

Katherine Scholfield Meehling

Oral History Project of the Marshall Public Library

Interview by William F. Meehling on November 14, 2003

W. How many years have you lived in this community?

K. Well, I've lived here all my life, which is 77 years. I was born at 702 North 8th Street. I was born in the living room of that house. It is still standing there; I don't know for sure who lives there now. Jim Bennett lived there for a long time. My parents lived there and I grew up there. My Dad had the house moved to the spot from a lot farther north.

W. In what year were you born?

K. 1926

W. Uh... Can you name your parents and your siblings?

K. Oh, yes, my parents were John and Opal Scholfield. Mother was Opal Richards. Her dad was a Methodist minister. They lived in the south part of town across from the present American Legion Home. The house is no longer there. My dad grew up in a big old house that his parents built just across the alley from where we lived; the old Scholfield house. It was a big old brick house, about 12 rooms, 3 stories. There was a barn out back, with horse stalls and originally was practically a farm. There was a smoke house for curing hams, etc. But through the years the family members left or died and the house became run down. Nobody kept it up and it was considered a haunted house. I used to play around there a lot.

W. What about your childhood, your schooling and friends?

K. Well, I always played hard, played around the neighborhood, rode the bicycle up and down; went to the North School, either walked or rode the bike. During the winter I don't think we ever had snow days. I usually had a friend living across the street. First, before school age, was Betty Amacher, daughter of John and Nell Amacher. They moved to south part of town. Later on was Doris Bell and her brother Howell. The parents were related to the Moyes and involved in the grocery business on the corner of 7th and Archer. They made potato chips on the second floor of that building. Often they would have a huge can of chips at their gatherings and I thought that was great. Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Moye were sisters.

And then later on, about 8th grade, Martha Prince moved into that house. Her parents were Herschel and Effie Prince, related to Kirchner lumber yard owners, where he worked. She was a good friend of mine. We often played around and in the old Scholfield house, each having an office, and making a telephone with tin cans and string. (Laugh) I think we tried smoking cigarettes there, too. (Both laugh) She started to Marshall High, but soon moved to Casey. She married Dale Chrysler, now deceased.

W. When did you get married?

K. We were married in 1951. I married Bill Meehling - Wm. F. Meehling - who is an attorney here in town. We have 3 children, Mindy, Tom, and Bill...the boys are twins.

W. How about your siblings?

K. My siblings were Betty Lou, my sister, 6 years older, and my brother, Warren, who is now deceased (in 1965) who was 8 years older. Betty Lou married George Millhouse and had two sons. They were later divorced and she married Bill Juranko of Waukegan, Illinois. Warren married Theresa Manhart and had 3 daughters. They lived in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

I remember the house that we lived in very well. On Christmas morning we couldn't wait to go downstairs to see what Santa had brought, but we had to wait until Dad fired up the coal furnace. Coal was delivered to the house. The truck would back up to the basement window and a man would shovel the coal down a chute into the coal bin. In the summer, ice was delivered for the ice box.

W. Has the neighbourhood changed much?

K. Yes, the old Scholfield house was torn down in the early 40's. John Lewis bought it and subdivided it into building lots. Johnny Koutsoumpas built one of the first houses on 8th Street in that block, now occupied by Gene Kile; Mac Matteson, the corner house on 8th & Spruce, recently owned by Frank & Fern Pearce. The Dr. Illies house and Ed Daly house later built on 7th Street. When I was small there were mostly vacant lots nearby. The Sampsons built behind us on 7th Street in late 1930's; also Bob Wilson, owner of Elite Bakery, farther north, at 809 N. 7th.

W. Do you have any special memories of your school?

K. I enjoyed school.

W. Did you have any favorite teachers?

K. I remember Miss Gilbert in the 1st grade, Miss Spangler in the 3rd grade, Irene Veach in the 5th, Helen Imle in 6th grade, Bertha Kannmacher 7th, I think she was principal later - after Mrs. Washburn. She was pretty strict (Mrs. Washburn) and we were all afraid of her. I recall doing an art project one time under art teacher, Miss Ethel Hurst, (later Mrs. Fred Gorham). Richard LaRue and I made stained glass windows out of colored cellophane and put them in the 3rd floor windows facing the south. Richard died in World War II when his plane was shot down in the Pacific area near Japan.

