Donna Kieffner Talks About Her Life as a Kid

Interview Date: 2-5-26
Writer: Taylor Commens
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I interviewed my grandma Donna Sue Keiffner about her childhood family life and school life. She is 81 years old and grew up on a farm by Haysville and Dubois Indiana. She was born at Stork hospital in between Haysville and Dubios Indiana to Harriet and Lina hemmerlein. I interviewed her about what her life was like growing up on the farm and what she did. Her stories help explain what has changed since then.

Q: What was it like?

A: It was very different than it is today. I remember we had outdoor toilets. There was also a little pot, if you had to go at night you had the pot. We had a garden. I didn't help on the farm at all; my dad and my grandpa, and my dads uncle, they farmed the land. My mom didn't even help much until later. I remember we had horses to help with the farming.

Q: What did you do when you were on the farm?

A: We raised corn and wheat, probably soybeans. We had a big garden and a big farmhouse. It had three bedrooms upstairs and five bedrooms downstairs. A lot of people lived there at one time: my mom and dad, and me, my grandma and grandpa lived there, and then my aunt lived there sometimes when she came home.

Q: What did your parents do

A: Farmers. My mom worked at a chicken house, she cased eggs, but it was by machine. And she worked at the Stuart Hotel before they got married.

Q: What was a day like in your house

A: I didn't get up early, farmers usually get up early. I did help in the garden sometimes. I had to walk to get to the mailbox to catch the bus. Even on Saturdays in the summer I would still walk down and get the mail. I walked a lot.

Q: What school did you go to

A: I went to Haysville grade school, I was there for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade. Then in the 5th and 6th grade I went to Dubois. Our classroom was below the gym. We could hear the basketballs bouncing. And then in the 7th and 8th grade I was in downtown Dubois.

Q: What was your school life like

A: I'm sure we had outdoor toilets at Haysville. Then I went to Dubois 7th and 8th grade and they had outdoor toilets. And then I was at the highschool, it was brand new, and there we had nice bathrooms. But the bathrooms were sometimes outside

Q: What was your favorite subject

A: I never liked math. I was never good at math. I was in the 8th grade and my mom helped me with story problems. And then I did a payroll for clients twice at a job. I liked algebra because I could always check my answers in my head, I really liked algebra. I took geometry and my friend and I would go to school early sometimes and we would go talk to the teacher and he guided me through. I knew she was gonna go to college and I didn't know what I was gonna do.

Q: What was the classrooms like

A: The whole classroom was together. I mean the 1st and 2nd grade, we were all in one room and the teacher got all 1st and 2nd grade. And then I went to 3rd and 4th grade and I had one teacher for that. One teacher had two grades. It was a small grade school. And I went to Dubois and it had the same thing, the 5th and 6th had the same teacher. And instead of 8th grade it was in with the high school. In fact, we all had the same hallway. It was a small school, and a small town.

Q: Did you ever get into trouble in school

A: I don't think so. One time there was a girl I remember. I did not do this, she asked me to go in her purse and buy her something and put the change back in her purse. She couldn't find her change, and the teacher accused me of keeping the change. And I did not, I told my mom and dad. Nowadays you'd call the teachers.

Q: How would people get punished if they ever did get in trouble

A: Oh, I don't know, they got slapped right in the face, or on the butt if you were little. I pretty much did as I was told.

Q: Did you have an influential teacher

A: I think I kinda did. I think it was Mr. Thackerty who taught 7th and 8th grade. He had taught my mom and I always heard about my mom. And one of my teachers, when we had tests, she would put exactly what was on the test, she would put it on the board. If you remembered what was on the board you would get a good grade because it was exactly what the test was.

Q: What was your best memory from school

A: Riding the school bus was kinda nice. I also had friends on the bus. One's name was Linda and we would watch American Bandstand. We always talked about the songs they played the next day on the bus. I would walk to the neighbors house with paper dolls. And the neighbor would walk to my house and we would play with paper dolls. And her mom always served pie.

