

Interview with Billie Jean Gillespie
Interviewer: Lauren Midgett
n.d.

Q: My name is Lauren Midgett and I am going to be interviewing my grandmother for my oral history project. Okay, Grandma. What is your full name?

A: My name is Billie Jean Gillespie.

Q: Why did your parents pick this name for you?

A: Billie Jean...I never could figure that out because I had an older brother named Bill, but I think my mom got tired of naming ten kids, so I ended up as Billie Jean.

Q: Did you have a nickname?

A: Yes, sometimes my dad would call me Sally and I have no idea why.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born on July 5th, 1936 in a house on 11th Street in Lawrenceville Illinois. Back then the doctors came to the house to deliver the babies.

Q: All ten of them?

A: All ten of them. I was the baby.

Q: Wow. What age range did it go from, like, the oldest to you? How much older was your older brother than you?

A: Okay, let's go back. I want to tell a story. The story is that my mom and dad had went to Vincennes to the river to watch the fireworks and she went into labor and they had to leave, and I was born just a few minutes after midnight on July the 5th. And as for kids there were 10 of us. And my mother had, we counted it one time, she had nine grandchildren when I was born. She had a daughter-in-law and a daughter both carrying babies at the same time she was carrying me. They are both three months younger than I am.

Q: Is that Aunt Marlene?

A: No, it was Buddy Seifert and Walter Byrley, he is deceased now.

Q: Wow, so how did your family come to live in Lawrenceville, do you know?

A: No, well, I know my dad did a lot of different things for a living until he went to the Texaco refinery during the war. He could not get in the war because he had too many children and so he went to work at the Texaco refinery and before that he, at one time, did coal mining. He did lumbering and they hulled the trees out by mule. He farmed and did a lot of things before he went to work at Texaco.

Q: What did your mom do?

A: She was always a housewife. With ten children, back then, that was just about all you could do.

Q: So, how much did your dad get paid?

A: I don't know...

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Q: You don't know?

A: No, I wouldn't know.

Q: Did you have any other family members in that area besides your immediate family? Did you have any aunts, uncles, or grandparents or anything?

A: Oh yes, I did on my mom's side of the family.

Q: In Lawrenceville?

A: Yes, and on my dad's side of the family, both.

Q: So how many cousins did you have? Were all the families real big like yours?

A: Oh yes. Back then they raised big families and thought nothing of it. I had an Aunt Debbie and an Uncle Gilbert on my mom's side of the family that lived out east of Flat Rock and then I had an Aunt Ruth and an Uncle Walker which was also on my mom's side that lived south of Flat Rock. I had an Uncle Golden Belcher and his wife Edna that lived out in the country. I am trying to remember some of the others but...

Q: So, it was pretty full, you guys pretty much lived in the same area?

A: Yes, and we visited altogether. There was always a lot of family around.

Q: What was the house like? Did you have a farm?

A: No, we didn't. We lived right on the edge of town and we rented. My dad never did buy a house. The first house that I can remember was the one where the Lawrenceville Hospital sits now. There was a big house there with a pond beside it that a Doctor owned, and he donated it to have a hospital built there. I am older than that hospital! We moved from there to a small house of 14th Street. It was closer to my dad's work, the Texaco refinery.

Q: How many rooms did it have?

A: The big house?

Q: Both.

A: Well the big house was a lot bigger than the little house. I think it had three bedrooms and a bath upstairs and at least five or six rooms with a summer kitchen. That was a kitchen that you cooked in the summertime on a can and did things like that. When we lived there my dad always kept pigs to butcher and a cow to milk and we kept chickens. We might as well had a farm but we were right on the edge of the city limits. Then when we moved to 14th Street, of course, we were not allowed to have any of that stuff and the house there was quite a bit smaller. I think it had five rooms in it.

Q: So, the house had three bedrooms with ten kids?

A: Well they were not all at home. By the time I come along...I was trying to figure out how far it would have went. Ernie would have been married, Francis would have been married, Charles would have been

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married, and Lucy would have been married. Yeah...half of them, five of them, were married by the time I came along.

Q: So, there were probably five of you?

A: Yeah, five kids.

Q: Still be kind of crowded wouldn't it?

A: But then by the time we moved to 14th Street, there was just June and I, two of us.

Q: Was there electricity in either one of those houses?

A: Both houses had electricity. One house had an outhouse. Believe it or not the house on 14th Street did have an outhouse.

Q: How convenient was that?

A: Well you know, you never think about it. Every house on 14th Street had an outhouse, not just us. You know, you just don't think about it. There's lots of stories that go along with an outhouse.

Q: So, the house that did not have an outhouse had plumbing and everything?

A: Yes, but you realize a Doctor had built that house...makes a big difference.

Q: That's true. How about telephones and any kind of communication devices at all?

A: Yeah, we had a phone on 14th Street. Now up on the hill I don't remember, I was too small to remember there but on 14th Street, yeah, we had a phone. It was a big black box phone.

Q: Was there anything in the house that you remember specifically? Any special items or gifts given to you that you remember? Was there anything special about the house that you liked?

A: Well I was...I started kindergarten and first grade when we lived at the big house on the hill and I was always afraid to be in the house by myself. But it was such a big house and one time when I got home from school there wasn't anybody there, so I took the dog and the cat and got in the bed and covered up. My mom thought that was pretty funny. The smaller house on 14th Street...the only thing I remember...the living room wasn't very big, and we moved in a big upright piano because your Aunt Freda played piano. She played Marketong (??) piano so we always had a piano and part of our entertainment was that people on Saturday nights would bring their guitars and come to the house, you know, and you sat around and they played music and the kids run around the house and in the summertime that is about what you did. The other thing I remember about the smaller house on 14th Street was we heated it with a big round coal stove.

Q: Oh really?

A: My dad would stoke that thing at night in the wintertime until it would be blazin' red hot and then he would bunker it down for the night so the coals would stay hot all night long.

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Q: What's your earliest childhood memory? Something that happened...maybe a favorite memory or just something you remember specifically a long time ago?

A: When we lived in the big house up on the hill it had a regular living room and it had something called a parlor and, in this parlor, there were stained glass windows around the big picture window and there was a tiny hole, and someone had stuffed cotton into that tiny hole. And my dad always said it was part of Santa Clause's whiskers, when he tried to get into the house.

Q: That's pretty clever. How was Christmas around there? Were there a lot of gifts or was it more of just a big family gathering?

A: It was more of a big family thing. You always got gifts, but they were not anything like they are now. Usually it was maybe a piece of clothing you needed like a new coat or a new pair of shoes. One year I got a pair of new cowboy boots. A fruit was a big occasion at Christmas time; oranges and apples...because they were expensive. They weren't something you just didn't buy every day.

