

FRED HERRINGTON TRANSCRIPT

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Damian Macey Interviewer

Transcribed by Donna Duzan, September 2017

D: This is Damian Macey with the Friends of the Library and today I am visiting with Fred Herrington on July 1, 2015, and with that I will turn it over to Fred.

F: My parents were William and Nina Shirely Herrington. They were married in 1933 and then I was born in 1935. So I am 80 now, and age never bothered me too much until I turned 80 and then I started thinking "I am getting old." Anyway, I went to school in the country at the location where Ray Ferris now lives. And in my class there was 6 of us. I went through eighth grade in the one room school and I only had 2 teachers the whole time. Clarence Collier for two years and then I had Laverne Adams the rest of the time. When I graduated from there I started high school in Marshall in 1949. When the new high school was built, it opened for the first time that year. So I got to go to a brand new school. My dad was a farmer and my mother was a housewife. I was in ag in high school and I was supposed to have an animal, so, we had a sow, she was to have baby pigs just right away but she died, so I had bad luck there.

D: Were you in 4-H too?

F: No. My dad had an egg route, and we would always go to Terre Haute and we had to have a A & W root beer. When I graduated from high school, in 1953, I went out looking for a job and on January 16, 1954 I went to Public Service Indiana and they hired me that day. So I didn't have to go looking very long. And I was with them for 31 years. I worked in a field office which was wherever they were building a new plant. I kept track of their cost of building the plants until I went to Princeton, Indiana for a year and then back to Wabash River and the office of the plant and kept track of the costs to build. And that is where I ended my 31 years of working for them. My mother wasn't in very good health, I had already lost my dad in 1971. So I was able to take care of her until the very last, she fell and broke a hip, and then had to go into a nursing home and she only lasted there 42 days.

D: In the 31 years that you worked for them, were there dramatic changes that you saw?

F: Oh, yes, at first, we didn't know what a computer was and when they did, I thought how will I ever handle that? But you just gradually learned, and it wouldn't do everything at first, it just kept track of the coal that we burned, and then they would just keep adding things that it could do, until I could go full schedule on the computer.

D: Those computer days were probably with the card system, weren't they?

F: Yes, on my job is really where I learned to deal with a computer. And then I got one at home too. That was when I retired which was 1984. Then I took care of my mother for six years. We went on

some trips, down to Branson and different places and she enjoyed all that.

D: That place has changed a lot in the last few years.

F: I'm sure it has. I have been there four times but not for quite some time now.

D: With those experiences with the computer would you say, gosh there were some things that I wish I had learned about or maybe I could have done this or could have done that.

F: There is a lot to comprehend but you can look up anything on a computer, and I have a tablet also which I like because I have that right beside my easy chair.

D: Well you really have modernized.

F: I have a friend and he thinks I need all that stuff and he gets it for me. He even bought my last computer and printer for me and gave it all to me for Christmas. And the tablet he gave to me for my birthday this year.

Like I said, you can go in and find anything you need. It is almost scary. If you Google it, you can ask it what you want and it will go right to it!

D: With all that modern technology have you adapted to a thing call a Smart Phone?

F: No, no Smart Phone yet. I still have the old fashioned cell phone, all I need it for is emergencies.

D: You mentioned going a lot during the time you were a youngster, to Terre Haute and you worked there for a while, you might mention what changes you saw in Terre Haute. I can remember going there as a youngster and downtown was just bustling with activity.

F: We would go up one side of Wabash then we would go down the other side. And there was Roots and Alden's, Wards, Schultz, Meis and they are all gone now. And once Honeycreek Square came in then everything went down there.

D: Do you remember, I believe, it was Kresge's, that had the donut machine inside?

F: I don't remember a donut machine but we did eat in there a lot. We would go up to the counter and usually it was so busy that you would have to wait until someone left and then you could have a seat on a stool.

D: There was also a peanut shop on the north side and the guy would be dressed in a Planters peanut costume and he would hand out peanuts.

F: And I went to the service in 1959. And I was there until March of 1960. I spent my whole time in the service at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. They told me when I went in that I would be in finance and that is where they put me. I was there for two years. I enjoyed it because I was able to take my car and run around some because my job really didn't amount to very much. I just took care of the records as people came in and would take off the information so that they could get their flying 5 or 10

to get supplies with. Some days only three people would come in and I had no boss, I just went to work when I wanted to. So if I had no one coming in, I would just take off in my car and maybe go to Jefferson City or Rolla. Especially weekends I would always have a car load. We would take off and go to St Louis and go to a musical or event that was going on. And we always got free tickets because we were in the service.

D: Did you have basic training there too?

F: Yes, and from there I went to the finance department.

D: I was in basic training there beginning in February and it was horrible weather. They were just beginning to build the new barracks.

F: We would go up on the hill, and get new guys to come do work for us, like scrub the floors or whatever. But I was always easy on them, I would buy them a Coke and they told me they had never had anyone treat them so nice as I did.

D: Have you been back to Fort Leonard Wood?

F: No, but I guess it has really changed.

D: I have driven by there several times and thought it would be interesting to see what it looks like now, but I never have gone back. Were you kinda glad to leave the military?

F: Oh yes. I did come home, though, once a month and usually brought a friend with me. Some of them were from Chicago or California, so it was very different to them.

D: What was their reaction to Marshall?

