

Boots at Eighty-Two

Due to confidentiality reasons the nickname of "Boots" will be used for this interviewee of eighty-two years old. This Life History will be reported in three sections, the first stating facts and chronological information. The second section will be the information gained from the interview and the third section will be additional information learned outside of the structured interview.

Section One

Boots is a white woman, born in Foose, Missouri on June 05, 1916 and is 82 years old. She has three siblings, one sister who is older than she (85) and two deceased brothers (one was older and one was younger). She was only married once at the age of 20 on December 12, 1935. She is an inactive heterosexual and has been for some time. She had two daughters. One daughter died at the age of 62 from emphysema and the other daughter is 56. She owns her own home and she lives alone; She considers herself totally self-reliant and has been and is a homemaker. She has volunteered most of her adult life and is doing so at present. She is a high school graduate. She is living in a different region but within the same country of her birth. She considers her health to be excellent. Considering social institutions, she has regular contact with her family and makes regular visits to health care professionals. She is very involved in religion, economics and politics. Education takes last place in priority. She was named for her mother's middle name.

Section Two

Her father's name was Earnest and her mother's Edith. Her mother was 23 and her dad was 22 when she was born. The first family home was in Foose, Missouri and she remembers nothing about it because they only lived there for a few months after she was born. The family then moved to Red Fork, Tulsa County in Oklahoma in 1917. Red Fork was later incorporated into the city of Tulsa. They moved to what Boots considers the family home when she was six years old and she lived there until she was married. It was approximately 1 mile from where they originally lived when they moved to Red Fork. She mentioned her parent's first car, a 1929 Chevrolet.

Her parents were not immigrants. Her dad farmed for a very short time after her parents were married. Her dad worked at Dickason Goodman Lumber Company for a year and then worked for the Frisco Railroad for 5 months and then worked for and retired from the Texaco Refinery after 40 years.

Her dad was a small, very nice looking man and meticulously clean. He was always on time for any event. He was very active in all phases of worship at their church. Her mother suffered severely from arthritis early in life and walked with a

slight limp. Her mother was undaunted by her physical condition and remained active until her death at the age of 67. She was a good cook, a seamstress, tackled most any job, was a flower gardener and volunteered at the local Hillcrest Hospital.

Legend has it that ancestors on her father's side of the family sailed from England and settled on Staten Island in 1611 and owned valuable property. However, they didn't have the funds to support a dispute in court on their claim and lost what money they had. Later, records did show they legally owned the property and got it back, sold it and moved "up" until the 1700's.

Although The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl occurred during her childhood, Boots' dad was fortunate enough to have been permanently employed at the Texaco Refinery. Her mother was a very enterprising person so they were always adequately cared for. They lived within walking distance of their church, school, shopping and doctor. Even her school teachers lived in the same neighborhood, so she couldn't miss school and play outside. As a child she played jacks, cut out paper dolls from the Montgomery Ward catalogue, and furniture out of the cardboard dividers from boxes of Shredded Wheat cereal. At that time the street in front of their house wasn't paved and they played ball in the middle of the street. There was also a park close by where she played tennis with her dad.

Junior and senior high school was in the same building about a block away from their home. She had the same teachers through both junior and high school. She attended and participated in practically all extracurricular activities in school. "Clinton Junior and Senior High School" was named after Lee Clinton, who was part of a prominent Tulsa family. In fact the family home was demolished so they could build the school on the same property. After the home was torn down and the builders left for the day, she fondly remembers going over during the evenings and playing on the wooden elevators. She enjoyed high school and was a member of the National Honor Society. She excelled in public speaking winning 1st, 2nd and 3rd in a Civitan contest, sponsored by the Civitan Club of Tulsa. She thinks she was popular but explained they didn't have cliques like they do today. She started college but dropped out because she didn't receive much encouragement or support from her family.

She did typing for a small telephone directory at home. Boots did not work after marriage because they immediately had children and her husband would not allow her to work. To him maintaining a home and caring for the children was her top priority and he financially supported them adequately.

When her first great grandchild was 3 years old she tried to find a birthday card for her at the store. None of them seemed to say what she wanted so she created one herself. The great grandchild is now 22 and Boots continues writing personal birthday poems for not only the grandchild but other family members because they expect it. There are no famous relatives in her family and she never had the opportunity to meet any celebrities.

She met her husband on a blind date through one of her best girlfriends. Before they began seeing each other he was dating a girl who lived in the block over from Boots. She would see them walking to the girl's house and they dated for seven years. However, later she snagged him and they were married in the home of a minister in a town about 35 miles from where they lived. He was 7 years older than Boots. They did not go on a honeymoon because they couldn't afford to. After marriage she knew NOTHING about cooking and had to learn on her own. He survived her trial and error because she had the desire to learn and eventually became a very good cook. He was very patient with her.

She has two dogs and a cat now. Over the years they have had 10 dogs, 3 cats, 2 gerbils, 2 finch birds and a mockingbird she rescued after a storm blew her out of the nest and was barely alive. Boots nursed it back to health and it stayed with her for several months and she really had an attachment to that bird.

