

William H. and Willetta R. Beckner

I met with Bill Beckner in January to learn more about his parents and family. It was a lot of fun hearing about his memories of the 1950's and 1960's.

Prior to moving to the Arlington area, William H. and Willetta lived in Morristown. William drove a milk truck and hauled milk from the farmer to the creamery. One day, Bill, at a very young age, decided he wanted to go with his dad so he went to where he thought his dad would be and was planning to hop in the truck with him. Fortunately, his mother found him missing and went after him. She was able to locate him before he could meet up with his dad. Luckily he did not get hit by a car when he was on his way to see his dad.

Hauling milk was not an easy job. Prior to when the farmers installed milking machines and large tanks for the milk, they would milk the cows by hand and pour the milk into eight or ten gallon cans. In warm weather, they would place the cans in cold water to keep the milk as cool as possible. William would drive his truck to the farmer's location and take the empty cans from the truck and leave them for the farmer to use the next day. He would then pick up the full cans and load them on the truck. The bed of the truck was at least three feet from the ground. He would carry two ten gallon cans of milk to his truck and load them into the truck. After he had picked up the milk from all of the farmers on his route, he would drive back to Morristown. He would then take the milk to either Comptons Dairy in Shelbyville if it was Grade B or to Bordens Creamery in Indianapolis if it was Grade A. This job was seven days a week all year long.

I can remember riding with my uncle who lived south of New Palestine when I was about 7 or 8. He would take me on his route with him and upon the arrival at Bordens, he would get me a bottle of chocolate milk. He was about 5'5" and weighed about 135 pounds. I still do not see how he could load those heavy cans of milk.

William and Willetta moved to a farm located near Arlington and Bill changed schools. William got a job in Indianapolis and also farmed. Bill said most of the farm chores were delegated to him and his brothers. Willetta was responsible for taking care of the home and family. She would fix all of the meals for the family. During this time period, almost everything was made from scratch. When you wanted fried chicken for supper, you had to go grab a chicken from the chicken house, chop off its head, clean it, cut it into pieces and fry it. Then you would get the vegetables from the garden or from the pantry where you had the cans of green beans, tomatoes, etc. that you had canned last fall, make ice tea or lemonade to drink, set the table, do the dishes by hand, along with a whole lot of other things that needed to be done to provide a good meal for the family. Breakfast usually consisted of eggs you collected from the hen house, toast from bread you purchased from the bread man, milk that you either got from the milk house or from the milk man and any other food that she wanted to serve. Many times, she would fix lunches for William and for her children. In addition to preparing the meals, she would go to the grocery store and purchase the items she needed for the coming week. Monday was usually wash day and she would wash the clothes in the wash machine and run

them through the winger. Then she would usually take them outside and hang them on the clothes line to dry. If the weather was too bad, she would hang them inside to dry. Tuesday was usually ironing day. She would iron most of the clothes so her family would look good for school. Friday evening or Saturday evening usually was when she and the family would go to Rushville or Shelbyville to shop for items they needed or go see a movie. Bill told me they would go to a movie shown outside in Morrystown on Saturday evenings during the summer. Sundays were a day of rest and to attend church services and visit with friends and relatives even though she still had meals to prepare. She would use the telephone service to keep in touch with her friends and family during the week.

This period of time was a great time to live. The people in the community knew each other and worked together to make life easier and more enjoyable. People were able to find jobs and receive wages to help pay for the necessities. Very few people were wealthy in the community. But very few people felt like they were poor.

William and Willetta enjoyed living in the Arlington area. Like many of their friends and neighbors, their main focus was having a family and taking care of them. They worked very hard to provide for their family and were able to purchase a farm. They will always be remembered by their family and friends. One of their sons, Bill, and his wife, Carole continue to be a very important part of the community.

Information was provided by Bill and Carole Beckner.
The story was written by Larry Martin.