

Jean West Life Story (July 28, 2001)

Darrell West: We know that you started working at Miami University. Why did you work at Miami?

Jean West: He wanted me to get a job and help him pay for a new tractor. He needed a new tractor.

Darrell: Was it a difficult decision to start working off the farm?

Jean: No, I had wanted to for a long time, to help out.

Darrell: Why was that?

Jean: Because we needed the money with four kids.

Darrell: Why did you decide to look for a job at Miami University as opposed to somewhere else?

Jean: I had Richmond or Eaton or Oxford in mind. I think Ken was going there so I decided to try there first. And I got on right away.

Darrell: Were you looking for any particular kind of position?

Jean: A secretary.

Darrell: Where did you end up working at Miami?

Jean: The political science department.

Darrell: How did you happen to end up there?

Jean: That's where they took me for the interview.

Darrell: Who did the interview?

Jean: Dr. Woodworth.

Darrell: What did he want to know? How did the interview go?

Jean: He wanted to know my abilities, what I could do, how long I intended to work. I told him I didn't know, maybe five years. It ended up 25.

Darrell: Did you enjoy working at Miami?

Jean: Yes. It was hard sitting still for eight hours. I was so used to being on the go.

Darrell: So Jim Woodworth was the first chairman you worked with. What was he like to work with?

Jean: Very good chairman. I had no problems with him.

Darrell: What was he like as a boss?

Jean: Considerate. Very good boss to have. In fact, all my bosses were. I can't complain about any of them. He was first, then Dr. Waltzer and then Dr. DeLue.

Darrell: What was Waltzer like as a boss?

Jean: He was a good boss, only you never knew what he was thinking. He was a quiet person.

Darrell: What about Professor DeLue?

Jean: He was very nice. I liked him. They were all good bosses, I cannot complain about any of them. It was a good place to work. I am glad I worked there. It had good benefits too.

Darrell: What was it like being in a political science department?

Jean: I learned a lot. It is a broad area. There are several departments in it. It was interesting. I learned a lot working there.

Darrell: Such as, what did you learn?

Jean: It was current news and history and international and urban. There was Russian. There was a law department. Several different things.

Darrell: Who was the most memorable professor in that department when you worked there?

Jean: Well, I remember all of them. I don't know that anybody stands out above the others. They were all fine,

Darrell: How many years did you work at Miami?

Jean: 25.

Darrell: What year did you retire?

Jean: 1993.

Darrell: Why did you decide to retire when you did?

Jean: I was retirement age and then I had worked over that, over 65. I worked some more and then decided it was time to quit. We got three years added benefit. That was the reason I picked that particular time.

Darrell: Are you happy you retired?

Jean: Yes.

Darrell: Did you worry how you would spend your time after you retired?

Jean: There is always something to do if you want to do it. There is no problem hunting a job at home.

Darrell: When you first retired, how did you spend your time?

Jean: First of all, mowing the lawn in the summer time, gardening, flowers, doing crafty things, crafts.

Darrell: You also worked at the church. What types of things did you do there?

Jean: I helped out in the music department. I was involved in the WMS, the Women's Society. There were dinners.

Darrell: What is your favorite thing about the church?

Jean: the whole thing. I always enjoyed going to church, since I was young. This is part of my life.

Darrell: You also get together with some women from time to time? Who are the people you get together with the most?

Jean: All the ones who have lost their husbands. Jeannette, and Jane, Jean, Lucille, Eunice, Ruth Stevens. We go to the Bible Fellowship in Richmond during the school year. I learned a lot from that. You dig down deep for that. We always had homework.

Darrell: Did you always do your homework?

Jean: Yes I did. It wasn't something we had to turn in.

Darrell: What do you women do after bible study?

Jean: We go out to eat.

Darrell: Where do you go?

Jean: We try different places up there, but MCL seems to be our main one in Richmond. Whenever the kids are out of school because of snow or something like that, they don't have it because of the leaders and their own kids being home.

Darrell: Do these women ever talk about their husbands?

Jean: Not at church, it is strictly on the Bible.

Darrell: But what about when you go out?

Jean: Well, we are widows, most of us. Mary Croy isn't. Most of us are.

Darrell: What do you talk about?

Jean: Anything and everything. Whatever is going on. Anybody who is ill in the community and the church. Just things that are going on then.

Darrell: What are your impressions of Jeannette Hays?

Jean: A very good friend and neighbor.

Darrell: What is your favorite thing about her?

Jean: She has lived in the community all her life. We both know people who used to live there. Families of ones who already have gone on. I don't know what we talk about.

Darrell: How would you describe Jean Charles?

Jean: A very good friend. We grew up together. We have the same problems. You have to learn to live by yourself and do all that you can without depending on someone else. But you have to call on someone from time to time, the son-in-laws, the grandkids, and the daughters.

Darrell: What is the hardest thing about being on your own?

Jean: Fixing something that you can't fix. Being alone, I guess. I got used to coming home from work, you get used to talking about what happened during the day. Now there is no one to tell it to.

Darrell: Are you surprised at how your live has been since Dad died?

Jean: Yes, I guess. I thought I couldn't cope being alone. But you do what you have to do. There is no choice. You have to go on.

Darrell: You have to do a lot more things for yourself?

Jean: Yes, definitely.

Darrell: Do you file your own taxes?

Jean: Yes, I do.

Darrell: Do you keep your own books?

Jean: Yes, I do. I go to a tax person. I don't file without someone helping out with the books, figuring it out.

Darrell: Is it difficult to keep track of things?

