

Lavon Timkin: Living History

by Neal Giebler

Lavon Timkin, born in 1929, has had many unique experiences during her lifetime. Her childhood took part in the town of Ingals. Her father worked for the Santa Fe Railroad Company so she spent much of her time at the depot, helping her father. Childhood hobbies and pastimes haven't changed a whole lot in the past decades. Timkin played with the neighborhood children and rode bikes and scooters with her friends. They did not, however, roller-skate, due to the fact that there were no paved roads in Ingals, only dirt. Cimarron did have paved streets at that time and when she went there she often took a vantage of that.

As a child her most vivid memories were of the dust bowl. The dust storms moving in, the dust upon the windowsills and doorways, her mother would stuff wet towels in the cracks to try and prevent the dust from entering the house. Often school would be called off because too much dust had entered to building.

Another dramatic experience Timkin had was of the jackrabbit drives. The men would go out into the country and set up a pen with snow fences and drive the rabbits into it. Then they would go around with clubs, knocking the rabbits over the head, killing them in the process. Lavon remember the cries of the jackrabbits as they were being clubbed, but said, "it needed to be done."

She came to Cimarron for Jr. High School. They bused the students over at that time, since many did not have their own automobiles. As she entered high school she became involved in music, spending much of her time in vocal and band.

During this era the band was rather different. It was much larger, about 75 participants, and they had uniforms. The uniforms were wool, with tall hats and very hot to march in. They often became very heavy, being saturated with sweat as the band marched along. The band played in many more marching contests than our band today does.

The band also played during the summer, for many of the community "get together's," and for the 4th of July. Families would come in the evening, picnic and listen to the band play songs, while the little children would play on the grass.

The town churches would also get together for dinners and other celebrations, much more than they do today. Timkin's remembers a time when all the churches in the county would get together and put on a cantata. People from Copeland, Montezuma and Ingals, would get together and sing songs and other various performances.

High school life was rather different during her era. Most students didn't drive, but they didn't ride their bikes because "that would be embarrassing." The School district bused all the students to and from school. This would be a rather large task today, but in her time the district was considerably smaller. There was a school, called Fiona, which was located at Kalvesta. It was only a grade school and when the students reached high school age they were then bused to Garden City to finish their education.

After school and during the summer teenagers would do what most teens do today: work. The boys usually took a job on a local farm, but a few stayed in town and worked at mechanic shops, or at the grocery store. The girls often worked at one of two Drugstores, the café (Located at what is now Burkarts funeral home) and babysitting.

Mrs. Timkin was employed by Clark's drugstore. In those days the drugstore was often open later than it is now, sometimes closing at 9:00 or even 10:00 on the weekends.

She did not remember the wages or how much various items of that time cost. There was also another drugstore, located on the corner where Clark's is now. It was called Tuttles, and the other half (in what now is the gift shop) was located Whites Grocery store. These two have employed and continue to employ the teenage workforce of Cimarron.

Teenagers haven't changed much over the years. In the 1940's they also enjoyed going to the theater on Friday and Saturday nights. The old movie theater was located in what is now Jamie Addison's beauty salon. Lavon says that the first movie that she ever saw there was The Wizard of Oz. She also remembers some other classics, such as Gone With the Wind.

One of the most memorable experiences in the theater was the war films. They often showed them before and after a showing in order to publicize the war efforts. Timkin remembers these very vividly; since it is the closest the war came to southwest Kansas.

After high school Timkin went on to college at Emporia State, where she planned to major in music. During her time there WWII was just finishing up and many of the veterans were returning to the states. Many decided to finish their education that they had left during the time of war. Timkin remembers these vets, mostly because they were significantly older than the students there. Many were already married, with children.

The college was quiet smaller in comparison to that which it is today. At that time a freshmen girl could enroll, and move straight into a sorority, without ever having to live in a dorm. There were 18 in a house, along with a housemother. There were no parties, little different from today's college standards. Most of the students didn't even have cars

to drive home. Since her dad worked with the Railroad Company, Timkin often took the train, as did many other students.

Since she planned to major in music, Lavon remembers much of the songs and bands of the 1940's to the 1960's. Such artist as Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, Lena Horn, Billy Holliday, Duke Ellington, and the Glenn Miller Orchestra are among her favorites. She still prefers smooth jazz and nice, easy, listening, as opposed to today's hard rock and roll, as preferred by many teenagers.

When asked about how the war with Korea and Vietnam affected this area of the country Timkin said that not much really changed. The town just continued to operate; the only news one heard at the time was by telephone, word of mouth or radio.

After 3 year Timkin moved back to Cimarron, where she married her husband Roy. They had 2 daughter and both are now adults with children of their own.

Roy was a farmer. The tractors of that time were much large than that of today's standards. They did not have tires but instead iron lugs. The lugs were simply a metal rim with spikes surrounding the outside of the wheel.

Today Lavon Timkin is still married to Roy, and they are still farming the same land as Roy's father did. The town has come a long ways since Mrs. Timkins era, and the town will continue to grow in the future.

Release Form

To be completed by the person interviewed:

I, (print name here) Laura Timken, give permission for the video/audio tape of my interview to be donated to the Cimarron City Library, to be kept on file, and used for purposes of research at a later date.

I agree that persons doing research may use my name and my statements without further approval on my part.

By giving my permission for this, I also understand that I am not giving up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold.

Accepted and agreed:

Signature: Laura Timken Date: 4-17-06
month/day/year
Address: Box 414
City: Cimarron State: Kansas Zip: 67835