

Edna Isabell Dorrance McKenna was born in Rock Springs, Wyoming on October 13, 1903. She was born in a house, located on the site of Robys Launderette, along with a twin sister, Eva, who is now deceased. She was one of 10 children of a coal miner who worked above ground all his life. There were 8 girls and 2 boys and never a dull moment.

Her earliest memory is traveling to Lander, Wyoming when the Indian Reservation was opened with her parents and about 5 siblings. They traveled by horse and wagon and camped out two nights in a tent. She remembers seeing the Indians but the rest of the trip is shadowy in her mind.

They only lived in Rock Springs from October until April and then they moved to the ranch her father had purchased about 50 miles out Highway 430.. The Dorrance Ranch is still there today much as it appeared then. The Elks Lodge had a house above the site of purchase and the father dismantled it and moved it to its present location with the help of one older boy. There they had a large garden where they grew "about everything" which the parents sold in Rock Springs. It took over four hours of traveling time with horse and wagon. Edna recalls that when the parents usually stayed overnight in town the kids had their greatest fights and arguments. Her eyes still sparkle at the memory of it.

This moving back and forth made a part time affair of school and none of the kids went beyond the 7th grade. The father worked clearing up the coal yards in the winter and delivering coal to the customers and the children, from age 14 on, had jobs outside the home. Her schooling was conducted at North Side School where Washington School now stands, and on the mazzanine of the Park Hotel where classes were conducted for years. Later she attended classes in a rock building, the site of the parking lot of the District Education Building which has since been torn down. During her school years she worked at the Empire Hotel helping in the kitchen both cooking and serving. This Hotel was torn down in the 70's to create the parking lot on 5th street.

Edna and I discussed birth control. She could not recall what her mother did; probably nothing since she had babies every other year but she did recall in later years her mother would discuss with contemporaries the cocoa butter babies. How this was used is lost to history.

Having completed her schooling at 15 yrs. of age Edna went to work at Hiibackas Tailoring Shop which was located on K st. Since sewing was part of her home education, her mother made all the families clothing, she knew the basics and immediately helped to make mens suits. She recalled that the cost of the suits to the customer was about \$150.00 each, could not recall how long it took to make each one since some was machine made, some hand stitched, repeated fittings were needed. After measuring carefully Mr. Hiibacka would cut out the pattern and the work would begin. While working in our establishment she would often reline a mans suit jkt. and do a beautiful job. Her wages were \$1.00 a day at that time.

Being married in the early 1920's and living in Winton, Wyo. curtailed her working for some years. She had two daughters and when questioned about means of transportation she replied simply, "walking". They did, apparently, have a car but it would not operate quite a bit of the time and since they could not afford to have repairs done they just used the most affordable means of transportation. She mentioned that since most everyone was in the same boat no-one worried about it. Who-ever had a car that ran provided the means of getting about.

Edna was divorced in the latter twenties, a decision she was four years in the making. Alcoholism was a factor but in those days divorce was not the norm and religion also entered as a factor. She did divorce, however, and went back to Mr. Hiibackas shop. Her mother stayed home from the ranch and took care of the children. She told me that she never felt guilty about not staying home with the kids because they were in school by then and she knew them to be getting the best of care. However, working mothers were not that common then. She joined the Tailoring Union at that time. Work was paid by the piece - coats, vests and pants and it was not until the union got into the act that hourly wages were paid. In the early 1930's she made \$25.00 per week. She was secretary of the union in charge of collecting the dues but could not recall what they were. In the 1940's this union became a part of the United Mine Workers of America which, in the late 40's also included the Laundry and Dry Cleaner workers. She continued to be active as secretary until the middle 50's when this section of the union died a natural death.

After her parents retired they lived with her in her home and Edna mentioned the pension each received from the County. I suggested that this might have come from the Miners Fund but she re-iterated that the funds came from the County. Her father received \$100.00 per mo. and after his death her mother received \$90.00. Later this was amended to approximately \$55.00 per mo. until her demise. Care of parents and siblings came more naturally before the 40's but it was not always easy either. Rock Springs did have the Old Folks Home, located in the white building behind the old hospital building, but this was used for the more extreme cases of failing health.

Today she still does alteration work in her home, plays bridge twice a month, belongs to a Home-makers group (admitting that this is purely social and they no longer have projects), is an office in the Eagles Aux., a member of the No. Side Catholic Church and bowls three times a week on the Log Inn team, the Cream of Weber team and on the Sr. Citizens League team. Needless to say she is in good physical condition.

I just contacted her on the telephone to check out a particular detail and she had remembered two details. There were several black families in the area of the ranch and she recalled the Crouch family (still in Green River) lived in Browns Park. Mr. Crouch became ill and needed to be taken to the hospital in Rock Springs and the family stopped at Dorrences Ranch for reasons unknown. Mr. Crouch took a turn for the worse and expred there. These people also farmed and took their produce to town for sale. With the short growing season in our area it seems amazing that sufficient amounts could be gown there to be profitable but they never attempted tomatoes. Another recall was that while walking to school when she was about 10 or 11 yrs. of age they saw the result of a lynching hanging under the bridge of the railroad crossing. He was black and it was never determined who he was and where he came from. She told me she never forgot the scene. The Klan was active in Rock Springs in the 20's and I have a story which was related to me by Edwards aunt which involved the man Kathy Smith interviewed. Since the son and his wife are close friends and the fact that they may be unaware of the fathers action keeps me from putting the incident in writing but if you like I will relate it to you at another time..~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Mrs. McKennas life has not been unusual in its scope. She is one of the countless persons who contributed to the sphere of life ~~but~~ by just having lived. In our search for the unusual and extraordinary we tend to forget that these were the unsung heroes of our time.'.....and their time.