Both of her daughters were very nice, good people. The oldest married very young but her husband has been a very successful man in his field of business. The younger one is a most reliable person having worked for almost 30 years with the same company and has a top position in the company. She doesn't have any regrets with how she raised her girls. She is pleased how they grew into adults. If she were to parent today she would be more patient.

She remembers a vacation to New Orleans. Her girls loved the beach and swimming. Another trip was with the younger daughter and they went to Hot Springs, Arkansas. They rented a cabin on the lake. Her husband was not ordinarily a big conversationalist but on this trip to the lake - he seemed to lighten and talked to everyone. He made lasting friendships on this vacation. There was also a 9 hole golf course in the middle of a horse race track so they played golf a lot as both enjoyed it.

About herself, she can truthfully say she thinks she has been a very caring, nurturing grandmother. She is proud of her grandchildren because she takes credit for their accomplishments. She truly savors being a grandparent.

While living at home with her parents they attended Sunday School and church services every Sunday morning and every Sunday evening. She also took her daughters every Sunday and they participated in other church activities. God is most important to her. She never drove a car and her husband never let anything interfere with taking her to church, not even a golf game. Her younger daughter continues to go to church today.

Regarding politics Boots is a Republican and she never fails to vote. The daughter who is deceased lived many years in Europe and England so she lost interest in American politics. Her younger daughter and her granddaughter both vote at every election and they discuss politics.

The day the United States was attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor and President Roosevelt declared war on Japan are very vivid memories to her. As well as when the United States entered World War II and she will never forget the day President Kennedy was shot and killed. Desert Storm affected her greatly because it was shown live on television. Wars of her youth were devastating but "seeing" the report rather than "hearing" the report was a dramatic difference. She didn't serve in the armed forces but purchased war bonds.

The greatest inventions that have made a difference in her life are automatic washers and dryers, the microwave and especially the television. She doesn't care for the nation's overindulgence in technology. She does not care for the direction the United States is headed. Much of the language used in TV programs and graphic scenes should not be allowed. She doesn't own a computer and believes the Internet is detrimental to our youth.

She has flown to San Diego and Monterey in California a few times, as well as to London, England. Her favorite place however, is her home. But, she would love to travel to the Holy land and see the places that Jesus walked and lived. She would not go by herself but would prefer going with a group of people she was acquainted. When asked why she never got a driver's license she said that everything she needed was in walking distance when she was young and as she got older public transportation suited her needs just fine. Now as a senior it is a frustration and causes impatience.

Her most frightening experience was flying in a small airplane during a turbulent storm. Her happiest moments are square dancing and caring for her grandchildren and her most devastating experience was the death of her baby 'great granddaughter. She has two granddaughters and three great granddaughters.

Her oldest friend was a girlfriend from high school. The last place her friend lived was in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. She has lost contact with her so she's not sure if she's still living or dead. They never had any disagreements and she valued loyalty most.

Her parents were married on October 6th and her sister was born on October 13th the following year. Her parents would embarrass her sister by telling everyone they were married on the 6th and seven days later they had a daughter. Boots found a nickel when she was young and her brother claimed he lost the nickel and he could prove it was his nickel by telling Boots whose picture was on the nickel. They never received an allowance and she rarely had any money - she really wanted that nickel. But she believed him and gave him the nickel. He was older and always had money. (This response was to a question of funny stories but the nickel story, even today is a sore subject) She enjoys silly jokes and she enjoys some of the older TV sitcoms.

She wants to be remembered as a nice, honest, caring and generous person. She laughs easily and regarding what she would do tomorrow if she could do anything, she would spend the day playing with her deceased great granddaughter. She feels the world is worse today, morally speaking. People seem to be more isolated from one another. But, the world seems better from a technological and medical viewpoint. Regarding spirituality she cannot conceive of a life without a church to worship in, a Bible to read, or her God to believe in and her savior Jesus Christ to have faith in.

Regarding three things she would share with the youth of today: 1) Get a good education, 2) work hard and 3) trust God. She does not dwell on regret. She considers her life to be fairly satisfying. Regarding pinnacles of success, she received awards in high school for public speaking but didn't consider them very rewarding. For almost seven years, now, she has been a member of the Volunteer Guild at the Tulsa Regional Hospital working in the admissions and outpatient offices. This has been the most meaningful experience for her and the most fulfilling. She cannot understand how some politicians can put party loyalty above doing what they know to be the right thing to do. She also has a disgust for the inaccuracy of news reporting. Getting the story out first is more important than content. Many lives and reputations have been damaged due to lies in reporting.

She has always had excellent health. She had a hysterectomy and never suffered from hot flashes or menopause and was just happy that "fertile" part of her life was over. She still does most of her yard work and there is always much to do. She is currently painting the inside and some of the outside of her home. She walks a lot on her "job" as a volunteer and can even walk faster than

many of the young folk. She has had many mountain peaks and valleys in her life but has always remained content. She refuses to think of herself as "growing old." She would not want to go back and relive any specific age as she believes, "Why would I go back in time, because it may be that the best is yet to be."

