

CAROLYN ROBINSON TRANSCRIPT

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Damian Macey Interviewer

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D: Today I am at the Marshall Public Library on behalf of the Friends of the Library Oral History Project. I am here Carolyn Robinson who is a lifelong citizen of Marshall. And with that, I will turn it over to Carolyn.

C: I was born January 14, 1941 in Clark County, IL. I was born in my grandparents' house on Route 1, that is where my grandparents lived for a long time. My parents were Mary Louise Pine McConchie and Hugar McConchie. The first house I remember living in was in Clark Center. I went to school at Jeff Davis School only because Zola Wolfe was the teacher and was a good friend and a sweetheart of a lady. I was only five when I started school. We were there for a couple years and then we moved to the Bernard Pine house over in Wabash Township. I went to Baggs School then in Wabash Township. Myrtie Melton was my teacher then. We lived there a few years then my folks bought the house on Fox Road and we moved there.

I had to change schools again, I loved the country schools but I had to change to the South School in town. I think I was in third grade then. It was the old two story building and Mildred Bush was one of my teachers and Ann Kile was the other one. Mr. Hadley was the superintendent and he said where you lived determined where you went to school and he said I had to change to the North School and I wasn't too happy but I still have friends from there today. Mary Alice Irwin was my fifth and sixth grade teacher, and I got along fine with her. She was very strict but was a good teacher.

D: Were the school buses operational then?

C: No, my father took me to school on a tractor when we had snow and I was so embarrassed, my dad always liked to embarrass me. My dad farmed, all my family farmed, both my grandfathers farmed. And of course that is what Gerald and I did too. My two boys farm too, I had one boy who said he would never farm, they helped on the farm always when they were small.

D: You mentioned your grandparents, what was their names?

C: Harold and Maude Pine was my mother's parents and Foster and Dulcie McConchie was my dad's parents. My dad had four brothers and a sister, but one of the brothers died in infancy. The McConchie side of the family got together every other Sunday and we had the best time doing nothing. Always wish that could happen now because you can't take that memory away from me.

D: People don't seem to socialize anymore, they talk or text on their cell phones.

C: The cousins and I just had the best times.

D: Did you have some chores at home when you were a youngster?

C: One thing I can remember, when I was in eighth grade, my dad had rheumatic fever and, oh I forgot to tell you that I have a brother who is four years younger and he lives in Florida now, and he is married and has two boys and a girl. I also forgot to tell you that I had four boys, and I lost two of my boys in accidents, and my husband died in 2000. I try to not feel sorry for myself, and I don't, but I had six then all of a sudden I had three.

D: And your husband's name was?

C: Gerald. We raised hogs, cattle, corn, beans, wheat, chickens, it was a family farm. When I was little I got to feed the chickens, did whatever needed to be done. I was in 4-H, the whole family was. I probably told this story before, but, I had chickens and I wanted them to be clean, so I was told to put bluing in the wash water, well, I had one of other bluest chickens you have ever seen !! So I had to wash the chicken again.

D: They didn't have a category for blue chickens !!

C: No. 4-H was a big part of my life and a big part of my kids' lives. Randy, my grandson, just started. Greg and Amy have Randy, Greg is my "baby". Randy is ten years old. They got married in 1991, I think. And Steve and Leslie got married, I don't know when, they have been together almost 25 years. And they have two boys, Jacob who is 23 now, he just graduated from SIUE with a criminology degree, and they have Jeffrey who is 20, and he graduated from Lakeland and is going on the SUIE to get him bachelor's degree. And Jake is trying to find a job, so if you know of anybody looking for someone, it's really hard now days to find something and I told him to not give up. He's been filling out lots of applications. He has been helping me since I can't do all that I used to. He's been a big help to me.

D: Carolyn, when you were young you mentioned you were in 4-H, did you have any one hobbies or pastimes that you enjoyed?

C: I did all the gardening, yard mowing and enjoyed riding my bike. My mom worked at TRW for twenty five years so I got to cook for the hired men and I was our housekeeper.

D: Did you have favorite recipes that you used?

C: Oh, I've got lots of cook books and I love to sit down and read a cookbook. When I was young, we went to Five Points Church and I remember Beverly Higginbotham and I remember sitting by her in church. Then when we moved over by the Baggs School we started going to the Grandturn Church. And that is where I still go. It's like going home, people at your church are like your family.

D: From cooking and animals and 4-H is there hobbies that you had or may even keep up today?

C: I enjoy cooking, it's a good thing I did because I had 5 boys to feed and today I cook for grandkids. I have always liked cooking.

D: Is there a certain part of cooking you like, like baking...

C: Yes, I like baking the best.

D: I bet a lot of good pies and cakes have come out of your kitchen.

D: Did you have pets when you were a youngster?

C: Yes, a dog named Pal. She was a chow, one day I came home from school and she was gone. She had gotten into the sheep so I don't know exactly what happened to her.

D: Did you get a replacement pet?

C: Yes, I got a beagle. Then when I was nineteen I had a German Shepard and she was like my kid for several years but then she got cancer and we had to put her to sleep. Then another pet I had was a black and white collie, someone had dumped her off and we had to give her a lot of TLC but she was with us for ten years. Then the year Gerald died Bev Pearce took me to Nashville, TN just to get me away and when I came home she was sick and we took her to the vet and she had cancer.

