

Oral History Interview with Lurlyne Goekler
May 6, 2001
By Lewis Goekler, son of Ralph and Lurlyne Goekler

This interview takes place at the home of Lewis Goekler, 121 Tarble Road, Marshall, Illinois on the afternoon of May 6, 2001.

LEG: Mom, to start off with, when and where were you born?

LG: I was born in Covington, Indiana, which is in Fountain County, to Mamie Askren and Riley Allen, July 25th, 1916. I had three brothers and two sisters, born to this family.

LEG: Did you live in Covington or did you live outside of Covington and how many years did you live there?

LG: I was born there, but then we moved to Cates where my grandparents had a home and then my Dad built us a home at Cates, where I attended school. It was a small community. I think we lived about a mile from Cates, and we children had to walk to school when it was nice weather. The community was surrounded mostly by relatives and my grandparents' brothers lived all around.

LEG: How many years did you live there?

LG: I lived there about fourteen years. Then we moved to Marshall, where my Dad was a coal miner. I went to school at Pleasant Hill. The school is now gone, but I went to school there.

LEG: When you were small what kind of chores were you asked to do?

LG: Well, we did all of the normal housework that children did. I can remember one incident when my sister Alice was born. Rovene and I had to get dinner. We would stand on a box, and we had to cook for my Dad. And he didn't like the food we would cook very well, but he ate it and was happy that we could do it. We had... Mom usually had fried chicken. We had that on Sunday, when we came home from church. We fixed biscuits and gravy. And ham was my Dad's favorite breakfast meal. Of course there was cornbread and beans and fried potatoes, which we had, and we all enjoyed the normal country food. My Dad and Grandpa would always butcher in the fall. They had a tree with a rack fixed up to hang the hogs on, and that was a lot of fun to watch them scrape the hog and cut it up, which we all participated in.

LEG: Well, then in your younger days when you started dating, what was dating like?

LG: I'm sorry, I didn't date when I was there, but I started dating Ralph when I was about 15. It was the normal activities. We didn't get to do the things that the young people do now. We went to church. I think the first movie I saw was at the Strand Theater and I think it was called "Seventh Heaven". Ralph took me to that. And we just did the normal things.

LEG: O.K. then, when and where did you get married?

LG: I got married when I was 16 years old, October 30, 1932, and we were married at the parsonage at the Christian Church and Rev. L. C. Smith was the pastor at that time. On our honeymoon I guess, or our wedding dinner, Mom fixed us a big dinner. We had chicken and dumplings and angel food cake. Then we went on up to my Grandparents, where Grandma always had a pot of beans on the back of the stove. That was our wedding supper. And then we went to Danville and went to a movie and spent the night there. We came back where Ralph had to go back to work at the garage. He worked for Simpson's Chevrolet and had to go back on the following Monday.

LEG: O.K. Mom, over the years I'm sure you've seen and heard a lot of historical events. Why don't you tell us some that stand out in your mind.

LG: I think one that really stands out is the night the Hindenburg came down. I can still hear the announcer crying "Oh, my God, its on fire". That was one of the most outstanding things. And then we lived in the country. We had kerosene lamps, and when the lights went on out in the country that was a beautiful sight to look out over the countryside and see electrical lights on. That was really exciting. And the airplanes, it was fascinating to hear the airplanes go over, which there weren't as many, but the boys would run out in the yard when they would hear it coming and just were amazed to see something in the air that would be flying.

LEG: Where were you when the Pearl Harbor bombing took place?

LG: When Pearl Harbor was bombed we were in Cairo, Illinois, where Ralph and Rovene Blizzard lived (my sister and her husband). We were there, and we had my sister-in-law, Ina Allen. And my brother, Vernell, was in Hawaii at the time. That was quite an experience to hear it come over the radio that it had been bombed. And that was one of the - I think - one of the most horrible experiences when we heard this.

LEG: He wasn't injured was he?

LG: No, he wasn't injured but he was there.

LEG: What modern conveniences do you think have affected your life the most?

LG: I think one of the nicest modern conveniences we women have is the washing machine because it was kind of tough washing clothes on a washboard. And it was quite a thrill when we did get the electric washing machine - that was a very exciting thing - and the electric iron. We ironed on a stove, which I did many times. You'd get part of your clothes ironed and the iron would get cold and then you would have to wait awhile. So I think the washing machine and the electric iron was one of the nicest conveniences we had. Then I remember when the television came in. I think it was, I'm not sure when, but we had gone to Ann Arbor, Michigan, our friends had one and Ralph said coming home I'm going to get one of those just as soon as I can. So immediately he bought a television, I think maybe the first one in Marshall. But we sure had a lot of fun with it.

LEG: O.K., I've sure enjoyed that, Mom, and I'm sure the people who will be reading this will enjoy it too.

LG: I want to tell about my family. The Lord blessed us tremendously. Ralph and I had three children, two precious boys and one precious daughter. And now I have seven grandchildren (We lost one, our Jeff.) and fourteen great-grandchildren and four on the way. So I have been truly blessed and my family is so very precious. They have all been super kids.