

Narrator: Myrtle Bixler
Date of Interview: June 19, 1978
Place of Interview: Narrator's home, located at
8517 Fernald, Morton Grove
Interviewer: Denise Rossmann Christopoulos
Recorded For: Morton Grove Historical Society
Transcribed For: Morton Groove Public Library
Tape Running Time: 53 minutes

Introduction

Myrtle Bixler and her husband Al owned The Bit and Bridle Restaurant in Morton Grove for 39 years. Myrtle tells of the grand opening on Labor Day in 1934, the antique décor, and the menu and prices of the day. Many of The Bit and Bridle's clientele were from Northwestern University, and it hosted many dances for local organizations in town. The restaurant was not only one of the most popular hot spots, but also was one of the hometown landmarks of our village until it was torn down in 1969.

In the interview, Myrtle Bixler discusses other aspects of living in Morton Grove such as the roadhouses of the 1930s, the Depression years and the camaraderie that she felt existed with most townfolk and organizations.

MB: Myrtle Bixler

Q: Question asked by interviewer, Denise (Rossmann) Christopoulos

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: We'll start from the beginning of the outline that we had. This is the biographical data. Your grandparents' names?

MB: Well, my grandfather's parents' name was Battleday – my father's father's name was Battleday. I do not know my grandmother's. They lived there in England.

Q: Your parents' names?

MB: My father's name was George Battleday. He was born in England. And my mother's name was Ellen Hewson.

Q: Did they both come from England?

MB: No. My grandparents came over about two years before my mother was born. And they settled in Orland, Illinois. My father purchased about a thousand acres of land and he had quite a farm there. They were farmers.

Q: So your parents met here and married?

MB: Yes.

Q: What did your parents do for a living? What did your father do?

MB: My father was a farmer. He was a stock raiser. In Indiana he raised all full-blood stock.

Q: And did your mother work at all?

MB: She taught school for her father in Orland. They had so many people working for them and they had no schools at that time. My grandfather built a schoolhouse and all the children of my father's help went to school to my mother. Of course, they had to walk; they didn't have buses.

Q: How about sisters and brothers? Did you have any?

MB: I had nine brothers and sisters. They were five boys and four girls, five including me and I was the baby.

Q: You were the baby of the family?

MB: I was the baby. My father was 65 when I was born and my mother was 52. Now isn't that something?

Q: That sure is. Now this is a little bit of biographical data on yourself. You can answer what you want. Your birthdate?

MB: Well, I'm over 70.

Q: Okay. What's the date of your birthday?

MB: I ain't going to tell you.

Q: Just the day.

MB: Twenty-fifth of September.

Q: And birthplace?

MB: Brook, Indiana.

Q: What type of home did you have there?

MB: Well, we had a beautiful farm. And we had a tenant farmer's home that lived there. Usually one of my brothers supervised the farm for my dad because he retired quite early. And when I was about six years old, time to go to school, my dad left the farm and we moved into Brook and he built a lovely home in Brook. And then that's where I went to school – Brook, Indiana.

Q: What did he do from that point on?

MB: Nothing. He retired. He was a country gentleman. (laughter) My mother did the work. (laughter) My father never worked. And I used to be very ashamed. I thought it was terrible. All of my friends, their fathers were taking dinner pails and all going to work, and they were young people, you know. And my dad didn't do anything and I was sort of

embarrassed by that as a child. I never realized . . . Money didn't mean anything in those days, you know, like it does now.

Q: What other recollections do you have of your family life at home?

MB: Oh, it was beautiful. I always had a birthday party with homemade ice cream. And, of course, beautiful homemade cakes that my mother and my sisters made.

Q: Did you sew as a child?

MB: Doll's clothes.

Q: And you went to school there?

MB: At Brook. Then I went to Northwestern University for two years. I majored in psychology and Spanish. And that was in 1920.

Q: When did you meet your husband?

MB: Oh, about five years after that.

Q: Five years after you'd done to Northwestern?

MB: Yes. I was living in Chicago and a friend of mine had a boyfriend that she was very much in love with. And she wanted me to double-date because my husband –we hadn't met yet – he had a car. And so anyway that's when I met him. It was love at first sight so we got married.

Q: That's great. When you had just gotten married, did you live in Chicago?

