

Clara Isabell (Schoening) Herzog

As she stepped into the plane, she realized this had been a big step for her to make the decision, but the desire to see a new great grand child and her children made the decision decisive. For she had always said, "no plane trip for me, I want to keep one foot on the ground." But time and circumstances alter all cases, and here she was aboard the big jet at O'Hare Field bound for Seattle, 80 years old and this was her first plane trip.

The flight from Paducah to O'Hare had been by prop, but when she landed at O'Hare she felt that she was in a different world and the big Air Lines took over. A wheel chair was provided for her to get from plane to terminal and again to the plane.

She settled back into the seat as the big bird ascended, and with the drone and the hum of the big engines she finally relaxed and as she closed her eyes, she thought, this is a far cry from the day when as a five year old child she attended a funeral of a relative with a friend and rode in an Ox-cart.

About 75 years of progress had elapsed since then, she had accepted it in her stride and fully enjoyed the radio, TV and now her great pleasure was being able to dial direct and talk to her scattered family from coast to coast.

As the plane zoomed through the air, with fascination she watched the changing landscape, from planes to mountains, the miniture towns and rivers which looked like tiny streams.

Watching the winding river below, again she thought of her life as a young girl. She was the fourth child born to Emilyne (Cooper) Schoening and Peter Andrew Schoening on October 3, 1886. She was born in a log cabin, located in Big Sandy, Tenn. (Benton County) She never talked too much about her early childhood, know that they worked hard, never too much money with such a large family. I can remember her saying when they went to church and school they would carry their shoes until they were almost there then put them on, to keep them from wearing out, they were lucky to get one pair a year.

Also she talked about once when Grand-ma found a couple of boys playing chicken, one had the ax raised ready to come down on the other's neck, don't remember which boys.

Also going to church was their main social life, and one Sunday they would go to a Baptist Church and the next the Methodist Church, this was due to preachers being circuit riders.

When she was 17 years old in 1903, her family moved from Big Sandy by flat boat to Paducah, Kentucky.

They had a nice looking house, when I first went back to Ky. after the Belt Line had been completed, you could see the house from the highway, up until that time it was pretty well hidden by trees. At the time they lived there, one had to cross a hollow and the only way was to walk or horse back, I suppose a wagon could get through, but I know Mom rode horse back while she lived at home.

At that time Paducah was still just a small town, unpaved streets, that became a quagmire when it rained, there were street cars and when they got off the boat they took the street car to their destination.

The main street to their place was Bridge Street, on this Street lived a family by the name of Herzog, they had property in the area when she had to ride to get home, it is possible it could have been on their property, but one way or the other the Herzog boy which was the oldestchild in that family and the Schoening girl met. He was quite handsome, black curly hair, fair skin and big brown eyes, and even in latter years he would tell her she was the prettiest girl he ever knew.

One October 9, 1904, he was 21 years and 9 months, she was just six days past her eighteenth birthday. They were married. A cousin of his Annie Caporal, her Brother, Uncle Will and the lady that made her Wedding dress, a Mrs. O'Brine were the attendants. Annie was Dad's Cousin and Uncle Will was Mom's Brother.

Dad was a butcher, he used a horse and wagon in his business and Mom had a horse and buggy to drive.

August 2, 1905 their first child was born, her name was Ruth, sad to say she lived only hours due to a tumor in her head. Nine children lived to adulthood, the business grew and prospered until the Depression of 1928 and later.

During this time Mom had her own car which was one of the first Model T's that came out. Also, each summer she was able to take a short vacation, either visiting relatives in St. Louis, Mo. or going to Big Sandy for there were still a lot of relatives there. One summer when we had been to St. Louis, coming back on the train, my Brother George threw Mom's purse out of the window, he said, "see I throwed", I can see Mom's face now, she almost panicked a man on the train saw what had happened and pulled the emergency cord right away, when the conductor came back to see what the trouble was, they backed the train back and some one got the purse. I guess they felt sorry for her with all those kids, must have been at least 3 probably 4.

When the Depression hit in 1928, we had moved to the country, Mom's car had given out and the only thing to drive was the trucks which were used in the business and depended on for that. One Sunday morning Mom was taking us to Sunday School, we were almost there, and in turning a corner she hit another car, little damage was done but she would never drive again.

