

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES  
OF  
MELBA MADELINE SKINNER FOSSEY

Dear Linda:

My darling daughter, you have asked me to write, what I remember of my childhood.

I'll start by going back to my Mother and Father, your Grandmother was born to Frank and Lucinda Smith – your Great Grandparents. She was one of 6 children, she was next to the youngest. Her brothers were Frank, Charles and Hobart. Her sisters were Bessie and Lulu. My Mother's name was Maude Esther Smith. My Grandpa Smith was a section foreman with the Missouri Pacific Railroad for 37 yrs. They lived in Sterling Ks. When they were children, Grandpa made \$600 a week. That was good wages then. Each week as he was paid, he would bring home a small sack of candy for the 6 kids. Toys were just all homemade. Grandma & Grandpa Smith were very conservative people. They had to be. Grandma patched & darned everything. Children then, weren't made to attend High School. My Mother had a Grade School education thru 8<sup>th</sup> Grade. Some children whose parents were financially able sent their children to High School & College, but they were few. My Mother worked as a telephone operator as a young girl. When she was 15 she & her parents made a trip to Oswego, Ks where most of Grandma Smith's relatives lived. Grandma Smith was one of eleven children. Grandma was born Jan 31, 1856. Her Mother, my Great Grandmother, your great great, was Nancy J Abrams, born 1839 (Jewish), Her Father, My Great Grandfather, your great great, was James Smith, born 1832. Lucinda Smith and Frank Smith were cousins (My Grandparents). Her name was Smith before she was married & after. Now I think I had better go ahead & give you the family tree. This will be Mothers side:

My Great Grandparents: James Smith b. May 13, 1832, Nancy J. Abrams b. Mar 10, 1839, Parents of:

Lucinda Smith b. Jan 31 1856, Butler County, Ohio

Joreah b. Feb 15, 1857

Ann b. Feb 26, 1859

Elizabeth b. Apr 6, 1861

William b. June 19, 1864

John & Jennie (Twins) b. June, 1867

Katherine (Kate) b. May 1869

Ella b. Feb 16, 1872

Warren b. Apr 9, 1875

Cora (Had 16 children) b. Oct 29, 1881

Now that is Grandma Smith's Mother and Father and her brothers and sisters.

Nancy J Abrams Smith died June 23, 1882, aged 43 years, 3 mo, 13 das.

Katherine (Kate) died November 5, 1884, age 17 yrs.

Lucinda Smith died Nov 5, 1934 age 78 yrs, 9 mo. & 5 das.

James Smith was a soldier in the Civil War & discharged in 1865.

Lucinda Smith, born in Butler Co. Ohio Jan 31, 1856. At the age of 14 united with the Christian Church at Dunreath, Indiana of which she was a member for some time. Then later, on account of the church not

being able to support a Minister, joined the Baptist Church near Louisville, Indiana. At the age of 19 was united in marriage to Frank F. Smith Oct 19, 1874. They lived in Louisville, four years, and united with the Baptist Church, Aug 10, 1887. She died Nov 5, 1934. My Grandpa F. Frank Smith was born Mar 24, 1852 in Madison Co. Kentucky. He united with the Baptist Church in 1873 at age 21, Moved to Sterling Ks in 1886 and united with the Baptist Church Aug 10, 1887. He died Sept 25, 1930. My Grandpa Smith was Friendie Frank Smith but always went by F. for Frank F.F. or Frank Smith. I don't know too much about Grandpa Smith's family. I do know he had a brother John, married to Sarah Tustison. Their children were:

Mamie (Mrs. Hal Temple) – 2 children, Max & Lois

Edna (Mrs. Claud Clover)

John Lester Smith

Harold Nelson Smith

I have no information about his parents.

Now this is on my Father's side:

His Mother, My Grandmother: Flora May (Phillips) Skinner

Her sisters were:

Angeline Fugate

Lelia Phillips

Amanda Dodson

Agnes Welker

May Phillips

Delta Phillips

Grandmother: Flora May (Phillips) Skinner

Her Father (My Great Grandfather) was: William T. Phillips (Captain in G.A.R.)

Her Mother (My Great Grandma) was: Leatha T Troxel

Back to my mother, her sisters were Bessie and Lulu.

Bessie Thompson married T. Lafayette "Faye" Thompson. They had one child, Thelma

Lulu was married to Roy Sallie. They had 4 children: Nadine, Evelyn, Kathryn and Ted.

Brothers:

Charles Smith married to Verde, had one child, Vivian

Frank Smith married to Pearl, had 2 children, Harold & Bob (*\*note, although not mentioned in Melba's document, the 1880 census lists George F Smith in the household with Frank, Lucinda and Bessie. Apparently Frank Smith's name was George Frank Smith*)

Hobart never married

His, Harry H. Skinners (Timothy was his real middle name but didn't like it.)

Father (My Grandpa) was:

Charles E. Skinner.

His (Charles) Brothers were: Henry, Will, Frank

His (Charles) Sisters were: Mary Webster, Fronie Eggleston, Florence Morgan, and Alice Prichard

My Grandpa, Charles E. Skinners Father was:

Amos Skinner – who lived in England, invented the snap clothes pin and sold it for a thousand \$1000. dollars and came to the United States. His wife's name was Mary (My Great Grandfather)

There is a Dr. Russell Byrd – who lived I Kansas City, who was a cousin.

My Father had 2 sisters:

Beulah Roush – she had 2 sons Jack & Joe

Ruth Zerbe Martin – no children

Rather unusual thins have occurred on my Birthday. Grandma Smith died Nov 5, 1934 and her sister Kate died Nov 5, 1884. Joan, My Niece, was born on my birthday as was Rile Fossey, Johnson's nephew.

Now I'll go back to when Mama (Maude Smith Skinner) went to Oswego. When she was 15, she & her parents made a trip to Oswego, Ks., where most of Grandma Smiths relatives lived While she was there she attended a ball game and she met my Dad, Harry H. Skinner & were together some. She returned to Sterling & she & Dad corresponded for 3 yrs. I still have the post cards he wrote to her. Then on Oct 12, 1908 they were married in the old Court House that used to be at B & Main by Judge Rickseeker. Mother was 18 and Papa (as we always called him) was 21. Mama was a very pretty lady, with a fair size bosom and well built. Papa was a good looking man too, and both regardless of how little they had, were always clean and well dressed. My Grandparents, Mothers folks were terribly upset about Mama marrying Papa. You see Papa smoked and played poker, shot craps and would take a drink which was definitely against her parents' belief, but the longer they were married the more Grandma & Grandpa loved him. He quit his bad habits, all but smoking his pipe. Papa had a beautiful personality and was a fun guy. I don't know as much about Papas family as I do Mamas. He was one of 3 children. Ruth & Beulah were his sisters. Ruth was a late comer. His father, Charles E. Skinner was a carpenter. They lived in Oswego, KS and all the children were born there. Grandpa Charles Skinner died when I was about 2 and Aunt Ruth was 11, so I never really knew him. Papas sister, Beulah was a beautiful young girl & was in a Beauty Contest of which she was 1<sup>st</sup> place winner. She married Carl Roush & they had 2 children, Jack & Joe. Carl was an alcoholic & was killed by his own doing. He was drunk & drove into the Santé Fe Station in Bartlesville, Okla. Beulah raised the 2 boys. My folks after having Irene & I moved to Sterling, Ks. There was also a boy born between Irene & I. Irene was born Aug 21, 1909 & then a boy was born and he died as an infant and then I was born Nov 5, 1912. I was born the day Woodrow Wilson was elected President. Mama told me if I had been a boy, my name would have been Woodrow. I was then named Melba after the great singer Melba. When Mama became pregnant with me, she was as mad as a hornet. Kids were coming too fast. That made her not want me. She told me this, but after I was born, that all changed. When I was a few months old, we all moved to Sterling, Ks. And Papa worked in a grocery store. When I was about 8 or 9 mo. old, I was in a Baby Beauty Contest and took 1<sup>st</sup> place. When I was about 1 ½ yrs. old we moved to Hutchinson, Ks. We lived on Bigger St., & Papa worked in Grocery business. When I was 2 or 3 I was fortunate enough to have long blonde naturally curly hair, which my Father adored. I was the only one in the family that had thick naturally curly hair. Irene had very fine limp hair & straight as straight.

