 1955.

*I was called to the Bannock Creek Lamanite Mission. As*

*I watched the Lamanite people live the gospel, a light would come into their eyes and a change would come over them. . . As they gained testimonies of the gospel, they became clean in mind and body, both spiritually and physically and they just gained a new appearance."*



Photo: Back - Helen Christensen Tolman, Merlon Ray Tolman, Helen Faye Tolman and Marvin Ray Tolman.  
Front - Lola Tolman and Boyd Marvin Tolman.

**Marvin and Helen were called to serve in the Bannock Creek Lamanite Mission. Part of his calling included serving as the branch president of the Lamanite branch.**





*“Although this was a difficult and lonely time for the children and me, with the help of the Lord, family and friends, we managed.”*

Helen Christensen Tolman died 12 July 1956. She was buried in Pocatello, Bannock, Idaho.

**Marvin’s wife, Helen, died suddenly in the summer of 1956. Helen had stroke while visiting her sister in Caldwell and spent a week in the hospital. The day Marvin brought her home to Pocatello, she had a brain aneurysm which took her life.**

Photo: Helen Christensen Tolman and Marvin Ray Tolma, about 1955.

*“At Thanksgiving time in 1956, I met Muriel Ruth Neil and her two young sons, John David Allen and Stephen Andrew. We were married for time in the Idaho Falls Temple on 8 February 1957.”*



Upper Photo: Muriel Ruth Neil and Marvin Ray Tolman, Idaho Falls Temple, February 1957.

Lower Photo: Back (L to R) - Stephen Andrew Neil, Lola Tolman, Marvin Ray Tolman, Muriel Ruth Neil and Merlon Ray Tolman. Front - Boyd Marvin Tolman and John David Allen Neil.

**In the fall, Marvin met Ruth Neil, an English widow who had come from England with her young sons, John and Stephen. Several months later, Marvin and Ruth were married.**

*“For some time I had desired to have a meat business of my own. In August of 1957, we sold our home in Pocatello and moved to Hamilton Montana. We bought a meat processing plant and opened the business as Tolman’s Meat Processing Co.”*



**Marvin purchased a butcher shop in Montana and so Marvin, Ruth and their children moved to Hamilton in the fall of 1957.**

Photo: Marvin on a Gypsy in front of the business, about 1960.



**Marvin worked hard at the butcher shop, wearing a white paper hat, a yellow butcher's apron and white T-shirt in the summer or white sweat shirt in the winter. However, one day a week, he put on his best western shirt and jeans to go to the livestock auction.**

*In the early years, Marvin bought cows and hogs for butcher at the livestock auction in Hamilton. In the springs, he would buy yearlings, putting them out to pasture and then in the fall, bring them in to the feedlot to finish them prior to butchering. When the Hamilton auction closed, he then would travel to the Missoula Livestock Auction, delivering meat orders along the way; to places like Glen's Café in Florence and King's Hat in Lolo.*

Photo: Marvin Ray Tolmand at the butcher shop.

*“Often on Monday, our family would go for an evening fishing excursion and supper. Within a half-hour drive, there were fishing streams Dad liked. Along with the usual picnic fare, we often took some bacon and tenderloin. We had a flat cast iron grill which was set up on some rocks. When Dad came back with trout, and he most often did, we first cooked the bacon to grease up the grill, added the tenderloin medallions and lastly the trout. ‘A feast fit for a king!’”*



**Marvin enjoyed fishing and would sometimes take his fishing pole, when he went up the hill to change the water in ditches. In later years when he and Ruth would drive up the canyon, just for a ride, Dad always took his pole, just in case.**

Photo: Marvin and son, Stephen Neil.

*"Ruth has suffered from poor health the last 10 years and the blessing of the priesthood has been a great comfort and help, through these years."*

Muriel Ruth Neil died Jan 15, 1994 and is buried in Pocatello, Bannock, Idaho.



**Marvin and Ruth stay busy raising a family and owning a business. They enjoyed going out to dinner in Missoula and would often take in a movie. Marvin was a good husband to Ruth, who prior to her death had many health challenges.**

Photo: Marvin Ray Tolman &  
Muriel Ruth Tolman

*“My oldest son, Merlon, runs the business now, but I continue to work every day. It keeps me busy and my mind and body active.”*  
(February 1992).

