

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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They've a Story to Tell

Betty Lucas McKain's family has a long history in the town of Arnold

18th in a Series on Arnold's "Young at Heart" Residents

By Darlene Rimpley

As Betty Lucas McKain, her daughter Mary McKain Dymond and I sat visiting at Betty's dining room table—which was covered with pictures, books and clippings—I became entranced with the story of the Lucas clan.

The story begins as early as 1886 or '87 when seven brothers and four sisters came to Nebraska from Indiana and first settled in Merna. As often happens, the children decided to go on their own, and Joseph McClellan Lucas came to the Arnold area in 1889 to take out a homestead approximately four miles south of town. As required for homesteaders, he built a house, and he and his wife—the former Myrta Deardorff—settled in to make a home. For some reason, he failed to prove up on that homestead and moved on three miles farther southwest to acquire land to set up their residence.

Joseph and Myrta had two children, Floyd and Merna, who grew up on the family farm. Merna married, and she and her husband remained in the Arnold area. Floyd's marriage to Ella Kraisinger leads us into another era of Arnold history.

Ella was raised in Chicago, and in her growing up years she helped her grandfather—who came from Germany—care for homeless boys. She joined a dance troupe as a teen and traveled to give performances. As she was always anxious to try new things, the traveling tours were exciting to her. Ella would tell the story of when they attended concerts, they would take lemons with them to suck on during the performance to cause the musicians some



Betty McKain holds new great-granddaughter Addison McKain. Family is an important part of Betty's life. (Courtesy photo)

problems.

Two brothers had come from Chicago to Arnold sometime before 1920 and established Kraisinger's Meat Market. One brother, Albert, then moved to Alliance, and Adolph remained in Arnold for a time. Needing a housekeeper, he prevailed upon his sister Ella to come and help him out.

A picture in Betty's possession of the meat market shows an apartment built above it, which was where they lived in 1923—according to family history.

Adolph sold his business to Frank Koubek, and it is not known if that is when the upper story was removed or if it was earlier. Thus, Ella became an Arnold resident—not only for a time but for life.

Ella and Floyd Lucas were married on July 12, 1923, in Salina, Kansas. They lived in town for a time, until Floyd's father Joseph went to Ore-

gon to reunite with his wife, who did not care for Nebraska and had moved there. Floyd and Ella then moved to the farm to make their home.

Two children were born to Ella and Floyd: Robert, who soon became Bob, and Betty, who was born on October 5, 1929, in the home of Effie Pope with Dr. Burnham attending.

Bob and Betty were raised on the farm and attended Yucca Valley and Prairie View country schools. When it came time for high school, they boarded in town, both at Shaws—a popular place for high schoolers to board as they had cooking privileges—and at the home of Ethel Perkins. (For those not in the know, the Shaw home—a large two story that has been remodeled now—is the home of Gene Tullis. Eugene and Chris Andre own the Perkins home).

Betty spent her growing up

years working outside more than learning how to cook. The farmhouse had a small kitchen. Her mother was a good cook, so it was just easier for Betty to be “out of the way” and follow her love of caring for and riding horses—a love that goes on today.

When it was time for Floyd's retirement, he and Ella moved to town, and Bob and his wife Viola moved to the farm to keep the Lucas history moving on.

After high school graduation in 1947, Betty attended Wesleyan University for three years. While there, she helped care for horses at the state fairgrounds. There, she met a person who became a lifelong friend—Genevieve Collier of Arnold—who was there with husband Jack to show horses.

Betty returned to Arnold and worked at the telephone office. At that time the office was in a small house with an old switchboard that required an operator there full-time. Anita Bonta was the manager.

Betty recalls that people felt that the operators were “persons for all things” and should be able to know everyone's business—as well as their telephone number—and help them out with both. Betty had several angry people come into the office during her time working there, but with Miss Bonta's presence, she had some help dealing with them.

Betty married Rex McKain, and she became a full-time mother with the arrival of children Mary, Susan and Bob. When her father became ill, and with the children grown, Betty moved in to help her father until he moved to a rest home. She still lives in that same home.

Over the years Betty has



Among Betty's many treasured photos is this picture taken during her years studying at Prairie View School. Pictured are: (back) unknown, teacher Maude Witthuhn, Howard Weinman, Bob Lucas; (middle) Betty Lucas, Bonnie and Betty Purcell; (front) Beryl Frosh and Don Swanson. (Courtesy photo)

Worth Keeping

Betty recalls that one time, when she was riding her horse to help move cows, the bridle fell apart, and she was left with no way to guide her horse. She managed to safely jump off. She still has that broken bridle hanging in her garage.

kept busy.

One of her greatest enjoyments was being a member of the Eastern Star. She belonged to the Arnold chapter until it disbanded in 1991. She then attended meetings in Broken Bow, where she received her 50 year pin in 1998.

She worked for senior meals when they were served at the country club, the Model Cafe, Cardinal Inn and Jim's Bar.

She goes to the farm—which remains in the family—to poison prairie dogs and still has horses to care for.

She is a member of American Legion Auxiliary, help-

ing when they serve meals and is a member of the United Methodist Church, where she helps with funeral dinners and other meals.

She is also a member of the Flatlanders Car Club and owns a 1972 Ford station wagon that has 60,000 miles on it. When daughter Mary was still at home and had a paper route, Betty would sometimes need to deliver the papers for her. She would stop in to have coffee with friends and still enjoys that part of her life.

One of her greatest joys is visiting her children and grandchildren and attending their events. Mary, who just retired from being a teacher for 42 years, is married to Frank Dymond and lives in Hershey.

Susan is married to Jack Blair and lives in North Hills, California, where she works in computer services.

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Heavy Load



The delivery of a 750 pound beam by Bloedorn Lumber of North Platte to The Sentinel office last week drew a lot of attention on the street and willing volunteers to help guide the beam into the building—including a crew from Forrester's Dodge City that wasted no time in coming to offer help. The beam will be installed to shore the sagging roof up as part of the major renovation process. Meanwhile, The Sentinel office is temporarily located in Hotel Custer. (Fallon Gibson photo)



Inside the building, the beam is guided onto scaffolding by Larreau Construction's crew and the volunteers. Pictured in the center of the room is a temporary wall that was built to hold the sagging roof after it was jacked up about 6 inches to level.

Entry Forms Available for Annual Chili Cook-Off

Contestants are reminded to get their entry forms in for the 29th Chamber sponsored Chili Cook-Off set for Saturday, March 11. Entry forms are available on the Arnold website.

The public is invited to taste the contestants' chili from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the community center. Admission is a free-will donation. Chamber will be serving potato and chicken noodle soup, and the fourth graders will be selling pies.

Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place winners and people's choice. Prizes will also be awarded for Mr. and Mrs. Congeniality and best decorated booth.

Chairpersons of the cook-off are Jeff Bowers, Cheryl Carson and Patty Lamberty. Early entry helps these volunteers plan and organize the event.