

Interview with Mark Blinn
Interviewer: Justin Blim
December 1, 2009

Q: What is your full name?

A: Mark Blinn

Q: Did your parents not give you a middle name?

A: No

Q: What was the reasons for the name that your parents gave you?

A: I have no idea we never ever discussed that

Q: Did you have a nickname while growing up?

A: Dad used to call us, my sister and I we had a newspaper comic that was called the Gook and the Goon, I was a Gook and she was a Goon

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Huntington County Indiana, which is located in Huntington Indiana, and it was October 13th, 1934.

Q: How did your family come to live there?

A: Well we had a rough go of it, mom and dad, dad actually bought a farm in Marion Indiana in Grant County but moved out of that due to the water supply going bad, back in those days we had to dig wells. The rats and wild animals fell in and caused the water to go bad. You at least tried to find a place where the water tasted well and my grandparents bought a farm in Huntington county, after that period of time, my parents separated, ended up in a divorce.

Q: Were there other family members in the area? Who?

A: No most of us lived in Grant County at that time

Q: How far was Huntington County to Grant County?

A: I would say probably where the farm was it was about 25 miles from where the divorce took place. Then later on Dad remarried, my dad remarried, and my sister went with them and I stayed with my grandparents and was raised by them.

Q: What was the house (apartment, farm, etc.) like? How many rooms? Bathrooms? Did it have electricity? Indoor plumbing? Telephones?

A: When we lived in Huntington County, with dad and mom it was a small farm home, had an outside well in a pump house. Little early in my lifetime I don't remember a great deal of details.

Q: Were there any special items in the house that you remember?

A: Too small to recall that

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Q: What is your earliest childhood memory?

A: I'd say around 4-5 years old, at our grandparents house, it was a large farm, my sister was there for a while, my sister was there for a while, I would always try to assess the situation with her, I would let her test things out and if she didn't get hurt or if anything didn't happen to her I would decide to participate.

Q: Describe the personalities of your family members.

A: Being raised by grandparents, they were pretty much like most of the elderly, usually worked on the premises, grandma usually had her money which was usually aid money, had cows that we milked, milk separated to cream, and what they didn't use they sold, and that is how she got her money to buy stamps and so on, grandpa worked with vegetables, beef, hogs, chickens, and eggs, this would supplement what we couldn't grow at the farm to trade items. I remember their personalities at that time were that if one of them borrowed a stamp the other one hounded them until that stamp was repaid. Dad I don't remember too much he worked for some families who were influential in Marion as a contractor, in the carpentry industry. I also had an Uncle up there that I don't recall too much about because he wasn't around very often but as he was able to buy a lot of property, the time we were born was the time the great depression came along, people had lost a lot of things and those with money would buy a lot of property. That pretty well covers the family. On my mother's side, my grandpa was an iceman, one of the first men who delivered ice to the homes in Marion Indiana and was the first home who had a working inside toilet. They also had about two or three bulldogs.

Q: What was your favorite toy and why?

A: Well we didn't have, we kinda entertained ourselves a little bit, I remember going out into the barn one day and there was always a wooden chest and I was always curious and getting into things that I shouldn't have, and the doors were nailed shut so I figured out how to get the nails out and get the doors open, and there was an old wind up Ameson Andy Old Antique model T car, that you can wind up and it would run, Ameson Andy was in it and would bounce back and forth, apparently my dad and uncle had, and I guess the thing that I remember the most was discovering a bicycle and I had experimented one time and I had a friend one time that had a bicycle and we used to ride about 5 miles into town to go to the movies and we could go Sunday afternoon and we could go to 2 Sunday matinees for 13 cents and they were usually westerns, we would ride our bicycles and we decided one day to make our own tandem bicycle, so we took the front wheel off of mine and we bolted it onto the back of his, we lived up a long lane, and when we got to the end of the lane, that was the end of the bicycles he went left and I went straight, so we went back to riding single.

Q: What was your favorite thing to do for fun (movies, beach, etc.)?