Q: So, what kind of meals did you cook? I know when we get together, we have like loads and loads of food.

A: And that's exactly where you get that from. It is inherited.

Q: You guys had a ton of food too?

A: Always...always. My mom thought that socializing was when you fed people, that's what you did. So, she would have died if she had run out of food that somebody wanted on the table.

Q: So, she was a really good cook?

A: Oh yes. She spent her whole life...I don't remember my mom much except for in the kitchen. She always wore a great big apron. She was a very large woman because she had ten children and cooked for ten kids. The thing I do remember about there...and even after we moved to the smaller house, we still did it a lot... was putting up a lot of our own food. You know, you canned everything. Anything you could get your hands on. Anytime anyone wanted to give you something, you took it and you canned it. That's what you cooked with in the wintertime. And if my dad ever bought anything from the grocery store, like canned good or something we needed, he bought it by the case. He bought flour in 50 lb. sacks. My mom used to say, "if you lay it on the table and it doesn't wiggle, it got ate." Never any problems with leftovers either.

Q: Oh yeah?

A: The thing I do remember that people don't do anymore and they probably shouldn't have done it then, but lots of times on Sundays after a big Sunday dinner, if it was anything that wouldn't spoil real easily, my mom would put it in a smaller bowl and set it in the middle of the table and lay a table cloth over it. And when supper came along, that's what you had.

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Q: Wow, we don't even think about doing that now. Okay this might take a while since you have ten siblings, but can you describe the personalities of your family members, at least to what you remember?

A: Yeah. Well I'll have to start in order to do that. My oldest brother was named William Earnest. We called him Bill, but I understand where he worked at, he was called Ernie. And Ernie was the first born naturally. He was a fairly tall guy with straight black hair. He married and had two girls and a boy, and they lost a baby boy. And then he lost his wife to Tuberculosis. He remarried...I don't know, how much of this do you want to know?

Q: Just anything you want to tell me about them.

A: So, his oldest name was Betty, Aunt Betty and Wilma Rose and then Walter and then they had a baby. And I understand that his wife Bertha had tuberculosis and the baby got it too and back then it wasn't unusual for people to die from Tuberculosis and he lost them both. He came to live with my mom and dad for a while and then he remarried. They moved to Bridgeport. That is as far as I'm going to go on that. The next brother was Arthur and he married Mary and they had two boys and a girl and lost a baby boy. Arthur died when his youngest son was three days old. They had Donny, Rosalie, and Johnny...he was three days old. There was a Bobby that was born in there somewhere, but he didn't live.

Q: What was he like?

A: He looked like Ernie. They looked alike. I'm not sure where that look came from because it wasn't really mom or dad. Then Francis was the next one and he married and had identical twin girls, Patty and Nancy. Do you need to know that a lot of these men died when they were young?

Q: Yes.

A: Well we will have to back up.

Q: Before you were born?

A: No, after I was born. Francis was a shorter stockier man with blue eyes and curly blonde hair. He gets it from my mom's side of the family I think, I'm not sure. I have seen that in the family, you know, before. And then there came Charles. He was my dad all over again; he looked just like my dad, talked just like my dad, and act like my dad. He married and had two girls and two boys. He was a truck driver for a long, long time and moved to Oklahoma because his trucking company was out of Tulsa Oklahoma. They are still in that area, of course, he is gone. And then Lucy was born, and she was the first girl.

Q: So how many boys is that?

A: Four boys before Lucy. She was named Lucy Jane. She was named after my Grandma on my mom's side and my Grandma on my dad's side. Lucy was on my mom's side and Jane was on my dad's side. She had three girls and a boy which was Aunt Shirley and Aunt Marlene and Buddy Seifert and Willa.

Q: Oh okay. I didn't know that Lucy was their mom.

A: Okay, and then there was James Virgil and he was called Bud. We knew him as Bud. He looked just like Francis. I guess I should back up, Lucy had blonde hair, blue eyes, curly hair. I don't know where she got it from. Bud looked just like Francis except he was a little smaller in stature. They could have been

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twins really except for age and size. He was the one who died the youngest, but he married Freda and had Buddy and David. Then there was Ruby, my sister ruby. She was coal black headed and blue eyes and had freckles. She was a real pretty girl but unusual looking and she married Chuck Cummins I think was his name and she had Judy and Rita and Anthony and Shannon. I don't think you know any of them.

Q: Yeah, I don't think I know any of them.

A: And, uh, then after Ruby came Jack and Jack married Aunt Freda which was married to Bud. Well she had lost Bud for several years and she was living with my dad and I because I had lost my mom when I was thirteen and anyway, Jack came home, and they happened to get together and so they got married and had Linda Jane. Then there was Lois June. I have to back up...I want to press the point that Jack looked just like Bud and Francis.

Q: So, you had three blonde headed boys?

A: Yes, blonde headed and blue eyed. And then there was June who had brown hair and brown eyes. We were quite a mixture. She had Perry Francis and Paul Eugene and Patty Lynn and then she died in childbirth with Peggy Sue. And then there was me and I married Charles and I had Alan, Jimmy, and Loretta. And then I remarried to Bob Gillespie.

Q: And you were divorced for how many years?

A: About twenty years

Q: Wow, so you lived by yourself for that long?

A: Yes, I did. I never thought I would get married again.

Q: I remember that. I remember when you and Bob met, that was funny. How did you guys meet?

A: Well really, this lady that is a friend of Bob's introduced us, got Loretta to introduce us anyway. And he called me up and wanted to come up and take me out to dinner and I said fine and that was all.

Q: Yeah, I remember because the night you guys went out on a date my mom said, "Grandma's out on a date." She was telling me all about it. Okay, so there are your family members. When you were a kid, what kind of games did you guys play? Did you have board games?

A: Yeah, we played a lot of cards and a lot of board games. The only thing was that, which I always tried to stress to my kids as well, that if you cheated you weren't allowed to play. I mean he was really strict about it. If you ever cheated, you usually didn't get to play for a week which was heartbreaking. But we played checkers. I never did learn how to play chess, but we played a lot of games, you know, marble games and card games.

Q: So, you guys didn't have televisions or anything, did you?

A: No.

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Q: So those games were how you guys passed time and everything?

A: Yeah and radio. We listened to the radio. Really, I don't ever remember being bored. We always had something to do.

Q: That's good.

A: Read a book or whatever.

Q: What was your favorite toy? Did you have a blanket or something?

A: Oh, I'm trying to remember. I loved paper dolls. I know that sounds weird.

Q: You still make them!

