



MY NAME IS LOLA

by Lola Rozsa,
as told to and written by Susie Sparks

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Undoubtedly, it was my mother's hand that led me back to *Manners of the Manse*, the memoir she had written about her life as the Preacher's wife in small town Cumberland Presbyterian congregations so many years ago. As I re-read those stories from the perspective of my tenth decade, I at last understood how all of us are so profoundly shaped by those who come before us. She still guides my journey, reminding me that none of us travels alone. So it is with many, many thanks to the countless people who have enriched our lives more than any of them will ever know that I express my gratitude, especially those who have helped me remember some of our mutual experiences in Calgary's oil patch and community endeavours.

It wouldn't surprise me either if Mama had a hand in bringing Susie Sparks back into my life to help me write this book! Susie had been one of the little girls who stepped off the plane from New Orleans into the brutal cold of November, 1949. She and her family moved into one of the Shell houses close to ours, and they shared those early getting-acquainted-with-Calgary experiences with Ted and me and our children. Susie and I spent many happy afternoons together reminiscing and unfolding my memories like tattered old letters, worn by age but treasured enough to store away to look at again in the fullness of time.

Both Dick Baillie and Sandy McDonald regaled me again with their stories of those early days when Frontier Geophysical was in its infancy and, thanks to the Petroleum Oral History Collection housed at the Glenbow Museum, I was able to recall the other pioneers of the Alberta oil industry too.

Tim Rawlings sorted out the CPO archival memories I'd stored over the years, helping me put them in chronological order, and our dear friends, Hy and Jenny Belzberg reminded me about the old days when we were all learning how to be effective community volunteers. They have been enormously generous in their development

work with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra through the years, and equally generous with the Rozsa Centre at the university.

Nomi Whalen and I had both been aspiring actresses when the MAC 14 theatre group was very active, but while I was cast as the matriarch, my glamorous friend Nomi was usually the femme fatale! She reminded me of those times as well as the days when we were both trying to organize the first Women's Auxiliary of Theatre Calgary, and what fun we had.

My thanks as well to Jack Stewart and Victor Kim, Ministers at Grace Presbyterian Church, who have offered me their friendship along with a generous helping of encouragement as this project took on a life of its own. They never wavered in their conviction that I could complete it.

But it has been Amy Praxides and Sally Jeslava who have quite literally kept me going! They've attended to my health, they've kept the household running, welcomed my visitors, made sure I could get to every social event, and over the years have become so much more than my caregivers. They have become my truly cherished friends.

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So Ruth Ann, Ted, and Mary, for your unflagging support, for sharing your own memories, for the countless trips into the yellow room to bushwhack through the boxes of photos and stacks of memorabilia, thank you. To Karen and Mary Cristina, my Calgary-based granddaughters, thank you for your memories, your wonderful creativity, and especially for sharing your technological expertise. To Howie, Scott, T.J., Stacey, and Charles, thank you for keeping me current with all of your news as you build your careers and families. You will never know how much I enjoy our visits and appreciate your very frequent phone calls to keep me updated and in the loop.

And finally, to my great-grandchildren Tristan, Emma, Evan, and Satchel, I send my love. One day, I hope you might share this story with *your* great-grandchildren.

What a privilege it has been to walk through this life with all of you.

L M Rozsa

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SUSIE SPARKS' continuing interest in the study of history, particularly social history, has given her the opportunity to write about how profoundly we are all shaped by the context of our times. She is the author of *But Who Are Her People?*, the editor of *Calgary: A Living Heritage*, and director of an extensive oral history project for the Calgary Bar Association, which was the basis of *Talk to My Lawyer*. Susie was the founding Director of Leadership Calgary and former Executive Director of the Famous 5 Foundation. She is currently working with the International Women's Forum.



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This book contains the collected memories of Lola Rozsa – of her life and service to her family, her church, and her community as she and her husband, Ted, made their way from the tiny towns of the Depression-era, dust bowl southern plains to the burgeoning oilfields of Alberta in 1949. As Ted struggled to build his first seismic company, Lola raised their children in Calgary, an environment far different from the home in Texas she desperately missed. However, the values taught by her preacher father stood her in good stead as she immersed herself in service for her new community. For the next sixty years, as Ted prospered, they made Calgary their home and, along with other industry pioneers, helped to build many of the enduring cultural institutions in Calgary.