A: Being by myself after my sister left I pretty much entertained myself, the only activity I had was to ride on the farm equipment, we had an Oliver tractor with a rim and lugs on it and I used to ride up on it and it was a lot of fun when I used to sit up on it, grand-dad wouldn't ever say anything, he didn't even call me by name he would just say boy, whenever he was talking to me, we would plow and disc by the hour and never say anything. He stopped in a hurry one day and I went over he almost run over me with a lugged tractor with a disc on the back. I didn't ride for a while after that. Another experience that I know, we used to make hay, and I used to notice the dogs when we would stop the wagon and they

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dogs would crawl under there into the shade. I thought that it was a good idea to get under there and get out of the hot sun. My biggest concern was I could yell pretty loud and I was going to go along that hay rack and yell but that was the last time that happened. We also had a steel wagon that had a 10-inch-wide wheel that was metal, and it left an imprint across my belly for a couple months but that was the worst thing that had happened on the farm.

Q: Did you have family chores? What were they? Which was your least favorite?

A: Gathering eggs, getting the cows, my job to drive the horse to get the hay into the mound, sometimes that was miserable because the horse would be really sweaty in the summertime, then we mowed grass and feed the animals. My least favorite was pitching manure and cleaning the barn

Q: Did you receive an allowance? How much? Did you save your money or spend it?

A: Not growing up, my first allowance was in the 7th grade at the school I went, they would hire one of the older students to take care of the furnace or the pot belly stove I agreed to take care of that for one year. That was my first allowance, it didn't actually pay anything, but they gave me a 25-dollar bond at the end of the year. The bonds I saved until they matured and as I needed them, I would cash them in. There wasn't a whole lot of money to be made. 25 to 50 cents a week was the typical adults' salary, so things didn't cost much but you didn't know how poor you were because everybody was in the same boat that you were, you didn't really think much about what money was.

Q: What was school like for you as a child?

A: I always liked to go because like I said I was alone and that was when I could meet kids and play with them we had a one room school that consisted of all 8 grades, they didn't have but 25 to 30 kids in them but a lot of them had 7 or 8 kids to a class and it was a little interesting, we usually got initiated when you first went there we had an outside well that had a big metal handle on it and the older kids would usually initiate the younger ones by in the wintertime stick their tongue on the handle and of course you couldn't get your tongue off of the handle until you ran water on it. And another one we also had outhouses and they were up to day and they weren't single hole jobs they were what you call double hole outhouses, the older boys always enjoyed teasing the younger ones acting like there was going to dump them down into them of course that wasn't the most pleasant experience to go through, of course the louder you yelled the longer they would do it. I can recall that we were never out of school due to snow, snow back in those days would get as high as the fence post, and we would walk to school because most of the route was 2-3 miles, or they would clear the main roads and you would walk to them, and we never missed any days of school. We didn't have homework back in those days, you always had plenty of time to do it at the school, they did make some changes by time I hit the 6th grade. I did finish all 8 years at that 1 room school.

Q: What were your best and worst subjects?

A: My worst subject was English and math until I got up into geometry and algebra; let's just say we got by in those courses. I took a spell about the 8th grade to be the class clown, so I got moved out into the hallway. In junior high I was there I just kinda passed though, and in high school I went into the building

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trades, the last couple years we went out and built things for the school like ticket booths for the football games. That got me out of hard math.

Q: Where did you attend grade school? High school? College?

A: All of the schools that I attended were in Marion in the northern part of Indiana

Q: What school activities and sports did you participate in?

A: Well we always had played the other 1 room schools in the area, we played softball, and we would play the other schools when we would visit, or they would visit. All eight grades played together. Snowball fights we would have, and other organized games such as red rover red rover send me right over, and they would try to break locked arms if they got though they would take someone back. We would throw the tennis ball over the school back and forth.

Q: Do you remember any fads from your youth? Popular hairstyles? Clothes?

A: No not too much until we got into high school then there was always a group that wore white saddle oxfords, then people that would color their hair. Clothing wasn't too much growing up because everyone was pretty much in the same economic class, nothing too far out.

Q: Who were your childhood heroes?

A: Roy Rogers and the cowboys, batman and those that came through in those days, we didn't get too involved into those because there was no tv back in that particular time, we would occasionally listen to a radio, that didn't really entertain me that much.

Q: What were your favorite songs and music?

A: Really never had any, I developed a liking for country more than a lot of stuff.

Q: Did you have any pets? If so, what kind and what were their names?