Of course I would cry when Mama combed my hair & that went on for a long time. One day Aunt Bessie was there, she said "Maude why don't we cut her hair? So she won't cry." Aunt Bessie begged Papa & Mama to let her cut my hair. The answer was always, No. One day Aunt Bessie and Mama cut my hair. I had long blonde naturally curly hair, Remember! When Papa got home, he was one sick man, and so mad he could have chewed nails. He never got over it. When I was older he would throw it up to Aunt Bessie, so Mama let my hair grow again, but it got darker & was never that curly again.

I was a healthy child but Irene had leakage of the heart and was rather frail as a child, but she outgrew it. Mama told me when I was born, Irene said "I'm Mamas girl, she's Papas girl", and I guess it was pretty much that way. I was more like my Dad & Irene was quiet & reserved like Mama. Irene was a dear sweet wonderful sister. When I was about 3, we moved to 208 East 9<sup>th</sup>, Hutchinson, Ks. It was about a block from North Side School, where Irene started to School. Then Grandpa Skinner and Aunt Ruth moved back to Hutchinson & lived in a house right next to ours. Eventually Aunt Beulah & boys moved back to Hutchinson. Grandma, a widow with A. Ruth still at home supported her by babysitting for Dr. Young. Just don't know how she did it. At that time there was no Soc. Sec. for widows or elderly. Prices and wages were cheap. A. Ruth was 9 yrs older than me. She was born late in Grandmas life. Finally A. Ruth graduated from High School & went to work as a stenographer & bookkeeper in the office at Pegues – Wright store downtown Hutchinson. (The store is still there) That was a big help to Grandma.

When I was about 6, Irene & I were playing in the dining room. We had a square dining table & there was a couch close to the table & Irene was chasing me around the table & I had to step up on the couch & down & around. I missed my step & Hit my head on the corner of the table. Blood spurted & I passed out. Got me on the temple, which is a dangerous place. I remember I was laying in Mamas arms in the kitchen and A. Ruth & Grandma came over & A. Ruth took one look & fainted. Grandma spent her time reviving A. Ruth. Irene was crying & looking on. I had a scar for a long time but has faded. Aunt Ruth was always fainting – She took piano lessons, I think from day one, from the Perken Sisters and never could play worth a hoot. She just didn't have a natural talent – but – she enjoyed it and that's important. She played well enough to play at Church & in a number of recitals, where there would be 15 to 20 Pianos playing at one time in a Concert. Some people have natural rhythm but she didn't.

While we lived at 208 E 9th Papa had 2 different Ford Touring cars stolen at night from his garage. That was eerie. We lived at that address until I was 8 yrs. old, Irene was 11.

In 1917 World War I began & Mama's brother Hobart went to war. He was in the Medics Corp in France. I was 5.

In 1918 the horrible Influenza hit the nation and people were dying like flies. We were all down at the same time. Papa developed pneumonia & we thought he was going to die, so Grandma Smith came) with her home remedies) & stayed & took care of all of us. She wore a mask for protection. We all got well again, but some of our neighbors died. The Dressler family, 3 houses from us, all died but Mildred, my age. The Father & Mother & 2 sons died, leaving Mildred. It was horrible. At that time there was no vaccine or cure. Just bed rest, mustard plasters for chest & mentholatum for nose & head. There were more neighbors that died too.

In 1918 the War was over & Uncle Hobart was coming home. What a Day! You see Uncle Hobart had a girlfriend, named Daisy Wells & he planned to marry her. When he got home from the war – I remember going to the Santa Fe Station in Hutchinson to meet him & he just grabbed we kids & Mama & was so happy to be home. He always walked so straight, head up, about 6 ft tall & soft spoken. Well he go a rude shock when he got to Sterling, Ks his home. His girlfriend Daisy had married another man. He grieved over that for years & was never the same. He never got married. He lived at home & worked for Dad Wheeler in Sterling & later on lived with us & so did Grandma. After Grandma died, he went to Topeka. His life had been ruined and he died I his 40's from a heart attack. He was a good guy but terribly unhappy.

When I was about 4 or 5, relatives from Oswego came to see us. Not sure how they were related, cousins I think. We called them Aunt Mamie & Uncle Hal Temple and their kids, Max & Lois. They were onry kids. They wanted to play in the new chicken house. One thing lead to another & we were all running around Naked – I guess the folks were watching us & out the door they came & guess what happened to all of us. Yeh! Well, we got the switch across out bare bodies. I have been afraid to take my clothes off ever since.

When I was about 4, Irene was 7, Christmas rolled around and Santa Claus left us each a beautiful wicker doll buggy & a big doll. What a Christmas! We wheeled those buggies indoors & outdoors. Even the cats got a ride. Those doll buggies would be worth a fortune today.

At Christmas we always had a fancy stocking full of nuts & orange & an apple. My folks always made Christmas a Happy Event.

Now you want to remember, there were no radios, televisions, electric refrigerators, furnaces, electric appliances, washing machines, sweepers, and very few inside bathrooms, but we did have electricity & running water. (When I was a kid) The folks had a big old fashioned gas cook stove and a Base burner that used coal, to heat the house. We had no phone. You would freeze in one room & be warm where the stove was located. Ice was delivered by horse & wagon for the Ice Box. In the winter, most everyone wore long underwear. I would put off going to the toilet because I hated to unbutton & button the seat of that underwear, and they got baggy at the knees – but warm. There were no boots to speak of. We kids wore leggings that buttoned, to keep our legs warm outdoors & Papa would wrap his feet in gunny sacks to go to work in the snow. He worked for Mammels Grocery downtown. Of course Papa had a Ford Touring car, open air job & self-crank, but wouldn't start in cold weather, so walked. There were no washing machines - laundry was done by hand. Mama had 2 galvanized tubs and a wash board & used P&G soap. She washed in one and rinsed in the other. The clothes were always clean & white & starched. Until electric irons came in Mama used flat irons, heated on the stove. There wasn't such a thing as wrinkle free fabric. Everything had to be ironed. We had no dryers, so Mama hung all the clothes on a line outside. There always seemed to be a contest among the neighbors to see who could hang out the whitest wash. Mama should have had 1<sup>st</sup> place – It wasn't fashionable in those days to have a sun tan – All the women wanted to have lily white skin, so Mama wore a sun bonnet & wore stockings with the feet cut off on her arms when she hung out a washing. My Mama's knuckles would be raw from scrubbing clothes on a wash board. There were no electric sweepers - just a broom and

then a carpet sweeper – but our house was always clean & clean clothes and food on the table. It was a hard life but pride and determination spurred them on.