Q: What was your first job

A: I went to beauty college, but my mom called me and said Kimbell was hiring. But I started beauty college and I wanted to finish. And I still carry a beauty license. I used to work at a factory in Jasper. Then I went to work for Kimbell. And then I took off for 7 years and was a full time mom. And then I went to the jasper desk. And I went to the bank, which was the most stressful job I've ever had in my life. Then I was called back to Jasper desk, but it got sold. I think a few people stayed behind but most people left.

Q: How was work life

A: They used to have cubicles. It was different. At the bank you used to be able to give out all kinds of information. And when women had kids they didn't have a job anymore. Women didn't work outside the home. Usually when they had the kids they quit.

Q: What job do you wish you had

A: I liked working in human resources. I would go to factories and help people. When I was at Jasper desk I shared an office with a guy. Jasper desk was my favorite place to work.

Q: What did you do there (Jasper Desk)

A: First time around I did the payroll. Another girl processed it and then the bank took over printing the checks.

My Grandma: Life in the 1970s, The Time Machine

Interview Date: April 5, 2026
Writer: Lydia Fromme
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I interviewed my grandma, Joanne Fromme, who was born on April 25, 1956, at Huntingburg Hospital, and she is my dad's mom. She is about 69 and grew up in the 1960s to 1980s. The interview mostly focuses on her early life and what it was like. Her story is worth reading because I think it is cool to see her point of view on how life was for her compared to us now. It was also cool to see her point of view on when grandpa left for service, since I never got his. It is really interesting and helps you "live in her time".

Q: What were your parents like?

A: They treated us how we should; we knew our spot, and we didn't go over that limit.

Q: How did your siblings/family treat you?

A: They made sure we knew where we stood and kept us kids safe. My siblings were crazy with all 18 kids, but we always had someone to be with so that part was nice.

Q: What was homelife like?

A: We had the daily chores that we did, and we always had work to do with a big family. And we would always work, then play.

Q: When going to school, what was that like?

A: Our school was small with only 2 classrooms for 1,2,3,4 and 5,6,7,8 grades. It was small but not very chaotic because we kids knew how to act.

Q: What did you guys do for fun after school or just overall?

A: We would play together and have fun on the farm. We would have chores and do them, but make it fun.

Q: What was your favorite part of being home?

A: Probably playing with my siblings and always having someone to be with, it was just so fun.

Q: What is one of your best memories from your childhood?

A: Going to my grandma's house with cousins and siblings and playing around in the yard, having fun all the time.

Q: What was your nickname and how did you get it?

A: My nieces thought it would be funny to start calling me Joanne Fromme full of bologna. Ever since everyone calls me that now, haha.

Q: What was the worst thing you did and how did you get punished?

A: One time I was in Holland with one of my friends, and we thought it was a good idea to walk home without telling my parents, so when we got home, I got in big trouble, and my punishment was to walk all the way back to Holland. I was told to never do something like that again without telling my parents.

Q: Do you remember a specific event that happened that might've changed things then?

A: Yes, grandpa left for service in the Marine Corps in August of 1975-August of 1979.

Q: What was it like during that time?