When the move was first made to the country there was no electricity but we did have some Coleman lamps, had a pump in the house so had water in the house, but no indoor toilet or bath tub, but we managed to stay clean.

In January and February of 1937, 7/8th of Paducah was covered by flood waters, it had rained almost the solid month of January, then it froze. The Ohio and Tenn. rivers which flow together at the foot of Broadway was frozen solid, a person could walk across them and a number of people did. These rivers are a mile wide and big boats ply their trade up and down them, even now.

On 23rd of December 1937, Dad died of double Pneumonia, but the Dr. told Mom even if he had been able to get him over the Pneumonia, his heart would have killed him, for it was practically gone when he saw him. He was buried on Dec. 24th. in the Herzog Cemetery.

He was a good Father, worked hard, took care of his family, and loved to eat, before his death he weighed close to three hundred pounds, however, he was a big man about 6', 3".

At the time of his death there were still 5 children at home and in school; Bob was the youngest being nine at the time. Mom had a little income from the truck that Dad still had in the business, she also raised chickens and had eggs. She

had regular customers for these, she killed and dressed the chickens, and also washed the eggs, they were always nice and clean., then she would manage to get them to town, sometimes this entailed walking to the highway which was about a mile and a half walk and catch the bus.

She worked hard, always had a garden and she canned a lot of food, she also had a cow so she had milk and butter. She loved her flowers, and many people would come out from town to see them, and to get wild flowers, she was never too busy to go to the woods with them for she knew pretty well where the best ones grew. In return they would bring her cuttings from their flower gardens; she had a good collection that she would have never had otherwise.

Then came World War II, she had 5 sons and a Son-in-law in service. As a result of the war children had married and had settled in California, Nevada, Oregon and Wisconsin.

One of the earliest things I remember her saying, "If I die before I see the West, I won't die happy." It was always her dream to see the West, but little did she ever realize it would be a dream come true.

When the War was over Daughter Marguritte had settled in Nevada where she was working for the Navy Ammunition Plant, and Son Fred was living and working in California.

Ralph had been injured in the War losing both legs; when he was released from Percy Jones Hospital in Michigan he returned to Paducah to learn the use of artificial limbs, and put in an order for a special equipped Ford car which he received shortly and Ford gave him the special equipment which would enable him to drive. So now his plans to drive West had materialized. He was coming to enter college and of course this was Mom's chance to see the West. This was her first trip but not the last. One of the most memorable events was her first trip over the Million Dollar Highway with it's hairpin curves and continual ascent into the mountains.

From then on every three or four years she would come by bus. She would stop and visit with friends and relatives as she crossed the country, spending a day or two -on the bus and visiting two or three days, then resume her trip.

But, then came illness and arthritis which put a stop to her sitting for long periods at a time, and she thought her visiting days were over. By now she was 80 years old; Fred was working for Permanente in Seattle, Washington and Ralph was working for Government in Oregon, they decided that Mom should make another trip West. By now, Mom had not seen the Children in several years, Brother Bill was now living in California and there was a new Great Grand-Child she had not seen, so they started talking the trip up. In the meantime a young friend had flown from San Francisco to Paducah in one day and Mom thought it was great, so it really didn't take a lot of persuading for her to decide, then Fred made it real easy for her as she was met at each terminal where she had to change by an attendant and a chair, she really had a ball, and never stopped talking about it, but that was her last trip West, even though she lived almost 9 years after, she was never able to make another one.

There is no denying that more progress has been achieved during the last century than any period of history and the 89 years of her life Clara Bell Schoening has lived, and experienced a lot of this history in the making, her greatest pleasure was being able to talk to her children and grand-children scattered pretty well from coast to coast. Even I at that time still marveled with the ease the direct dialing took from one state to another and she accepted it and also did her own dialing. But her greatest experiences was in the transportation line. As she says from Ox cart to Jet.

She says, "I can truthfully say I've traveled from Ox cart to Jet during my life time and all the other means of transportation in between. Not many people living today can remember ever riding in an Ox cart and not many people her age have experienced the thrill of the jet plane.

From Ox cart to Jet was the remark made as she recounted her experiences of her trip from Chicago to Seattle by Jet. The experience was fantastic and thrilling to her who had always said, "I want to keep on foot on the ground."