

Bob West Life Story (around 1985)

My name is Robert Marion West. I was born May 16th, 1923. My parent's names were Laverne Crist West. She was 88 years old when she passed away. My father's name was Walter Lawrence West. He passed away when he was 73 years old. He was an only child. My mother's father was Parker Crist and his wife's name was Catherine. My mother had two sisters: Grace who married a Dr. Burns who was a veterinarian. His other sister was named Irene and died when I was about 17 years old from hemorrhaging. She had blood come out of her ears and mouth.

My mother had one brother whose name was Earl Crist. My dad's father's name was Lawrence Philander West who had one brother, Carl West which were neighbors. My grandmother's name was Sarah Crist. She was very small and lived to be until 97 years old. She had one brother named Howard Crist. She had three sisters whose names were Ellen Osborne, Mary Carven, and Clara Guard.

I had two brothers whose names were Lester and Lawrence. I had nine sisters: Betty Shriver, Mineta Williams, Martha Mathis, Eleanor Rapson, Helen LaMar, Mabel Kalsbeek, Ruth Logue, Jean McCormick, and Catherine Jones.

We had a big house which was always full. We got along real good as a family and when we went to school, we brought others home with us to stay all night. I went to school the first eight grades at Dunlapsville.

We always milked about 15 cows by hand. I had to milk three or four cows each morning before I went to school. Then I had trouble getting the manure smell off. One time when I was in high school, I had a gilt [pig] for the FFA and 4-H to breed. I took her two miles to breed before school. I had trouble getting the gilt home and the bus came just as I got back. The bus waited for me to get ready for school.

From 8th grade on, me and Lawrence planted our own little garden. We sure had fun learning how to plant things. One year, I planted some peanuts, but they never done very well. You have to keep covering up the bloom on them as that is where the peanuts come from.

We played a lot of horse shoes when growing up. One time, I hit Ruth in the middle of the forehead and it really bled. Was I ever sorry! She still had a scar there.

I always had the knees worn out of my pants from crawling and playing. Sometimes, we would play in the barn. We played basketball in the driveway. The neighbors always came to our house to lay. We had a small loft in the barn. We used to string up a blanket for a curtain. We would play and have side shows and try and out do the other one. We would play Follow the Leader and climb up as high as we could in the barn and jump off into loose hay. It was loose hay then, as we did not bale.

I got my first bicycle when I was a sophomore in high school. Went sled-riding a lot in the wintertime. We had a big hill in back of the barn. We had an outside toilet and no bathroom. It was out in the chicken yard. Sometimes a rooster was mean and would chase us as we went to the toilet. The girls are afraid to go because the roosters would try to flop you on the legs. In the wintertime, we used a chamber instead of the toilet.

I was always little and short. I grew four inches after I got out of high school. Lawrence was six foot tall when he was in 8th grade. I always slept with my sisters until about the fourth grade. Then me and Lawrence slept together. We had two beds in each room upstairs and it was really cold in the wintertime. We would heat irons and silk stones to wrap up to put on heat when we would go to bed to keep warm. We only had a wood stove downstairs and we would run downstairs in the morning and stand by the stove

to get warm. One time, Ruth got her nightgown and hair on fire. My mother put a cold rug over her to put the fire out. But she burned her hands really bad.

I was in 4-H about eight years and enjoyed it very much. I had a Grand Champion Steer in Union County in 1941 and a Reserve Champion in 1942, my last year in 4-H. I played baseball and took track in high school. My last two years, I run the mile and half-mile run on track, but didn't do too good. Lawrence ran the 440 dash and always won. He went to state his senior year and came in third. I got to go along to watch him run. We went to the 500 miles race try-outs to watch out for a while.

We cut a lot of wood by hand with a cross-cut saw, about 100 yards each winter. We heated about 100 yards in winter. We heated with wood and cooked with wood so I wasn't that cold.

I went to Liberty Short High School and graduated in 1942. My best subjects were arithmetic, math, shop, and agriculture. Ruth and I were in the same grade from third grade through high school as I was sick a lot in third grade and missed too much school and had to take third grade over. I did make a nice cedar chest for Mabel in shop class, I think in my junior year. We now have the cedar chest as Mabel gave it to us when she passed away.

