

EDEN-WEBSTER LIBRARIES



Interview
With An
Older
Adult

[REDACTED]

*Very good
statement of purpose
& introduction.*

The purpose of these interviews with Mrs. B. was three-fold.

(1) I was motivated to become better acquainted with my neighbor, Mrs. B., and (2) to determine if, through our interviews, I could see if she fit any statistical patterns that corresponded with information presented in class (such things as life style, geographic distribution, education, health and health care) and (3) to try and determine how society and the time when she was born and grew up influenced her and her development and attitudes. Many of my questions were prefaced with "What do you think about" or "How do you feel about" to accomplish this end. I enjoyed our contact and felt that I achieved my purposes. I was also pleased that Mrs. B. felt positively about our encounters: on our last visit she remarked that she had enjoyed getting to know me better.

At the beginning of our initial interview I asked permission to tape record our conversations. Mrs. B. did not have any objections. Mrs. B. did request that she remain anonymous. I assured her that her identity would not be revealed and she seemed more relaxed and willing to talk.

Our first interview conversation began as follows:

Please tell me if any of these questions seem too personal to discuss or make you uncomfortable in any way. We don't have to talk about every question I ask.

How old are you now?

"I am 70. I was born in 1922 on December 7th."

Where were you born?

"Herbardsville, Ky."

Where was your mother born?

"Henderson County, Kentucky, Cash Creek neighborhood."

Where was your father born?

"The same as mother."

Where did your mother grow up? Was it in the city or the country?

"The country. She didn't have a telephone."

Where did your father grow up? Urban or rural?

"Rural."

Do you have anything that once belonged to your mother? What is it and how did you obtain it? Mrs. B showed me a butter dish with a mold that had been made by her maternal great-grandfather and an ironstone pitcher that she used to drink buttermilk from as a child. When I asked if the milk was warm or cool she replied it was kept cool in the ice box. The ice man sold them ice to keep things cool.

Can you describe your mother and father physically? *(good open ended question)*
"They were both small people. My father was small and short with a Scotch-Irish background. My father was 5 years older than my mother. My parents eloped when mother was 16. They eloped from a church picnic - they had planned their elopement for over a year. Their parents thought mother was too young to get married. They married in 1898."

At what age did your parents pass away?
"They were both 89 when they died."

Do you have any siblings? Are they still living?
"I was the youngest of seven. My oldest brother is still living, he is 92. He lives in Kentucky. A sister died when she was 28. The car she was in went out of control on a gravel road and landed in the creek and she drowned." *(she chose not to comment on the other, huh?)*

What is your earliest memory?
"Mostly a life of hard work on the farm. I gathered eggs, helped plant tobacco. Everything was hard then, we didn't have any labor saving devices, everybody had to cooperate just to survive." On my next visit she recalled the following story "We had a player piano, the only one in the whole county. The schools then were one room schools and they had programs in the winter. They all borrowed our piano. I can still see them hauling it up on some wagon and then it would go from school to school."

Did you have lots of neighborhood friends where you grew up?
"Oh sure. Our family all lived along the road, aunts and uncles. Mother was a good cook so lots of people came to our house, especially after church, to eat with us."

Were you born at home or at a hospital?
"I was born at home."

Did you hear any interesting stories about your birth?
"No. When you are the seventh in the family, your arrival is not exactly an earth-shaking event. Later on in life I used to get teased because my birthday was December 7th, Pearl Harbor Day."

Did you like being a child?

"Yes. I enjoyed school. Of course back then it was only seven months, it let out in March."

Were you a healthy child?

"Yes"

Did you, your siblings or family have any pets while you were growing up?

"We had lots of cats and things on the farm. We also had a Pekingese that stayed in the house with us. Pudge. An Aunt that lived in Detroit had it but it barked too much so they gave it to us. Pudge lived with us about 15 or 20 years."

What was your highest level of education?

"1 year of college to get business type courses. We couldn't get typing classes in high school then."

Did you have any teachers that you can still remember? Why do you remember them? Can you tell me about it?