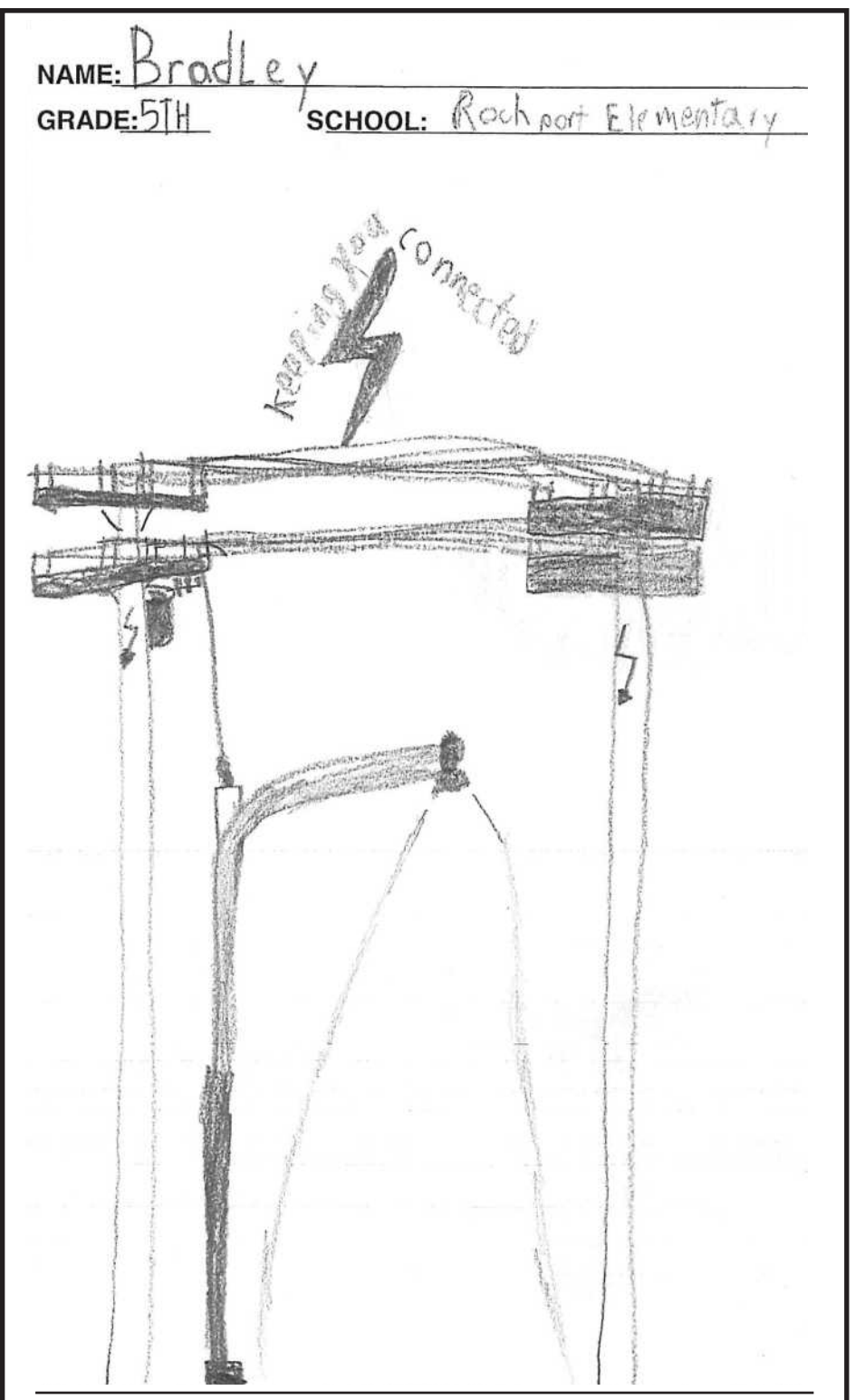
A: I was alone for 4 years, and I would send him a letter every day. However, I was pregnant when he was gone, so he didn't get to see our first child being born, Jackie.

Q: What is something you wish you would've done, but didn't do and regretted it then or now?

A: I wish I had told grandpa I love you more like every day because we showed our love, but we didn't say it directly, in a busy house with 4 kids.

Q: What do you wish younger people today understood more about growing up in your time?

A: I think we showed more respect for each other and had more respect for ourselves. But I wish people would know you are who you are, because God made you that way. And you don't need to change yourself for anybody. My final words are to love yourself, respect yourself, and everyone that you know. Respect who they are, and accept who they are.