MB: Yes, we lived in Chicago several places. And then we opened a little restaurant on Devon Avenue in what they used to call Tessville. And then one evening we were going out to dinner to The Pink Poodle, which used to be out here on Lake Street. And that's when we went by The Bit and Bridle because we used to go out to The Bit and Bridle. There used to be a big house there and they had this barn and had fabulous food. It was very good. We used to drive from Evanston out there and have dinner with various friends. And, anyway, it caught on fire and burnt down. Well, of course it was just demolished. There was no help for it at all. But as we were going to the Pink Poodle I said, "Oh, this is where the old Bit and Bridle used to be." And I said, "Look at the beautiful barn."

Q: Where was this located now?

MB: On Harlem and Dempster. Just off Dempster, about a block and a half off of Dempster. I said, "And that gorgeous willow tree." And my husband said, "You would call that interesting?" (chuckles) And I said, "I think it's gorgeous.." he drove in and stopped the car and, of course, there was all of that rubble there from where The Bit and Bridle had burnt. And we peeked in the window and someone had been working on it. There was a "For Sale" sign to call a certain person.

I said, "I'm going to call him tomorrow and see how much he wants for it." My husband said, "You're crazy!" I said, "Well, maybe I am, but I'm going, I like it." (chuckles) Because I could see all those beautiful beams in there, all solid oak. You know, it broke my heart. I couldn't even drive a nail in it if I wanted to hang a horse's harness or bridle or something. You couldn't even get a nail in that oak. It was all hand-hewn beams, you know.

And so we went to The Pink Poodle, and the next day I called him and made an appointment. Then we came over to see our mayor in Morton Grove which his name was Herbert Dilg. And we told him we were interested in buying the place. Liquor was coming back and if we did, could we open a tavern? And he said that we could get an architect and have him draw up a sketch and present it to him and the Village Hall. And they would issue us a license. So we were very happy. Then we had that awful Rendezvous fire here on Dempster Street. I don't know if you ever heard of that?

Q: Yes, I have.

MB: It was very bad. And my husband said, "There goes everything. Everything's gone." Because we had purchased this. We already had the property. So we made an appointment with Mr. Dilg – he was a wonderful man. We were kids then to him, you know, and he said, "I promised you kids a license and that isn't your fault that the Rendezvous burned down. You'll get it." So we did. We opened up as soon as liquor came back.

Q: Do you remember what date the grand opening was?

MB: (laughter) Labor Day, I think it was 1934, whenever liquor was back. It was 1934 and it was the first day of September. It had fallen on Labor Day.

Q: Were you in charge of the decorations inside? Could you tell me a little bit about how you had it?

MB: Everything was antique. We had an enormous fireplace. It went all the way along; it must have been at least a 30-foot fireplace. And then it went clear up – it was a cathedral, you know, just like an old hayloft up there – and the fireplace went clear to the top. Beautiful fireplace!

And on the other side, the south side, we had a loft, a balcony. We had tables up there and they could look down and watch the dancers. Of course, they had to walk up the steps. We could seat about 200 people very comfortably. And very nice. In the wintertime, we always supplied them with chestnuts and they could toast chestnuts by the fire, and dance.

Q: An old-fashioned little place.

MB: Yes, we always kept that space in front of the fireplace open so the dancers could come and dance around it.

Q: Where did you get the dancers? What type of dancing did they do?

MB: Oh, just regular ballroom dancing. Whichever was in the vogue at that time. I remember one of them was the Big Apple and it used to drive us all crazy when they'd all get around in a ring. But waltzing and any kind of dancing. About once a week there for a while – I'd say about two years – we had barn dancing, square dancing. And the old-time fiddlers. We had a farmer and his wife and a nephew and they used to play the fiddles. One night a week was the square dancing, which was a lot of fun.

Q: Do you remember the prices of food in the 1930s?

MB: Hm . . . I think I have a menu.

Q: Good.

MB: Steak was fifty cents, chicken was fifty cents, and that was served with French fries . . .

Q: Steak was fifty cents? (chuckles)

MB: It was served with cold salad. Then the menu got bigger and, of course, we went into lobster.

Q: Did you advertise at all or was it word-of-mouth?

MB: Most of it was word-of-mouth. But we would advertise, like, a special occasion. The Lions Club met there. Legions used to have a lot of their parties there. And, oh, loads of private parties.