A: People now days think that's weird, but I had a huge box of paper dolls. I loved paper dolls and anytime my dad ever gave me any spending money, or I had extra money I would spend it on paper dolls because you could dress them, use your imagination, and build houses for them. I spent a lot of time with paper dolls. So, I would have to say that was my favorite toy.

Q: Yeah, I know you talked about all the games you guys did for fun but what other things did you do for fun? Did you go to the movies or ride bikes... ?

A: Oh yeah. We had bicycles but they were usually ones my dad put together. They weren't new ones. I don't ever remember having a new bicycle. The new cowboy boots were the biggest thing I remember. I got a new coat one year, but I don't remember ever having a new bicycle or anything like that. We also used scooters a lot...not the fancy one's they got now but we rode scooters a lot. We jump roped a lot. Now when I got to be a teenager, we roller skated. That is how we spent our time.

Q: Like roller blades or just roller skates?

A: No, roller skates. But yeah, we were allowed to go to the movie. Back then I remember my dad would give us a quarter and we could go to the movie and have a snack on a quarter.

Q: Wow, now days it is like four dollars to get a candy bar!

A: Saturday night was always a big night because we would go to town, you know, everybody would go to town and walk around a square and meet up with everybody you had not seen all week. I know that sounds impossible to say. The stores were all open and you wandered in and out all the stores and usually things didn't close down till about ten o' clock. You couldn't get away with anything because it was told. Everybody knew everyone's mom and dad.

Q: This was in Lawrenceville, right?

A: Yes.

Q: That's what you get for living in a small town. So, did you have any family chores? Did you guys get assigned chores?

A: Absolutely. We were expected to do our share. I don't remember being assigned chores you were just told to do them, and you did. I can remember one time I think my dad spanked me maybe three

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times in my whole life and one time was because I stood up and told him no I was not going to...oh I know, he told me to go to the store for something and I told him no I wasn't going and he yes, you will go and he took the swat out of the window blind. You probably don't know what that is. It is a little wooden stick that went in the bottom of the wooden blind to weight it down to pull it down with. He pounded my butt with it, and I went to the store. You know, he just expected the kids to...he loved kids and kids loved him...he was like the pipe piper. All the kids followed him around because they all loved him. I was a little jealous about it because he was my dad. But if he told you to do something, he expected you to do it. I don't remember there being too much of a fuss about it.

Q: So, did you do dishes and stuff like that?

A: Absolutely. My mom always insisted that one of girls help her with cooking. Like one of us would wash pots and pans while she was cooking. When you cook for a lot of people like that. One would help do the dishes after the meal. Well I always took up the one before because I always did it better. I raised my spending money in the summertime by washing canning jars for my mom because I could get my hands down in them and wash them clean. She would give me a penny a jar.

Q: A penny a jar? Wow.

A: I made good money!

Q: So, what was your least favorite thing to do chore wise? What did you not like to do?

A: I think hanging up clothes on the clothesline.

Q: Yeah, that's never fun.

A: Yeah, simply because my mom insisted on, and Loretta doesn't believe it but it's true, she insisted that...when you had that many people you had stacks and stacks of towels and we washed them in a washing machine on the back porch...and when you hung them up she insisted that you put all the white towels together and all the green towels and all the yellow towels together. If you got one out of whack you had to go back and get it put in there where it belonged.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: So, I would have to say hanging up clothes on wash day was my least favorite thing. I didn't mind emptying out the water tubs because we always got in water fights.

Q: So, did you get an allowance for all of this besides your penny a jar?

A: No, no.

Q: Okay so when you started school what was that like for you?

A: Scary. I was a big scary cat anyways, but I started kindergarten at Arlington school which isn't there anymore. You know where Arlington school was?

Q: No...

A: Well there is this big bank sitting there now.

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Q: So, did you go to a pre-school or a get-set or anything?

A: No, we just went straight into kindergarten.

Q: Really? I didn't know that.

A: Well they didn't ever have anything like that.

Q: So how old were you when you went to kindergarten?

A: Five. I think I had kindergarten and first grade at Arlington and then I went to Old Central and it's not there anymore either. New Central is but Old Central is not. And then I went to New Central and then Lincoln. Lincoln was the Jr. High.

Q: And this was all in Lawrenceville?

A: Right. So, do you not know where Lincoln and New Central is?

Q: No. I just know where Parkview is.

A: yeah this was between 11th and 12th Street.

Q: Oh okay.

A: I'm sure you seen the big brick buildings that are not being used anymore. I don't know what they are going to do with them. I remember...I guess I shouldn't tell this on myself...but it's part of it. I think my dad thought I was a little retarded because I couldn't see. Well and they didn't know that until I got into Mrs... we used to call her Mrs. Guts, but her name was Mrs. Gets. This class was upset with me because I wasn't bringing any homework in and come to find out she was writing it on the blackboard, and I didn't have any idea we had any homework. If she said we had homework then I did alright but if she wrote it up on the blackboard, because I couldn't see it, I didn't know it was there. She had me tested and I was very, very near sighted. They put glasses on me and from then on, I did alright. But yeah it took me about a half year to catch up with everybody.

Q: That was what grade?

A: Third grade. I got that far without them realizing I couldn't see. I always remembered that after I got my glasses I was just fascinated with leaves because they would fall down and I would collect them and put them in shoe boxes because...

Q: Yeah, because you had never seen them before.

A: No, they were just masses put together and I saw them separately like they were, and I just thought they were beautiful.

Q: I think it's crazy that you have bad eyesight and mom has really bad eyesight and I'm doing fine so far.

A: Yeah but it is inherited. See, mine showed up early but your moms didn't show up early.

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Q: College was it?

A: Yeah and that's amazing. But my Doctor told me it definitely was inherited.

Q: Oh good, something to look forward to. So, what was your best and worst subject?

A: Oh, my best subject is reading. I've always loved books as far back as I can remember...and literature. I like history but I'm really bad with dates. I have a hard time remembering dates and I've always been terrible with names too. Spelling was my worst subject and I can't believe anyone that would love to read is such a bad speller but it's true! Math was just...I do okay at it. I still do it in my mind when I balance my checkbook and everything, but it wasn't a thrill or anything.

Q: So, your worst subject was spelling?

A: Yes, absolutely. I tend to spell exactly how you pronounce it and leave out all the extra.

Q: Yeah. So, did the teachers influence how you looked at school?

A: Oh yes, I remember a lot. I had Mrs. Hill in Jr. High and she was the English teacher and I like her, but she was also the penmanship teacher and back then you had to practice penmanship, and nobody practiced penmanship as much as I did because I couldn't make the words like she wanted them made.

Q: Yeah, they don't have those classes now.

A: Well they did then! I've made pages and pages of A's and o's and U 's. It might have helped a little bit.