At age 5 it was time to go to Kindergarten. We lived just a block from School North Side, so the first day, my big sister took me by the hand & went to school. Kindergarten was in the basement, so she took me downstairs and as I went into the room, the teacher was at her desk just inside the door & there was a little boy standing behind her desk with his face to the wall, which automatically told me I had to behave or else. I remember the names of some of my grade school teachers. There were 6 grades in my grade school. There was Miss Scroggs, Miss Morton, Miss Leonard, Miss Springer, Miss Botkin, Miss Talmadge & Miss Hartford. Miss Botkin was the Superintendent. Not any of them as good a teacher as your Miss Rose Davis. There were about 25 students in each class. Playing jacks & jumping rope were favorites. We played on the giant stride (<https://preservationinpink.wordpress.com/2010/03/30/preservation-photos-25/>) & slides & swings too. One little boy always teased me a lot, called me sugar pie face. I always wore long curls & I can remember sitting at my desk, & running a pencil up my curls – then I would pull one curl from one side & a curl from the other side & place them under my nose for a mustache. After I wore my shoes for a period of time the sole would come loose & I would flop my foot when walking = It was time to have them half soled. There was a family lived across the street by the name of Royle. They had several kids, good hard working people, but Mrs. Royle was always yelling at the kids & telling neighbor kids to go home, so me & the neighbor kids made up a little poem about her. We would go around saying “Old Lady Royle, sitting on a pail, picking her teeth with a Monkey’s tail”. My Mother never heard me or she would have brained me – That was a rotten thing to say, but kids are kids.

When I was 8, Papa & Mama bought a house at 110 West 11<sup>th</sup>. It was more modern. Had a bathroom. What a luxury! We had to walk to school 5 or 6 blocks to North Side. It was fun walking with other kids. There was a grocery store on the corner from the school & it got to be a thing to do, to eat a dill pickle. So we would all indulge in a dill pickle. Then we switched to town squares, a toffee like square candy. The pickle was 3 cents and town square 2 cents. When I got to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Irene was going to Liberty Jr High. I was feeling like a big kid in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I discovered there were little boys & little boys discovered there were little girls. Jack Carter was a neighbor boy & he would take me for a ride on his bicycle - There was Clayton Main, whose Father owned a clothing store, Fritz Haskard whose Father owned a Car Agency & Cliff Sherwood and girlfriends too. Clayton played the drums & he had a party at his house & I was invited. Well of course games were played, Spin the Bottle & whoever the bottle pointed to – you had to kiss them. Cute huh! Oh yes, there were Sam Jones & Sam Cones. Sam Jones became a Dr. & passed away recently, but his son Sam Jones Jr. Is an announcer on KWBW. Oh we had fun to say the least.

When I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade I wanted to wear lipstick & powder my face, so I used red cake coloring for lipstick and powdered my face at noon when I walked home for lunch & when I got back to school & walked in the room Miss Springer my teacher was sitting at her desk and she took me by the hand & pulled my face down in her lap & rubbed my face on her dress. I didn’t wear powder to school again until I became a Freshman.

I had long hair & wore long curls as Mama would wrap my hair up on rags & she could really wrap curls. I wore a big hair ribbon bow in my hair & dresses with a big bow in back. I was always clean & starched & curled to go to school.

We went to Sunday School at the United Brethren Church.

I took piano lessons from Mrs. Jenkins who lived 3 doors west of us on west 11<sup>th</sup>. I was 9 – Irene & I both took lessons, only she started earlier. She was 12 & had 1 yr. of lessons before I started. I couldn't sit still long enough to practice so at age 22 the folks got me a violin as a Christmas present. I took lessons from Prof. Fohnstock. I took for 3 years & when I was a freshman, played in the Jr High Orchestra. I was 14 or 15 when I was a freshman – Ed Sawyer played a trombone in Orchestra & was always teasing me. He was a tall, black curly haired guy. We had a school play coming up & the orchestra had to play. Ed asked if he could walk me to the school function. I had to get my parents' consent – the arguments began. Mama, Papa & Irene all said no, too young. Of course it was at night, but by begging and reasoning, they finally consented. I wore my first silk stockings, without wearing them over cotton stockings. Big deal. Times change don't they? I was a lover of silk stockings and high heels – when I first wore silk stockings I had to wear them over my cotton stockings – Seams had to be straight.

I meant to tell you, when I was still in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I wanted my hair cut. I was wearing long curls & wore it in braids sometimes. My Father had another fit. You see, most women had long hair & wore it in different styles. Permanents' weren't in yet. My Father offered to buy me the prettiest barrette he could find – or a new dress. I wanted my hair cut – so I got it cut. I wore it parted on the side & pulled over with a barrette. When I was a freshman I had it cut into a windblown haircut. My hair still had some natural curl, so I thought it looked great. When I was also 15, Irene had gone with Merton Bilslend for about a year. He was & is a great guy. We all loved him. Merton was out of school, graduated & working for Bixlers Pop Bottling Co. Irene was a senior & they wanted to get married and did in Jan. Irene graduated in May as Mrs. Irene Skinner Bilslend. They lived with us until school was out. They were married in Lyons, Ks. I can remember how I carried on about them smooching. Teasing of course. I remember, Mama put clothes pins under the flat sheet, the first night they were there, which we all had fun over that. Oh, yes I had to sleep on a cot & gave them a hard time over that.

My Mother & Dad just loved both of their sons-in-law. Merton & Johnson are just two great guys.

That summer, times were tough. The nation was going into a depression. Papa was behind with payments on the house & out of a job. He sold the house for \$3000. & took his equity. He was supposed to have a job waiting for him in Joplin, M. Sold all our furniture and possessions. Aunt Ruth kept the one chair (I now have) that Angeline & Fred Fugate gave the folks in 1908 as a wedding present. All we had were our clothes in a suitcase. Irene & Mert moved to an apartment. We went to Joplin on a bus, got off the bus & asked if he knew of any rooms close & it was right there, a stairway – What we got into was a Bordello. I had heard of such a place & I guessed that's what it was. My folks showed they were a little shocked, but it was dark & late & sure, she had rooms for rent. So we stayed all night. Next morning, afoot, we found a nice apt and Papa went to see about his job – when he got there – there was no job. His face fell. He walked & walked, looking for a job. No jobs to be had – The Great Depression

was staring us in the face. I decided to apply for a job. I was still 15 but I lied & told them I was 16 & got a job at Newman's Dept. Store. Wages were cheap for women so it was easy for girls to get a job. My wage was \$6.00 a week. By the end of the week Papa decided to move to Independence, Ks. The week I worked at Newman the Credit Manager's son Mike Robinson, wanted a date with me. His Mother came to my Dept. (Jewelry) and introduced herself & we talked & then her son Mind came and introduced himself & asked me to go to a movie. He came by for me at The Mallory Apts. & we walked to the movie. He was a real nice, good looking guy about 17 or 18. We left the next week end and went to Independence, Ks, got an Apt. and Papa looked & looked for a job. I remember the folks talking about companies wouldn't hire anyone 40 yrs. old & Papa was 40. No jobs to be had. I applied for a job at Truby Bros. Jewelry Store & at the end of the 2 weeks we were there, I received a notice to come to work and the folks decided to move to Wichita. We got a room over a downtown store. It was so hot we could hardly stand it. Papa looked & looked for work. Nothing. We then moved back to Hutchinson, got an apt. and Papa went to work for Bett's Baking Co. driving a truck, delivering bread. I went back to High School. I was a Cheerleader in my freshman year. Lucille Warren & I were the only cheerleaders, but I didn't try our when I got to High School. My folks were so hard up, I felt awful, but other parents were hard up too.

The worst of the depression hit in 1929. Banks all over the nation went broke, people out of work, breadlines, executives committing suicide, students dropping out of school. There were tramps & beggars coming to out back door for handouts, just a cup of coffee or a sandwich. Mama always gave something. She would always quote the Scripture, Hebrews Ch. 13 v 2 "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some entertained angels unawares." Pertaining to brotherly love of course. Wages were cheap & prices were cheap and people lost their life's savings. Yes, it was horrible & unforgettable.

Now, I'll go back to grade school, about age 8, after we moved to 110 W 11<sup>th</sup>. Mama used to come visit school. She would always be dressed up. She had a pretty fur piece and beautiful hats, her hair was long, down to her waist that she wore in a figure 8 in the back & rest all cured & pretty. I was always so proud of her. She always smelled good & was soft & nice to cuddle up to. I have such fond memories of my Mama, Papa & Irene.