"My first grade teacher, Miss Crawford, she was so pretty and Miss Betty [REDACTED], she was a spinster lady. She wore her hair in a knot on top of her head. Even my older brother had Miss Betty. Miss Betty was a third and fourth grade teacher."

What was the latest fashion craze or style when you were a teenager? Did you participate in that fashion?

"Pleated skirts were quite the thing when I graduated in 1940. Of course those were hard years, just coming out of the Depression. People were just glad to have clothes back then. We didn't worry about fashion or style."

Is your current marriage your only marriage?

"yes"

Can you tell me about the first time you met your husband and how old you were?

"We met in 1941. I worked at Woolworth Store and on Friday & Saturday he and his friends came in with their girlfriends. That's how we met. We married in 1945."

Can you tell me about your first date?

"It was like a typical date for most kids at that time, a school function or a movie. We double dated a lot."

Did you date a lot?

"Well, I guess I did. As much as anyone."

Can you tell me about your wedding? Where were you married, in a home, a church, outside? Was it a large wedding or small?
"I married in '45. We married in the First Baptist church in Henderson. It was a small wedding, family & a few friends."

What did your dress look like? Was it long or short?
"I wore a suit not a dress. It was not hand made."

Did you have a honeymoon? Where did you go?
"We took 3 days and went 'round and about Henderson and to Tennessee."

Where did you live after you were married?
"We forgot to think about that before we got married so we stayed with his family on their farm. We finally had a little house."

Good open-ended question
How do you feel the moral standards of today are compared to when you were a teen? Do you feel the change, if you think there has been one, is good or bad?

"It's more liberal now. Things went on back then, on a smaller scale, but it's more accepted now. Then it was really, really bad for a girl to get pregnant out of wedlock, it could ruin her for life, but now she can find a way to get by. In my day ear piercing was really bad. When my daughter got her ears pierced when she was 16 I was really nervous about my mothers' reaction. I finally told her, and she saw them and said they looked nice. I said "Mother, Heaven help me if that would have been me!" but Mother said "times change and so should we" I always remembered that. I thought that was good of her. I do think things have gone too far today. It's harder for young people to learn to control their feelings, there is a lot more temptation today."

Did you have a job either before or during your marriage? If so, what did you do?
"I worked at the Woolworth store then for a while at the courthouse."

How many pregnancies did you have?
"Two. The first ended in a miscarriage."

How did you feel when you were pregnant?
"I looked forward to it. I had a good doctor. There was no OB-GYN in Henderson, everybody went to a family doctor. I went to the hospital at 8:00 PM on a Saturday night. My doctor stayed in the room 'till the baby was born. Also with me was an Aunt. She never married and said it was her "bound duty" to go through labor with each of the girls so she always went to the hospital with each of us. Of course Frank was not in the room."

Do you think you were a good parent?
"I tried to be. I think I didn't do too bad of a job."

Do you think it was harder being a parent when your children were young versus now?

" Oh, it's much harder now. Kids are under so much pressure to be part of all that's out there and the parents are all stressed out."

Did you ever get frustrated because you felt there wasn't enough money to give your child everything she wanted, or that you felt she should have?

"Yes. She was never a demanding child. I worried about her needs more than wants. We never did vacations. I felt bad when others talked about vacations and we never did them."

Do you feel you were a strict parent?

"No."

What about your husband?

(laughs) "No."

Do you think you need to be more strict with either boys or girls or do they require the same amount of supervision?

" I'm not sure since I didn't have boys. Some people smarter than me say, and I think they are right, that mothers tend to be less strict with boys and fathers are less strict with girls."

END OF FIRST VISIT

How many grandchildren do you have? What are their names and ages?

"Scott, he will be fourteen in ~~14~~ in August and Alyssa she will be eleven in October"

Do you see anything of yourself in either of your grandchildren? Can you tell me about that?

" I'm not sure about that. Alyssa looks like my side of the family. Scott is really good with his hands. I think he gets that from Frank."

What do you think of the food kids eat today?