Q: I think you have pretty good handwriting.

A: It's not very feminine.

Q: Neither is mom's, really. I think I get my penmanship from you because I have horrible handwriting. So, you attended grade school and high school both in Lawrenceville...did they offer sports or organizations?

A: Yeah for the boys, not much for the girls.

Q: So, they didn't have softball or volleyball or anything?

A: I think there must have been some but by the time I got to high school I had to work and go to school at the same time. So, I didn't really have time. I worked at the Lawrenceville Hospital as an assistant dietician. I didn't like baseball very well. I loved basketball; I'll always love basketball. But when I was in Jr. High, I don't remember any teams, you know what I'm saying?

Q: They may not have had them in middle school, they may have just had them in high school and college.

A: And most of it was for the boys. I would say that 95% of it was for the boys.

Q: So, did they have cheerleading?

A: I don't think so. I had to stop and think but I don't think so.

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Q: Wow I wonder when they got a team then. That's interesting.

A: Well, you know, all those pictures that are up in the high school when we went to state three of the four years I was in high school, I don't remember a picture of a cheerleader.

Q: Might have to find that out.

A: Maybe I just don't remember it but...I went to a lot of the games. I worked at the concession stands a lot.

Q: So, did you do any school activities? Were there any clubs that you could do?

A: Yeah...I remember being in a camera club and of course I was in an FHA...or something like that. It was a home-makers association club that the girls had. Most of the time as soon as I was out of school, I had to go to work so a lot of it I was not involved in.

Q: Do you remember any fads of your youth like any popular hairstyles?

A: Oh sure.

Q: What was clothing and all that like?

A: We wore bobby socks and saddle shoes...that's not funny!

Q: I know, I'm sorry (chuckling)

A: When I was in high school, we were finally allowed to wear blue jeans. Up to that point we were not allowed to wear blue jeans, girls weren't.

Q: What did you wear?

A: You wore dresses or skirts or slacks, but you couldn't wear blue jeans. They were considered boys wear not girls. But then when we did wear them, we wore them rolled up with the cuffs and the scarves tied around the neck.

Q: That's coming back in style! It is, it really is. People on campus have the thin scarves around their necks, not the big scarves but the thin little ones and people just wear them around their necks with shirts. It's cute.

A: Yeah that's what we wore. The skirts were always full and long, not poufy but full. Not to the floor but about a foot off the floor. And uh sweaters...little sweaters with the scarf tied around the neck. For dress shoes we wore little ballerina slippers.

Q: We have those too. Not like ballerina slippers but what is coming in are little flat shoes they are flat and cover your whole foot like ballerina slippers.

A: Yeah that's what we used for dress shoes. We used to have sock-hops. Do you know what sock-hops are?

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Q: What's that?

A: It's a dance! You have to take your shoes off. You wore fancy socks or the most outrageous socks you could find and then when you went to the door everyone just stacked their shoes in a pile and you had to dance and then find your shoes in the big pile.

Q: Oh, I bet that was fun!

A: It was fun!

Q: So that was in high school?

A: Yeah that was in high school. You've never heard of sock-hop?

Q: No, I guess I'm way behind. What about hair styles? What was the hair like? Long? Short?

A: Yeah, I never did look good in long hair. I wore it longer...maybe down to my shoulders and curled but...

Q: Did you cut your own hair, or did you go to some place?

A: Aunt Freda cut my hair all the time. I couldn't afford to get it cut all the time. I remember going to a beauty shop for my senior prom and that was it, that's the only time I went to the beauty shop. We used to go to the barber shop to get our hair cut.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, the barber shop guys knew how to cut women's hair. Of course, they didn't do anything fancy like blow it dry. They just cut it.

Q: Leave it wet?

A: Yeah, that's what you did.

Q: What about guy's hair styles?

A: Well, you had everything from burr haircuts to ones that look like Elvis Presley. But in our high school I'm going to say that the burr hair cut was more prominent. Of course, we had a lot of country kids too, you know. We are bringing up a lot of awful memories. (laugh)

Q: Who were your childhood heroes? What about Elvis Presley.

A: No, you know I liked Elvis Presley and I loved his singing but to go gaga over him I never did, it just wasn't there.

Q: And some people are just crazy over him.

A: I guess I'm just different about that. Oh, John Wayne was my favorite movie star.

Q: Really?

A: Yes!

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Q: We saw his star when we went to California, remember that?

A: Yeah and I don't know. And at that time Pearl S. Buck was my favorite author.

Q: Pearl what?

A: Buck. She wrote about people in oriental countries and I liked her.

Q: So, what were your favorite songs and kind of music did you listen to?

A: Oh, geez wiz. I'm too old to remember all of that. Blue Velvet was my favorite song. I know you don't know it. Cool Waters... you don't know that either do you?

Q: Grandma, I'm 20.

A: That's funny.

Q: That's okay though you can tell me all about them.

A: I'm looking over four leaf clover...

Q: I'm not going to let you sing.

A: And what's so funny about I'm looking over four leaf clover is that I like the rhythm and everything and my mom says, "that song was famous when I was a kid."

Q: Wow! My mom says that about a few songs I listen to but not many. So, did you guys have any pets?

A: Oh yes. We always had pets. Of course, cats more than dogs I think because they were a little easier to take care of.

Q: What were their names? Do you remember any of the names?

A: No, no we had a pet duck! My mom carried this duck egg home on her lap from her dad's farm. Her dad farmed between Princeton and Mt. Carmel in the river bottoms. She came home with a duck egg and she put it in the oven just to keep it warm and it hatched. I don't remember this duck's name, but this duck would eat anything. It would eat spaghetti and there's nothing funnier than watching a duck eat spaghetti. It ran in and out of the house...

Q: It was inside the house?

A: Well yeah. I don't remember what happened to it, but we had that thing for a long, long time. It was a little white duck. I think that was the most unusual pet I can remember.

Q: I remember you saying something about having a monkey but that was when you were older right?

A: Yeah that's when your mom and dad were in the picture. Charles sent it home from Vietnam when he was over in Vietnam, he sent it home. I was so mad at him for doing that. They are a lot of work to begin with. They have to eat all the time. You can't feed like you do a dog and take the bowl away from them. You can't do that. Plus, they have a body odor that you can't get rid of, it's their natural odor.

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Q: Yeah why don't you share what you did...

A: Well nothing. It loved to get baths. It would sit and let me shampoo it and give it a bath but then it got sick and I took it to the vet. Well the vet said I had washed all of its natural oils away, its defenses away and it died.

Q: You killed a monkey!