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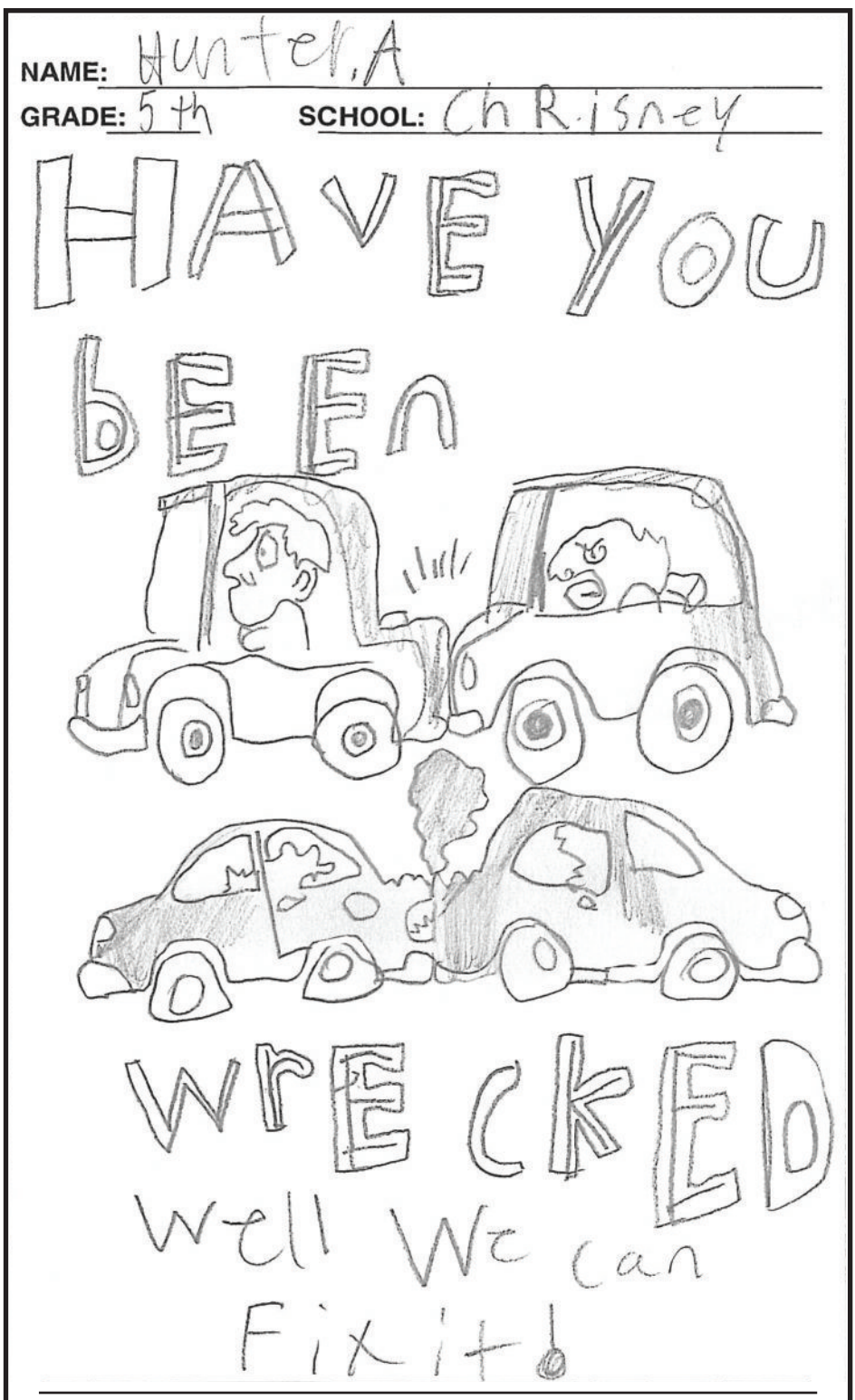

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