I started farming with my Dad when I got out of high school. I was the smallest in my class. I was five foot one inch as a freshman and weighed about 103 pounds. We had a thrashing machine that cut and thrashed our own wheat and some neighbors. We shucked corn by hand about 80 to 100 acres. We put hay up by hand and used wagon and a pitch fork.

We always had horses which I worked an awful lot over the summer. We planted corn with horses and had to follow the corn planter to cover corn that didn't get covered. I shucked 80 acres of wheat by myself before I went to the Navy. I always had it hard to harness the horses because I was little. They got a combine and corn picker after we went to Navy.

We had a tractor but my older brothers drove it. I got my driver's license when I was 21 years old. My first car before I went to Navy was a 1935 Ford. We used to make a lot of cider, maybe 100 gallons. We always put it outside next to my Dad's bedroom and one year someone stole two barrels of cider.

World War II started and Lawrence went to Navy. I joined Navy in 1945 and took training at the Great Lakes Training Station. Went to California and trained at Treasure Island. They put me on a big ship that was named Selma. It was 600 foot long and carried ammunition for all the other ships, like aircraft carriers, battleships, destroyers, and others.

The shells were 16 inches. My grandpa died the day the war ended. The war ended in 1945, but I did not get discharged until 1946. I was in service about 18 months. I drove a lot of liberty boats out in California after the war was over. I had a great experience in service and felt great to serve my country.

After I got out of service, I went three years to GI classes at Liberty to study farming. I also met a real nice sweet little girl whose name was Jean Steele. She worked in Hamilton, Ohio and I lost a lot of sleep going to see her and going to school three nights a week. It is great to be young and full of life. You are young only once so make the best of it.

I thought so much of Jean that we got married May 3, 1947. She was two years younger than me so we learned everything together with a great life ahead of us.

We had two sons, Kenneth and Darrell. Kenneth was born in Indiana as we lived there one and one-half years until March, 1947 when we moved to where we now live. Kenneth married Sharon Buchanan and had a little girl named Amy. My other son is Darrell who married Annie Schmitt. They both were great to

me and helped me farm. They both have doctorate degrees now and like to teach others what me and Jean taught them. He, Ha, Ha.

We did try very hard to help them. Darrell doesn't have any children yet, but is working on it. I hope so as we have no one to pass the West name on yet. Kenneth lives in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and Darrell lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

We have two daughters also, which we are proud of. One is Joanne who married Tim Shaver and she has two sweet kids I like to spoil. One is Jeff and the other is Katie, a little girl with curly hair. They live close to Fairhaven. It is nice to have them close so we can see them often. Tim works in Oxford as an engineer and also is farming on the side.

Another daughter Shirley married Jim Mitchell. They have three sweet kids I also like to tease and spoil, a daughter Laura who is in school, Mark at home farming, and Doug also at home. They live close to Eaton and are farming. Glad to have them close by also. We can baby sit with them and also they can help me when I get into trouble.

I have always farmed and enjoyed the hard work of raising my children and teaching them new things. I wished could spend more time with them when they were little. I spent a lot of time raising hogs, calves, chickens, cats, dogs, and also milking. The kids all carried milk and helped carry silage when they were young. Please spend lots of time with your kids. They will love you later.

I fell out of metal corn crib when Joanne was out starting to school. Always had trouble with my back later that. I also enjoyed working in the Church, which I love very much. The Lord has been real good to me. I enjoyed being an usher, superintendent of Sunday school, being a trustee, being an elder, teaching Sunday school, being on the evangelistic committee, forming a prayer group that has worked overtime for me many times. I pray my kids and grandkids also accept the Lord as their Savior and know what life is all about.

I also have slowed down a lot with operations. I had a hemorrhoid operation, hernia operation to remove my belly button. I had a heart attack, leg trouble, and many other backsets, but still thank the Lord for being good to me. I enjoyed being on the extension committee, the Pork Festival Board, Farm Bureau president, township trustee, and serving my community.

The girls helped do the farmwork while I was laid up. They plowed corn. One time, they run into each other. I like my hobbies now doing things each day I can like working puzzles, doing garden, work books, latchhook, painting, carpentry work, praying, and taking care of my wife and cooking. I have great neighbors and friends and am glad to live where I do. The United States is a great country. I hope I can live the best life possible. I hope I can continue to be a good Dad and grandparent. Thanks for all your visits and it is nice to be part of a big family. Thank you for listening.