A: Well then, he was going to send another one and I said if you do, I will kill you. But the kids loved it, it was a cute little monkey but my goodness a lot of work. Alan got in trouble at school because he kept telling his teacher he had a monkey. So finally, one day she called me said "I want to know what's going on I think Alan is telling tall tales" and I said, "no we have a monkey" and she said, "oh will you bring it to class?"

Q: You brought it to class?

A: Yes, I did. We put a little dress on it and took it to class.

Q: That's so cool! So, what was your religion growing up? Did you go to a certain church and attend church or was that not really a big thing?

A: Well...it was to my dad, he went to the First Church of God, right up on 15th Street. He was an elder in the church. And yes, he insisted that we get up and go to church every Sunday, it wasn't an option. When we got old enough to fuss about it, he told us "okay, you can pick your own church, but you are still going to get up every Sunday morning and go to church."

Q: So, what did you do?

A: Well I went to a Presbyterian church for a while and then I went back to our old church. (laugh)

Q: Well you have to branch out and check it all out, right?

A: well I had to be defiant one way or the other.

Q: So, did you enjoy church?

A: Yeah, I did. I'm not so sure all preachers are right, but I enjoyed the companionship and the music. Yeah, I have always enjoyed church.

Q: This is a little awkward question but were you ever mentioned in a newspaper for anything?

A: Good or bad?

Q: Both! Well I'm hoping not bad.

A: I had my picture in the paper for my 50th class reunion. Yeah, at Robinson one time I had my picture taken and I didn't know they took it until it came out in the paper and it was where we helped serve a turkey dinner at Thanksgiving at the church for other people. There I am serving myself food and they took a picture and put it in the paper...like I was there to be fed (laugh). I was a little upset over that one because everyone at work seen it.

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Interviewer: Lauren Midgett
n.d.

Q: You weren't helping other people you were helping yourself, right? (laugh)

A: Yeah, so I wasn't too happy about that one.

Q: Oh, that's funny! So, who were your friends growing up, do you remember having like a best friend or...?

A: Yes, I had a best friend and her name was Beverly Boward and we were best friends clear up until we were juniors in high school and then we kind of went our separate ways. For one thing, I had to work, and she didn't. But I still see Beverly once in a while. We are not great friends, but I still see her.

Q: So, does she live around here?

A: She lives in Sumner.

Q: That is really cool that you still see her.

A: She looks more like Beverly than I looked when I was younger. She hasn't changed in her features as much as I have but she has gray long, long hair. I kind of think that by the time you have gray hair you need to do something other than that. She has gotten heavier, but her features haven't changed like mine have and she is introverted...real shy.

Q: Was she not like that when you knew her?

A: No, but I guess she got that way after she got married and I don't know the whole story behind that but she got married to a guy out of our class and I think she had three children right away and he left her and she has raised those kids by herself. So, I don't know the whole story behind it, but we still run into each other and chat when we do and last time, we did she told me to call her...and I should do that. But she was my best friend.

Q: So, what did you guys do?

A: Roller skating was a lot of what we did. We wore those great big full skirts and roller skated. Could you imagine?

Q: Yeah, that would be a sight to see. What world events had the most impact on you when you were growing up? You lived during the depression, right?

A: Well, no. I was born at 36; I was born right when the depression was going on.

Q: Oh ok.

A: I know everybody always says that 1936 was one of the hottest years in history. The thing I remember in World War II, I remember faintly but not a lot, was that my mom had books of stamps and you had to have these stamps to buy certain things like shoes, sugar...however members were in your family you were allotted a certain number. And my mom would save her sugar stamps and would buy honey and other stuff so she could make birthday cakes when birthdays came up. It was a pretty precious commodity. I know you had to have stamps to buy gas. I know you haven't heard of this but it's true.

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Interviewer: Lauren Midgett
n.d.

Q: That's crazy.

A: Well it happens whenever you need all those products for the war then you were limited what you could have.

Q: So, did the war impact your family? I know your dad was in the military so...

A: No, my dad wasn't. He had too many kids remember. But yes, it impacted us because my brother Charles was hurt. He was in France. I understand that the story was that they were not supposed to, but they were riding tankers on the outside and an airplane come over and shot at them and he hurt his back and he was transferred from there to somewhere in Texas. I remember my mom crying because she couldn't go to Texas. Of course, he lived through it and everything but...

Q: How many of your brothers were in the military?

A: Just two that I know of. It would have been Charles and Bud. Bud was an MP in the state of Washington, and they would not let him go into active combat because he had a crooked arm when he was a teenager. He had turned a car over with a crank. You used to have to use a crank in the front. You've seen pictures where they crank them in the front and when they start up sometimes, they will go real fast and it broke his arm and it never did heal back. He could not straighten it completely out, but they took him as an MP and that is what he did.

Q: so, what did your other brother do?

A: He was in infantry, I think, I don't know.

Q: Well I think we are going to stop there and pick up in the next one in the next one. Okay we are going to start the second part of the interview. Okay, describe a typical family dinner. Did you guys all eat together? Who did the cooking and what were your favorite foods?

A: First of all, my mom always did the cooking. I don't remember her ever having any help except for the dishes and getting things put up. We all ate together at the same time. There were sometimes as many as twenty people around the table. We had a great big table that would set four people on each side. It was a big square table and I have no idea where it came from. We always had full meals...meat, potatoes, two, three, four vegetables, sometimes salad, and desert.

Q: Always?

A: Always.

Q: And you said your mom always did the cooking, right?

A: yeah, I would have to say fried chicken was one of favorites because my mom would fry it in great big arm skilletts. She always had two skilletts going, not just one, but two. Deserts were always pretty special too. My mom...I always remembered peach pie. She always made it with fresh peaches, and I know Aunt Freda used to come to our house and they yeast donuts which is a long process. It was just like the ones you got out of the bakery and, my gosh, you couldn't cook them fast enough. We would eat them as fast they would get them out of the kittle. It was a big treat and like I said I don't think we ever had any

problems with leftovers because everything got ate. If it was a leftover it got ate later. Homemade bread was one of my favorites too, my mom used to make homemade bread and biscuits. So, what else?

Q: I know you talked about how Christmas was a lot of family getting together but what about birthdays? Were they a big deal since there were so many of you?

A: Not a very big deal...I mean it was always...my mom usually bakes a cake and the guys would want a pie or something but as for presents the kids usually got one present, but the adults usually didn't get any. It was just a hug and a kiss and happy birthday.

Q: That's kind of how it is now. How is the world different today than it was when you were a child?

Billie : Lots and lots different. I mean there is a lot of things as a child I never envisioned like computers and all this stuff that goes along with it...the MP3 players and all of that.

Q: Technology, then?

A: Oh yeah, from outhouses to sonic airplanes it's just gotten...crazy. It's just not in one area, everything has advanced.

Q: What about the school systems? Do you think that is different?

A: Oh yes, very much so. The teachers were more in control than they are now. It was their job to teach, that was what they were paid for. I'm not saying that there weren't bad cases but with my experience that's what they did. There wasn't a lot of nonsense. I must say you couldn't have...the children that had problems couldn't get the help that they could now. They were just kind of lost in the crack.

Q: Really? So, they didn't have like specialty classrooms or anything?

A: No. Every once in a while, you would have a special student and their parent was rich enough to have somebody with them. If that didn't happen, they just didn't get any help at all. I don't know if the teachers didn't have time or what but there wasn't a lot of that.

Q: Who was the oldest relative you had as a child and what do you remember about them?

A: well...

Q: Because the oldest relative for me is you.

A: I would have to say my grandma and grandpa Belcher. What I remember about my grandpa was that he was a very hard working, stern man. I suppose he had to be farming back in the days your farmed with horses and my grandma had hair she didn't cut for many, many years. And I remember when my grandma was sick my sister Lucy would take her hair down, she always wore it in a bun in the back, she would take it down and brush it and it was come almost clear to the bottom of her back. So, I would say the time that I spent at, which was not often, was at my grandma and grandpa's house.

Q: So how long did they live?

A: They lived into their 70's. My grandma died before my grandpa did.

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Q: That is pretty good because the average life span back then was not through their 70's it was more in their 50's and 60's so that is pretty cool. What do you know about your family's surname?

A: Byrley...I was always told it was Irish and French, but we have come to find out it is German, and the story is that the Irish moved to Germany and it became a German name. I always thought it was French but...

Q: So, you found out it was German then?

A: Yeah, and Belcher was a Dutch-German name. That was my mom's maiden name, Belcher, and it was a Dutch-German name no doubt about it.

Q: Yeah, it sounds like it. Is there a naming tradition in your family such as giving the first-born son the name of his paternal grandfather?

A: No, but we do have some names that are like that. James is one. If you go back in our history there is always James everywhere.

Q: Yeah, my brother's name is James.

A: Yes, and my son's name was James and my mom and dad had a James. It's just there. And then there is Jimmy Byrley, Charley's son. And Wilson is another family name and I didn't realize that until just recently. We found my dad's birth certificate and I never knew where the name, my brother's name is Charles Wilson, where it came from. Well believe it or not, my dad's, dad's name is Wilson so it's in there. Like I said, Lucy and James are family names as well, but they don't use those very often.

Q: Yeah, I don't hear those very often.

A: James is used more as a middle name but that would be about it.

Q: What stories have come down about your parents, grandparents, and ancestors? Has your mom or grandparents told you any stories that have stuck with you about their life?

A: Oh yeah...I am trying to think. I know that they did a family history thing and I didn't get to see it, but I wish I had of. But they traced it clear back to a Roman soldier, but I don't know too much about it. We need to get together and kind of go over it. My mom used to tell about the time they lived in a big white tent with a wooden floor in it up off the ground for several years. That must have been rough.

Q: How many of them were there?

A: I don't know...I know she had children at the time, maybe three or four. My dad used to tell the story that at one time he worked in a coal mine and he stuck it out until he got laid off and he said that he hated it so bad that he would go hungry before he would go back to work in that coal mine and he never did.

Q: Have any recipes been passed down to you from family members? You cook all the time. Are any of your recipes passed down?

A: Yeah, the oatmeal cookies that I make. In fact, it is written on an old envelope. I still have that envelope around here somewhere.

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n.d.

Q: What is different about it?

A: I don't know...it just happens to be one that we like real well so it's the one I always use. But it is kind of like that... you always stick to one over the other. And my mom taught me how to make pies. But I don't really have anything written down it is just one of those things where you just put it together.

Q: Yeah you do that a lot. Are there any physical characteristics that run in your family?

A: Absolutely. When you get old you get fat.

Q: Short too, right?

A: Yes, short. Well the boys are not but the girls all are. I think it comes from my mother being...she said they were black Dutch; Pennsylvania and they are all short chunky people and we are too. We all have big tummies and are round and then we have skinny butts and legs and we all ended up that way except for when we were young. But as you grow older, we all get there way.

Q: So, did the guys have any similar characteristics in them?

A: Yeah, I think the men in our family...especially...they are all short. But my dad was tall, he was over six foot and Charles was over six foot and so was Jack. They had broad shoulders and tiny behinds.

Q: What was the full name of your spouse, your siblings, and your parents. We already talked about your siblings but...

A: My dad was James Enock Byrley. Enock is a bible name and my mom was Minnie Pearl Belcher Byrley. Can you imagine? We can go ahead and list the siblings. William Earnest was the oldest. Hang on just a minute...

Q: ok.

A: Robert Arthur was the second boy. John Francis was the third. Charles Wilson was the fourth. Lucy Jane was the last. And then James Virgil who we called Bud was next...I don't think anyone would even know him if we didn't call him Bud. And then there was Ruby Alice and Lois June...well that's not right. It would have been Jack Eugene and then Lois June and then me, Billie Jean. Now who else?

Q: Your spouse's.

A: Oh, my spouse's? Okay, Charles Edward Fouts and we got divorced, I was divorced for twenty years, and then I married Robert Brooke Gillespie and he died five years after we were married.

Q: Okay, when and where did you meet your spouse? What did you do on your dates? So how did you and grandpa meet, first?

A: Well I knew your grandpa because we lived on the same street.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yes, famous 14th Street in Lawrenceville. His mom and dad lived there, and they had ten children also.

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Q: Oh my gosh I think I remember you saying that now. I remember mom telling me that.

A: Yes, they did. So, we grew up playing ball in the street and riding bicycles and they had a basketball hoop on their garage, and we played a lot of that. We were raised very differently because Mrs. Fouts was very strict. Her kids were not allowed to run in and out of the house whereas at my house it was always full of kids and what happened was that Charles went into the service and we started writing to each other.

Q: Oh, cool

A: So, when he got home, we started dating and mostly we went to the drive-in movies and anyway he proposed, and I accepted. We got married and moved to Norfolk Virginia because he was stationed there.

Q: So, did he talk to your parents about proposing?

A: No, at that time both my mother and father was gone. My mother died when I was thirteen and my father died when I was junior in high school, so I lived with my brother Jack and his wife Freda with Ronny and David. No, he didn't ask anybody I just went and told them that I was going to get married.

Q: How long were you guys engaged before you got married?

A: Oh, I'm going to say about four or five months because he was in the service, so he had to get leave to come home and get married. Then he went back and the next time he had leave I packed and when he went back, I went with him.

