

74 year old grandma tells her story of her early life!!!

Interviewee: Barbara Cooper
Interview Date: 4/2/26
Writer: Skyla Black
8th grade
Heritage Hills Middle School

I interviewed my Grandma, Barbara Cooper, my grandma is 74 years old, she's my grandma on my moms side. Our interview mostly focuses on her early life in Indiana growing up with her 5 siblings and the challenges of daily life. Her story is worth listening to because she was a strong woman and still is to this day. She is part of our history and has many amazing stories to share.

Q: What was it like in your home whenever you were young?

A: Well, we did not have indoor plumbing. We had a pump in the kitchen, and the bathroom was outside. And we only had a living room and a kitchen, and so all the kids slept in the living room.

Q: And how was that?

A: Tight.

Q: Right

A: Six kids

Q: What stories do you remember hearing about from your parents when they were young?

A: They didn't really talk much about them. Mostly, Mom talked about going to dances. That's about it.

Q: Did your dad talk about anything?

A: My dad hardly talked. He was very quiet.

Q: Did your family have any traditions that mattered to you?

A: Christmas, we always went to church the night of Christmas Eve. And when we got home, we got our Christmas present, which was usually all the same thing. Three girls, we all just got the same thing. That basically, that was about it.

Q: Okay. Can you walk me through, like, what a normal day in your home was like?

A: That's hard. You didn't stay in the house.

We were always outside climbing trees and... We just, there was no air conditioning, so you spent your days outside. In summer.

Q: Okay. Did you guys play any games,

like, outside?

A: Not really. We just, we had one bike, and we would all take turns

Q: What happened in your home if you got, like, in trouble?

A: You didn't want to get my mom mad. Your parents did not. They weren't your friends. They were your... What would you call them? You just, they were not friends, like people are now. She would slap you in the next week if you did anything wrong.

Q: Any other forms of punishment or something?

A: That was it. A belt.

Q: Okay What is your earliest memory? Like, what is the earliest thing you can remember?

A: My earliest memory was when I was running in the cattle field with all the cows. And I was about four maybe. And my mom saw me, and she got me out of there, and she was so mad, she picked up a board to spank me with. And when she hit me, it had a big nail in it. So I got hit with a nail. And I can still remember her putting horse salve, that used to be this big old thing of medicine I used for everything. She stuffed that nail hole in my behind with the hardest to have. That's my earliest memory.

Q: Okay, on a different note, what is your best memory from childhood?

A: Best memory? Oh, my God. Climbing the apple tree. We take salt shakers up there and we would just put green apples and eat them with, with salt. It was fun. Yeah, you put salt and green apples.

Q: I've never heard that. Okay, what was school like when you were my age?

A: When I was your age. Still in, I guess, if I was in the 8th grade, our school did not have indoor plumbing, so it had an old outhouse. We were only allowed to wear dresses, so we never wore any kind of pants, slacks, jeans.. And the schoolhouse had 2 classes in it, one room, and the same teacher taught both. So, it wasn't like today where you got one teacher for one class, so we really only were taught half the day because she would go

back and forth. Seventh grade for one hour or whatever, eighth grade for the next hour.

Q: Okay... Did you guys have, like, the uniforms, like, was there a specific dress?

A: No, we just had to be dressed, but other than that, no.

Q: Was there a teacher, like, who had an influence on you, good or bad?

A: We always had women teachers, so it was shocking when I went in 7th grade. We had our 1st male teacher. Because we were not used to that. So in 7th and 8th grade, I had a male teacher for both classes. So that was different.

Q: Okay. Were they a good teacher or...?

A: Yeah, they were nice.

Q: Did you have any job or responsibilities, like, before your 20s? A job in the house or outside of the house? Like, anything?

A: I mean, our job in the house was, after Mom got home from work, she cooked supper, and my job was dry dishes, and Sue had to wash the dishes. Every day.

Q: Was there anything else, like, outside or...?

A: No, when I went to college, when I was 19, I worked in elementary school. Then I worked in a hotel as a registra, where just, what are they called?