" I ate whatever my mother fixed me. So did Louise. The grand-kids are picky eaters."

How about the TV and movies they see? Do you like them?

" I wonder if those kind of things contributed to the problems kids have today. There is so much violence. I don't think they should show it in prime time. Cartoons are equally violent."

Speaking of TV - I would like to talk about some recent inventions that have affected all of us.

When was the first time you viewed TV?

"That would have been a display at the store."

When was the first time you owned a television?

" I had hyperthyroidism when Louise was 2. My doctor said get a TV and sit down and relax. I remember it was a great & tremendous purchase. Not every place carried them. There were lots of bad programs on, lots of local and amateur things. My nephew came over on Saturday morning & spent the day. He wanted to watch " Miss Francis"."

Do you have cable now?

"yes"

Do you enjoy watching TV?

" Not too much. I watch the news in the morning. I don't watch during the day. Frank likes to watch Jeopardy in the afternoon, then the news. I like channel 9 and the old movies on AMC. I think TV is kind of boring."

What can you tell me about telephones? Do you like the telephone or see it as an invasion of your privacy?

" I consider the telephone like my refrigerator, it's a necessary thing to have. It keeps me in touch with my family."

Do you think kids or teenagers should have their own phones?

"My grand-kids have an extension in their own rooms. Not their own lines, just the phones. You never know when you call there who might pick up the phone. I think they are entitled to their privacy and should have them."

How about transportation? Have you ever ridden in a plane? On a train? Traveled by boat?

" I've never been on a plane or a boat or a train. We had too many obligations to travel, family to take care of."

Do you drive a car ?

" No. I have a depth perception problem so I could never drive. I once walked into a post at church, I just couldn't tell how far away I was. I don't think too many people would want me on the road driving."

What was the first car you owned in your married life?

"That would have been Frank's car. A late model Plymouth, I guess."

Do politics concern you and do you regularly vote?
" Yes. I'm interested in politics. I try to follow what happens. I always try to vote."

Do you remember the first time you voted?
" It was probably a presidential election. I don't really remember."

Do you think the threat of communism is over? Do you think communism is or was a real danger or were people paranoid?
" I have an idea it could all come back. It was necessary for the government to end it, but it backfired, the economy and all. I talked to a lady friend who went to Yugoslavia and she said it was just being destroyed. It's such a shame."

Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?
" I was at the old school in Murray, it was my birthday, December 7th and we were aggravating the lady who ran the cafeteria because we wouldn't leave. One girl was married to a boy who was at Pearl Harbor and she was so worried. Young men just saw their dreams go down the drain when the war broke out."

Was anyone in your family in the war?
" Frank and my brothers-in-law and cousins and people I knew. Lots of people just didn't come back. We got to know lots of soldiers and their families because the troop trains came through Henderson and stopped there."

Were you involved in the war effort and if so in what way?
" I worked for a wholesale food chain that sold to Breckenridge Base. I have very, very fond memories of hours at the OPA (Office of Price Administration) and figuring rationing stamps at Lambers Stores, they had to balance, you know. I worked for the draft board a little. During the war you figured your income tax and then added 3% surtax."

What do you think of the way the Japanese-American people were treated during the war? Have your opinions changed from what they were during the war?
" Looking back it was a mistake but at that time you only had radio and newspaper so people were quite upset about them. Everyone was scared. In the long-run, it may have been safer for them where they were sent, then if we left them alone."

What did you think when the Atomic Bomb was used? What do you remember about that day?

"Everybody didn't want to see any one else killed but it was necessary. The majority of the people didn't know such a weapon existed, they were surprised. I had an uncle that used to be gone for weeks at a time and said he didn't know what he was working on, nobody there did. He worked for the government. We just thought he got drunk and couldn't remember, but after the bomb we figured he really didn't know."

Did the Korean war have an impact on your family?

"My nieces' husband was in the Korean War. The boy I toted around in my kitchen, a neighborhood boy, came back a paraplegic. He got to see President Johnson when the president visited a hospital in Washington."

