

Rosa McKinney

"I was born on a farm in Clark County August 21, 1922 in the hottest summer of the year and I was born at home. My mom said she thought I would never get here. They gave her whiskey because you couldn't go to the hospital. You stayed home and had your baby. I weighed over ten pounds which was a big baby for that day in age.

I had four brothers and one sister. Two of my brothers died at infancy.

Our neighborhood was very friendly. We had ice cream socials, suppers, the kids played together. We all walked to school over a mile and a half every day through rain, sleet and snow."

What school was that Rosa? West Liberty Grade School. There was one teacher for eight grades. She had to keep the fire going in the winter time, help the kids put their boots on and help the little ones get their coats on. She had to be a nurse aide all day, janitor and she had to bring in water in a water bucket and we all had to drink out of the same cup in the back of the school.

But we all grew up to be pretty old so I guess it didn't hurt us.

And in the Spring, we would kind of eat according to seasons. Dad would go, like when the squirrels were young, we would have squirrel. We would go fishing. They would cut down trees where hives were to collect honey. We ate well. We butchered and had garden produce, but it was during the Great Depression and many people lost their farms.

A lot of people jumped out of windows because they couldn't live that kind of life anymore.

We were hanging out clothes. Mom made clothes

from feed sacks. Remember they put the feed in printed sacks? Women made aprons, pillow cases, kid's clothes.

I even wore underpants made from them.

We had a little dog in 1927. Lindenberg flew over which was big in the news then. So our dog was always Lindy. He lived to be a good dog.

Did you have some chores? Oh heavens yes. I had to go gather the eggs. I could never milk a cow. My sister could milk a cow. I could not get that milk to come down. She always said I did it on purpose but I didn't. I tried. I just couldn't get it to let go. I think she knew me. Did she ever kick you? No, I wasn't there long enough for her to do that.

In the summer time, we had what they call the truck patch. Big. Other than the garden. We had to hoe and pull weeds. Pull the produce. We would save potatoes and cut the eye out of the potato and plant it in the truck patch.

Dad grew peanuts which was quite a thrill. He allso grew his own tobacco and cured it in the barn. Did you ever try any of that? No, and i'm surprised we didn't. We tried everything else. Especially green apples, when they came on we would eat a bunch until we were sick.

I did one day try to help my mom. She was down in the truck patch and I saw her ring the head off of a chicken. I was going to fry it for her and have the meal ready.

I go that all chicken and twisted and twisted and he would rrrrr and twist more and rrrrr. I finally went in and got a hatchet and a board and cut its head off. That was the last time I chicken fried. I was through with that.

In the summer we liked to go fishing for the meal. Dad

was never one to eat opossum. Alot of people did, we did not. But he ate frog legs which I couldn't understand.

What about your playtime in school or at home, did you make up any of your own gmaes? I can't remember what we did play. I remember a hand game indy indy over because a kid thought it would be smart to throw a rock over. It hit me in the head the blood just gushed. Well they took me home. Of course back then you didn't go to the doctor, you just treated it. Mom treated it and by the next morning it was all swollen. They took me to the doctor in Westfield and he said he couldn't do anything about it. It was too swollen to stictch it. So I still have a scar on the top of my had where that kid threw that rock. But then other games, I can't remember what we did play. We played ball alot.

We had to go to the out-house of course. If I remember right there was just one. We didn't have his and hers. One. For all of us.

So with your family life were you coming into town a regularly to do some trading or to buy groceries? We went in to Clarksville which was 3 or 4 miles for little things, well we never bought thread because my mom made thread. But, once in awhile we would go to Clarksville. For big shopping, we would go to Marshall.

We lived 7 miles south of Kansas, 7 miles north of Martinsville, 7 miles east of Westfield and 14 miles west of Marshall.

As a youngster did you have some hobbies that you still do today? The only thing I ever did that anyone ever said anything about.....one part of our farm was a clay. In the spring, you could work that clay and make furniture and little houses and I did that alot. Thats the only thing

I can remember other than having to do our chores.

How about some artwork? I didn't do any artwork at all and anything to do with hair I had no part of.

My mom took me, when I graduated from grade school, to Terre Haute and got a permanent with those big old heat rod permanent. And I thought my head was going to break off. I had these frizzy, kinky little wound up curls that I absolutely hated.

That summer, I went to my aunts and I asked her to cut it off and she did. She cut it how she cuts the boys hair. She was a country barber. Well when I went home things weren't pleasant when she saw my hair. I think she paid 89 cents for that permanent. She was really unhappen but then as time went on I began to get over my straight hair. I wound up making that my profession.

Q: I remember when I was a youngster, my mom would go to the Archer House and Odeilia Miller had a beauty shop in there. She had on eof those what I tought looked like a hard torture machine. With the wires. I didn't know the name of it until you said it. Did you have to use one of those?

Yes. When I first started beauty school we had one. We had to use one in order to pass the state board. Back then Cold Waves were just beìng introduced and of course people said they would cause cancer if we were to continue to use them. Well, that didn't prove to be true. It wasn't long after that until they went out completely and everyone was leaving.

Q: You use the phrase Cold Wave and alot of the young people have never even heard of that. What is a Cold Wave?

Chemicals. Used with chemicals rather than heat.

See, some chemicals got hot. And we had a pointer and if it got hot then you pointed with this pointer and we would raise it up and had a blower and would blow under there. Sometimes you wouldn't get there in time and it was like a steam burn under the skin. Awful hard to heat and I think we gave them blue something and they would never thing to sue us if anything happened.