W. Uh... What about high school. Do you have any special memory of it?

K. I was class president my freshman year. I guess I went down hill after that. I didn't hold office after that. One of my good friends was Charlotte Wilson, a neighbor. Phyllis LaRue, Donna Rolison, Betty Medsker, Mary K. Prevo. Mary K. & I had good times. One time when we were little, we built a little car with lumber and put wheels on it and pushed each other around. We wanted a motor in it but couldn't figure how to do that. We used to go to the

corner drug store which was on the corner of Archer and 7th Streets and split a milkshake, one paying a dime and the other 15 cents. I used to go into the post office where my Dad worked and bum some change from him, if he had any! Many years later, Betty Medsker (Gordon) who's Dad was Don Medsker, Post Master, told me her Dad didn't approve.

W. Did you have any favorite High School teachers?

K. Oh, let's see, Miss Goff was our Latin teacher, I thought she was good. Mr. Holler was always interesting, and he would always get off the subject, and often talked about fighting the battle of Valparaiso, where he served in WW I.

W. I'm especially interested in knowing about your dating when you were in High School.

K. Well, I don't know that I dated a whole lot. I went to the Junior Prom with Dean Hutchens, I think, when he was a junior and I a freshman. Later I dated Maurice McDaniel, who's Dad was Claude McDaniel, States Attorney at the time. We went to our Junior Prom, but for the Senior Prom, he was called into the service before graduation, as were several of the boys.

W. What about any jobs you had?

K After high school, I worked in St. Louis. I passed the Civil service exam, and worked there for a year, during WW II, at the St. Louis Ordnance Depot, typing requisitions for military supplies. Prisoners of war were kept on the grounds and sometimes we would see Italian prisoners working in the cafeteria. Charlotte Wilson was working there also, and my sister Betty was living there. We all lived in a hotel for women. It was an experience, living in the city for awhile. Charlotte & I came back to Marshall and worked at the Clark Co. Ration Board, which closed when the war ended. Charlotte married Bob Hedges that year and I later worked at the Dulaney Bank for 6 years before Bill & I got married.

W. Do you have any historical memories?

K. I always think of my Grandfather being a very important person in Marshall history .He was a lawyer who was raised around Martinsville. His whole family moved to Oregon when the westward migration took place. He stayed with an Uncle, Jacob Anderson, then attended the Marshall academy run by Dean Andrews. He got his law degree at the University of Louisville, and practiced law here. His office was upstairs in the former building on the corner of 6th and archer. He was States Attorney and elected to the Legislature. He was elected and served 20 years on the Illinois Supreme Court, (1873-1893), serving as Chief Justice part of that time. He was approached by President Grover Cleveland to become Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. This was long before my time so I did not know him, but he refused that honor on the grounds that his family would not leave Marshall. He had ten children. His wife would not leave and he would not leave without her. There are no more Scholfields around this area, except me.

W. Do you have any hobbies?

K. I have always enjoyed art work. I started in an art class taught by Mildred Stewart of Paris,

Illinois, at Juanita Blankenship's in the early 60's. There were about a dozen people and this was the beginning of the Marshall Art League. Later many of us went to Mrs. Stewart's for classes: June Bubeck, Doris Murphy, Barb Martin, Rita Tarble, Juanita Blankenship, Audrey Davidson, and others. I was in the W.E.D. program at St. Mary of the Woods for a semester, studying art, and also have taken many non-credit art courses at various times and places.

W. What about your favorite books?

K. Oh, I don't know. As a kid I liked Treasure Island. And other Robert Lewis Stevenson books...oh... I don't know. I wasn't prepared for that one. I read quite a lot and have been active in the Library; was on the Library board for several years; am now a member of the Friends of the Library.

W. Any other community service?

K. I deliver meals on wheels on Wednesdays.

W. Church membership?

K. I was raised in the Methodist church and we had Sunday School classes there. Most of my friends went to that church. Later when I started dating Bill I became interested in the Catholic Church. We were married in the Catholic Church and I have attended that church ever since.

W. Anything further?

K. Marshall is a wonderful little town to live in. Many changes through the years, such as wash day, which used to take all day, heating water, running clothes through wringer. Usually had bean soup on Monday wash day. Then all day ironing on Tues. We had a coal furnace in the basement with one big register that heated the whole two story house.

W. I can vouch to the fact that you have become a pretty good cook. When did you start?

K. I don't think I did a lot of cooking before I got married. My family traded at Bill Pearce's grocery on Michigan Avenue a lot. Also I remember Dick Davidson's grocery on East Archer, and earlier the little Park Grocery on the corner of Spruce and Michigan, where the First Bank & Trust now stands.

W. If you think of anything else you can add to it. Thank you very much.