What about the Vietnam war? How did you feel about war resisters?

"No one in our family was in the war in Vietnam. If Louise would have been a boy she would have gone. I never understood that war. I was not sympathetic with the resisters but I would have had to have added my voice to bring about an end to the war if I had a son there."

END OF SECOND VISIT

At the beginning of the third visit, Mrs. B. wanted to be sure I understood that she supported the draft. She would not have opposed the draft, just the war. I assured her I would not misrepresent her feelings.

Tell me about your feelings when Kennedy was assassinated?

"I liked Kennedy. I'm not sure if history would have proved him a great president, but it was sad he died."

How about when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated?

"I suppose what he was doing had to be done as far as civil rights."

How do you about different minority races? Do you think the blacks are generally well off or do they have problems you and I don't have?

"Well, I guess they have problems. I can't see how we today are to blame for their ancestors problems. There was a black farm family about a half a mile down the road from us when I grew up and another a few miles farther down. They had just as much as we had. Maybe in the cities it was different. Young men hired out as farm help in the summer. Black and White helped out with the crops. We always had good relationships with them. When my parents were old, in their 80's and still on the farm, they would bring baskets of fruit at Christmas."

How would you feel if one of your grandchildren married a black man or woman?

" Probably it would bother me. I would prefer if it didn't but yes, it would bother me. The couple involved should think about it and consider all that is involved, but I would never disown them."

We have talked about where you were and what you were doing when certain events took place. Do you remember what you were doing when you heard about the moon landing?

" No, I really don't. I remember the Challenger crash, I was in Dr. Barron's office and a little girl had the radio on. The space ship crashed and we listened. The nurse went and got the doctor and we all listened together."

How do you feel about the space program? Do you think it is good and important, or a waste of money?

" I guess a lot of good came out of it. I wonder each time if its necessary though, especially when you think about how much it costs."

Would you like to travel in space? Would you be overly concerned if one of your grandchildren became an astronaut or would you be pleased?

Mrs. B. laughed. " I'm still in the horse & buggy age to my grand-kids but they could go if they wanted." Laughs again. "I remember my boss at the store. I guess I was working when the moon landing happened because I remember he talked about going to the moon! He even sent his name and address to the space people because he wanted to go. And he was no spring chicken, he was already getting up in years but he was so excited to go. Of course, he didn't."

What do you think about environmental issues like pollution and the rain forests? Do you think we should be concerned or are people over-reacting?

" Everybody gets up in the air and whether they even understand it, who knows. We have been a little bit careless through the years but I do think some times too much is made of it. The rainforests could come back and grow. Maybe the ozone layer already had a hole."

Could we talk about religion?

This was received with much enthusiasm, a loud yes and a big smile.

Do you read the Bible often?

" Yes."

Do you have a favorite passage? If so could you share it with me and tell me why it means something to you?

Mrs. B. got up & got her Bible.

"My favorite is Psalm 103, I like all of it but especially verses 15 through 18. May I read it to you?"

I responded yes, please and she read. When I asked why she liked it she replied

"It reminds me of how insignificant people are 'like blades of grass' I like Psalm 119, too. I like all the Psalms."

Do you pray?

"Yes."

Who taught you to pray?

"My family, mother."

Very interesting

Can you describe a typical Sunday in your home when you were a child?

"I grew up in the Baptist Church. It was a country church and we shared a pastor with the neighboring town. Neither community was big enough for a pastor by themselves. My mother was a real good cook. After church she would cook for our family and the pastor and neighbors. She would cook for pastors she would never see again. There were finer, nicer homes than ours, but the pastors always came to our house to stay. She always left a light burning in the front window at night. One night it was dark and storming. The pastor was going from the neighboring town to our town. It was eleven at night but he saw the light and stopped and spent the night at our house and mother gave him breakfast in the morning before church. When my mother died, my nephew flew in from Lewisville, Kentucky for the funeral. His seat passenger started a conversation about where he was going. My nephew explained about the funeral and where his grandmother had lived. The man he was talking to used to be a traveling salesman and used to drive by my mothers' house all the time. He didn't know her, but he said he always felt better when he saw her light in the window because he knew he was almost home. He sent flowers to my mothers' funeral. I thought that was awful nice."