There is no significant other in her life as her husband has been deceased since 1991. Sexuality did not play a great role in her marriage. She currently does not consider herself a sexual being and didn't think so 30 years ago. The aging process has had nothing to do with sexual intimacy, in her past experience and she doesn't have sexual intimacy now. Sex has never been important in her relationships.

She lost her daughter on July 10, 1998 from respiratory failure due to emphysema. She also lost her great granddaughter on February 04, 1999. The great granddaughter was asleep on a twin sized bed surrounded by pillows to keep her from rolling off. However, she rolled off the bed on the side nearest the wall and the bedding fell on top of her and suffocated her to death. Her first granddaughter died at child birth. The doctor didn't make it to the hospital in time and the cord got wrapped around her neck and she died. Her sister is the matriarch in the family. She has a living will, a living trust and signed power of attorney. What takes place at her funeral will be completely up to her daughter and granddaughters. She believes in an afterlife. She believes that when her physical body dies her soul lives on and will immediately go to Heaven or Hell. She is prepared, emotionally to die but doesn't dwell on it. The most difficult thing about growing older is a lack of transportation.

Section Three

Boots is bright and alert and deeply mourning the death of her great granddaughter. Her faith has not suffered but her loss is overwhelming. She said when she was young she had a vocal teacher who predicted great things for her. But, she never pursued a musical career because of lack of motivation and encouragement. This is a "wish I could do over" moment in her life. Another "if I had it to do over" would be going to school to become an elementary school teacher. She thrives on her grandchildren. And in one in particular. She kept one granddaughter while her daughter was climbing the corporate ladder. She said, "...this child excelled in school. She could read most of the newspaper even while she was in kindergarten. At less than 2 years old she knew her primary colors, could count to 10, knew numbers by looking at them, knew shapes, lots of animals and some songs." She clearly takes credit for the child's cognitive abilities and adds an aside, "Her parents also worked with her."

She was born cross eyed and didn't start wearing glasses until she was probably in the third grade. So she had very little vision in one eye. But, she sewed practically all of her daughter's clothes, her own and many of her grandchildren's clothes. She has made draperies, slipcovers and even upholstered furniture. She reads a lot.

She volunteered at another hospital years ago. And she has volunteered at the Little Light House (a ministry for handicapped children). She worked one-on-one with a little blind girl. She also volunteered at the elementary school close to her home with special education children. She volunteered at church for many years at the media center and was in charge of the tape library.

She considers herself to be very blessed. She also has a much broader sense of humor than is evidenced in this report. She just needs to have an audience larger than one. In fact when I first spoke to her about this interview and told her when it was due the first thing out of her mouth was, "Well, aren't you a procrastinator." One question asked was how she thinks other's see her and her reply was, "I think this is a question I cannot logically answer." The aging process is not something for her to share, it is something to be lived. She just does it.

She has great admiration for Billy and Franklin Graham. She enjoys their teachings and preaching. But, she would most like to meet Marva Collins. Ms. Collins founded the Westside Preparatory School in 1975. Boots is in awe of Ms. Collins due to the fact that she has had many opportunities to forego the school for fame and fortune and continually turns them down to stay true to her passion of teaching children. Boots, I believe would love to share a similar life experience in the education profession. A teacher in junior and senior high school had the most influence on her. She said that this teacher lived a block away and took in Boots and her siblings as if they were her own. They had weenie roasts, made popcorn balls and candy and had taffy pulls. She even traveled out of state with this teacher. Something a teacher today could never do because of the liability.

When asked about her nickname "Boots," she said her dad gave it to her but she wasn't sure why...she has never owned a pair of boots until recently and bought a pair of "moon boots." She was the second youngest sibling and her dad called her Boots to tease her older brother and younger brother but she wasn't sure how it worked. But it just stuck over the years.

Talking about the role of women she is amazed at how "older women" dress today. She catches herself staring but figures they must be freer and more

comfortable than in the past. But, she dresses dignified and ladylike. When she was younger she considered herself thrifty and rarely went out to eat. In fact she HATES to go out to eat today. Women today eat out much too much. They seem to be more involved in lots of things and not as efficient in them. When she was young, women took care of the husband and the children, period. In addition, "I think many of the women are a little too militant today. I don't think abortion was as big an issue then as it is now. Also, then men and women didn't live together as openly as they do now without first being legally married." Today even grandparents aren't around for their grandchildren. Buying RV's and driving all over the place. NOT HER. She is a devoted and active grandparent and takes pride in her commitment.

She can name drop. She can remember names from **50** years ago or from yesterday, easily. She strikes me as more a peer of my mother than someone in her eighties. She rarely hesitates when asked a question and could summon immediate recall. When asked something that didn't set well with her...she suggested to immediately move on. I'm not sure of the relationship she had with her husband as she didn't mention him much, didn't seem to need to or want to. Her focus was always grandchildren, grandchildren, grandchildren. Everything else seemed to come a distant second.