There was one lady who didn't like the way her color turned out. She wondered about suing me and thought maybe if she sued me and I sued the company then maybe we could both get money. She was no longer one of my customers.

Where was your shop? I went to school in Paris. If somebody wouldve told me when I went to school that I would one day own that school I would think they were off their rocker. Anyway, I went to work in Casey for an old lady who had been a beautician for a long time. She let me work about three days. She called me in the back room one day and she said "Rosa, have you been to beauty school or where in the hell have you been? You don't know anything. She taught me completely over of everything I had been taught. Now, if she hadn't have, I may not have been as successful as I turned out to be. Buy boy she rode me hard for that two years I worked for her.

Q: Would you say that was just good old practical experience?

A: Yes it was. She taught me how to get along with customers and how to treat customers. Not only that but she showed me the business end. How to take care of a customer. If you have one customer for the year, it was worth \$500 where if you had a customer walk in and

pushed your regular customer away, you lost that. She taught me things like that. So anyway, I went to Kansas and bought a shop of my own.

Then, I moved to Marshall and bought a shop where Odiella Marie used to be. I put an ad in the paper where the previous Odiella Marie beauty shop was and she called and reemed me out for using her name without permission. I never even thought of that.

Anyway, then after fifteen years here I went to Paris and bought the beauty school.

Q: Who owned the Archer House at that time?

A: Mr. Charlie Morris and Martha.

Q: He was operating it as a hotel?

A: Oh yeah. It wasn't fancy. It was kind of old and antique. But as he told his customer, "The waters hot and the sheets are clean."

Did they serve meals there at that time? No.

When I was there a lady lived in the back. Mr. Morris did rent some like apartments but they were mainly rooms..

Q: After you bought the business in Paris, is that by any chance still in operation?

A: Nope. The man that bought it from me said he didn't know how in the world I ever ran that place. He said it would take two men and a boy to keep it running.

I spent lots and lots of hours there. After the day was over, I had to do all of these things the State wanted. You really work for the state. So then, I would stay and do that and make sure all of the sterilizers were clean because we had inspectors that came in.

Q: Were you living in Paris at the time you had that business or were you living in Marshall?

A: Marshall. I was driving back and forth. But then I did put an apartment up there after I got a divorce from Bill. I put an apartment upstairs. Then, I met Bob and moved back to Marshall.

Q: Did you find a lot of changes in Marshall when you moved back?

A: It hasn't changed in 100 years. Well, less businesses. I remember drug stores, grocery stores, clothing stores, shoe store, two hardware stores, hotels, movie theater, liquor store, two newspapers, furniture store. We had just about anything you would want. Car dealers, filling stations, taverns, there were seven at one time.

Q: Looking back at your career as beauty shop owner and operator, do you see differences in how shops are today? Would you go back in business?

A: Not since the third sex started telling people how to wear their hair. It's awful. The women on Little House on the Prairie has better looking hair do's than some of the girls on T.V. with it hanging out and sticking out. I am tickled to death that I don't do hair now. Not only that but men started going to beauty shops and I don't like that either.

We did do updo's. We would take a ruler and hold it so that it would come up 12 inches from the head. Back comb, back come and the lacquer. The lacquer you had to use alcohol to cut the lacquer out of the hair but the hair do stayed for two weeks.

Q: Is there a person or individual here in Marshall that has made a big influence on your life?

A: Schaeffer. The lady that taught me. I had some interesting friends like Lenny Handy.

Some people refer to her as eccentric. Was that your

take on her too, I don't mean that negatively. She was different but a nice different. Everyone associates her to the "From Here to Eternity" book and the writer's colony.

If it wasn't for her, there would be no "From Here to Eternity" book or any other book and there hasn't been any since then. The people she had, never went on to write any other books than what that wrote here.

Were there National events or something historically that had happened that you feel affected your life?

Really, not too much other than World War II. I graduated from beauty school that year and we were all elated thinking that it was over. It really wasn't that much different. My life didn't change.

I know you remember air raids and blackouts....

My little boy was born in December 1941. The nurses kept running into my room. Back then everyone smoked. They all ran in with their cigarettes and they took the radio out of an old man's room and brought it in my room. They said the old man wouldn't care because he couldn't hear any way. There were 7 girls surrounding an ash tray. They were all up in the air thinking they would be drafted, doctors would be drafted, they would have to black out curtains over hospital windows. I never heard such stories. I was in there ten days. When you had a baby back then, you stayed in the hospital for ten days. I just had to believe what they were telling me. What a time.

You know we were kept in bed for ten days and waited on like royalty. My girlfriend who was in there visiting me had a baby the following year. When I visited her, she was there three days then kicked her out.

What modern conveniences have helped you

today?

Things have been going so fast here lately. I had a six year old show me how to use an iPad. I can't grasp all of it.

Back to your question on events changing my life....

I did lose my boy to Leukemia when he was ten. I still have trouble with that.

My mom had a kettle of water and boiled our clothes in the water and then we cleaned the porch with that water. Not a lot of electricity didn't go through the country. We didn't have electricity for a long time.

Q: Did she have a washer finally that had a gas motor?

A: Mmmhmmmm.

Q: If you were in another country and they asked you do you live? What would you say about Marshall in this part of the country?

A: When I was in Alaska, a man asked me about schools around here. We have some good schools, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and Rose Hulman. We do have some really good schools in this part of the country. It's just a nice place to live.

Q: I previously asked you about your hobbies but, did you have a pet?

We had Lindy. We got him in 1927. I don't know how old he was when he died. We had different animals along the way. We would pull taffy and then we would feed some to the poor old dog. We would butcher and give him cracklins.