While we lived at 10 W 11<sup>th</sup> Papa was making pretty good wages. He finally became Manager of one of the Dillon Stores. He had worked for Dillon's in their first store, in Sterling. They were small stores except for one on West B. He had worked there too. I remember Ray Dillon, Clyde Dillon & wife Flo. They all worked in the stores. At one time, Papa had an opportunity to buy preferred stock in Dillon's when they first sold stock. He just didn't have the extra money to buy it. Boy! Oh Boy! What it would be worth today. Dillon stores grew to a multimillion dollar business. They just recently sold out to Krogers.

About age 9, Mama taught Irene and I to cook & sew. There wasn't such a thing as 4H Club in town. Irene would get dinner for a week in the summer & I had to wash dishes, then the next week we changed jobs. At least we were making ourselves useful. She taught us to embroidery too. By the time I was 14 I was making clothes over. I remember Aunt Ruth gave us some hand ne downs & I made a darling dress out of one of hers. It was a light green silk, trimmed in Ivory pleated satin 1" wide. Balero



style. Irene had the Jr-Sr banquet coming up and she & Mama got together and sneaked my dress out for her to wear to the banquet. They knew I would object, so they didn't ask me. In a few days I was looking for my dress & couldn't find it. They had to confess she wore my dress to the banquet & the waitress spilled coffee on it & it was in the cleaners. I had a fit! They knew I would. I really didn't care, but I had to blow off steam. They would have been disappointed if I hadn't. There were several neighborhood kids in our block. Walter Bunte lived on the corner west & he was a kind of an odd ball, always wiggled his nose like a rabbit. He had the right name. Bunte's owned the Bunte Coal Co. Walter had a pinto pony & in those days one could keep a horse in their back yard. Every so often he would come by on Fanny (the pony) & let us ride her. We loved it. Then there was Billy McCarroll. Coach McCarroll's son. He was some kind of nut. His father was a fast ball coach and Billy was far removed from a fast ball player. He was a blonde curly haired kid, played the piano & ever so often would turn out in the yard, jumping up & down & singing. Some kid! Then there was Alberta Ewing, she lived across the street with her grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. Johnny Sollenberger, related to Gilbert. She was kind of pitiful. A victim of circumstances. Her mother died when she was born & was raised by her Mother's parents, Sollenbergers. We used to play together. Jack Carter lived 3 houses from us. His Dad travelled all the time & his Mother Kate Carter was Notary Public. They had a housekeeper. Jack & his brother Bob fought all the time. Mr. & Mrs. Duvall lived next door, east of us & they were retired farmers. She was Dutch and when you knocked on the door, she would say "Kuverhin", that meant "Come in". Irene & I gave a Halloween party in her basement. Oh that was fun. Older kids went off in the corner and necked, while the rest played games, etc.

Kathleen Warren lived across the street & she was real little for her age. Her Father was about 4 ½' tall & her grandma that lived with them was about 4' tall, but her Mother was taller, about 5' 4". Kathleen was a brilliant child. Read books in nothing flat. Big thick books – was always reading. They had a big white Persian cat they called "Seetiedad". Kathleen had one blue eye & one brown eye.

One little boy about 9, lived across the street was Howard Koontz. His Mother worked at Wiley's & his sister, a lot older, was at home. It was close to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July & he was playing in the back yard, with a gun, shooting blanks. There was a live bullet among the blanks & he tried to put it in the gun & it wouldn't go in, so he held the gun against his stomach & was pounding on it & it exploded and killed him. I'll never forget that.

Yes, there were good times and bad times. Another unpleasant experience came on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, which I finally learned to dislike the 4<sup>th</sup>. I was about 9 & Papa & Irene & I went out to the sidewalk in front of our house to shoot fireworks. We had some roman candles & I had one in my hand & Papa lit it & the fuse had been put in the wrong end, & it shot right up my arm. It burned my arm so bad & I cried & cried – ruined another 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Another thing that happened to me was funny, but it hurt. We did have a bathroom on West 11th, but we had to heat it with a stand up kerosene heater, so I had taken a bath & was drying and I bent over to dry my legs and my little pink bottom came in contact with the stove & burned a pretty bright red spot. Of course we all laughed about it afterwards.

I was always told I was the clown in the family, because I was always doing something or putting on an act of some kind. We had a big wicker rocker, that sat by the base burner in the dining room. Papa had gloves with a gauntlet cuff with fringe.

Thelma was staying all night with us, so of course I had to put on a show. I climbed up in the wicker (because they were bigger) & put mine on my hands and proceeded to act like an ape. Well, everyone was in stitches, then Irene, Thelma & I went into the living room to play a game & we were sitting on the floor & I decided to get the jar of raisins, so we could snack on them. The raisins were in a glass jar. I got them, sat back down on the floor & the raisins were stuck in the jar, so I worked & worked at it & finally I turned the jar upside down & squeezed the glass jar & made a noise & all the raisins fell out on the floor. Well, that did it. Thelma went into hysterics. She laughed & cried. We finally got her settled down and we were off to bed.

As kids, we skated, jumped rope, played jacks, rode a bicycle, made mud pies, played in the sprinkler, rode a horse, went to a circus, and played Shinney – Shinney is played with a stick and a tin can, up and down the alley (probable origin of the game <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinney>). We also had a T stick and a wheel (homemade) that we pushed up and down the sidewalk. In the evening kids came from other blocks & we played tag with the trees. We also played “Auntie Over.” You find a small building like a garage or chicken house & kids get on each side of it & throw a ball from one side to the other & yell “Auntie Over.” Sometimes we went swimming at Carey Park. I was so afraid of water that I never did learn to swim & I hate myself for that. There were no Red Cross lessons at that time. I can swim a little now, but wish I could have been a good swimmer. I also wish I had of stayed with Piano Lessons. I know a little, but I would love to be able to play jazz & ragtime music. I haven’t been in a swimming pool for years & I’m not about to expose all this flab & wrinkles = A Lot of women my age do swim but so far, haven’t had the courage.

Ever Saturday night, when Papa was working at the store, Mana, Irene & I would go to a movie. We walked from West 11<sup>th</sup> to downtown, to the Old Delux Theater. After the show we would stop at Candyland and have an ice cream soda, a 44 or a Sundae, and if it was cold we had a hamburger at Hamburger Genes. “Hamburger Genes” was an enclosed portable wagon type that sat at the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> & Main. He was well known to everyone for his hamburgers. In the winter you could smell those hamburgers for blocks. You had to stand on the outside to eat them, but they were delicious. There was also a guy called Bob, that wheeled a “Hot Tamale” cart up & down the street. Sometimes we would have Hot Tamales.

After we had our treats we would go to the grocery store & wait for Papa to get off work, which on Sat. night was always late. There was never any special time for stores to close on Sat. night. It was always a big night for everyone. Stores all open, everybody saw everybody. Sunday morning was Sunday School. We always went wearing the best we had. One day the Church burned down & we started going to the Baptist Church on Main Street. It’s still there. Ever so often Irene & I were asked to play at Sunday School. Irene played the piano & I played my violin for a special. Papa would always come by in his Ford 2 door sedan & pick us up. One Sunday I had a bad experience. The two door had doors in the middle of the car & the front seat folded up & I always sat on it folded up, riding backwards. I got in, sat on the seat, window was down & I had my fingers between the door & window part. Irene got in & closed the

door & my fingers were in the closed door. I screamed & Papa opened the door & we hurried home. It really hurt. My fingernails all turned black and finally came off, with new ones coming in. Papa & Irene were both so sorry and Papa kissed my fingers & Irene had her arms around me, but it wasn't their fault of course. Mama bathed my fingers & tried to make my fingers all better.