Jean: Not if you had a good memory (laughs). I keep all my bills and anything that I think I might need during the year. I keep a record book. It is not up to date now, but it will be.

Darrell: Do you keep a diary?

Jean: No.

Darrell: Why not?

Jean: I have tried three or four times, but I don't stick with it.

Darrell: What is the thing about your life that you are most proud?

Jean: My family. My kids have all done very well. They all have been good to me. I don't know what I would have done without them.

Darrell: Is there anything about your life that has disappointed you?

Jean: No, I don't think so. No.

Darrell: Is there anything you would have liked to have done that you didn't do?

Jean: We were talking about going to Grand Canyon which we never got there. We were going to go that last year before he left. We did a lot of traveling and I am glad for what we did.

Darrell: What was your favorite trip?

Jean: I had a lot of favorites. I went to London twice and Romania. That was a place I thought I would never go, but I did. I saw how the other side of the world lives.

Darrell: Do you think your parents would be surprised at how your life turned out?

Jean: Probably. Our way of living is nothing compared to what they did. Things have changed tremendously since I was born. I can even remember when they put in electricity. Your lifestyle is different.

Darrell: When did they put in electricity in your house?

Jean: It must have been when I was 10 or 12.

Darrell: When would that have been?

Jean: 1935. I remember using a kerosene lamp at night.

Darrell: After you got married, you lived in Indiana for a while.

Jean: A couple of years.

Darrell: Where did you live?

Jean: We were with his parents. They were building a house for us. So we lived with them from May until December. Then we moved across the road from Bob's parents, west of Liberty.

Darrell: How did that work out?

Jean: It worked out fine. I had the best mother-in-law anybody could have. But you still are better off in your own place. She never chided me about anything and she could have.

Darrell: And Dad was farming then?

Jean: Yes.

Darrell: Was he working with his father?

Jean: Yes.

Darrell: How did that work out?

Jean: Well, he was farming on the thirds so we didn't make much money.

Darrell: Why did you decide to move from Indiana to Ohio?

Jean: My Dad found this place that was open to a new tenant. We talked to him and went.

Darrell: Where was this?

Jean: Across from Grace Kline or next to her. She later moved across the road from us on the Scott farm.

Darrell: You were farming on the halves then.

Jean: Yes.

Darrell: How did that work out?

Jean: Pretty good.

Darrell: What was the house like when you moved over?

Jean: There was no running water in it or hot water of any kind. No bathroom. We got thing one at a time. It was the only way to do it.

Darrell: How did you deal with the fact there was no running water?

Jean: You carried it in. There was a sink in the kitchen. There was a pump, a hand pump. Gradually, we got water in there.

Darrell: What did you use for a bathroom?

Jean: We went outside (laughs).

Darrell: Did that get cold in the middle of winter?

Jean: A little bit, slightly!

Darrell: Is it true you got electricity in the barn before you got it in the house?

Jean: There was electricity in there. We had that. Where did you mean? Where I live now or where we lived before?

Darrell: Across from Klines.

Jean: There was electricity in there.

Darrell: But you had running water in the barn before you had it in the house.

Jean: Yes.

Darrell: What would you do about laundry?

Jean: I had to heat water on the stove. I got a Maytag washer right away and washed that way. Which is a long time between carrying the water in heating the water, wash, rinse, and carry it back out, and hang it up. You didn't do it in 15 minutes.

Darrell: What was it like when you had your first child Ken?

Jean: It was great. I didn't have much experience. I hadn't been around babies much before. It was great. I learned a lot there.

Darrell: How did you know how to raise the first baby?

Jean: I don't know. You do things by instinct. My mother helped a lot. She took him home for a couple of days. I had wrote out everything she was supposed to do, just the way she was supposed to do it. She kept that letter and razzed me about it quite often after that. The more kids you get, the less rigid you are.

Darrell: Did Ken sleep through the night when he was first born?

Jean: Well no, not for a little while. I don't remember how long.

Darrell: What do you remember about him as a baby?

Jean: A good child. I didn't have any trouble. I can't remember anything specific.

Darrell: How did life change when Joanne came along?

Jean: A little busier. When you had two and they were pretty close together. Then Shirley came along and that was like having twins almost You did what you had to do as quick as you can Every child had their own needs. Every child was different.

Darrell: How would you describe the childbirth of Darrell?

Jean: He was pokey. It took him hours to think about it. He was a breech birth so that was why.

Darrell: What does that mean?

Jean: He came backwards.

Darrell: How long was your labor?

Jean: I don't know what time I went to the hospital. He was born around 10 o'clock in the morning. We went the evening before. I guess he could be a lot longer. Now they do it by Caesarian for breech birth. But I didn't.

Darrell: You did it the hard way.

Jean: Yes.

Darrell: Was the doctor worried about that?

Jean: I don't know. He didn't tell me. But then I really did it the better way because you don't have as long a time in healing.

Darrell: What was it like having four little kids in the house?

Jean: Busy. Very busy. It seemed like Joanne could out-cry Shirley. She kept me on my toes.

Darrell: Which one was the most difficult to raise?

Jean: I am not going to say that. I don't know. I didn't have time to think of it that way.

Darrell: How did you keep up with four kids?

Jean: It was a 24 hour a day job. It was busy all the time. You had things to do.

Darrell: Do you have any advice for the future?

Jean: What kind of advice?

Darrell: Any kind of advice for anyone?

Jean: The biggest thing would be to get involved in your church. Don't forget who our Creator is and serve him. Make him your Lord and Savior. You have to trust in him.