Q: And where was that at?

A: Norfolk Virginia.

Q: Okay, and how did you meet Bob?

A: Well I was living at Robinson working at Hershey and I had lived up there for some years and your mom, Loretta, had a friend who worked for her at Golden Rule and her mother was best friends with Bob's wife that was deceased. She was having a cookout and she asked Loretta to bring me to the cookout. Well, we went but I was thoroughly embarrassed because when I realized they had set it up...

Q: They set you up like little kids....

A: Yeah, they did, and I was thoroughly embarrassed, so I just spoke to him and that was it. But then a few days later he called me on the phone and asked to take me out to supper and we went out and hit it off real well. We just keep seeing each other until Christmas time he asked me to marry him at the Christmas tree. We had a Christmas tree down here at his house and of course I had one at my house, but I came down here for a supper which he always fixed for his side of the family. Before they came, he had put the ring box and the ring in the Christmas tree and so he led me to the Christmas tree and handed it to me and asked me to marry him.

Q: That was cute. How long were you engaged before you got married?

A: About a year. It was over a year before we got married.

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Interviewer: Lauren Midgett
n.d.

Q: And you guys got married where?

A: In St. Francisville in a Christian church.

Q: Okay.

A: Don't you remember that? You were there.

Q: Yes, I do, it was lavender and yes, I remember. Okay, this is just asking about the proposal and how it happened. Where were you at when grandpa proposed to you?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Ok so what year did you and grandpa get married in?

A: 1954

Q: 1954... and you and Bob got married in...

A: 1999

Q: What memory stands out most from your wedding day? Both of them.

A: Um, when your grandpa and I got married we were married in the parsonage of the church in Lawrenceville and I remember I had on white dress that was shorter and had the stuff underneath of it. I remember sitting down in it and the skirt was just waving around and flew up because I was shaking so bad.

Q: You were nervous?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Was it a big wedding?

A: No, it was just Charles and myself and his brother and his sister-in-law and then we went back where I lived with my brother and we had a little reception there and that was it. Back then you couldn't always afford to do big things.

Q: Right, so what about the wedding with Bob? Do you remember anything special?

A: Oh yes, I remember that...I didn't think Bob was nervous or anything but when I went to put his ring on his finger, he was shaking so bad I couldn't hardly get the ring on his finger.

Q: I'll have to share with you my memory about that wedding was the preacher. He kept making so many mistakes.

A: Yeah, he was a good friend of Bob so that's the reason we had him and yes, he kept making mistakes. When he said something about in-laws your mom and I turned around and looked at Bob, your dad, remember that? I thought it turned out really nice and the reception was really nice too.

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Interviewer: Lauren Midgett
n.d.

Q: Okay, how would you describe your spouse and what did you admire most about them?

A: Well you know when you first love somebody it's completely different than after you get to know them for a while. You still love them but it's not so frantic. But your grandpa was a clean, neat man. He always kept himself very neat, of course, being in the service you had to do that. I always thought it was sad that he became an alcoholic because he could have done a whole lot of things that he didn't get to do. So, I guess that stands out more than anything. Then I admired Bob because he worked so hard and enjoyed it. When he got sick, he said "I'm not going to sit around and just die, I'm going to go work." No matter how bad he felt he always got up and worked.

Q: And he was a farmer?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay what do you think is the key to a successful marriage?

A: Being patient. And I don't think it's just on one side it has to be on both sides. If you go into a marriage thinking you are going to change someone into who you want them to be then you might as well not do it because it's not fair to that person and it's fair to you. It's a give and take situation and it has to be evenly distributed.

Q: Did you try to make it work with grandpa even though he was an alcoholic?

A: Yes, I did. I got to where I would even go sit in the taverns with him and I hated it. Nothing any more boring than sitting in a tavern with a bunch of drunks.

Q: I'm not sure if it would be bored more than irritating.

A: Yeah, and I realized I couldn't do that and that wasn't me. It wasn't fair to me to have to do it. Yeah, I feel like I worked at it very hard and I was very sad it didn't work out. I never ever hated him, not ever I just couldn't live with him.

Q: Yeah, some things just don't work out. How did you find out you were going to be a parent for the first time?

A: Well I had been going to a Doctor in Norfolk Virginia because I hadn't got pregnant and it had been a year and we wanted a baby. He had been treating me with some medication and the next time I went in he said I was pregnant. Charles said he knew I was pregnant when I walked out of that door because I had a smile clear across my face.

Q: And that was with Alan, right?

A: Yes.

Q: So, you didn't have pregnancy tests or anything?

A: Well at the Doctors office but that was it.

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Interviewer: Lauren Midgett
n.d.

Q: Why did you choose your children's names?

A: Well I wanted to name Charles after his dad and my brother, Charles, which is another family name. So, his dad said fine but he wanted the middle name to be Alan and he didn't want it to be spelled A-I-I-e-n he wanted it spelled A-I-a-n so that is what we did. With Jimmy I named him after my dad and his dad which was James Edward. And for Loretta we kind of had a hassle over that because from the time I can remember having paper dolls that if I ever had a little girl, I was going to name her Loretta. I don't know why although I think it is because it is so opposite from a boyish name like Billie. I love the name Loretta. Charles was not very happy with that and then when I was carrying Loretta my sister June, Lois June, died. When we got back home from the funeral Charles said "I don't care what you name this baby if it is a girl... of course back then we didn't know ahead of time and I didn't know ahead of time not on any of them.

Q: Well you didn't really have the technology to tell.

A: Not back then you didn't.

Q: Did they do ultrasounds or anything?

A: Oh, I think they did but they just didn't do them on pregnant women. But anyways he said, "I don't care what you name her if it's a girl as long as it is name after June." I was going to name her Loretta Jean, so I just turned around and named her Loretta June.

Q: It's pretty, I like it. What was your proudest moment as a parent?

A: Oh, I think my daughter graduating out of college and getting her diploma.

Q: Yeah, I have a feeling that is going to be my mom's too.

A: But one of my proudest moments with my grandkids is when I cried because my granddaughter, Lauren, got baptized.

Q: Yeah, I remember that. I think I was eleven. Ten or eleven. What did you family enjoy doing together?

A: My kids you mean?

Q: Yes.

A: Well we did a lot of things together. For one, we didn't have the money to go out and spend even then. I used to save my pennies and dimes for a month just so we could go to McDonald's for a treat. But we did a lot of things together. We did have television then. I'll tell you one thing we used to do when my boys were little and they loved it, we would pack a picnic lunch and we lived at Norfolk Virginia where they have these huge air bases and we would go park at the fence and watch the jets take off and land and have a picnic lunch.