Then there was a girl by the name of Sylvia. She wanted me to come over to her house which was straight across the street.

She wanted me to go up in the attic with her, so we went up the stairway, it was kind of dark & when we started down, there was an electric meter box on the side wall, I laid my hand on it, accidently & I got a terrific shock – I came down that stairway 90 miles an hour and ran across the street home, like a deer.

We were now living in the Roaring 20's. The days of Clara Bow (the flapper) and Charleston days – girls & women were wearing short skirts & baby doll shoes. As I got older I wore baby doll shoes, short skirts & did the Charleston.

Then there were the times we took trips to Oswego. Both the folks had relatives there. It was over 200 miles & of course there were dirt roads & flint hills. Mama made us khaki outfits for traveling. Grandma Skinner & Aunt Ruth went with us. We had a terrible time getting there, one summer as it had rained & roads were muddy. When we got in to the flint hills, Old Betsy (the car) could hardly make it up hill, so we all got out in mud & pushed Old Betsy up kill, when she was stuck. What a mess. Then on top of that we got somewhere between here and Oswego & it thundered & lightened terrible & Papa said "We had better stop at a farm house." So we did. There was a man with a team of horses & a wagon coming towards us & we learned next morning they were killed by lightening. We stayed with this farm family & that night before going to bed we had to go to the toilet. The privy was outdoors. Irene went with me & just before I got my pants pulled up, there was a crack of thunder lightening & we came out of there with our pants down & screaming and embarrassed. "That's what you call, getting caught with your pants down."

Anyway we had a good bed to sleep in. The next morning, the lady had hot oatmeal with sugar and cream & toast. It was so good. After breakfast we loaded up & went on to Oswego. As I mentioned, lots of relatives there. Aunt Angeline, Grandma Skinner's sister & her husband, Uncle Fred Fugate, Aunt Lelia Philips, another sister, who never married, but went with a guy, all of her adult life. She was an expert stenographer & bookkeeper & worked in the office of a Mill in Oswego. Later she worked in Washington, D.C. in the government offices for many years. She then went totally blind – had her cataracts removed & wore thick lenses, but could see again. I loved to hear her talk. She was quite a lady. Aunt Lelia & Aunt Angeline had no children. A. Angeline was a teacher. Wish I had all the antiques that were in Aunt Angeline's house. Didn't think anything about it then, too young.

Mama had relatives there to Great Aunt Sarah (Sadie) Smith, one of Grandpa Smith's sisters = in = law, Mamie & Hal Temple, Lizzie Ratzloff & Jenice Kirkendall. Lizzie's daughter, Edith had been blind since age 18 and did the most beautiful fancy work you ever laid your eyes on. They also made potato chips & sold to stores. Then there was Aunt Cora & Uncle Frank Cooper, Grandma Smith's sister. She had 16 children. Two died. To go to Aunt Cora's & Uncle Frank's was an experience in itself. The oldest son

was Milford, married & not at home. Gladys next, I believe was a nurse, & next was Irene & she was a comedian. Fun, fun, fun. Dorothy was close to my sister Irene's age. About 12 children at home. G. Aunt Cora had a dining table about the length of our family room & kitchen. Uncle Frank worked for the cit. Their big house had no carpets & was just barely furnished with necessary furniture. I have never been around a family as happy as they all were. Every moment was laughter and jokes and happiness. We were there for dinner and the table was loaded with good food. After dinner later in the afternoon, Dorothy put some records on the old Victrola & got some of her brothers to come in the house & we danced, or thought we were. It was a fun time. There kids would all be 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins & I don't know their names, other than the ones I mentioned, or where they are or anything about them.

We made a trip to Oswego almost every summer for several years. The folks had friends there too. John & Mae Carey. Papa & Johnny were boyhood friends. Mae played the piano. She was great. We used to stay with them some.

My Grandma Skinner & Grandpa Skinner, Aunt Beulah, Uncle Carl, Jack & Joe are all gone by now.

Back to when I lived on East 9<sup>th</sup> until I was 8 yrs. old. There was a family lived next door by the name of Mero. There was Arnold, Anita & Elizabeth. Arnold was a rotten kid. Another family across the street, last name May had 2 daughters older than me & they were sitting on their front porch & Arnold put a rock in his sling shot and aimed it at one of them. It put her eye out for life. That would be something to live with. We all hated that kid. He and his sister would stick their heads up to our kitchen window, so one day I was just waiting for them to peek in that kitchen window & I threw a pan of water in their faces. That took care of that. We were more than happy to move from that neighborhood.

While living on West 11<sup>th</sup>, Papa raised strawberries & other garden & it was we kids job to pick strawberries. He had a few chickens too & we gathered the eggs. Later, Hutchinson as it grew, changed its rules about livestock in town. We had a garage, Papa kept the Tin Lizzy in, and during the day the car wasn't in there, so on Sat., Kids got together & put on a show. Penny a person. It was always a flop, but we had fun doing it & talking about it. The garage had a coal bin so in the summer, when there was no coal in it, we made a play house out of it. We played dolls & played house. We also had a big swing.

When I was about 13, living on West 11<sup>th</sup> the first permanents came in. Mrs. Ritter Brown advertised to give permanents. Mama had always wanted naturally curly hair. She hounded Papa to get her hair cut short & get a permanent. I had never seen my mother with anything but long hair, done up in a pretty style. I loved it that way. Al women had long hair. li was considered a in to have your hair cut (for women) but Papa finally gave in, and Mama got her hair cut & got a permanent. She didn't look like Mama. Took all of us a long time to get used to it, but she loved it. Permanents then weren't as easy as they are today. They were given with a big machine. Things hanging from the machine to the curler attached to your head. They were hot. Cold waves, like we have today, came in much later. Permanents then were \$30.00 which was a big price according to everything else. Mama did some sewing for Mrs. Judge Priggs that lived around the corner form us, to pay for her permanent.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade & living on West 11<sup>th</sup> there was a family moved in from the country to West 12<sup>th</sup>. Just a block from us. Mr. & Mrs. Miller & 6 children. Fern, Daisy, Violet, Roland, & Cecil & one other. They

had struck oil & were loaded. Cecil, a sophomore drove a big ling car. They had been very poor & they were having a ball. Violet & I became real good friends and we spent a lot of time together. They all had to help with the house work, etc. They were unspoiled as far as being friendly. Their wealth was new for them too.

You remember earlier I wrote at age 15 Papa sold the house on West 11<sup>th</sup> & went to Joplin, Mo., and then back to Hutchinson. I went back to school in Sept. We moved to a duplex at 315 W 1<sup>st</sup>. Small but nice. I enrolled in High School. I walked from 315 W 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> & Main. H.S. was ½ block east. About 10 blocks to school. I came home at noon for lunch & walked back to school & had time to eat lunch. In the winter I thought I would freeze to death, but when I got home at noon, Mama would have a good hot meal. I'll never forget those hot bran muffins & butter & navy beans with ham. Mama was a good cook. When you are cold & hungry, you don't forget that good food. If it was just real bad out, I would take my lunch, but most kids had someone to come after them & bring them back, but I wasn't that lucky. There was no lunch program in the schools then. Not even a kitchen. The usual things took place at school. Beginning with my freshman year, I took a Commercial Course. English, History, Algebra, Commercial Arithmetic, Industrial geography, Salesmanship, Typing, Shorthand, Penmanship, Public Speaking, Bookkeeping, Orchestra, Home Ex, and Phys. Ed. My junior year was like a nightmare. Mr. Fall was my Eng. Teacher in my freshman year & my grades were B+ B+. I was the teacher's pet & he must have let me by with murder. I wasn't aware of it so I got by in my soph. year, but in my Jr. year I flunked Eng. – my first. I hated History & flunked that. I was crushed. Had Hummiston in my class did the same, we both flunked. He has been a successful radio announcer on KWBW for years a great guy. Well, I was hurt & depressed because of flunking, so I decided to play hooky. Three other girls & myself one day during school, in Bernieces car drove to Kingman, Ks. Thought we would meet a bunch of football guys, well, we never did find the football guys, so we drove back to Hutchinson and we were driving east on Sherman & came to the stop sign at Sherman & Poplar & who should drive by in front of us but Professor Gilliland. Thad did it. We knew we were going to be expelled. Sure enough, come Monday morning the 4 of us were called into Gilliland's office, by way of a little pink slip. He said "I guess you girls know you are automatically expelled from school. Get your books and get out. The only way you can get back in is to bring one of your parents with you & enroll again/" "You will also have 10% off of your grades."

