This is Helen Garrett, Kinmundy Historical Society member and native of Kinmundy. I grew up in the country and moved into town where I still live today. Since I was a Robb and married a Garrett, I am related to many of the Kinmundy pioneer families.

First I'll tell you about my grandmother, Matilda Jane Vallow Spicer Maxwell. All the people called her Aunt Tillie, all the cousins and everybody in the whole neighborhood and the Vallow family, and the Williams family. She lost her first husband, Robert Spicer. He was a Baptist minister. I have a picture of him at home. He's leaning against his pulpit. His suit has one button buttoned, and it looks like it was a homemade job. However, for some reason, I never exactly knew why, he died and left Grandma Maxwell, I called her because she was later married to a Maxwell, with four young girls to raise. My mother was the youngest. My grandmother was in very dire circumstances financially. In those days, there was no aid to dependent children or pensions or anything for widows. She took in washings and this would be on the board. There would be a fire out in the yard where she heated the water and washed them. My mother, Georgia, and my Aunt Jenny would be the little ones who took the red wagon to the different homes in town that Grandma washed for, pick up the dirty clothes, bring them home, and then take the nice clean folded ones back whenever the laundry was done. Grandma had two other sisters and one of them especially took lessons and was a really good organist and piano player. My mother took her lessons and taught herself and she played for churches all over town before she was married. She said they called her for what they called then, protracted meetings instead of revivals. It was a pump organ and we had one in our house and lots of times when we had company, Mom would go in the parlor which of course was where the organ stayed to play.

When Mom was old enough, she worked in a hotel in Kinmundy. We did have hotels in Kinmundy. In fact, we had three or four. One would be where Junior and Peggy Harvey live. Peggy thinks she has some material on it. I think one would be next to Bowen's Apartments, that house on the corner. I think that is where my mother worked. In those days salesmen came to town on the train with their suitcases and their wares to show to all the stores. They would take the orders, and then they stayed at our hotels and ate at their dining room. That's where my mother worked waiting tables. She did that until she got married when she was 20. Dad talked her into marriage.

My parents were married in 1914. I was born September 12, 1928 on a farm four miles west of Kinmundy. As my mother's labor became more intense, my dad hitched up the horses and buggy, drove four miles into Kinmundy to summon Dr. Hugo Miller to our house. Then Dr. Miller hitched up his horses to the buggy and came the four miles out to our home. When I needed my birth certificate, for my first job and that was after I got out of high school, I went to the courthouse and found the one that should have been mine. It had no name on it except Baby Girl Robb, and I had to prove my name was really Helen Louise Robb. My parents had been married 10 years before my older brother Donald was born and he was five then when I arrived and none too happy to see me.

When Dad and Mom moved down to the house where I was born, it had been vacant a long time, and Mom had a bunch of chickens and the foxes were raiding her chickens. So finally Dad said, "I'm going to get some foxhounds and be a fox hunter. That's what happened. I was raised up with baby pups every year and we had this one dog named Libby who was supposed to be the best fox hunter in the country according to my dad. We had puppies every year and Dad sold them for a little money. Money was pretty scarce in those days. Every time Libby had a batch of puppies, I played with them and named them all and then the day came when someone came and bought them. Then Dad joined a foxhunters' association which was formed here in Kinmundy. The idea of foxhunting was you never caught anything. You just took the dogs out of a night and listened to them trail and by their voices you could tell which one was in front and Dad thought Libby always was. Then a movie came to Farina called "The Voice of Bugle Ann". My dad never took us to movies, but that was a foxhunting story about this dog named Bugle Ann. So the whole family got to go to Farina and see a movie about a foxhound. Later in years after we even moved to town the big fox hunt was out here toward Jim Williams's house in Charlton's Grove, we called it. Every year they had a big hunt, and the Mulvaney family came in from the east and played music and it got to be a big thing every year. My dad was so thrilled with foxhunting and even after old age they'd go, and like I say, they just listened to the dogs bark and run the fox. You never caught the fox. The fox was there for another day.

When my parents lived down where there were so many foxes, one day my dad was out in the front yard and this dog, who he recognized immediately, came towards him and he leaned down and the dog was frothing at the mouth. We had heard of rabies going around, but I don't think Dad had ever seen an animal with it. He realized the dog was leaping up toward his throat. It was just crazy. My dad took his two hands and he took that dog around the neck and he choked it to death. It belonged to a friend across the creek. I think his name was Mr. Gregory. Rabies was a pretty fatal disease in those days. There was no way to treat it around here and my dad had a real good friend who lived in Chicago, Illinois. His name was Ed Green, and he was a lawyer. He heard about it and he said, "You get on the first train and come to Chicago. We have doctors up here that know how to treat that." So he got over it and came home and resumed his life and raised more dogs.

On the farm, we had ten head of workhorses who were so gentle. I used to climb into the hay manger of the barn, put a bridle on one of them, lead it to a stump in the yard, climb on its back, and away we'd go. Their backs were so broad and my legs so short, I sometimes slid off, but they waited for me to take the reins, lead them back to the tree trunk, and away we went again. None of the roads were rocked in those days—not even the main roads. Although we had a car, it was parked in the garage through the winter when the roads were muddy. Each Saturday we took horses and wagon, two big cases of eggs, big can of cream to sell, and did our "trading", Mom called it. That meant buying our groceries for the coming week. We raised all of our meat, all of our vegetables Mom canned from our huge garden, had a milk cow for

butter and milk, chickens for our eggs and also to eat. So it was mostly flour, sugar, soap for the laundry, corn meal, matches, coal oil for our lamps that we bought in Kinmundy as we never had electricity even when the rural electric cooperative brought power to all our neighbors on the main road. My dad would have had to pay for a mile of poles, wire, and so forth where the main road came to ours, and that would have cost about $2000. I don't think my dad ever saw $2000 in cash all the time we farmed although we had a good living.

We burned wood in the heating stove, big chunks, and Mom cooked on a tall wood stove where the logs had been split in smaller size. That was my job when I got home from school evenings. I had a little red wagon. I put the big wood on the front porch neatly stacked for the big stove and the split ones in the kitchen in a box behind the kitchen stove for Mom to cook with. Also, we had laying hens for our eggs to use and also to sell—the two cases each week. As Mom said—trade, go to town and do her trading. Each egg we sold was perfect as the cracked ones we used ourselves. Sometimes, no matter how many wooden nests in a row were in the chicken house, the hens would fight over one certain one which resulted in the cracked ones.

One of my jobs I hated was churning butter. We had milk cows for our milk. The milk cow was a Jersey cow named Buttercup. Jerseys gave the richest milk you ever saw, which we strained, let the cream raise on crocks of milk in our cellar. We had no icebox. We would keep the cream from each day, and on Saturday take it to town to sell also. Mom would set me out under a nice shade tree to crank that churn. Round and round and round I went with the handle. It seemed forever. When I complained, my Mom, sunbonnet on, hoe in hand, on her way to hoe her huge garden, would comment, "I wish that's all I had to do was sit under a shade tree." Besides the garden, we also had a potato patch, a big one, as it was supposed to keep us in potatoes all winter. It had potato bugs, and it was also my job to pick them off by hand, put them in a jar. Keep in mind, there wasn't the insect control we have now. Mom did have a hand sprayer she also used on the garden.

We lived a mile off of the main road, and that's where our mailbox was. The daily paper with the funny page in it was something I looked forward to, especially the big colored one that came on Saturday. I loved Lil Abner, Popeye, Red Ryder the cowboy, and all. Sometimes I walked there barefooted on the dusty road, but sometimes I would bridle old Fletcher, the riding horse. Mom would say, "Now you don't whip and ride fast. Just let him walk." There was a nice hill just north of our house so Fletcher walked slowly up the hill. On the other side, outside of Mom's view, I switched him with my small limb I hid away and away we went. Coming back we did the same thing. As we came to that same hill, we were loping along and we came over the hill very slowly.

Whenever we saw my dad and my brother Donald coming in from the field with the horses and wagon for dinner, my job was going down through the barn lot to the hand pump, pump the horse trough full of water for the horses. Then when it was

good and cold, I brought a fresh cold bucket to the house. With Mom's cooking, of course, on the big wood cook stove, the drinking water in the bucket always felt warm. We had a cistern and our kitchen pump was hooked to the cistern, but it was used for laundry, dishwashing, washing vegetables, and such.

My brother and I walked four miles to Swift School, our one room school each day and four miles home. Parents never picked kids up like now, and four miles apart was the most the schools would build distance wise. The country roads were rocked at last and buses were able to go through rural areas to pick up students for high school in 1942. I still had to walk the mile to the main road, take my boots off, and hide them. During the war, World War Two, we were on daylight savings time, and I often walked mornings carrying a lantern. My brother Donald started to high school, but quit after six weeks. I, however, loved high school and our big three-story brick building was like a college campus for me.

I loved high school. As country kids, I had the idea the town kids would make fun of us, but that wasn't the way it was. I remember that there was so much going on. The first thing was we were going to have the fall parade and they were picking king and queen candidates for each class and guess who the freshman class picked. They picked Floyd and I. He says to this day that he can't believe that they picked us—the country kids. Anyhow, that was so much fun, but we didn't have formals or anything. We just had the sweaters and skirts that we wore to school. Carl Vallow was in our class and he was really smart.. His dad was the one who ran the Kinmundy Express. Of course the war was on and so we had a parade and each class was supposed to make a float. Ours was a big tank, and it said "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." I think we got 1st place on that too, and that was so much fun. To be in anything, I had to stay in at Grandma's house because nobody was going to bring me back and forth so I spent a lot of time with Grandma. Then later on, I got to be in the class play. There was a junior play and a class play and you had practice every night which was so much fun because all the boys and girls were hanging around over there. I still stayed with my grandma for that. She left the door unlocked for me.

After I got out of high school I worked here at Kinmundy at the telephone office. It was the kind you saw on television where you plugged in and said, "Number please". We had telephone directories, but half the people in town did not use them. They would just say, "Helen, ring Jesse George's. Helen, ring the bank." We learned to identify all the numbers in town. I was the last girl hired and so I got the third shift, eleven to seven. The calls were few and far between. At first they even had a bed in there for you to sleep in but not after I went. They said they were paid by the hour and you could stay awake. One night my light went on and I answered it and they said, "This is Effingham, Illinois. The St. Anthony's Hospital is on fire. The St. Anthony's Hospital was probably the premiere hospital in the area. All of a sudden they said, "We need you to send all the fire trucks, ambulances, anything in the area that can help out up to Effingham." All of a sudden I realized that my Grandma Maxwell had gone up there. She had a problem with her kidneys, and I think she

was about 86 years old. Mom thought that she should go up there and get checked out. Doctor Buckmaster was one of the premiere doctors in the area and he was going to treat her. All of a sudden I realized my grandma was in that burning building. I called one of my friends to come down and take over my job at the telephone office. My mother and dad lived here in town then. I had to walk down there and tell my mother that Grandma was in the fire. We were sure she had perished. I remember she fainted, and I had to pick her up. That was a terrible thing because the bodies were so burned up that they were hard to identify. They finally identified my grandma by some broken bones that she had in her feet and ankles. Of course, the body was just burned up to pieces. I can remember her funeral which was at the Church of God. It was summer time. They had all the windows open because I can remember the stench from that casket with her body in it. My mother like to never have recovered from that because it was her idea for Grandma to go, but that's the way things happen.

Actually Floyd was probably my first boyfriend because freshman year we had a wiener roast out to the C&EI Lake, and teachers and all of us were out there. I remember he and I held hands all the way out there and back so that was the first start. Through high school, we dated once in a while, but then we'd split up and date with somebody else until we got out of high school. Then we started pretty serious dating each other.

There were hardly any jobs then. It was a bad time. He went to Clay City and worked in the oil field. Then there were five of them here in town who decided they would join the army together. They promised to keep them together so they would never be separated. They sent them to Fort Devons, Massachusetts, and they split all five of them up. Floyd, of course, got the infantry. One of the boys got in the Medics and so forth. Then Floyd went to a training course. We had never heard of Korea. No one had heard of that in my school days or anything. He had joined the Army for two years. When those two years were up, and I was looking for him home, and by the way, he had come home on a Christmas and gave me a diamond. We were engaged. He was added a year to and he was put on the first boat to Korea. He was over there for two years, maybe, and he was wounded twice. He was wounded the first time in the leg. I think a big shell blew up, and he said his buddies never expected him back, but here he came back. Then the next time he was wounded in the chest which could have been terrible. First he was on a hospital ship and then they sent him to a hospital in Japan, and I got a letter from him, and he said, "I've got what they call a million dollar wound. It isn't bad enough to cripple me, but I get to come home."

When he came home that fall, it wasn't long until we got married. He didn't have a job. I still had mine at the telephone office. I had three days off, and we took off. We went to Mt. Vernon and were married at the courthouse, and then we took off for a two-day honeymoon trip to Tennessee and Kentucky. I remember Floyd saying we would cut a lot off our trip by going on the ferry at Shawneetown. We go down this clay hill that's straight down. Here's this little bitty thing with 2 by 4's across it, and

we drive on it and there's two or three other cars on there and clear up the steep hill. That's the thing I'll never forget about my honeymoon trip.

At first we lived here in town. Floyd got a job at Salem, and I still worked at the telephone office. We rented a little house here in town—nice new little house Doc Hanna had built--$35 a month. At that time, we were making it fine in here. Floyd has always been a quail hunter and wanted a bird dog. Down the road was his sister Norma Shreffler and her husband and they had a really good bird dog who was having puppies. Her name was Queen. The little boy called me one morning and said, "Aunt Helen, Queen's got puppies." I said, "Oh, really. Could Uncle Floyd have one?" He said, "Aunt Helen, she only had nine." Eventually we got one, and we kept her in this little house. Of course we both worked. Guess what we named her. We named that dog Puddles. She was like our first child. When we did eventually move to the farm, Floyd's folks came in and decided the other boys were all established and they wanted Floyd to take over the family farm with the house and barn and pasture and the farming ground around it. I had sworn I would never live on another farm because I lived on that one without any running water, no electricity, but this one had a bathroom and electricity. It was really a nice place to live, and that's where our three boys were born. By that time, Puddles could go with us, and she slept on the porch.

We were on the farm, and we had sort of bad luck, I guess. We had two baby boys and two years of crop failures. The crops looked beautiful and then it just didn't rain. Floyd made a path around the house looking for clouds, and we were all praying for rain. It didn't happen. So Floyd had to find a job someplace to get us through the winters. At that time there seemed to be no jobs around Salem. Of course, there was none in Kinmundy. He went everywhere, and they weren't hiring. We knew Lloyd Bailey and Thelma who owned a home here in town. Their boys went to school with us. They had oil rigs, and so Floyd asked them if they needed somebody to work at an oil rig. He said, "I'll do anything." So they hired him. He came home, and he said, "Well, Helen, I have a job. It'll be midnights til morning in the oil field at Salem." He said, "Would you be afraid to stay here by yourself with two boys?" I said, "It's either that or starve to death. I think I can do it." I had Puddles on the front porch. She wouldn't hurt anybody, but she would bark and let me know if anything was wrong. That's when I lived in such a nice neighborhood. It was almost all Garretts. Mac and Jo lived down the road. Bill and Eileen lived right up the road from me and Jack and Dot. It was just Garrettville. I so enjoyed the years there.

We stayed there for about 12 years or so and then Mr. Raymond Atkins, the postmaster here in town died suddenly. He was married to Pola and had the little boy. That office came up to choose a new postmaster. In those days, it was political. We were Democrats and all the Robbs and all the Doolens and all the Garretts were Democrats. So Floyd put in for it. There were probably six or eight here in town that put in for it, but Floyd's army career helped. He got so many points for being in the army, and then he did a real good score on his test, too. So he got it. At that

time, even though we owned a farm, eight miles west of Kinmundy, they said, "You cannot be postmaster unless you live in the city limits of Kinmundy because you will be on call all the time." That's the truth. He sold duck stamps at two o'clock in the morning to hunters. The idea was you did everything to please the people in those days. After Floyd got the job in the post office, sometimes the trains had a mail bag . All the mail came in by trains then—not by trucks. There was a hook that was supposed to catch the mail bag. Sometimes it didn't catch. The trains didn't stop. They just let it go. One time Floyd came home and he was all worried. The train had run over the mail bag. So all of us had to go up and down the track picking up piece by piece the letters—especially the first class stuff trying to get it in some kind of order to take it back to the post office. Rex, Reed, and even little Ray were picking up mail. Now that didn't happen very often—very seldom.

Grandpa and Grandma Garrett came up with the idea that we should move in their little four room house with my two junior high boys and little Ray and they would move back out to our farmhouse. That's what we did. We were so crowded there. Every time the big boys would go to school, little Ray and I would go look at houses to buy. We probably lived there two or three years, and then the big Pruett house became available. We had had a doctor, Dr. Stallings and his wife was the first doctor we had here in Kinmundy after our doctors had all died. They came to Kinmundy and bought the big Pruett house. They didn't like Kinmundy. They only stayed about two years, and they put the house up for sale. That would be what we call the Webster House now. It had a big yard, and they didn't like taking care of it. He decided he didn't want to be a family doctor anyhow. He wanted to go into some kind of specialty. They had the house up for sale, and the shrubbery grew up. It just looked terrible every time I'd go by there. I decided I would get the key and go look at it. I took the boys with me. We were so impressed with it that the boys could each have their own room. All three could have their own room, and there was a dining room. There was a fireplace room, and there was a room for the TV and a full basement. We came home, and we were telling Floyd about that house, how wonderful it was, and Reed said, "Dad, it's got its own flag pole," and Floyd was not impressed. He said, "We've got one big two-story house out in the country to keep up. We don't need another one." So time passed, but I really wanted that house. Since it wasn't selling Stallings kept coming down on it. They were first asking $10,000 and finally they said they would take $6,500 for it. I just said, "We've got to have it." So we bought it. That was my very favorite place I've ever lived. I didn't even have my own room at home on the farm. I had to sleep on a day bed. Up there, everyone had their own room, and I loved antiques. My friend, Sue Hulsey and I, every Saturday we went someplace. She had a truck and she liked antiques. We went to sales all over, and I had just the right furniture—high poster beds with bed skirts, and I made all the curtains. I loved that house.