

# Interviewee: Ronald Stephn Balbach

**Interview Date: Friday 4-3-26**  
**by Alexis Balbach**  
**8th grade**  
**Heritage Hills Middle School**

I interviewed my grandfather, Ronald Stephn Balbach, about how he lived his early life and what things occurred. Ron was born on July 12th, 1949, in his grandmas farm house about half a mile west of the little town, Mariah Hill. I know Ron from my dad's side of the family. He is also known as a caring, funny, and wholehearted person. His story is worth reading about because it shows how different things were back then and how he had to work for the things that he wanted.

**Q:** What was the place you grew up in like?  
**A:** I started out my first 8 years at a location of where the Dale Lake is now. There was a farmhouse over there, and that's where I grew up from 1949 to 1957.

**Q:** What were your parents' names?  
**A:** My dad was Louis Antone Balbach, and my mother was Marcella Hohl Balbach.

**Q:** Were there any stories or things that your parents said that you can remember?

**A:** Well, my dad worked hard on a farm helping his dad, and my mother worked hard on the farm helping her mom with canning and raising a garden. And of course, they would always mention some things about how my mom's dad used to make moonshine, and how he got caught by the excise people with the moonshine still on the farm.

**Q:** How many siblings did you have, and what were their names?

**A:** I came from a family of 7, including me, so I had 3 brothers and 3 sisters. David is the oldest, who sadly passed away from cancer about 3 years ago. Then came my sister Barb, my brother John, so we were all fairly close together. Then there was a 9-year gap, and my mom had the last 3 kids, Karen, Jenny, and Rick.

**A:** Ok, so my grandpa and grandma Balbach, even though we visited with them, they pretty much spoke German, so I didn't really socialize with them that often. But on my mom's side, they were more active and more talkative, and I

remember on my mom's side, Grandma Tersea did a lot of canning, and I would be there to help, as well as being there for my grandpa to help put in hay or when he checked the cattle, and I would be there for that. I also got to drive the tractor. A little Ford 8N tractor.

**Q:** How old were you when this happened?

**A:** Well, it was my early life, so probably around 8 years old, but after my grandpa Balbach had passed, we moved in with my dad's mom, also known as Rose Balbach, for about 3 years. This is basically how I learned to speak German because we lived in the same house, and I could understand her speaking German, and she could understand me speaking English.

**Q:** Who were your best friends when you were younger, and what did you do for fun?

**A:** Ok, so I went to a Catholic grade school, it's called Saint Joseph Catholic grade school. The grades 1-8 were at school, and there were probably about 20-something kids per grade, but the school that I went to, it was a four-room schoolhouse that had two grades in the same room. So grades one and two were together, and three and four, and so on. When the teacher was teaching one grade, the other grade was doing homework, and when she was finished with that, she would come back and give us more homework.

**Q:** Did you go to the high school in Dale, IN?

**A:** Yes, the grade school was in Dale, and the high school was about two blocks away from the grade school. And when I was a freshman, we got put in with a whole lot more students from everywhere, and we were like, "Wow, we didn't know they existed, but that's how you made friends."

**Q:** Who was your favorite teacher, and did they have an impact on you?

**A:** So in elementary school, there would be four teachers in those 8 grades, and three of those teachers were nuns or sisters, you might call them. One of them was a teacher named sister Sylvia Gehlhausen, and she was my first-grade teacher. After I got out of high school and college, even in my adult years after I was

married, I still maintained contact with Stister Sylvia. But yes, she was my favorite teacher.

**Q:** Do you remember what your graduation year was?

**A:** Of course! I would never forget that. I am a Dale High School graduate of 1967. We were the Dale Golden Aces, but we did not have a mascot costume.

**Q:** What was your first ever job and how much did you get paid?

**A:** You might say my freshman year, I got a job working for the parish, and we would help plant flowers and do the cleaning. I guess I was lucky if I got \$0.50 an hour, maybe. But when I finally got my license, and I could drive, I worked at the IGA in Dale, and I would stock shelves and put price tags on by hand.