Q: How about waitresses and cooks? Did you do any of the cooking yourself or did you just manage it?

MB: No, I was always very lucky. I had a very good cook. I couldn't handle that. I used to do the hostess work. I used to seat the people and check the I.D.'s, and then my husband he used to take care of the bar business.

Q: Did they wear special uniforms – the waitresses?

MB: Sort of old-fashioned.

Q: What were the hours at that time?

MB: Well, at first we were open for breakfast for the horseback riders. That got tiring. That was too much. Of course, we were open for lunch, too. And then we just decided that we were just going to open about four o'clock in the afternoon and then for the rest of the evening. We cut out the lunch and everything. It was a killer for two managing, like my husband and I. You would have any children or anything and we didn't think it was worth it to kill ourselves. So we just took it easy.

Q: Last time I was here you mentioned the different clientele you had – it was not just a hang-out for teenagers or college students.

MB: Oh, we had a lot of Northwestern gentlemen, and they were very, very lovely. And like I said, Paul Lynde came up once in a while and so did Ara Parsegian. He was the coach

for Notre Dame for a few years. Oh, we had beautiful people. A lot of them were billionaires now and we get cards from them. I still get cards from them at Christmas. I have some friends in New York that call me when they're in Chicago. That's why I had to buy a wig, because I never knew when I was going to get a call . . . (laughter) . . . and my hair would look terrible. And I'd have to jump into formal, you know, and grab a cab and go down. But they're very lovely people and I had a very, very special evening with them. And the families, the son-in-laws that they don't like, the daughter-in-laws that they don't like, and . . . But it's nice seeing them.

Q: Where did you live at this time when you had The Bit?

MB: We had a suite there.

Q: Right in the back section?

MB: Yes, floor-level, and we had a four-room apartment.

Q: How long did you and your husband run The Bit? And if you could tell a little bit about what happened in the later years?

MB: Well, we ran it from, I think it's 1934 – I'm not sure – and until about – we rented it to a man and his wife. And it wasn't very successful. The business was wonderful.

Q: Is this after '34, 1934 that you rented it?

MB: Oh, no, honey. This was only just before we moved here. [Mrs. Bixler's home on Fernald] And we'll be here eight years in October. The thirteenth of October I will be here eight years. And they leased it for five years. We lived right there. We retained our suite. But we sold it then in 1969. But he had a drinking problem, and it worried us, because you have to know what you're doing. Oh, goodness, I'd go to bed at night and I'd be so worried. I'd think, "Gee, is the place going to be burned down?" And us with it?" My husband was quite ill at that time. So we decided we would not renew the lease. We would sell the whole place. Then I liked this old-fashioned house.

Q: Yes. I do, too. (laughs)

MB: It's so nice. I don't need any help. All I have is a window washer and a gardener. And then, of course I get help if I need it. But I don't have help under my feet. I don't want help – I've had that all my life. (chuckles) I don't need it now.

Q: Talking a little bit about Morton Grove, can you remember what the streets were like when you came here in the '20s and the '30s?

MB: Oh, my goodness . . .

Q: I realize a lot of things weren't developed . . .

MB: I can remember when I first came out here – no here, but first to Evanston. We used to come out here to the various roadhouses for dinner or an evening dancing or something. I know that Dempster Street wasn't paved. And I can remember the Lincoln Tavern. I

can remember the Dells. And then they had the White House. All very lovely, beautiful places.

Q: What was the White House?

MB: It was a bootleg place. (laughs)

Q: Where was that located?

MB: That was at Dempster and Waukegan Road.

Q: Weren't most of the roadhouses bootleg along Dempster?

MB: Oh, yes. Well, they didn't come out with it, you know. But if you knew somebody that knew somebody that knew somebody, you could get a drink if you wanted to.

Q: Do you remember any interesting stories about any of the roadhouses along Dempster?

MB: The only thing I could say is good. Everybody was very wonderful, and the people of Morton Grove – now like my husband and I we ran a nightclub, and everybody was just wonderful to us in town. My husband was president of the Lions Club, he was the vice-president of the Liquor Dealers Association, he was the commander of the American Legion Post over here – 134. And everybody just accepted us. Just because – it's a beautiful town. It always has been a beautiful town.