Then one time Greg, my youngest son, and Neil Lindley found me a dog beside the road but I told them I just didn't want another dog.

D: Earlier, before we started here with your interview, you said you were an animal lover.

C: Yes, I love animals, I like dogs better than cats but cats are no trouble at all. I had an egg route in Terre Haute and that was an experience, you get to know all kinds of people, it was fruitful for a while. But it got to be just took much for me to do.

D: How did you develop your customer route?

C: Well, there was a guy here in Marshall that had a route and he sold me that route. It wasn't very big, it was mostly word of mouth. It was mostly in North Terre Haute.

D: I'm sure with something like that, I'm sure you ran into frustrating times.

C: Oh yes, but I just kind of learned to smile and go on.

D: Did you raise the chickens and eggs on your farm?

C: Yes, we had 5000 chickens at one time. We would sell starter checks to people and that was OK too. It all just got to be too much and we just didn't want to do it.

D: Where did you get the chicks from? I remember there were what we called poultry places here in Marshall.

C: I think around Newton is where we got the large amounts from. From Anderson's.

D: And there was another one...Harley Hurst, did he have a poultry business?

D: Something I think has changed so much is that there used to be several little grocery stores up and

down Marshall's streets.

C: Yes, the Washburn grocery was there on second street, Bill Pearce had one, Van Arsdalen had one.

D: Were there so many because people didn't have cars to drive to a store?

C: I kind of remember one downtown.

D: Yes, it was where the library is now. Then for a time there was a store down here on the corner call Oakley's which is where Marshall Mutual is now.

C: And I remember the Western Auto and a little department store downtown.

D: Do you remember some of the other businesses here downtown?

C: Well, I remember a feed store because my dad worked there, Newberry's. I would walk there from school and then he would take me home. Then of course there was Tom's.

D: We also had four or five auto dealerships. Ford, Chevrolet, Buick, Studebaker, Hudson's. So you could buy a lot of different things right here in Marshall.

C: You can't now.

D: I guess that is part of progress. Carolyn is there a person or an important event that happened in your life that changed your way or thinking or had a big impact on you?

C: I had so many good teachers. I will go back to Zola Wolfe, if you didn't know her...she was a "dandy".

D: I did know her quite well, her son was just a year older than me.

C: That was the reason I went to school a year early, because she didn't have any place to leave her daughter, but I had lots of good teachers. I remember Mrs. Heaton was my eighth grade math teacher, math was not my expertise but she was a very good lady.

D: Was her husband a coach?

C: Yes, but that is a few of the teachers that stand out in my mind.

D: Did you have a favorite subject in school?

C: I guess anything to do with home ec. And I did better in that than some of the others. I wasn't very good with math and history was OK but my favorite was home ec. But sewing wasn't my thing at all, I wasn't good at that.

D: Who was your home ec teacher?

C: Mrs. Shaffner and Mrs. Ralston.

D: We have gone through a lot of different things in our lifetimes, was there a world event that you really remember well?

C: When JFK was killed, I can remember what I was doing when I heard that.

D: Seems like most people remember that well and where they were.

C: I was ironing, why would you remember that, but I was ironing.

D: We have so many modern conveniences nowadays, is there one that you would say you just couldn't live without?

C: Well right now my washing machine is broken, so there is a new one coming, because I just do not want to have to go to the laundromat.

D: You don't want to go back to hitting them on a rock in the creek?

C: No, I never done that but I don't want to have to start !

D: Is there someone in town, you mentioned your teachers, is there someone that influenced you or had an influence in your life?

C: Well, I went to college, I was going to be an elementary teacher, I didn't finish but I always wished that I had. But we farmed and when the kids came along, and I never minded helping with the farming.

D: What is your take on how farming has changed through the years?

C: It has changed a lot and people don't realize the expense that there is. You had to watch your pennies. I guess I am partial but I still think on the farm is a good place to raise kids. And I am still keeping books like I did fifty years ago. We farmed a long time, Gerald passed away a week before our 40th anniversary in 2000.

D: Coming back to farming, and how it's done, I remember the small tractors, planters, and everything is huge nowadays. And I don't understand how GPS is used.

C: Well, I think that is a waste of money. Corn prices weren't very good last year but you just have to learn how to do it.

D: There has been such a change in yield, though.

C: That one year we did a lot better and this year the crops are looking good. In 2006 when my oldest son got killed, he was my farmer, and Steve is a civil engineer with the highway department and Greg, the youngest, is a mechanical engineer with the highway department. So the two boys now have full time jobs in addition to farming. And Greg raises hogs.

D: My dad had a grain elevator in Martinsville and I remember in about the early 50's, he came home

one day at noon and someone had had 100 bushel corn and that was just totally amazing and we never thought anyone would do better than that.

C: But you had to keep up just to pay for the equipment. It is all so expensive.

D: You mentioned keeping the books for the farm, do you do that on a computer?

C: I used to then one day it died on me and that was it. Now I use a book and I do it just to see what we've done and I've done that forever and forever.

D: My last question is, if you were in a foreign country, and someone asked you where you were from, what would you tell them about Marshall and why it would be a good place for them to visit?

C: Well, we have got a lot of friendly people, and we are a small town, most everybody knows everybody, and I think it's just a super nice place to live.

D: I have enjoyed visiting with you, this oral history will be available for future generations to read and hear. Thank you so much for being a part of the Friends of the Library Oral History Project.