I went back to school. Mama had gone with me, so I was in again. Now I was real depressed, with 10 % off my grades.

So I decided I had a pretty good education & the folks were so short of money that I would quit. I heard about a job opening at Winsted's Studio (Kodak finishing) and we were in the Great Depression of 1929. It started really before that, but that was when all the banks went broke & Wall Street collapsed. I applied for the job, wage was \$8.00 a week. I got it. I had to learn how to print & develop Kodak pictures. I learned & I worked there for Mr. Oscar McEntarffer. I was 17 when I started. At the end of 3 years, I made \$12.00 a week.

While we were still living at 315 W 1<sup>st</sup> Cass Shrout lived on the other side. Peggy was her name, and I was still in High School. I came home from High School and some neighbors' met me out in front of the house & informed me Mama and Peggy Shrout had been in an accident. I was petrified. I went inside &

Mama was sitting on a chair by the sink with her hand in the sink, bleeding. A neighbor was with her & Peggy was in the hospital. She & Peggy had been for a walk & on the way home, on the corner west of the house, they started to come across the street and the sun was still shining and a "Wardrobe dry Cleaner's" truck turned that corner & the sun blinded him & he ran into Mama & Peggy, knocking them down. They were both lucky they weren't hurt a lot worse. Mama had a lot of bruises & a cut on her hand. I did what I could to help her. Her leg was hurt too. Peggy's was cut & bruised too but had a bad leg injury. Papa came home & took Mama to the Doctor. No bones broken. Just would take time to heal bruises, etc. When they both recovered, they sued The Wardrobe Cleaners. It went on for 3 years. Times were getting worse & worse & we moved into a less expensive house on No. Maple. We lived there about a year or two. Papa was laid off from Betts Baking Co., where he had been working. Companies were having a hard time too. Merton's folks owned a house at 129 E Campbell. Mert's mother had inherited some land & money & they moved back to Grand Island, Nebr. Papa got so he couldn't pay the rent so Merton & his folks suggested the folks move into their house, with some furniture in it. I believed Mert & Irene lived there a while before we moved in. I think that was when Mert & Irene moved to Pratt, Ks. Mert's folks were older than mine, but real nice people. That was a God's send for us to move into that house. Everybody was having a real rough time. No jobs, no money. I was still working at Winsteads & I would give them money to buy coal and some groceries. That really hurt my Dad's pride. Papa worked at odd jobs, whatever he could get. We survived. He finally went to work for a Wholesale Grocery Co. and things were getting better. The Court Sessions came up from time to time and at the end of 3 years, Mama for \$1500. She sued for \$10,000. They started making plans. I was still working, had to walk 12 blocks to work & 12 blocks home. At noon I ate a ham salad sandwich 10 cents and a cherry coke 5 cents, maybe a candy bar 5 cents. There was a bakery just below Winsteads where I worked & that's where I got my sandwich and coke. Sometimes I would work thru my lunch hour, printing & developing pictures & order my food sent up and eat and work. I went to work at 7:00 & 7:30am and got off sometimes at 3:00 & sometimes 4:00pm. I had a girlfriend, Mae Craig, & she worked at Wileys and lived a block from me. In the winter, we both had to be at work at 8:00am. We walked together.

We used to double date. As I mentioned, Mama & Papa were making plans. The first thing they did was buy a houseful of new furniture for less than \$500. Complete dining room set, buffet, table & 6 chairs, 2 pc lovely living room set, with end tables and an occasional chair, walnut bedroom suite for my room (4 poster bed) chest, and vanity dresser with bench, a bed, dresser & chest for their room & a gas range. Can you imagine all this for \$500.00? Oh yes, carpets too. Everything was so pretty and Mama was thrilled.

Papa had a lot of experience in the grocery business. Having been with Dillons and Sentry Wholesale Co., Mammels, Henrys & Dillons in Sterling also Dillons in Hutchinson & manager of Dillons. He seemed to know the business forward & backward. He was out of work a number of times due to the Depression. Companies laid workers off just right & left. They couldn't afford to pay them. A Jett \* Wood Wholesale Co. salesman contacted Papa, telling him there was a good location in Nickerson for a grocery store. Papa had always wanted his own store, so he investigated the possibilities.

I'm getting ahead of myself. I'll go back to getting all the new furniture and still living on East Campbell.

Irene & Merton were living in Pratt & Irene was pregnant, so on Nov 5, 193 Joan Merlene Bilsend was born. What a birthday present! I was 20. Everything was fine until Irene developed uremic poisoning. Mama was with Irene & Mert, helping with the new baby. Irene finally got over it and they all got along fine. Joan was a doll. I almost felt like she was mine. I had a part in naming her. I was crazy about Joan Crawford so I suggested to Irene naming her Joan. They both liked it, so her name is Joan Merlene. The name Merlene comes from Merton and Irene.

Back to West 11<sup>th</sup>. While we were still kids, almost every Sunday Mama, Papa & Irene & I, after Sunday School, would drive to Sterling to see Grandma & Grandpa Smith. Sometimes Aunt Lulu & Uncle Roy Sallee and their kids, Nadine, Evelyn, Kathryn and Teddy (late comer) would be there from Roswell, New Mexico. Teddy was just a baby and we kids would put him in a big pan of water and bathe him. We had a ball with him. Grandpa would (before we all arrived) get his rifle & go out & kill 3 or 4 rabbits and Grandma would have fried rabbit, mashed potatoes, gravy & vegetables for dinner. Sometimes Aunt Verdie & Uncle Charley & daughter Vivian would be there from Topeka. When Teddy was about 5, he was an artist. He drew caricatures & later in life lived in California & worked for Walt Disney. Vivian was also an artist as was Thelma and Irene. Vivian after she was married to Ted Hughes, lived in Lodi, Calif. & they dealt in Antiques. Vivian would hand paint globes for Gone With The Wind lamps. I haven't seen any of those cousins for 50 years. Nadine lives in New Mexico, Evelyn, Kathryn, Teddy & Vivian live in Calif. When all we kids got a little older, Uncle Hobart loved for us to come see them. We were still kids but we had fun. Uncle Hobart had a Ford Touring car & we used to play in the car, so one day, I was behind the steering wheel & Uncle Hobart said "OK, we're going for a ride. He made me drive. I was scared to death. Didn't have a drivers license in those days. I was about 11 or 12. The old Ford Touring cars had 3 peddles to push by foot and a hand operated gas feed. He told me everything to do and he sat beside me. All the kids were in the car. Of course there was very little traffic, so I proceeded to drive. Could hardly reach the peddles. I had to sit way up toward the steering wheel. I drove around the block. I felt like I was going 100 miles an hour, but I got along fine with his help.