Q: Were you involved in the Legion also?

MB: Oh, yes. I was past president . . . (pauses) . . . and I enjoyed that very much. It's a wonderful organization. It really is. Very dedicated and beautiful organization.

Q: Would you happen to remember the airport that was in Morton Grove?

MB: Indeed I do! A friend of mine, her husband went out and lost a car gambling out there one day. It was on the other side of Dempster Street right straight through here. [motions with hand] I know we all went up one time and took a ride because my husband was in the Army. He was an Army mechanic during World War I and was stationed in England and he was stationed in France. He was interested, you know, and he knew the boys out there. And we knew they used to get little poker games out there once in a while. This friend of mine lived in Chicago and her husband went out and lost his brand-new car gambling.

Q: (gasps) Oh, you're kidding.

MB: So I'll never forget that.

Q: Did you ever go up in any of the planes?

MB: I didn't out here, but I did down in Rantoul, Illinois. I went up there many times.

Q: So you said your husband was involved in the First World War?

MB: yes.

Q: How about the Depression years . . .

MB: (whispers) Oh, it was terrible. That's an awful thing. I hope nobody in the world has to live through that again. We were very, very lucky that my husband did have a job. And he worked and it was steady work. I lived on the first floor – the people that lived on the second floor their gas was turned off. People that lived on the third floor their gas was turned off. And they just couldn't pay their rent, they couldn't pay anything and they had little children.

And I would go to the store and I'd buy, oh, beef and make some beef stew. And you could buy beef stew for twelve cents a pound. I'd buy four or five pounds of beef stew and make like a Hungarian goulash and put a lot of good fresh vegetables in. They'd all come down and make their coffee. And it was kind of fun. Finally both the couples got jobs, and they're still my very dear friends. We'll always be.

Q: But it really didn't affect your personal life?

MB: No, not me personally. I never had gone on relief or joined anything.

Q: How about the town here itself?

MB: Oh, it was hit quite badly because all the banks closed. The only bank around here that didn't close was the Skokie Bank. The First National Bank of Skokie survived it, but everybody was just all in the same boat. You couldn't put your money in the bank because there were no banks to put your money in.

Q: A lot of people had worked at Poehlmann's also, and that went.

MB: Oh, yes. Who could afford roses? You know, especially American Beauties.

Q: How about the Second World War?

MB: Well, in the Second World War, I just went in 1941 as president of the Auxiliary. We organized a Red Cross. I was the chairman and I had I don't know how many co-chairmen. We met in the Village Hall, down in the basement – the mayor gave us that. And we made bandages and we did knitting, and then they made clothing for the refugee children. And, well, all together I think we had about over 200 women working. We had it three days a week, and one night for the workers that couldn't – that worked daytimes. We had a lot of people out here working in the Buick plant which they were making, oh, certain things for the war. I think it was airplanes. I'm not sure. But some motors of some kind. And a lot of women were working there.

Q: That's interesting, the support they gave for that.

MB: That's right. It was a beautifully supportive town. Everybody was very, very, very patriotic. But, of course, you know I told you the other day we had difficulties with some of the people. There were very few.

Q: I wondered about that – the reaction of the German-Americans at that time. I've had other people also tell me that everyone would get together.

MB: Yes, yes, it was quite bad at the time, but everybody was alerted to it and everybody was watching. There's plenty of people here in town that were sworn in by the federal government, the F.B.I, They kept the government pretty well posted.

Q: Were you and your husband involved in politics at all once you moved here?

MB: No. We had enough troubles without getting into politics. (laughter) No.

Q: How about the Volunteer Fire Department?

MB: When we came out here, I'll tell you, you had to be a saint and you had to have I don't know what to get on that Volunteer Fire Department. And people waiting years and years and years to get on there. And when that old whistle blew over there (laughs), all the fire department volunteers would run like the dickens over to the firehouse. (laughs) I know there was one man here – he was a darling – Harry Lumpp. He used to have a – I think it was an A & P store, managed the store there. And no mater if you were in there shopping, that whistle blew, Harry raced everybody in town to it (laughs) – it's a wonder the store wasn't robbed and cleaned out. (laughs) but you know there's clerks there, of course. But, boy, they did a good job! There were terrific.

Q: Did you ever go inside Poehlmann's?

