

Marie A. Watson (125 Amory Street)

Interviewed by Marvin Hillery and Yessenia Molina (2003)

I was born on December 27, 1917 in Owensboro, Kentucky, and was raised there and in Ohio. Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio were just like Boston and Cambridge, one city across the bridge from the other. So I went to school in both places. If you want to know something about me, my favorite color is blue. I like gospel music and doing handicrafts like making quilts, knitting or crocheting. And my favorite food is fish!

I'm 85 years old now, but when I was coming up, girls weren't allowed to go out on their own like they are today. They were kept home with their mother or their parents, and had to learn to do work around the house. We didn't have a chance to get in trouble, because we weren't allowed out! Girls were very sheltered back then. If we were allowed out at all without our parents, it would be with an older brother or sister, but not alone. When you did finally get out, you were more or less 18. So, as a girl growing up, I didn't have much chance to get into mischief.

Mostly people in my family weren't sick. But if we had something like chicken pox or a fever, we would be treated at home. Now they put you in the hospital for more illnesses, but back then, mothers took care of children at home, unless they broke an arm, or something, then you might have to go to the hospital. Castor Oil was the main remedy, and they used that to treat everything! Once in a while a doctor might come to the house if it was something serious.

I married my husband Louis when I was 18. I never drove a car. I never got my license to drive. First thing, we didn't have a car. It wasn't a common thing like it is today that young people have a car. Our family didn't have a car. If you did have a car, usually just the father drove it, or sometimes an older brother. Today life is very different, with young people — children, really — having their own cars. Today you all are doing what only adults could do when I was young.

When I was about 22, my husband and I moved to Boston. I had my son Louis a few years later. When I got older I worked at a hospital in Brookline, so that's where I spent a lot of my time. I didn't get to be a nurse, but I worked as a nurse's aide, and did small jobs like waiting on patients and taking care of them. We didn't have much money to do anything extra like vacations. Probably, if we had a special adventure or a trip, it would be to visit someplace like the Blue Hills for a walk in the woods.

What advice would I give you? Well, always be honest, be true to what is right. Learn what is right, then do that. That's the best advice I can give you. You never want to be ashamed of anything that you've done, so do right by people. And, try to get along with people. You do get back what you give to others.