Now I'll go back to Papa and Mama and their plans. They got their furniture and Papa investigated the possibilities of opening a grocery store in Nickerson. By this time I was 29 yrs. old. Joan was born on my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday & they were all OK now, Papa & Mama decided they would invest \$500. To open Skinners' Grocery in Nickerson. They asked me if I would be willing to move & work in the store. I said Yes, I'd be happy to, in fact I was excited about it. By this time, I was calling Papa, Dad, sounded more grown up. Dad & I went to Nickerson on a bus, didn't have a car, & we rented a room at Mr. & Mrs. Spauldings, Nickerson jeweler. Dad rented a building on the corner of Main Street, which is now the Library. It had been a grocery store. There were 2 other grocery stores in Nickerson, I.G.A. & Alexanders. Dad & I worked on the store & whole sale companies delivered groceries & we stocked the store. Dad was the owner, manager, & butcher. He knew a lot about cutting meat. I worked my heart out. The store looked great. We heated it with a big old potbellied stove.

All the old characters in Nickerson would come in & stand around it & chew the fat. It was in the winter, when we opened. We rented a house, just a block from the store & moved Mama & furniture to Nickerson. We were all comfortable. Dad hired 2 other people. I think it was Emma Lee Monson & Jerry Hoffman. I know Emma Lee worked for us a long time. We had a "Grand Opening". This was all back in the days, when clerks waited on customers, made a ticket & put up their groceries. The farmers

brought their eggs in, in big egg crates & cream in cans, which we would pay them for their products & in turn, and Egg & Cream Co. would buy the eggs & cream from us. The cream business was operated by one special person that tested it.

Our opening day was a big success & we had a wonderful business. People had heard that Dad was a Dillon man & lots of people knew Dad. We came to know everyone in and around Nickerson. I loved working for & with Dad in the grocery store. After all, this is where I met your Dad, which takes me into another period of my life.

When Dad opened the store in 1932 the Depression was still on. In 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected President, and he brought the Nation out of the Depression. The first thing he did was to declare a Federal Bank Holiday, so no more Banks would go broke & close their doors.

The government insured the Depositors savings. That straightened out the Banks & they re-opened. Then he created the WPA (*Works Progress Administration* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Works\\_Progress\\_Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Works_Progress_Administration)). Men who were out of work, went to work on Federal Projects, roads, bridges, etc. There were many here in Nickerson, working o WPA, getting a check every week. That helped Dad's business as they came in, bought groceries & cashed their checks. Roosevelt was elected to office 3 consecutive terms, but he brought the nation out of its depression. Roosevelt was also our World War II President. He served the Nation in a wheel chair, a victim of polio. He died in office before the war ended. Harry Truman was Vice President. I sincerely hope there will never be another Depression. The human mind cannot imagine what it is really like until one experiences it.

Even tho I have almost written a book I'm still thinking about girls & guys I knew. I had a real cute girlfriend when I was a freshman living on West 11<sup>th</sup>. Her name was Geraldine Rigs. She lived with her Aunt Mary Polly on West 23<sup>rd</sup>. We called her Jerry. Her Aunt Mary & Uncle Bill Polly owned a plumbing co. Jerry's mother and father had divorced so Jerry came to stay with her Aunt & Uncle. Jerry had gorgeous dark brown naturally curly hair. We had a ball together. She & I would laugh at the slightest excuse. There was a big wicker rocking chair on the front porch & Jerry was sitting in it. I was in the porch swing. I was doing something that caused me to almost fall out of the swing. Jerry got tickled & was laughing and threw her head back and over she went backwards. Feet in the air, head on the floor. Then we did laugh. Seems like yesterday.

When Irene & I were real little Carey Park was a favorite place to go. Coon Beck ([https://books.google.com/books?id=i3cUAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=A+Timeline+of+Events+in+the+History+of+Reno+County,+KS&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjf7aSp9oLPAhXI\\_R4KHUO0B0QQ6AEI\\_HjAA#v=onepage&q=beck&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=i3cUAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=A+Timeline+of+Events+in+the+History+of+Reno+County,+KS&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjf7aSp9oLPAhXI_R4KHUO0B0QQ6AEI_HjAA#v=onepage&q=beck&f=false) Beck, Konrad C. Jr. Page 517) owned it. There was an outdoor theatre. It had a roof and cement pillars for sides, a big stage & rows & rows of bench seats. They had vaudeville shows. The Wallace Bruce Players were there every summer. They were Hutchinson residents, but travelled too. Mrs. Bruce's daughter is now married to Mr. Hoffman who owns "The Royal Inn".



We always had to have a box of Cracker Jacks. That was a must. Then too, there was an open air Dance Hall. There were various animals, not too much of a zoo. It was fun. I remember wishing I was old enough to dance, it looked so elegant.

Other entertainment that I remember was an Opera House that had all stage plays. Irene & I would always go together. It was on Main Street between A & B. Saturday was always a big day. Every other Sat., we went to the Barber Shop for hair trim and a shoe shine at the Shine Parlor. That was after Irene & I had short hair of course. I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade when I got my hair cut, so I was a pretty good size kid. Irene was 3 yrs. Older, so Mama trusted us to walk down town by ourselves. Irene always looked after her little sister. Sometimes Mama went with us.

Mama used to dress us alike. She made a lot of our clothes. When I was about 8 & Irene 11 she made us each a darling dress. They were red & white check gingham. The 3 ruffles at the bottom were bound in solid red & picot. That was special stitching ([http://www.vogueknitting.com/pattern\\_help/how-to/beyond\\_the\\_basics/hems](http://www.vogueknitting.com/pattern_help/how-to/beyond_the_basics/hems)) that Mrs. Gilpin did across the street. We loved those dresses. When I was about 7 or 8 & Irene 10 or 11 she made us each white organdy dresses with ruffles from the waist down & with a big bow in the back. We had pretty white slips to wear underneath. I can even remember wearing the slip in the Hospital when I climbed up on the operating table to have my tonsils removed.

Well, one memory brings on another. All in all, I guess Irene & I were pretty good kids. I don't remember ever causing our parents a lot of grief as a child. There was never a lot of money, we were never given an allowance, we would ask for a nickel, dime, or a quarter for candy & go to the show. No comparison of prices & wages then & now. Anyone making \$18.00 to \$25.00 a week was doing great. But considering that bread was 5 cents a loaf, milk 10 cents a quart, real butter 15 cents lb., sugar 5 lbs. for 20 cents, 100 lbs. flour \$1.49, and farmers' prices were low, they were getting 28 cents a bu. for wheat, hogs were 3 cents lb., corn was 10 cents a bushel and cattle 10 cents lb., then \$18.00 to \$25.00 a week went a long way. When your dad & I were first married & for several years, we only spent \$3.00 to \$5.00 a week for groceries, but we only had \$600.00 for the whole year to live on. It varied from year to year.

So if you guys think you're having a hard time, think again. I realize times have changed. I never dreamed that we would ever spend so much just to live, nor did I ever dream that we would make as much money as we have.

Wages & prices today are out of control. I really think people were happier when they had less

I meant to tell you something about the old movie theatres. The Delux Theatre in Hutchinson was across from Wileys. Most theatres had a pipe organ in them. There was a woman named Sybil Seaman that always played. The movies were all silent movies. We saw Charlie Chaplin, Rudolph Valentino, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Fatty Arbuckle, Jackie Coogan, Gloria Swanson, Pola Nigri, Norman & Constance Talmadge, and the western Jack Halt, Tom Westand. Oh yes, Harold Lloyd. That was a riot. It was always a thrill to hear the pipe organ. She played all during the movie, the words were printed on the screen. Then there began to be talk about talking movies. The talking movie came out about 1927.

I was 15 and we were in Joplin, Mo. & I saw and heard my first talking movie. It was Al Jolson in "Mammy". That was a real thrill. It was called Vitaphone then.