**Q:** How much was gas?

**A:** Probably about 25 cents a gallon in around 1971. I could get that for the little scooter that I had before I got my licence. It is amazing how much it has changed so much.

**Q:** How did you get into the military?

**A:** Ok, so after I finished the required 4 years of college, it was the 1960s, and the Vietnam War was going on, and because of the Vietnam War, they needed men and women to serve in the military. So back then, they had what is called a draft lottery. So 365 days of the year, and my birthday lands on July 12th, 1949. The year you turned 18, they would have a lottery where they would draw out 165 numbers, and those numbers had a birthday on them. And if that was your birth date, you would have to serve, but anyway, they pulled out July 12th, which ended up being number 15, and that's really low out of 365, so anyone with a really low number would probably be drafted, you wouldn't have a choice, whether you wanted to do that; the government told you what to do. So I did not really have much of a choice since I was finished with my college, and it was hard to get teaching jobs back then, and since I paid for my own schooling, I did not have the money to keep going to school to avoid getting drafted. So I signed up for the U.S. Army for 2 years, and so I was in the army

from 1971 to 1973.

**Q:** How old were you when this happened?

**A:** I think I was around 22 to 23 years old.

**Q:** Did you fight in any wars?

**A:** No, I didn't have to, even though I was trained to do that. I did not have to go to Vietnam at the time. So I lucked out, the good Lord took care of me, and left me in the States. And one thing I remember about basic training in the military so you got this great big room with a lot of bunk beds and no privacy at all.

**Q:** Did your life turn out the way you thought it would when you were younger?

**A:** No, cause you never know how your life is going to turn out, but the good Lord helped me make it through everything that I went through.

**Q:** What advice would you give to your younger self?

**A:** Probably, keep the faith. In other words, don't give up, trust in the good Lord's plan, be kind and considerate to people, and when you think, "Why did all of this happen?" and "Where's God in this?" Just remember that he is still there with you, whether you realize it or not.

**Q:** Last question, what were your sports did you do?

**A:** Well, I did basketball, but I was really short, and there were limited sports we could play. So in my junior year, there was a man who was a teacher, and he started a cross-country program. And since they knew I was a good runner, he asked me if I would join the team, and I said well, I'll join the team, but I can't stay after school for practice since I have to help mom and dad on the farm. And he said ok I will make a deal with you, and this is my coach, so I really admired him and respected him for doing this, and he said ok if you go to the meets, after you do your farm work, run around at your house by the field or woods. So he let me be on the team, and I did my own practicing at home, and I went to the meets. So I really appreciate him for that.

"Thank you so much for coming and talking to me about this."

"You're welcome!"

## A lesson in hunting

**Levi Vaughn**  
**4th Grade, Lincoln Trail**  
**Mrs. Collignon**

Hunting is a very hard task that some people like to do. You have to know a lot about hunting to do it safely and correctly.

### HUNTING GEAR

If you want to go hunting, you would have to have gear. The gear you need is camouflage because if you go outside with a red shirt on,

the deer would be able to see you. Also deer are color blind for the color orange. But you have to have some orange on because if it is a public area some other people think you are a deer. But if you are at your own property you should still wear an orange hat or something. And if you want to go get a deer you have to have a big coat on because when it is deer season it is like near 30 degrees so you would like to have big pants.

### HUNTING SEASON

To hunt deer you need to do it in 1-Jan 4 and Nov 15-30, for muzzleloader Dec 6-21 and Reduction Zones sept 15 Jan 31, 2026 and turkey season is April 22 to May 10. There are duck season are in North Zone runs Oct 18-Dec-7 and Dec 28, 2025; central runs Nov 1-Nov 9 and Nov 22, 2025 -Jan 11, 2026 south run Nov 8-9 and Nov 29 2025 -Jan 25, 2026 .

### Hunting safe

Essential hunting safety involves mandatory education for hunters born after 1986, treating every firearm as loaded, identifying targets clearly, and using safety harnesses for tree stands. FOR KIDS

Strict muzzle control treating all firearms as loaded and identifying targets before shooting.  
 The end

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