Q: Wow I bet the boys loved that. Did you take mom too?

A: I don't remember taking her as much. Fishing, of course we fished a lot. I even fished when I was pregnant with your mom and Alan.

Q: What was your profession and how did you choose it? So, tell me as soon as you graduated what you did.

A: Oh my gosh. Well after school we moved to Norfolk Virginia. I graduated in May and we got married in July which is when we moved to Virginia and I got a job in the dine store in the hardware department of all things because it was the only one that was open. But I was pretty adapting at it which surprised me. I didn't know much about hardware, but I had that job for a long time there. I was trying to remember if I worked anywhere else. I was mainly a mother.

Q: So, you went a time when you didn't work?

A: Oh yes. Once I had Loretta, I don't think I worked again until she started school. Then we moved to Great Lakes Illinois and I went to work for the government. I took a test that you take for the government to get a job. I was hunting for a job and someone had told me to do that because they had a lot of job opening in that area, so I did. I came home and I said, " Well I just flunked that, so I don't have to worry about that." In the next few days I got a letter saying that the post office was interested in hiring me on the base. So, I went, and I interviewed, and I took the job. Well I hadn't been on the job but about two weeks and I got another letter telling me a computer-based place that tracked all parts that went to navy ships and overseas was interested in me. They had an opening in a learner in their computer department and that they would be willing to accept me. So, I took that letter to my boss and said that I had gotten this letter and I didn't know what to do about it. He read it and said, "if you can get this job, you should take it." I said "Well, how do I do that?" He said, "I will put in a transfer for you." So, I got the job. I even had to be fingerprinted for it for security reasons. I had to have a tag to get in and out of the building as well. It was just at the beginning of computers when they had things called computer cards which had little holes in them that the machine reads, and they were getting ready to change over to tapes. See how everything has advanced?

Q: Yeah!

A: And that's how they tracked all the parts that the navy bought for all their ships and everything. At that time, they had about ten million dollars' worth of computers in there which was a lot and I loved my job and I was learning something new all the time. But your grandpa got transferred. I should have stayed and kept the job, but you can't look into the future, you know? So, we transferred. I worked that job the whole time we were up there in Great Lakes. I had gone from a GS2 to a GS4. It was an ideal job but anyways. He went to California and we went with him and I worked in a toy factory out there. I made Barbie dolls and hot wheels were brand new. They had just been put on the market. I have a lot of funny stories there. You don't want to go into them, do you?

Q: Yeah! Tell me one of them!

A: Well one of them was that I had this one job with this engineer and what they had done was built these tracks for these hot wheels and my job was to roll these hot wheels down this track so they could time them. It was good money!

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Q: That would be a good job!

A: And then for a while I worked on the production line where they made Barbie dolls and put them into the boxes. There is a sleeve that goes over the dolls and this machine clamps it and it all stays together. When it came off the line, I had to pick up a doll and inspect it and make sure it was all perfect and then when the talking ones came out you pulled the string. I pulled the string on this one doll and thought "what in the world?" So, I threw it over in the reject box. Well I got another one and it did the same thing. So, I called my supervisor over and told him that this doll had something wrong with it and pulled the string and he said, "It's just talking Japanese, put it back on the line." But we knew we were only going to be out in California for a few years. We knew we weren't staying so I tried to get the kids to see things I didn't think they wouldn't ever get to see again. It was a good thing I did.

Q: So, after the toy factory where did you guys go?

A: Lawrenceville. He was stationed someplace else, but we came back to Lawrenceville because Alan was going to start high school and I didn't want him to start out in California with me by myself out there, so we came back. Anyway, then I went to work for Hershey's, well at that time it was Heath and company Inc. and then Leaf bought it. After Leaf bought it, Hershey bought it and I worked there and moved to Robinson because that was where it was, and I got tired of driving back and forth all the time.

Q: And I was happy you did. So, where did you start at? What did you do?

A: When I first started, I worked as a production worker and that's exactly what you did. You packed and wrapped the candy. Pretty boring and hard job but as time went on I learned to be a machine operator which wraps the candy and from then on I did some jobs in the maintenance department instead of getting laid off and I ended up in the parts department because at that time their parts department was a bunch of parts stacked in boxes so we got them all sorted out and on the computer. I kept at it until the man that was in charge retired and he recommended me to take his place and my boss said fine. So, I stepped up as supervisor in the parts department and I was a purchaser for all the big equipment that went into the building. That's what I retired from.

Q: How old were you when you retired?

A: In 2000...so nine years ago. I was pretty proud of that job because I was the first woman in their maintenance department ever. When I left there were seven of us.

Q: Wow, that has to make you feel like you did something, doesn't it?

A: Yes, it does. I had to prove myself to my boss very much so. He would check on me and stand behind me checking everything out once in a while.

Q: And that is not easy work either... factory work is hard.

A: I was real proud of the fact that I did accomplish that.

Q: Yeah, good. If you could have had any other profession what would it have been and why wasn't it your first choice?

A: I would have been a librarian.

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Q: You love books that much, huh?

A: I love books so much. I would have been a librarian. And why wasn't that my first choice; because I didn't have the money to go to college to become one.

Q: Did you ever think about going to college?

A: Absolutely. Something always came up. I know that is not how it is supposed to be in the story book life, I know it's supposed to always come first but it doesn't.

Q: Of all the things you learned from your parents, what do you think is the most valuable?

A: Hard-working and to be honest.

Q: Fair enough.

A: I do. My dad always worked hard and raised his kids to the best of his ability. He would not tolerate us to be dishonest in any way shape or form. You better not lie to him; you better not steal anything. We were raised to know that.

Q: Good. What accomplishments were you the proudest of?

A: Well, raising three children.

Q: Yeah, being a mom is not easy.

A: But in my last job when I became a supervisor, I was pretty proud of that.

Q: What is the one thing you want people to remember most about you?

A: Well the one thing I don't think people know about me is that I love a lot of things with a passion and I just don't show it. I want them to know and remember me as a person who can leave things behind and face forward. It doesn't do any good to look behind you.

Q: So, give me an example.

A: Well if you make a mistake all you can do is say I'm sorry and go on and try not to do that again.

Q: Alright well I think we are about done unless you have anything else you want to say or talk about.

A: Well yeah, I could talk about how much I love my grandkids.

Q: Alright! Now how many grandkids do you have?

A: I have seven and two great-granddaughters. And basically, I have five step grandchildren and once step grandson, but I don't have too much to do with them anymore.

Q: And those are Bob's kids, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Who had a baby?

A: Abby, she had a little boy.

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Q: Okay well that is all I have for you. Thank you for doing this!

A: Your welcome.