MB: Oh, yes, years ago. It was very beautiful, interesting. They shipped rosed all over the world.

Q: Yes. I think it's amazing that most of the people in town or a lot of the people in town had worked at Poehlmann's. And then when it crashed . .

MB: Yes, it was terrible, because Poehlmann Brothers was really the main supply of jobs in the town.

Q: How about any other recreation in town? Parades?

MB: Oh, we had parades! My husband and I – we had a 1911 Chalmers. That was a great car, I'll show you a picture. That was neat. (walks away to get photo)

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

MB: . . . (conversation joined in progress – speaking of the 1911 Chalmers car) Everyone used to have so much fun. When my husband and I retired, we wanted to give it to the American Legion. And so we had the commander come over, and my husband told him that he'd like to donate that to the Legion because we had the big Legion emblem on the side. We were in all the parades – Peoria, Illinois, and we were in all the big parades in Chicago. And , oh, it's been in the paper many times. And Milwaukee to all the conventions.

The commander said he didn't think they should accept it. Because, he said, "I'm afraid it would cause trouble. Everybody'd be wanting to borrow it." And they're noot a toy. They're worth a lot of money. They are not a toy, and you cn't go running around to all over with an antique car. He said people would be wanting to borrow it, and he says, "I'm afraid it would cause too much trouble. So we gave it to a friend of ours.

Q: How about dances in town? Did you often go to Dilg's?

MB: Oh, goodness gracious! Upstairs. Don't tell me! One time the Legion had a party up there. And we had raffled off a radio. And the place was packed, and we had more fun. It was nice and warm when we went up there. Well, my father-in-law used to live with us. All of his people were Pennsylvania Dutch on his father's side. We went up there, and he was a big , heavy man. Well, when we came down there was ice on the ground and snow. It had turned, just like that, real bad. Dad Bixler had won the radio. We only had three of them at home, but he won the radio, and he loved that radio. Here he was going (chuckles) and I'll be darned if he didn't slip and fall and bust the radio all to pieces. He weighed about 250 pounds and he fell flat on the radio. (laughter) Never hurt him, but the poor radio. You couldn't even fix it. One of those little square ones. But they were beautiful dances, and everybody had a lot of fun. And I remember we used to have the most beautiful dinners over at St. Martha's. The women of the parish used to cook them. I don't know if you ever heard of that.

Q: No. You belonged to St. Martha's?

MB: No, no. I'm a Methodist. And they would cook these beautiful turkey dinners. Oh, we used to have beer down there.

Q: For fund-raising?

MB: To make money. It was a fund-raiser. I have a lot of my dear friends that are Catholic. We all went, would patronize at St. Martha's. That's the one thing that we've always been very good at out here. Every organization or whatnot, we patronize. And we've always sort of looked after each other. More or less been very friendly with each other. Whether you're Catholic or whether you're Jewish or whether you're a Methodist. I'm a roaring Methodist myself. But those things don't mean anything when you're living in a nice little town like this.

Q: How about carnivals when you were involved with the American Legion?

MB: I have to tell you a good one. Now this is the truth. I don't know if you know Marguerite Stitt Church.

Q: No.

MB: Well, her husband was Ralph Church, and he was a United States Congressman. We had Morton Grove Days out here. So I was helping the Auxiliary girls back in the kitchen. We were making hamburgers and whatnot. We looked over at the bingo booth. You could have bingo then out in the forest preserve.

I looked over there and I saw this lady sitting there. We were at just about the end of the day. And everybody had checked out from the bingo game and checked in their money. That little woman was still sitting there, so I said to one of the girls there, "I'm going over and see what's wrong."

And I got over there, and it's Marguerite Stitt Church. And I said, "Mrs. Church, what are you doing sitting here all by yourself?" "Well," she says, "my husband gave me some money and told me to play bingo and to stay here and he'd pick me up. And," she says, "he hasn't come back for me yet." "Well," I said, "come on. Go with me and we'll go over here with the other girls. You can't sit here." And all at once, here come a car in there like mad and Ralph Church had forgotten all about her. He'd gone home – he lived in Evanston.

