

GERALD MONK TRANSCRIPT

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Interviewer: Maury Miller

Transcribed by Donna Duzan, August, 2017

M: This is Maury Miller with the Friends of the Library Oral History Project. I am with Gerald Monk today. Gerald, could you tell us what year you were born.

G: I was born in 1950.

M: Did you have siblings?

G: I had three sisters. They were all older than me.

M: And you parents were?

G: Arthur and Joy Monk.

M: You were born in Marshall?

G: No, I was actually born in Terre Haute but I lived my whole life in Marshall.

M: And where did you live?

G: Right now I am at 1313 Meadow Place which is a subdivision in the North part of town.

M: Where did you live when you were a boy?

G: Out in Oak Grove. Do you know where the old Lincoln Motel used to be? You turn south there and that was Oak Grove Road and it went down to Oak Grove School. I lived there all through my childhood. Other than when I went to Champaign to college, I have lived here all my life.

M: Let's talk about the neighborhood you grew up in. Where there lots of children there?

G: It was really rural. There were neighbors about every half to three quarters of a mile. Everybody worked together, butchered together. If anybody had trouble, everybody helped.

M: So you were on a farm?

G: Yes.

M: And you had animals?

G: We had about 90 acres. We raised hogs, cattle, and milk cows, chickens. It was a pretty much self-sufficient farm.

M: And did you butcher?

G: Yes, we butchered all our own meat. The neighborhood would get together on weekends and do our butchering from farm to farm.

M: That's interesting, I grew up on a farm but I don't remember anything like that.

G: Everybody in the neighborhood was relatively close.

M: Did you have playmates close by?

G: There were some younger and some older, none of my age.

M: Let's talk about growing up, what types of things did you like to do?

G: I got a motorcycle when I was about ten years old, I enjoyed farming.

M: Did you have chores around the farm?

G: Yes, I had about an hour and a half in the morning and afternoon.

M: Did you family attend church?

G: My family didn't go all the time, Zion Church, Fenton Fraker's wife took me to church a lot.

M: So church activities were not part of what your family did?

G: Well, actually, yes, about every three weeks we would come to town, mom would sell her eggs, over at Harvey Hurst's, which is Mo's Package Liquors today. Every Saturday night Main Street would be so full of people you couldn't hardly walk down the street. Stores all stayed open until eight or nine o'clock. People would come to town to visit, maybe go to the bakery across the street, or go to get ice cream, where the fire station is used to be a filling station.

M: Let's talk about school. Where did you go to school?

G: I went to Kindergarten where the administration building is now. Then I went to South School, Jr High and High School all here in Marshall.

M: Do you have any special school memories?

G: Oh, memories of all the friends I went to school with, I don't think you ever get away from your school mates because of class reunions and stuff like that.

M: What kind of school activities did you do?

G: I played football, I didn't do a lot of activities when you rode the bus. Our family only had one vehicle, not that we were poor, because we weren't poor but we didn't have any extra cars.

M: What about hobbies, did you have hobbies?

G: We did gardening, mom usually put out a big garden so we had a lot of canning to do plus we did the butchering for ourselves too.

M: What kinds of things did your family like to do together?

G: Oh, going to visit other family, we had family in Martinsville and out around Clarksville. We would go on weekend to others houses of family to visit, maybe fix a big supper and things like that.

M: What were your favorite foods?

G: About anything, my mom was a "Whale" of a cook, I love my meat, potatoes and gravy.

M: When you were on the farm, did you have pets?

G: Oh yeah, we had old coon dogs and as we got older we would coon hunt and rabbit hunt. We raised chickens, eggs, rabbits. We raised the chickens to eat and lay eggs.

M: Let's talk about after high school, what did you do after high school.

G: Right after high school I got married and then got a divorce then I got married again and got divorced again and then I married the girl that I am married to now. I was married for the third time when I was 21. So that all happened pretty quick. And we have been together 43 years.

M: Congratulations, did you have children?

G: Yes, we have three children. A boy and twin girls. The girls both work in prisons, one at Robinson and the other at the federal prison.

M: You said you went to University of Illinois?

G: No, I went to barber college at Champaign and I used to own a barber shop in town but I sold it. Then I went to work at the cereal mill for twenty years, and I have run two restaurants, I used to run the restaurant down at Lincoln Trail and then I had a restaurant and pool hall down here on the west side, and we have 30 rentals. All I do now is work on my rentals.

M: What was it about restaurants that attracted you?

G: I just enjoyed cooking, my mom taught me how to cook and at my restaurants we just had plain home cooked meals. Nothing fancy, just meat, taters and such.

M: Is there a particular person when you were growing up that influenced you?

G: Well, I had Darrell Harlow as a mentor, as I got older, I looked at people to see who was getting ahead and who wasn't. And Darrell was a good guy, I worked for him a lot and I just watched him and he had several rentals and I just kinda tried to follow what he had done.

M: As you look back on your life, what events do you think are most memorable to you?

G: Oh, probably when I got out of high school, that's something you never forget. I didn't go to the service, I would have come in at the end of the Vietnam War, also I was married so they wouldn't take me, but had I went to the service, that probably would have been very eventful. And getting married, having children, then grand-children then great-grandchildren, that is just wonderful.

M: What national events do you remember?

G: Martin Luther King, all the riots, I was in Champaign when the riots happened. The thing about a living in a little town, you don't always get the full impact of how events effect the world. And I think about the boy in Ferguson, MO that got killed, and I'm afraid we are going to see more and more of that type of thing.

M: What other events or inventions during your lifetime have affected you most?

G: When I look back, up until my dad was born, and the way everything was run, everything that has happened in the world has happened since my dad's birth. They have come from horses to getting water from the creek, and digging wells. I remember I took my granddad over to Honeycreek Square when it was first built, he couldn't imagine one building under one roof. All the different types of technology have progressed so fast.

M: Let's talk about why you live in Marshall. If you were to talk to someone from a foreign country, why would you say you live in Marshall?

G: It's a great place to live. Most of the people are friendly, we accept outsiders and try to help them. You can work in Marshall, in big towns if you want to do anything, you have to have a permit. In Marshall if you want to build a new house, you can build it, plumb it, do most of the work yourself. The cost of living, I think, is high. But in comparison to other big towns, you don't have to make \$100,000 to live here.

M: Well, Gerald, I want to thank you for talking to me and doing an oral history for the library.

G: You are welcome.