When Marvin celebrated his 80th birthday, Tolman’s Meat Co. ran a special newspaper ad, offering special savings and inviting customers to come have a piece of birthday cake.

In 2007, Tolman’s Meat burned to the ground in a fire caused by a short in the smoker unit.



Marvin worked at the butcher shop well into his eighties. Much hard work established Tolman’s Meat as a successful business where one could; purchase meat and delicious smoked meat products, bring an animal to be butchered or a game animal to be processed.



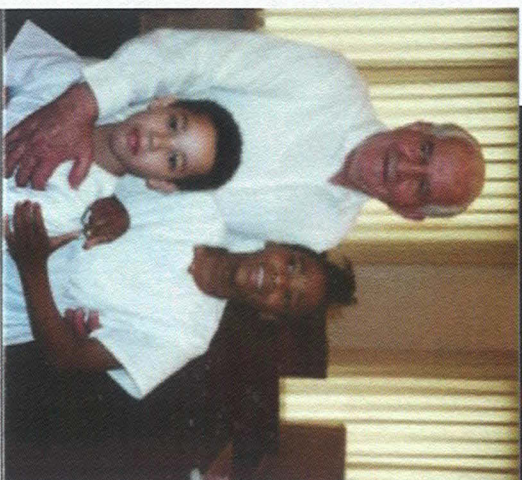
*“Dad met the Merkleys when they first moved to Montana. Dad & Don Merkley had traveled together as high councilmen in the late 1950’s. Sometime after Mother died, Dad called Marcia to see if she would like to go out to dinner sometime and she agreed. Later Dad was planning a trip to SLC and asked Marcia if she would like to ride down with him to visit her children. They had a good visit, down and back and that was all that was needed.”*

**Marvin married Marcia Merkley for time in Seattle Temple on 23 July 1994. Marvin and Marcia moved out of the house on the business property and bought a little house in Hamilton.**

Photo: Marvin and  
Marcia Mae Reid  
Merkley summer 1994.



Marvin and Marcia served in the Arkansas Little Rock Mission from January 1996 to August 1997. They drove their own car to Arkansas and blessed many lives.



Marvin and Marcia served as missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Arkansas. After their mission, Marvin retired, but he and Marcia kept busy delivering Meals-on-Wheels and volunteering at the public library.

Marvin Ray Tolman was  
92, when he died on  
14 August 2006,  
Hamilton, Ravalli,  
Montana. Buried  
Pocatello, Bannock,  
Idaho.

Marvin was survived by  
his third wife, Marcia  
Merkley Tolman, who  
later passed away on  
16 July 2012



*“I am the president of the Sunday School as of this writing. I feel blessed to have the good health that I enjoy. I am thankful for the blessings of the gospel in my life and for my testimony. I’m thankful for my wife and family and I want them to know that I love them and want only the best for them in this life. I have said often, “life is not always like we would like it to be, but we do what we have to do, and with the help of the Lord and the blessings of the gospel, we’ll make it and we will obtain what we are all working for, Eternal life with our families and our Father in Heaven.”*

## **Sources:**

Text from: "Life Story of Marvin Ray Tolman". Printed in William Alvin Tolman Family News, Volume 26 #2, Spring/Summer 1992.

Side-bar Story on pages: 20 & 23, recounted by Marvin's daughter, Lola Beagley, Dec 2013.

Personal conversation with Marvin's children; Lola Beagley and Merlon Tolman.

## **Photo Keys :**

Page 5 - (L to R)

Back: Emma, Naomi, Armenia, Grandma, Grandpa, Bill, Alma

Middle: Wendell, Alvin, Marvin

Front: Bernice, Hattie

Page 9 - Wendell LaVor, Alvin Leroy, Marvin Ray, Alma Jaren, William Odell, Naomi Jane, Emma Briggs, Armenia, Bernice - front - Noel Jay, William Alvin, Hattie Naomi, Hattie

Photos in possession of Lola Beagley.

## **Thanks:**

A special thanks to my Aunt Lola Beagley, who probably didn't know what she was getting into when she agreed to let me come scan family photos. She has been a great resource for this project and I have appreciated her helpful encouragement.