Have you ever changed denominations in the observance of your faith?

"No."

Do you believe in miracles? Do you think you have ever witnessed or experienced a miracle? Can you tell me about it?

"I think some peoples lives are miracles, the way they live." I think judging from the previous conversation she was probably referring to her mother.

How do you feel about the recent tele-evangelists that have been publicly exposed for immoral or illegal acts? Do you think that has changed anyone's attitudes about religion? Has it changed yours?

"It's just too bad, so many people just sent money to them and were taken in. If I had done that my faith would have been shattered. Still, there are some of them that still stand by them. It didn't change me, though."

How is your health?

"OK. I had endometrial cancer in the '70's. I fell in the yard in '88 and fractured my arm and back so I have to watch where I walk."

Do you, or have you ever smoked?

"No."

Are you concerned (as in worried) about your health?

"No, I don't think about it."

Are you healthier or less healthy than you thought you would be at this age?

"I always hoped I would live a healthy live. My mother-in-law will be 99 in 3 months. She always said she would die soon and she outlived everybody."

Do you like being the age you are right now? Why or why not?

"It doesn't bother me. I've had a good, happy life, a good family."

What do you think was, is or will be the best age to be?

"When you are that age you think it's the best. I guess I think the best is when the children are grown and on their own. You still worry but you know what you do now won't make a difference."

Is your life-style now what you had hoped or thought it would be when you were 30? How about when you were 50?

"Probably so. I never was a social butterfly. I like to read or work on my doll house. My grand-kids got me a doll house and they buy a piece of furniture for it for Christmas or birthdays. I can't bend over like I used to because of my back so it's harder to work on it now. Everybody would like to have more money."

What do you worry about?

"I don't know. I'm accused of worrying about everything. I'm concerned about my sisters, and my brother-in-law has so many medical problems, and my brother who is 92."

If medical science was able to develop a method to allow you to live another 50 or 80 years, would you want to do that?
" No! The world is for the young. When I've lived my three score and ten what ever is left is a gift from God then it's over and that's enough."

Thinking about all the changes you have seen in your life, what would you say is the biggest change you have experienced? Is it good or bad?

" Probably for me, the biggest change was moving to Missouri. I would have been just as happy to live in Kentucky all my life, but my husband had to go where the job was. I missed a lot, helping mother and my sisters. From another angle, we were financially better off. We could send Louise to college and save for our retirement. That was for me. I guess the biggest change for most people was World War II. That was a great upheaval for this country. The whole society changed, women went to work, it could never be the same again."

After thanking Mrs. B for her time and honesty in answering my questions and turning off my tape recorder, she continued to talk for another fifteen minutes, asking me questions. I enjoyed my time with her and felt it was well spent.

END OF THIRD VISIT

I was impressed with the fact that Mrs. B.'s family seemed to exceed the norms for life expectancy. Both of her parents died at age 89 and she has a brother who is 92 and still living. Her mother was born in 1882 and died in 1971. Her father was born in 1877 and died in 1966. Based on this information, I thought it might be interesting to determine Mrs. B.'s life expectancy. According to the results of the life expectancy calculations in Box 2.2 on pages 36 and 37 of our Harris text, Mrs. B. can look forward to living to 94 years of age.

Life Expectancy Calculation for Mrs. B.

Start with number	72
If female, add 4	<u>4</u>
	76
If a grandparent lived to 85, add 2	<u>2</u>
	78
If you finished college add 1	<u>1</u>
	79
If you live with a spouse, add 5	<u>5</u>
	84
Are you easygoing and relaxed? Add 3	<u>3</u>
	87
Are you happy? add 1	<u>1</u>
	88
If you are a woman and see a gynecologist once a year, add 2	<u>2</u>
	90
If you are between 50 and 70, add 4	<u>4</u>
	94