A: We had a goat, which happened to run from the barn and smacked my grandma in the rear, the goat was then sold to a couple hobo's the next day. I have had many dogs growing up, I had one that I bought as a young pup, when we moved from the country into the town, I left it with the people that bought the farm. That was basically dogs. My favorite dog was collies spent a lot of time with them they would hunt and bring back rabbits. We have had several other kinds since then. Some would die a natural death; some would die a rather violent death. I don't get too attached to them to the standpoint that they cause me to be greatly grieved.

Q: What was your religion growing up? What church, if any, did you attend?

A: We have always been Baptist. My grandparents were the members of the Baptist church and we are still involved in that today.

Q: Were you ever mentioned in a newspaper?

A: Yeah, our marriage license was in the news paper.

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Q: Who were your friends when you were growing up?

A: Had a friend Ray Kim, he and I started in grade school together, he moved to a 4 room school, went to Marion high school together, we always thought growing up that we would go into business together, but we grew up and he went his way and I went into the service. He worked at a store and died 15 years ago. I'd go up there a few times to visit. You know you have great dreams sometimes as young people, but sometimes things change things.

Q: What world events had the most impact on you while you were growing up? Did any of them personally affect your family?

A: I could remember laying in the yard and group after group of airplanes would fly over the yard. We were in the process of WWII; dad was one of the oldest ones that got drafted at that time. I could remember we would gather milk weed pods for parachutes, and gather aluminum foil and gum wrappers, tin cans, and lard, and take to the school. I remember we had rationing for tires, gasoline, coupon books to only have a certain amount of stuff a month. Like sugar, you would turn in tokens, people would swap tokens around to those who didn't like sugar, also things like chocolate, nylon hoes, blankets, and all kinds of things that would be used for the war effort.

Q: Describe a typical family dinner. Did you all eat together as a family? Who did the cooking?

A: Meat Potatoes, each day had a special deal, usually had plan ole basic food. Like the kind of stuff that makes me built like I am today. My whole family ate together and that was something that most families ate together. On the farm we always met for all 3 meals that was something that was expected to happen. Grandma cooked

Q: What were your favorite foods?

A: All of them

Q: How were holidays (birthdays, Christmas, etc.) celebrated in your family? Did your family have special traditions?

A: No, we never really had a whole lot for Christmas or anything, usually when we started with school you got your first pair of shoes, you would wear them til they wore out. I always fixed my shoes with black shoe polish, so it didn't show. Your pants and you could tell how much you grew by how high off the ground they were at the end of the year. You would usually get socks and or gloves, underwear, they were more practical things, there were times that I would get one toy, or a bag or oranges or apples.

Q: How is the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?

A: Technology has changed so much, electronics are different, we were pretty well as far as childhood, tv came along and it changed the world, started as a 4 inch screen, and would see snow, but maybe get lucky and see a faint outline, the neighborhood would gather and usually one person would buy a tv and then everyone would watch it together. Movies were basically either cowboys, not the gory stuff that you have now, they were light and joyful to see, more like emotional things. The automobile has changed since that time. Changed in comfort and so on. Society has changed a whole lot. Trucks used to be used for work purposes only and not they are fancy. Space has changed like going to the moon and

back, the short space of time and the things that go on in other nations that we never cared about now if you turn on the tv you are a part of the world. Air travel wasn't involved, now it is normal. Washer or dryer are almost a given. A lot of automated things in the home. I think it changed a lot more now than it did then. Who was the oldest relative you remember as a child? What do you remember about them? I can remember going to visit some of the relatives of my grandparents. I can remember how old they seemed at the time compared to me. A lot of them had infirmaries, such as swelling of the joints. One of the uncles I know I always liked him he always had a very trimmed mustache, always was up and could make a lot of things. That was my grandma's brother. He had a cottage at the lake we would go to every once in a while.

Q: What do you know about your family surname?

A: We are German, we came back, our ancestors came over as a sold person like a slave and paid off their passage. Arrived and settled in Ohio, migrated to Indiana, pretty well known in the area of Ohio, basically hard-working rural type people, we are still that way. Some that was in the Civil war as a drummer, several that were involved in some things, don't know much about the skeletons in the closet.

Q: What stories have come down to you about your parents? Grandparents? More distant ancestors?

A: I can remember my grandparents telling me about a tornado that came though and was vivid to them and other people in the area that came through and moved trains off the tracks about a mile and a half. There was a man asleep in bed and it lifted him up and sat him down without even taking the blankets off. Back in the gas age, with gas wells in the area they heated with it and used it for lighting, but it was gone before I was there. The farm where we were at had fruit like plums, apples, pears, and peaches, but at one time it had a true orchard. Some of the biggest ice cream socials that you have ever saw!