F: Well, some thought it was pretty small, and you didn't have much time to do anything great because we couldn't stay very long.

D: So they thought Marshall was a pretty small place. And if you were from California, the weather would have been very different.

F: Oh, a lot of things were different, they don't have June bugs, lightening bugs, whatever you want to call them, in California. And one of the things I always did was put salt on watermelon and they could not understand putting salt on watermelon.

D: Now from the military where did you go?

F: I went back to Public Service Indiana. And then I had to work at headquarters in Plainfield for five years and I lived over there. And then I went back into the field office again where they were building plants. And that was different over there because you had to wear a suit every day and you didn't meet the public at all.

D: Is there activity in Plainfield today?

F: They still run that office but now it is Duke Energy and I am not sure where their headquarters are. I think they are the largest electric company in the country.

D: You mentioned about your 4-H sow dying, did you get another animal?

F: No I just didn't take ag after that.

D: Did you have a pet?

F: Oh, yes, I always had a dog.

D: Do you have a pet now?

F: Just a parrot. But it doesn't talk.

D: During your school years, did you have hobbies?

F: Not in school, but today I like antiques. And I collect open-handled plates and Mary Lou Bohn would go antiquing probably about every two weeks. We would take off and spend the whole day going anyplace, Bloomington, IL, Bloomington, IN, Indianapolis, St Louis. We would just go a different direction and look up antique stores.

D: Were these buying trips or just looking?

F: We would usually find something. She liked lamps and I like lamps. I have JR's lamp from the Dallas show, a replica and a Betty Grable lamp, and one from My Fair Lady, or course they are all replicas.

D: Do you still collect?

F: No, I don't have any more room. Most of them are Tiffany lamps and they are really colorful and I really enjoy them.

D: Do you follow the Antique Roadshow?

F: Oh yes, I enjoy that show, I have seen items like I have on there. And you get an idea what things are worth. And you can get a value just going around to other antique stores.

D: Have you ever taken anything of yours in to Antique Roadshow to see what value it might have?

F: No, I never have.

D: That's a great hobby.

F: As a kid, of course I didn't do any of that but my folks bought me a pony and it was smarter than I was. My dad built a cart for it and that silly pony... it would only go so far down the lane and then it would stop and back up all the way back.

D: What was the pony's name?

F: Champion, and it was black and white spotted and it was a pretty thing.

D: Was it named after anyone?

F: No, I just named it Champion.

D: I always used to enjoy watching on TV Roy Rogers and I loved watching shows with horses.

F: That pony had learned how to get into the corn crib and we would look out in the mornings and see that pony in the corn crib and my dad said it would founder itself. So we finally had to get a way to fasten the door so it couldn't get into the corn crib.

D: But I'll bet he or she was still well fed.

F: Oh, yes.

D: Are there some favorite teachers that you remember from high school?

F: Well, I always said Mildred Hutchens got me my job in the Army because I took two years of typing and in the testing in the Army, I was the fastest typist. So I always thought that might have got me the job but I never used typing once I got into the finance department.

D: So those typing skills were put to use.

F: Yes, but I can't type fast like I used to.

D: So modern technology helps you out some. And you mentioned the collecting of antiques, do you still attend antiques shows or frequent shops?

F: Yes, I attend some, since Mary Lou is gone I haven't met anyone else that was interesting in doing that, but I still go to some shops and look around.

D: Do you have a particular shop that you like?

F: I think the ones that were my favorites are gone, I used to love to go to Shadeland in Indianapolis, it was a big one and there was one called Southport that I liked.

D: You mentioned the antique lamps, is there anything else you like to shop for?

F: I have marble topped tables, and Victorian items but I just got all I could handle. I see things that I like but I would have to get rid of some of my stuff and I don't want to do that.

D: Has there been any particular person through your life that has greatly influenced you?

F: Well, not that I can think of. Allot of the teachers I would say helped me along but Mildred Hutchens was probably the top one.

D: How about events in the world, has there been a world event that really changed your life?

F: Well, in 2001, the New York deal, I remember exactly where I was when I learned about that, I was in Paris, IL. I was stopping to get a friend to go up to the mall in Tuscola. We got there and within a few minutes they closed the mall. We heard about it on our car radio.

D: Yeah, that day kind of created a vacuum. Today we have so many conveniences, is there a modern convenience that you could say you just wouldn't want to live without?

F: I suppose now I couldn't live without a computer. But if you stop and think about all the things we have now days ...what worries me most is if the terrorists would hit our electric plants and cut us off...what would we do? Everything we have runs on electricity.

D: You can't even get into any stores anymore because they have electric doors.

F: You couldn't even do to the bank and get any money. Just everything, even my stove, is electric. Heating, cooling, microwaves.... are all electric.

D: Do you see the computer continuing to take over?

F: Oh I think so, I don't think eventually we will even carry cash.

D: If you were in a foreign country and wanted to tell someone about Marshall and why you live here, what would you say?

F: Well, it is an interesting little town, it's small and quiet, and everybody knows everyone pretty well, and a small town is just something altogether different than a big town, a place where you can relax and enjoy the Friday Night Bank Concerts, we have several restaurants, and it's a clean little town with pride of ownership.

D: Well, Fred, thank you so much for contributing to the Friends of the Library Oral Histories collection, it's been a pleasure talking to you.

F: Thank you, Damian.