Another piece of clothing that I remember, were my Roman Sandals. I was little, probably 3 or 4. I loved those shoes. They were black patent. They came up over my ankle with little black straps that buttoned. Open in between. Guess I am like you & Alison. I loved certain kinds of clothing. Never had many but liked what I had. I'll just bet you can remember some of your clothes too when you were a little girl. I still remember wearing half sox & knee sox.

Irene & I had the usual childhood diseases, such as chicken pox, measles & mumps. I remember Mama talking about Irene having Scarlet Fever, but I don't remember her saying I had it. I know we had our house fumigated and I remember that Papa stayed at Grandma Skinner's while she had it. We were quarantined & Papa used to come to the window to talk to Mama. Irene always had everything much harder than I did. We lived at 208 E 9<sup>th</sup> then. We were older when we got the mumps.

I don't remember getting spanked except for a switch now & then, but as a teenager, my Mother slapped me so hard, my brain felt scrambled. That was for talking back and sassing my Mother, and I really deserved it.

My memories wouldn't be complete if I didn't tell you about the big flood in the summer of 1929. 1929 was quite a year. We lived at 315 West 1<sup>st</sup>. Our duplex had a fairly high foundation. We were warned of a flood. In the evening the water began to creep into the streets of Hutchinson. After a while the water filled the streets, then it came over the curb, then over the grass. We sat up almost all night watching it. Before morning it was up as high as the top step of our duplex. It was in some peoples' houses by this time & was in the stores. Sandbagging didn't help. There was 4 ½ ft. of water in the streets of the whole city. Finally, the water came to a standstill. Aunt Beulah lived close to us. She & 2 men and a woman came wading in that 4 ft. of water & wanted me to wade with them. Water had gone down from 4 ½ to 1 ft. so I waded with them. Water was up to my neck. We waded up to 1<sup>st</sup> and Walnut, one block east of Main St., then past some of the stores. We had to be careful because there were currents in some places. There was a restaurant, deep water in it too & some guys were sitting on stools and all you could see was the stool with them sitting on it. I have forgotten just how long it took for the flood eaters to leave the city, but was several days. The stores and houses had a flood line left on the walls & floors were muddy and most stores had hardwood floors that warped. It was one big mess. It took weeks & weeks for everyone to get back to normal.

Then the City Officials got their heads together and a Canal was built to take care of the flood waters. Hutchinson hasn't had a flood since.

One other event was that President Harding came to Hutchinson. He was at Rayl's Hill at a wheat field there. He rode a binder, bound one bundle of wheat and got off. Later the monument was built on Rayl's Hill in honor of President Harding. It's still there.

The memories keep coming it seems. When I was a freshman I took Phys. Ed. I'll never forget those gym clothes. They were miserable. We wore big old black bloomers, a white middy blouse with a sailor

collar & a black silk tie scarf, and long black hose and tennis shoes. I hated that outfit. Seemed like it took half the gym period to get into it and get out of it. It was anything but sexy. I guess that was the general idea. Our Principal at Liberty Jr. High School was J. W. Jarrott. Dr. Jarrott at the Medical Center in Hutchinson is his son. He was a victim of polio & is crippled, but very successful as a bone specialist. J. W. Jarrott (our principal) was really tough. He had black piercing eyes that seemed to look clear thru you. In assembly, if some kid was misbehaving he would, with a firm arm & a pointed finger correct him in front of all. Don't think we didn't behave, we knew better, but at the same time, we all had a lot of respect for him. He sure kept all we kids under control. If a student was corrected, it was accepted. The parents weren't running to the school to tell Jarrott how to run that school.

Irene and I both took penmanship in our freshman year, only Irene was 3 years ahead of me. Irene's penmanship was beautiful. There was a small magazine put out by the state or school that also went to other countries. Various activities of the school were published in it. Irene was in a group picture with names that was published in that magazine about penmanship. In her Jr. year, J. W. Jarrott called and asked her to come to his house that he had something for her. She wanted me to go with her, so we went to Jarrott's house, just a few blocks away. J. W. Jarrott had a letter for her, from Constantinople, Turkey. It had been sent to the School. On our way home, she opened it. It was from some boy in Turkey that saw her picture & name. In the letter, he wanted her to come to Constantinople, Turkey. Can you imagine this? I don't know if she ever answered it or not. We talked about it for days. Our imaginations ran wild.

There have been many things invented since I was born. I'm thankful I wasn't born in the 1700's when there were no conveniences. When I was a child probably 6 or 7 the radio was invented. I listened to my first radio at a little boy schoolmates house, Harold Salman. It had head phones & so much static one could hardly hear the program. Of course it gradually improved & look how far we have come since. All the electrical gadgets & appliances have been invented since I was a kid. What will be on the market in another 70 years?

I was lucky as a child that the folks had electric lights & running water and gas to cook with. Country people didn't have that yet. It wasn't until 10 years after your dad & I were married that we had electricity and inside bath & running water, even tho most all homes in town had all the modern conveniences. Some farmers had their own light plant, but they were few.

So we are grateful and appreciate what we have today. We have worked hard for it.

When the Rural Electric Association (REA) or Ark Valley Association was established that's when Farmers got their electricity. You can't imagine how happy the farmers were for that. That is what made a big, big change in country life.

I don't think anyone ever forgets their childhood. It's so important to show your love for your child and to be understanding. I'm thankful my parents cared enough about me to correct me & punish me & make me acceptable to society. I only wish they had of made me finish school & graduate, but there was such a shortage of money, that I'm sure they must have been relieved when I went to work. Of course there are many people without a H. S. Diploma, who have become wealthy people. It's a matter

of reading and learning. In this day and age a High School Diploma means the difference between getting a job and not getting a job. A College education helps even more. It's important.

I'm a graduate of the "National School of Dress Design" which took a year to complete, while working and keeping house. It wasn't easy.

I do hope Alison will love school & take part in the activities. Help her all you can. You'll never regret it.

Well, honey, I'll bring this to a close by saying "I think I had a normal childhood. My parents were very devoted to one another and they gave us love and understanding. What more could a child want?"

"I love you"

Mamma

PS

Joan, I have written this especially for you. In order to save time I just copied Linda's. If there is additional information, I will send it to you & you can add it to this book.

MELBA MADELINE (SKINNER) FOSSEY

Born – Nov 5, 1912

Place – Oswego, Kans.

Married – to Johnson Fossey July 25, 1937

Moved to Nickerson from Hutchinson, 1932

Moved from Oswego, Ks as an infant with her parents to Hutchinson & lived there & attended H. S. & worked for Winstead Studio before moving to Nickerson I 1932. Was associated with her father in Skinner's Grocery for several years. Later united in marriage to Johnson Fossey July 25, 1937. I was employed by Kays Jewelers for 15 years. We have lived south of Nickerson all of our married life with one exception of living in Salina Kans. for 1 year. Member of Christian Church for many years. I have one deceased sister Irene Bilslend and our Daughter, Linda Kaye Hugget, Portland Ore., one granddaughter, Alison, and a niece Joan Peyton, Colorado Springs, Colo.

JOHNSON SAMUEL FOSSEY

Born - May 17, 1911

Place – 4 mi. so. Of Nickerson

A graduate of Nickerson High school and attended Hutchinson Jr. College. Has lived So. Of Nickerson all of his life with the exception of one year, living in Salina, Ks.

Was member of the Polled Hereford Association for 30 years. He coached the Nickerson Basketball town team for several years. Very fond of sports. Has been a farmer all of his life.

Was united in marriage to Melba Skinner July 25, 1937.

Three brothers:

Clifford – Valliant, Okla.

Leighton – Mound City, Ks

Arden – Yates Center, Ks

One daughter Linda Kaye Hughet, Portland, Ore.

One granddaughter – Alison, Portland, Ore.

Two nieces and 2 nephews

Son of J. S. (Don) Fossey and Agnes Fossey (deceased)

To Joan from Aunt Melba Oct. 1985