Q: Are there any stories about famous or infamous relatives in your family?

A: None that I know of. We now have a senator that was related to my grandmother, senator Lugar.

Q: Have any recipes been passed down to you from family members?

A: Not to me, I'm not a cook.

Q: Are there any physical characteristics that run in your family?

A: Yeah, we have one that is very strong, have one eye that has a tendency to be genetically smaller even to the grandchildren, usually shows up when they are tired or something along that line, evidently a strong trait because it carries though from generation to generation.

Q: What was the full name of your spouse? Siblings? Parents?

A: I have a sister Ferba Ruth Campbell, and I have a brother that is Herman Glenn Blinn, goes by Glenn, named after my dad, and I have another sister, she is the one that is a little harder to keep track of she has been married 4 or 5 times she is my younger sister.

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Q: When and how did you meet your spouse? What did you do on dates?

A: Vinetta Elizabeth Reece Blinn, when I was working for Anaconda wiring and cable, she was the head of the teletyping section in which controlled all of the communications between plants. She had a department. It was convenient that I would stop in there every once in a while and talk to her. We would go visit at her house, or where she was staying at that time because sometimes, she rented a room closer to where she worked. Other times go to the movies, we would go see things available in the general area. We've gone to caves; I tell her to use her imagination. Close to 21 when I met her.

Q: What was it like when you proposed (or were proposed to)? Where and when did it happen?

A: Been so long ago, I think that I proposed to her at work, went out at lunch time, bought a ring, then came back. We knew each other for 2 years, after the proposal we got married in 3 months.

Q: Where and when did you get married?

A: December the 9th in 1956 in Center Methodist Church. My dad said it was the longest wedding that he had attended.

Q: What memory stands out the most from your wedding day?

A: Everybody stood during the entire Ceremony.

Q: How would you describe your spouse? What do (did) you admire most about them?

A: Most beautiful thing that she could've been at that time. Putting up with me, going for 53 years, and they said it wouldn't last and that she was marrying him for his money.

Q: What do you believe is the key to a successful marriage?

A: Talk things out, communication, every single day will not be happy. The best way to get along, if it is a conversation that isn't going well, just don't respond. Works every time because it stops the argument.

Q: How did you find out you were going to be a parent for the first time?

A: No, it wasn't planned, we were only married for 2 weeks and he received his orders to go to the army. Almost always you would go take your physical then go home and receive a letter. He couldn't pass due to high blood pressure, so he had to wait until he finally passed. They swore him in and on the train and he left that day.

Q: What did your family enjoy doing together?

A: Our family always enjoyed going places, state parks, museums. Whenever we would move into an area, we would go to the city historical areas.

Q: What was your profession and how did you choose it?

A: As you can see by the list that we had some of them were just need of having work, others were a challenge that was there and available at the time. I was one that evidently changed jobs every 3 to 5 years. The challenges of new experiences, not for the pay but something that kept me busy, interested in, and support my family, had what we wanted.

Q: If you could have had any other profession what would it have been? Why wasn't it your first choice?

A: Liked to have been a minister, I have toyed with the idea at times, something that I had enjoyed to work with. Maybe something contributed in that area. My grandmother told me that I wasn't qualified and would never be qualified.

Q: Of all the things you learned from your parents, which do you feel was the most valuable?

A: That your word means what it means. Do the best at what you do. Be available to people that are in need. Listen a lot. Listening, God gave us two ears so we can listen twice as much but that is because a lot of people today just don't want to listen. Two ears because it is harder to listen.

Q: What accomplishments were you the most proud of?

A: That we instilled some moral and spiritual values, in spite of the mistakes that we made, something came out of it, and fortunate enough to have grandchildren and to see what they mean to us and the legacy that we will have through them for our family to be remembered. My dad was always interested in the boys of the family to carry on the name and I think our family has done that to a satisfactory.

Q: If you could change one thing what would it be?

A: Spend more time with my children

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

A: To be somebody that cares about them, willing to listen, might not be able to help them financially, but I hope that they can realize that I can be emotional with them, I can feel sorrow, pain, joy, and help overcome things with them. That would be my main deal and I hope that they would see me as an individual that God put on this earth to be a caring person and individual.