

Ann Bennet

Q: Where and when were you born?

A: I was born in Harrisburg, Illinois in 1939.

Q: Who were your parents? Did you have any siblings?

A: Harry and Mildred Hurst. I have one sister and three brothers.

Q: When did you come to Marshall?

A: I moved to Marshall with my husband, Harley who did grow up here. His family had a farm here. At one point in our married lives, our oldest daughter was getting ready to start high school and we didn't want her to go to school in Peoria, where we were living at the time. There was a great deal of unrest in that community at that time. We had the opportunity....Harley was offered a position in Terre Haute and everything fell into place. We moved to Marshall in the 1960s.

The thing that I remember, is when we moved into our present home. We built it on the farm where he grew up.

Q: How would you describe the neighborhood?

When we first moved there the neighbors were very sparse. In the time that we have lived there, there have been several homes built. It is a dead end road. We are the next to last ones on the road. The last house on the road is owned by someone in West Virginia.

Q: Did you have chores as a child?

I didn't live in Harrisburg very long. I was still an infant when we moved to Centraillia which is where I grew up and I had a lot of chores. My sister and I were responsible for a good part of the house cleaning. With three little brothers coming behind me, I helped my mother take

care of my brothers. I was responsible for mostly myself. I had to behave myself and take care of what was mine.

Q: What did you like to do during playtime?

A: I rode my bicycle and I read. Every opportunity I had, I read. I started out reading because my aunt was a children's librarian at the library. She helped me select books when I wasn't even in school yet. I learned to read when I was four. I remember reading Flicka, Ricka and Dicka. By the time I was in elementary school, I was reading biographies.

Where did you go to school?

My elementary years, I went to Schiller Elementary School in Centraillia. There were eight elementary school in Centraillia at that time. Then, I went to Centraillia High School and then I went to a junior college which is now known as Kaskaskia Community College. I went to U of I and finished my degree in Education with a major in English. Later, I got my Master's from Indiana State.

What kinds of things would your family like to do together?

Actually, not a whole lot. My dad always worked atleast two jobs, sometimes three. My mother was always very busy taking care of children and the house. House-keeping at that time was not easy. She didn't have all of the equipment that we have today. It took alot of effort to get the house clean and my mother was always particular. She always made good meals. We always had dinner together. No matter who had what after school, we managed to have dinner together. We also always went to church together. In the summertime, we often would picnic. All five of us worked at the community swimming

pool as life guards and it wasn't uncommon for mother to pack a picnic lunch and bring it out.

Did you have hobbies?

I enjoyed playing with kids in the neighborhood. We roller skated alot. I lived on a boulevard which was actually amounted to two blocks and on that boulevard there were 38 children. I never waited for someone to play with. We played a lot of baseball, we roller skated, played jack's and Annie over. I had two good friends who lived in the same block as I did and we spent time together. I love movies and I was allowed to go with a group of friend when I was ten or eleven years old. We could walk there because we didn't have a car. We walked everywhere we went.

Did you have a pet?

We always had a cat. My dad always had a bird dogs. They were always considered pets. The cats were the real family pets.

How did you meet the man that was to be your husband?

He was a close friend and a student at Bradley University with a fellow I was dating at the time. He introduced us and I ended up marrying Harley.

Where and when was that?

February 1963 at Centraillia. At the time Harley was working at an accounting firm in Peoria and I was teaching at a school in Leroy. We came home to where I grew up in Centraillia and got married there.

When his folks moved to Harvey from his family farm, Harley went to the Navy. He went to the University after he left the Navy.

Did you begin teaching as soon as you moved to Marshall?

No. I didn't. Our son Joseph was still young enough

to where he wasn't in school yet. I didn't teach until he started school.

What did you teach?

I taught Jr. High English, primarily grammar but some literature.

How long did you teach?

I was at the Jr. High for 12 years but then some riffing took place and I was moved to the High School and there I taught sophomores and seniors. I taught 13 years at the high school.

How would you compare teaching at the Jr. High to Sr. High level?

I think I was designs to be a Sr. High teacher. Although, I was really starting to be comfortable in thinking I had some kind of handle on Jr. High kids. I think high school students are such interesting people. They are right on the cuspus of something wonderful and some of them have such wonderful senses of humor. It is fun to work with that.

Was there a personal or event that had an effect on your life?

My grandmother for one. She lived down the street from us. She was always a very sympathetic and compassionate person. I often was not a happy child.

Another person was Robert Burkheimer who when I first met him, was the dean of the Junior College. He became a good friend. He left Centraillia and I am not sure where he went but I know that he came back to Illinois and became State Director of community colleges. I recall he invited me one time to sit on a discussion panel for for the WILL television. I was very large and with child and I felt uncomfortable doing that. He was such a good friend. He was also a poet. He wrote a couple of books of poetry that I have inscribed.

What historical events

happened in your life?

I think the first one I remembered that stayed with me was when there was a coal mine explosion in Centralia. I must have been five or six years old. There were 111 men that died in there. John Lewis, head of the Union at that time, visited that mine several times and insisted that it be closed down because it was in terrible condition.

My parents were so concerned because their friend worked at that mine who was also working that shift. The explosion happened as he was waiting for the elevator to go down. He was not involved and that stayed with me forever.

I remember when I was at the University of Illinois that John Cannady came and spoke on the quad. I remember the threat of the Cuba Invasion. I remember the Vietnam War and I remember living with what we understood to be a Cold War. When I was a child I would hear things about communism and the communist world and those things stayed with me.

What modern conveniences have most effected your life?

I think laundry equipment. Washer and dryer. I think of my mother doing laundry and sometimes having to do it again because it rained or birds flew over.

I don't know what else except today's furnaces. Gas, electric. I remember my dad having to shove coal into the furnace at night and how dirty the cold dust was. It was difficult to keep the house clean.

If you were talking to someone who wasn't from here, how would you describe Marshall and what would you say is the reason you live here?

Well Marshall is physical-

ly beautiful. I think the community demonstrates when you look at the pride people have in their homes and yards. I remember my dad and his first time he came to Mashall. He came into town and drove around and when he came back he said this is a beautiful community, even the empty lots alone.

People are concerned about each other. People really care about what happens to you and they want to help as much as they can when there is a need. The way the people come together to work on a project that needs to be done such as restoration of Harlan Hall and the people that worked on the house for the Scott Family. If you can help take care of that need, you do it.

I think there is a sense of companionship. I would encourage anyone and everyone to live in a community like Marshall if not Marshall. It is a wonderful place to live and is an incredible place to raise children.