Q: Register?

A: Yeah, when you register people. we didn't take money. We just gave them... We wrote down their name, and gave them their key to what room they were going in.

A: She worked in a hotel.

A: Yeah, signing guests in.

Q: How is everyday life different from now?

A: Oh, so different. We didn't have anything that would keep you occupied. Like, we did have TV, but it only had 3 stations. And you had to have an antenna, and if it was bad weather, somebody'd have to go out and move the antenna because the wind would blow it around. Or you couldn't pick up a TV station. So we had to entertain ourselves.

Q: Okay. Hmm. Do you remember, like, a major event that everyone was talking about,

like, when you were younger?

A: When President Kennedy was killed, I think I was in either 5th or 6th grade. I can remember that because everybody was crying.

Q: Did that affect you at all? Or did you just not know what was happening?

A: My parents were Democrats then, so yeah, they were and... He was a Democrat. And then when I was in high school, Robert Kennedy came to Dale to give a speech, and we got to go down there and watch him. But, of course, he did not make it to be president because he got assassinated before.

Q: Okay, I'm gonna go back to school, but how would you do assignments because now we have chromebooks and stuff?

A: Oh, gosh, when I was in the 1st and 2nd grade, we had the slate. It was the kids, they, I think they still make them, they're black on, and they got that piece of stuff that comes down on them and you write on it, and then when you win, you just pick up the top thing and I don't know what they called them.

Q: We have whiteboards now.

A: That's kind of similar. Yeah, so we didn't have anything like that. It is a chalkboard. Yeah, with chalk and chalkboards, teens are used, but as for the kids, we just use those... slates. And I'd love to read when I was, I always wanted to read out loud when I was in school. My favorite subject.

Q: So last question. Woo, what advice would you give to your younger self or to younger people?

A: Slow down. Everybody tries to grow up too fast. It's gonna happen. So just be young when you're young.

Q: Okay. Yippee. and then I'm gonna add one more. What was a dream you had as a child and did you succeed at it? Like, did you have a dream as a child?

A: Oh, yeah, when I was little, I always wanted to be a nurse. But I couldn't, 'cause I couldn't hear well enough.

Q: It's all right. Happens to the best of us. Okay, that concludes our interview.

Q: Thank you.

Lessons from the Past: An Interview with Karen Schleter

Interview Date: April 5, 2026
Writer: Adler Bert Oxley

8th grade, Heritage Hills Middle School

The person I am interviewing is my grandma, Karen Elaine Schleter. She is 81 years old. This interview focuses on the period between her birth and when she was about 20 years old. I asked her about where she went to school and what advice she might want to give. Her story is worth reading because it shows what real life was like decades ago. She went to a one-room schoolhouse, then a small junior high and high school, and later became a teacher

herself. Her experiences with her family, her favorite subjects, and her career show how hard work and a love for learning can shape a person's whole life.

Q: Did you have any siblings?

A: I had one brother, Michael Duane Scales.

Q: If you had one word to describe him, what would it be?

A: Annoying.

Q: What were your parents' names?

A: Bert and Maurine Scales again.

Q: Again, if you had one word to describe each of them, what would it be?

A: Loving.

Q: What schools did you attend?

A: The first school I went to was called Ashby School. It was a one-room school for grades one through six, and then after the sixth grade, I went to Lynnville for junior high and high school.

Q: Did you have any favorite school subjects?

A: I liked history in elementary school, and in high school, I liked the business subjects of typing, shorthand, and accounting.

Q: Did you have a favorite teacher?

A: Mrs. Greenlea. She was a business teacher.

Q: What was your first job, and when did you start it?

A: Well, my first job was when I got out of college. I became a teacher, and that was the first paying job I ever had.

Q: If you could change something about your younger years or do something again, what would it be?

A: I would do more reading and try to learn more—not just my school subjects, but anything I could—simply for the sake of learning.

NAME: Rayleigh James
GRADE: 8 **SCHOOL:** Heritage Hills middle school

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