Q: (gasps) Oh, no! (laughs)

MB: And he had gone home! And he forgot that he had taken his wife! Of course, they were all around the bar politicianing. (laughs) "Oh," she said, "Ralph!" He says, "Honest. I forgot you. I got home and I forgot you." And back he came. He died shortly after that and she was our congresswoman for many, many years. She ran and she was elected. She was our district – right in here—congresswoman.

Then I was affiliated with the Women's Republican Club. And I know I shook hands with Nixon and Mrs. Nixon. I poured tea for Nixon. They had it – the first time he ran, when he lost. They called me and wanted me to pour tea at the Dawes Home in Evanston. Anyway we went there and we poured tea for Nixon and had little cookies and served them. Of course, he got beaten. Then he won the next time he ran. But I always liked him. He seemed like a very nice man.

Q: Quite an illustrious career he's had.

MB: Yes. And she was a very lovely woman. Very beautiful woman. So I've had my finger in Niles Township.

Q: I would say so! Is there anything else that you remember about Morton Grove that sticks out in your mind? Anything about the town or what you did when you first came here?

MB: There wasn't very much here when we came. Because, of course, it was right during the Depression. But we were very lucky. We had a lot of farmers around here. Now like in the back of The Biit, that was all farmland – truck farming. They used to take their merchandise down to Chicago to South Water Street.

They were gone then because this was all subdivided and the subdividers went broker. And the farms were all gone. Farmers had sold their land. We'd go back there and pick beautiful asparagus and rhubarb and horseradish – the roots, you know, horseradish roots. (laughs) And Dad Bixler was the only one who ate it, so we made him grate it. (laughter)

In the wintertime when the snow was on the ground, it was so beautiful. In the afternoon sometimes my husband made a bobsled. And we'd put that in the back end of the car. A lot of the customers would say, "Come on. Take me for a ride, Bix." And we'd go riding. There were no houses over there. There was one house way up in back of us. Just the

one lonely house. And then the other house was right down on Harms Road, and they had a vegetable market. A farmer's house down there, too. There were no houses in back of us or houses in front of us. And we could get on that bobsled and just go all through that subdivision because it was all paved.

Q: Where did The Bit and Bridle get its name? Who originally named it?

MB: This man that had the restaurant there was very fond of horses. And I'm very fond of horses. That's my horse that I used to ride and had as a child at home. (points to photo)

Q: Oh. And that's where he got the name and it stuck through the years?

MB: Yes. That's my horse. His name was Baldy. He had two or three horses right down the street from us. It isn't an academy, but it's a rental. He kept his horses there, so I imagine it's because he was very fond of horses.

Q: Then wasn't it in the sixties that the "Bridle" part was dropped and it was just called The Bit?

MB: Everybody started calling it The Bit of their own accord – we never dropped it. And then when we put an enormous sign up there. The Bit. We said, "Why add the Bridle? Everybody says The Bit/" "Oh, let's go out to The Bit tonight."

Q: I think it's great that the restaurant was there for so many years. it was like an institution in Morton Grove. Everybody knew about it.

MB: That's right. But you talk about a home for your historical society. That would have been the ideal place.

Q: Oh, location, too.

MB: And that fireplace, honey . . . and those beams were all hand-hewn right out of the property that they cut down right where The Bit stood. Where all of that stood there's a beautiful old farm.

Q: Well, from what you said, you're the one that looked into buying the place in the very beginning.

MB: Yes, because I loved antiques. I've always loved antiques.

Q: What did your husband do when you first got married? You hadn't bought the restaurant yet, is that correct?

MB: Well, he was sort of – not on the F.B.I, but he was in Secret Service work when he got out of the Army. And he got tired of that. He didn't want any part of it.

Q: Did either one of you have any experience in running a restaurant?

MB: My folks were Methodists! (laughs) You couldn't have a drink in the house. (laughter) Except some of my mother's homemade dandelion wine.

Q: (laughs) You're kidding.

MB: But I never drank much and my husband didn't drink much. But, we just thought, well, what are you going to get into? We knew that if Roosevelt got in, we were going to get beer back. So we took a gamble and opened that little place. And you know the ironic part of it – our mayor at that time was Hank Proesel. He just retired about a year ago. I was so happy to see him because I loved he and his wife. They were such wonderful people and they were so good to us. They hated to see us move, but we rented from a woman and every year the price went up and she wouldn't give you a five-year lease. It was year-to-year and you never knew what minute you were going to get bounced out. And I said, "I want my own property."

