

Marilyn Glavin (Farnsworth House)

Interviewed by Carlos Baez, Alex Menjivar and Tommy Pratt (2004)

My name is Marilyn Ruth Glavin. My nickname is "Mal." That's what they use to call me when I was growing up. I was born in Boston on August 17, 1927 — before you were even thought of! I lived with my mother and father, two of my brothers and one sister. My sister, Margaret, was the oldest. And my brother Gerard was next, then my brother Edward. My mother and father had twelve children, and after me, they quit. Yes, I was the youngest!

I grew up in Dorchester. My childhood was good. I went to church every Sunday, made my first Holy Communion in May. I went to school every day, and I had a dog ... I use to walk the dog. I also had a black cat named "Blackie." It was a very nice childhood.

When I was small, we had dolls and doll carriages. We use to have doll carriage parades! And we played all kinds of games outside like Jack Knife and Relievo. I had three girlfriends growing up in Dorchester and we played together all the time. They were Dorothy, Theresa and Mary Ann, and we all went to school together. In the winter when it was cold and snowy, we had a lot of fun playing in the snow. But when it snowed, we didn't get the day off school. We had to walk through the snow to school.

I liked school. The school I went to was St. Ann's which was a parochial school. We had the nuns, and they were very, very strict. If we turned around the wrong way, we'd get "the red hand." Yes, I had a curfew when I was a young person. I could not be five minutes late, or I'd be grounded for a week. I couldn't even sit on the stairs the next weekend if I was late. Times have changed, huh? No, I never got in trouble with my parents. Who was more strict? My father was.

No I never sneaked out, but I did 'hook school' one time to go to see Frank Sinatra, and I GOT CAUGHT! I went with my girlfriends. When I didn't show up at school, they called my house. My father was at work — he worked for the Boston Elevated Railway for fifty-seven years — but my mother was home. So when I got home, my mother said to me "How was school today? What's new? Do you have a lot of homework?" And I said "no." So she looked at me and said, "You know Marilyn, I know you're lying. I know you didn't go to school today. You'll get away with it this time, I won't tell your father. But if you ever do it again, I'll tell him." So I never hooked school again from that day on!

My favorite season is summer because I like going to the beach and walking at the beach. Do I like sports? Well, I played basketball when I was young. And I had four sons, so I learned to like all sports later in my life. I don't really have a favorite kind of music, I like all kinds of music. I played the clarinet in the school band when I was young. My favorite song is To Each His Own.

In my teen years, my favorite things to do were to go roller skating and bowling. We

would go roller skating seven nights a week in the summer time. And we'd go to Nantasket beach or Hough's Neck or South Boston to swim. In the winter, we would go dancing. Sometimes we'd go to ChezVous to skate. I guess I'd say my hobby was reading.

I had a lot of friends. and I liked being around a lot of people. There were a lot of us who liked to go roller skating and bowling together. There were about six or seven of us who all went to the same school—we all grew up together. We also went dancing, walking around, to the movies, as well as roller skating and bowling.

I finished twelve years of school, then when I got out of high school, I went to work as an operator for New England Telephone Company. I felt a little more independent because I was working. I really liked that job as a telephone operator. I use to work all kinds of hours, split shifts, different days.

When I was growing up, the most serious illness people were afraid of was whooping cough. My brother did get whooping cough when I was very young, and I remember we were all quarantined — none of us could leave the house. My mother had to boil all of his clothes, and I couldn't go near his room. The doctor came to the house every day to check on my brother, and I had to get a shot every time he came. Each day, the shot was a little longer. It was hard because my brother was very, very sick, and even though I was young, I knew it was serious.

What was life like in the 1940's? Well, I had two brothers who were in the service during the Second World War. One was in India, and the other one was in Germany. The one who was in Germany got hurt. It affected the whole family, worrying about him and waiting for him to come home. Back then, everybody was friendly, and everyone took care of each other. If a person was sick, someone would come over with a ham or Irish bread. Or, if there was a death in a family, everybody would pitch in and help out.

I got married in 1950, then I had a child in 1951, another one in 1952, another one in 1955 and the last one in 1956. I had four boys, so that really kept me busy bringing them up and taking care of them in the 1950's and 1960's! Back then the neighborhood was different. There were all kinds of stores, and they'd be open late at night. Everything didn't have bars on the windows like they do now. On Friday and Saturday nights, they'd be open until 10 or 11 or 12 o'clock.

I lived across the street on St. Rose Street for forty-five years. I raised my four boys there. I think that kids don't care that much about school when they're in it, but then after they get out, they miss it. That's how it was with my boys. Now I have two grandchildren who are just graduating from college. They were dying to finish up, but now they're getting nervous about having to make a living.

Pay attention in school, because it will pay off when you get older. My oldest son wanted to go to college, and he could have gotten a scholarship, but he fooled around

a lot. He had good marks and was good in sports, but he didn't pay enough attention, and I couldn't afford to send him to college. He's got a good job now, but I think he would have really liked going to college after high school. So, pay attention now while you're in school, and maybe you'll be able to get a scholarship when you graduate!

If I had one important thing to tell you to learn while you're young, it's to stay in school, pay attention and stay out of trouble. I know this because I worked with the prisons and the Corrections Department, and I read so many stories about young boys and girls who got into trouble and wasted a lot of their lives.

My mother lived to be ninety-five years old. She lived alone and everything. My brothers were in their late eighties when they passed away. I've always had good health. The only time I had to go to the hospital was to have my children. It was very exciting because each time I went to the hospital I hoped I would bring home a little girl ... and each time, I brought home a little boy! They're all very good to me now. I've been very lucky. I'm going to be seventy-six years old, and I still have my health. I go out every single day. God's been good to me!