I was raised that way – that you're supposed to own your own home. That's the way people are. I can remember as a child, my dad had all this acreage there all these beautiful Black Angus cattle. He and I'd get in the buggy. Dad and I would be going along, he'd be checking over, down to see the cattle. He'd say, "Myrtle, as far as the eye can see is ours. Land and your own property is what counts in this world." And, you know – because he was born in England where if a duke or an earl or a sir or anybody went by, you took your hat off and you stood there. You were trash. You were just trash.

Q: What made your father decide to come over here?

MB: Well, he just got tired of England, and he had a cousin over here.

Q: Did his cousin live in Indiana?

MB: Yes, they lived there. And he went there and that's where he met my Uncle Bob. That's when he invited my dad to go down for Christmas dinner. And they got on horseback and went to Orland to spend Christmas, and there was my mother. So it was love at first sight. (laughter)

Q: Nine children later, huh?

MB: Yes. Ten children they had all together.

Q: How about your other sisters and brothers? Do they live in the area?

MB: Well, I lost a sister about two, three years ago, and she was 98 years old. And her mind was like a trigger. Three of them died before I was born. And then I lost another brother. There's only one brother and myself left out of the whole bunch. But they all lived a good, ripe age.

Q: Are you the only one that went into business for yourself with the restaurant?

MB: Yes, they were all farmers. My dad set them all up in farms. Every one of them. Even the girls with their husbands. Well, the one sister that died that lived to 98, her husband was not a farmer. He was from the farm, but he was a fireman in Chicago Heights. He loved the excitement of the horses running and the city, you know, and all of that.

Q: I just think it's interesting that here you're the youngest girl, your parents were older at the time that they had you and you had the gumption to get a business of your own!

MB: Oh, I wouldn't ever want to live down in Indiana. It's a beautiful little town and I love it, and I loved everybody that's in it. I had a beautiful childhood, just gorgeous. We'd go to Culver Military School to proms. Of course, we had chaperons with us. But Mother never went. She couldn't be bothered. We had a marvelous life. But I was never cut out to be a farmer's wife. I had more get-up-and-go in me. (laughs)

Q: Yes, it sounds like it. (laughs)

MB: I'm like Mildred (Orphan). (laughter)

Q: Yes, you are.

MB: I have more – something interesting.

Q: What was your husband's name then? Al?

MB: Adelbert. And his mother was Catholic and his father was Episcopalian. It was a split marriage. Bix's mother was a French Canadian and she was Catholic. Dad Bixler was Episcopalian. So it was agreed – they don't do that anymore, I understand – that the boys would go to the father's faith, and the girls would go to the mother's faith. So, you see, it's a split family, a split marriage.

Q: Yes. How interesting. What did you plan on doing with your degree in psychology?

MB: Well, I was going to go to South America with the Standard Oil Company. And I was going to be like an interpreter with the employees.

Q: They were going to drill in South America?

MB: Oh they've got oil wells there now all over South America.

Q: You were to go with the company?

MB: I would go with the company, and if I would stay with the company for five years, they'd pay me a salary there now another friend of mine she was going with me. They would pay us a salary, and then they would hold so much back, so if you stayed with them five years, you got \$10,000 cash. Well, now in those days, \$10,000 cash was a lot of money to come back to the United States with. But you had to sign a contract that you would stay with the company five years. And they paid your way down and you got your salary, of course – not your whole salary. So much was put away, but they added to it.

Q: What made you change your mind at the end?

MB: Fell in love. (laughs)

Q: That'll do it every time,, won't it? (laughs)

MB: Oh, honey, it will do it every time! (laughter) And it's the most important thing in the world.

Q: So you never regretted not going to South America?

MB: Never! Never.

Q: I didn't think so. Well, it sounds like you had a good life with your husband.

MB: We had a beautiful life/ Oh, yes.

Q: To work together like that in your own business.

MB: We had a lot of fun. And, you know, I think it's really wonderful to have a career, and I admire people that have it. But I don't think there's anything in the world as satisfying as a beautiful marriage, and you're happy together. And you've got someone that loves you. We all have to have somebody that loves us.

Q: Yes. Well, this has been a good interview.

MB: Well, honey, it's been fun.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS