Marina Metevelis

A true blue "Rosie the Riveter" and promoter and preserver of Tulsa history, including its famous tunnels.

Chapter 01 – 0:59
Introduction

Announcer: Marina Metevelis answered the call to defend the United States as one of the iconic bandanna-clad Rosie the Riveters. Marina was sixteen when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941—she applied for a job at the Wichita aircraft plant where the B-17 Flying Fortresses met the wings that carried them into battle. She became a Rosie the Riveter her senior year in high school. When she was a kid, Marina spent summers in Tulsa visiting her uncles. They were 32nd Degree Masons, and so were the oil barons. During those visits, Marina met all of the oil barons...thus her knowledge of Tulsa's history and the tunnels in downtown Tulsa, which eventually led her to become a tour guide through those famous tunnels in 1992. She was also a librarian at Tulsa Community College [TCC] and served as Director of The Heritage Center at TCC.

Marina was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1924. But her story actually begins in Greece which she talks about in her oral history interview on *VoicesofOklahoma.com*.

Chapter 02 – 4:18
Coming to America

John Erling: My name is John Erling and today's date is October 20, 2011. Marina, would you state your full name, please.

Marina Metevelis: Marina Ann Metevelis.

JE: Your date of birth and your present age?

MM: March 25, '24, and I'm eighty-seven years old.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

MM: We are recording in the Heritage Center at Northeast Campus of Tulsa Community College.

JE: What is your title here?

MM: Director of the Heritage Center, which is the college historic collection.

JE: Where were you born?

MM: I was born in Wichita, Kansas.

JE: Your mother's name? Maiden name?

MM: Mother's maiden name is Anna Elaine Pomidon. She was born in Turkey.

JE: How did she make her way to the United States.

MM: She and her baby sister came as French tourists because her brother was here in the States and didn't want them coming through Ellis Island as immigrants.

JE: Why?

MM: Because they did not know English, for one thing. They had just gone through the 1918 influenza. They had just lost their mother, their older sister, and her little twin girls, because they were living in Piraeus, which is the port of Athens, Greece. And because her brother Nicholas was here. He was telling my future father, "I can't bring my sisters here and have them come through Ellis Island. It will just scare them to death. How can I get them over here?:

So my father said, "We'll go see a lawyer and see if he can work out a solution for your problem."

My father was a friend of Harry Truman, and Harry Truman, at the time, was attending the University of Kansas City, along with my father. My father was taking small business classes and Truman was taking political science because he was going to go into politics.

But Nicholas paid a judge five hundred dollars to get a permit to have his two sisters come as tourists on the French ship. I have their passports, they're all in French.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

MM: And that's how they got their Social Security benefits and all, because I took their passports to the bank and translated the French so they would know their names and birth dates and all. And that's how they got their Social Security.

JE: Your father's name?

MM: His name was Augustus Kochfein. And because the KKK was throwing bricks through his store window in Wichita he went to court and had his name changed to a Greek name because his family had settled in Corinth, Greece, for years and years. Because they were all agrarians from northern Germany and they wanted to farm.

The homes there are built up in the mountains because they farm down in the valleys. They graduate from high school, they're fifteen.

And there was an uncle who had been going to America and coming back and getting the young boys and bringing them to America to learn business and how to have vocations and not be goat farmers back in Greece.

So Dad changed his name. He had to have not a German name, so he changed it to Constantine—it was Augustus, they called him Gus, but he changed it to Constantine and instead of Blafaus it was Balafas, B-a-l-a-f-a-s, so it didn't have the German name.

There were two families that migrated from Germany to Greece, settled in Corinth. One was the Kochfein family and the other one was the Blafaus family.

JE: So was he of Greek descent?

MM: Well, yes, because they settled in Greece so they were marrying Greek girls. And his mother was a Greek lady. Grandmother was a Greek lady.

JE: How did he come here to the United States?

MM: He came as an immigrant in 1905. And he was only about seventeen years old when he came.

JE: What did your father do for a living in Wichita?

MM: He settled in Kansas City because that's where Uncle Mike Conemenos was bringing all the boys, from the villages. And he learned a trade. He became a shoe repairman. He said, "I'm Gus the Cobbler."

Chapter 03 – 4:14
Harry Truman

Marina Metevelis: After he learned the shoe repair trade he had a shop in the Muehlebach Hotel. And next door to the hotel Harry Truman and Harry Levi had this little haberdashery shop. In the afternoons, my dad and Harry Truman would be in the Muehlebach Hotel coffee shop having coffee and shooting the breeze and discussing the affairs of the day.

Truman had already been to war and come back. My dad was going to war but Armistice was declared so he didn't go across the big pond, as they said back then.

So Harry was telling my dad, "You know, I think I'm going to go into politics. I've done everything there is to do. I've married Bess, we're living in an upstairs bedroom in her mother's house in Independence. All I owned in my life is an old black Buick. And I've got to do something to make some money."

My dad told Harry, "There's no way you can be a politician."

And Harry Truman said, "Why do you say that?"

He says, "Well, for one thing, you're too damn honest." (laughs)

Harry said, "Well, I've got to try it."

When Harry went into politics he started out as a county judge, then he was a commissioner, then he ran as lieutenant governor. He made governor of Missouri and the

next thing you know, he was the Vice President. And Roosevelt died and Harry Truman became President.

When he was sworn in as President, he sent my dad a telegram, and he said, "Well, I made it clear to the top, Gus. When you come to DC, look me up. I'll have you a room in the White House."

And guess what? When my brother was killed on Iwo Jima he was brought back to be buried at Fort Leavenworth.

After World War II there was just hardly any hotel rooms or any place to stay when you went somewhere. My dad, my mom, and my sister and I all went to Kansas City to meet the relatives and go to Fort Leavenworth for my brother's service. Dad said, "I know where we can stay."

So he called up Harry Truman's secretary, and he says, "Oh, by all means, you're all going to stay in the suite. Just go on up to Harry's room."

John Erling: In?

MM: The Presidential Suite in the top floor of the Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City.

So my mom, my sister, and I slept in Truman's bed. My dad slept on a couch in the living room.

JE: Oh, yeah.

MM: So I tell people, "I slept in Truman's bed."

And they go, "Was he in it?"

And I went, "Now wait a minute. (laughing) Just a minute." He was in the Blair House, he wasn't even in the White House because at that time they were redoing the White House and they were in the Blair House.

JE: Do you have recollections of seeing Harry Truman and being around him? Tell us.

MM: He was a small man, oh, a real natty dresser. He always wore three-piece suits, always had the best. He was an impeccable dresser.

One thing that a lot of people didn't know was he could cuss (laughing) a mile a minute, but he was the perfect gentleman in front of ladies. You couldn't ask for a nicer more compassionate man.

JE: Were you ever in his clothing store?

MM: No. See, after a while the Muehlebach Hotel closed down. It was shut down for quite a while and they didn't really restore it until just about fifteen years ago.

JE: So his clothing store was in that hotel?

MM: Yes.

JE: On the main floor, obviously.

MM: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yes. And Dad's little shoe repair shop was around the corner. So he knew Harry, and Uncle Mike that would go over and bring the boys over to learn trades

and set them up in business, owned the hotel coffee shop, but he was always traveling. So if Dad didn't have anything to do, he'd go over and babysit the coffee shop in the afternoon so Uncle Mike could run to the bank or run errands or something.

So Dad and Harry always had their coffee time in the afternoons in the coffee shop next door to Harry and Sam Levi's haberdashery shop.

Chapter 04 – 5:54
Amelia Earhart

Marina Metevelis: And what's more, my dad franchised his little shoe repair shops. So he traveled. He had one in Kansas City, Kansas. He had one in Fort Smith. He had one in Emporia, one in Lawrence, one in Atchison, Kansas. And that's where he met Amelia Earhart.

John Erling: Tell us about that meeting.

MM: Amelia Earhart's family lived in North Kansas City. She was a tomboy from the minute she was born. She was always climbing trees and jumping off of places and all.

When she was about four years old they built her a little cart. And she wanted a chute, like a slide, coming out of her second-story window. She put the cart on the slide, came sliding down, wrecked the cart and almost killed herself.

So the parents picked her up and said, "You are going to go live with Grandma and Grandpa Cole in Atchison, Kansas."

They got her to Grandma and Grandpa Cole in Atchison and she was a worst tomboy. She was jumping off of carriage house roofs and Atchison is a very, very Victorian town.

They put her in a private Catholic girls school. Even the nuns couldn't keep her under control. She was climbing trees and jumping off of rooftops and everything. And she kept telling them all, "I am going to fly. I am going to grow up and I am going to learn how to fly."

JE: How old would she have been about this time?

MM: She was about four or five when they put her in the Catholic school. When she was in high school Dad would go in to visit his shops. He made the tour and he'd check on his shops.

Next door was a little, what they called confectionary stores back then. They had soda fountains and candy and sandwiches and stuff like that. She would come in with her girl friends after school, dressed in men's clothes. It just shocked the ladies of Atchison because here she was, dressed in men's clothes, and they're such a very, very Victorian town.

But she took flying lessons and she learned how to fly.

JE: How old was she then, do you think?

MM: She was about seventeen, eighteen.

JE: Tell us who she was.

MM: Amelia Earhart was the first aviatrix that tried to fly around the world. She married William Putnam and to his dying day, my dad said, he exploited her. He had her fly across the Pacific.

First of all, she flew across to Paris, France, and they had the big parades and all this hoopla that goes with the celebrity doing something that wasn't done. And especially a woman flying across the Atlantic was unheard of.

Putnam thought that was great so he had her fly across the Pacific. They landed over in the Philippine Islands and there was a big parade and all this hoopla and all. So he planned the around-the-world trip.

In the meantime, he was doing other things. He was making Amelia Earhart luggage, Amelia Earhart clothes, Amelia Earhart cosmetics, Amelia Earhart jewelry. Her little house in Atchison that belonged to her grandparents is now her museum.

When they did the movie of Amelia Earhart, Hilary Swank and all the cast and crew came to Atchison for the premiere. I was there. I belong to Oklahoma Museum Association and every time there's something spectacular going on or something unusual, I get an invite.

I went to the museum; they had the big premiere there. They gussied up the little theater and they had the spotlights and the red carpet and the big, long stretch vans. It was quite a premiere.

The next day, I went to the museum and the cast and crew had donated all the wardrobe to that museum. There is a life-size cutout of her and she's about six inches taller than me. I was five one but I shrunk three inches due to arthritis. She had her curly bobbed red hair and her flight outfit on that Hilary Swank wore in the movie.

The curator there was trying to tell me, "Oh, she didn't die on that trip, she crashed but she came back and she lived here in the States incognito."

JE: (laughs) Well, we should—

MM: I said, "Ma'am, that is impossible. If she came back she would have been over a hundred years old."

JE: And then we point out that she was lost at sea and her remains were never found.

MM: She—true. Now they say that they think they've spotted maybe remnants of the wreck and all. They think maybe the Japs captured her and killed her. At the time, there was a Navy ship following her. They were radioing her that she had taken the wrong turn. And Newnan, her navigator, who was a great navigator but he was also an alcoholic, but he did not drink when he was flying with Amelia, he kept telling her, "I think we made the wrong turn."

And she kept saying, "We're low on gas. We've got to land somewhere. Dump everything off the plane." They dropped the pontoons, they dropped one of those little

rescue boats, and in dropping everything off the plane they dropped the radio, by mistake.

Therefore, the Navy ship couldn't contact her. They kept sending her messages but she wasn't receiving them.

So she made the wrong turn, she disappeared, somewhere they crashed. She's probably at the bottom of the ocean, who knows?

But anyway, they verified the fact that that's what must have happened—they dropped the radio by mistake and that's why she didn't get the message and that's why she disappeared.

But my dad kept saying, "Putnam just exploited her. He pushed her too hard." She was a great lady.

Chapter 05 – 4:45
Oklahoma Train Sign

John Erling: You grew up then in?

Marina Metevelis: Wichita.

JE: But you started making visits here to Tulsa.

MM: I was coming to Tulsa every summer. Mom would bring me and my little sister and little brother to Tulsa because her baby sister had married a Tulsa man. He had a bunch of cousins and all and they were all in the restaurant and candy shop business here in Tulsa.

JE: What was his name?

MM: Uncle John Athis had the Stockyards Café because he and his cousins all belonged to the Rock Lodge 32nd Degree Masons. He knew all the oil barons.

Aunt Mary, Aunt Dee, and Aunt Callie were all living in Tulsa at the time. They were all Eastern Stars and Aunt Callie kept telling my mother, "I think Marina should join the Rainbow Girls."

My mother said, "No way, she lives in Wichita, she doesn't live in Tulsa. She can't be a Rainbow Girl here."

JE: What were the Rainbow Girls?

MM: The Rainbow Girls were the junior girls part of the Eastern Stars. And the Eastern Stars were the wives of the oil barons and the 32nd Degree Masons that belonged to the Rock Lodge.

So I was not a Rainbow Girl. Instead, World War II broke out.

JE: Do you have any recollection, although you were very young, of Prohibition? When it was repealed in 1933 you were nine years old. Probably you were too young to even have any—

MM: I knew, see, my uncles here in Tulsa were taking me through the tunnels. They were telling me about Tate Brady and some of the other leading bootleggers and what have you and how they were making moonshine. And how the Hooper brothers, even though they were grinding coffee from all over the world—I know where the building is—in the basement was the still.

I knew about the cave out on Sand Springs Boulevard, which is now the Sam Avery Drive, which is West 3rd. That was the speakeasy. People went there, you had to know the code in order to get in.

So I grew up learning about a lot of Tulsa history. To this day, I still say, "Oklahoma history textbooks just gloss over the history of Oklahoma."

JE: You made all these visits to Tulsa but eventually you married a person from Tulsa.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And what was his name?

MM: Don George Metevelis. His father had a little cleaning shop on 2nd Street right now where the pack is. The corner of the pack was the steel building and next door was my father-in-law's little cleaning shop.

And right next to it was the Miller Bookstore. Mr. Miller had newspapers and magazines from all over the world.

When the Williams Center came in they cleaned that whole area. Main was all pawn shops and billiard halls. They put in all the overpasses because of all the railroad tracks. And a lot of those businesses shut down.

But during the Race Riot the pawn shops were all broken into because the mobs stole the guns and ammunition and all. And of course, a lot of them had already gone over and torched Greenwood.

But the part that bothered me was every time Mom would bring us down on the Midland Valley train the minute we'd get to the state line the conductor in the trains would run over and start flipping signs in all the coaches. "No Negroes use the lavatory," "No Negroes drink here," "Negroes sit in the back of the coach," and stuff like that.

I was young and I would go, "Mama, what does that mean?"

And she'd say, "Shh, we're crossing the border."

JE: So the train was coming from Kansas—

MM: Wichita.

JE: And the—

MM: Midland Valley, the Sinclairs owned part of Midland Valley. Harry Sinclair had his own private car, later.

JE: Okay, on that train line.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: But as soon as they entered Oklahoma, that's when they turned these signs out?

MM: The minute, uh-huh (affirmative). The minute we'd get to the state line the conductors would run through the coaches and start flipping all the signs. And I'd say, "Mama, what does that mean? Why can't they?" In Kansas we sat together, we ate together, we went to school together, we went to the movies together, we rode the streetcars together. I didn't know what segregation meant. Of course, I'm a Jay Hawker.

But anyway, they wouldn't even let the Indians sit in the waiting rooms of the bus stations.

JE: Here in Oklahoma?

MM: Yes. I couldn't believe it. To me it was just strange. Oh, and not only that, blacks were not allowed to shop downtown.

JE: Yeah.

MM: That's why they built Greenwood.

Chapter 06 – 6:00
December 7, 1941

John Erling: Let's go back here because we want to take you back to when you were seventeen—

Marina Metevelis: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: …and December 7, 1941. Do you remember that day, Pearl Harbor Day?

MM: Of course, it was bombed Sunday morning. But that afternoon, or evening, the *Beacon* and *Eagle*, the two newspapers in Wichita put out extras. And the newsboys were running up and down the neighborhoods hollering, "Extra! Extra! Pearl Harbor bombed!"

Of course, my dad was catching up all the news. The minute he'd get home he had all the radios in the house on, listening to Carlton Bourne and some of the other newscasters and talking about the war. I could hear my folks talking once in a while, sitting at the dining room table, about, "You know, we've still got the Depression going and Marina's got to go to college and I don't know where we're going to get the money." Because everything was rationed. Dad was riding his bicycle because he kept the delivery truck going because everything was rationed—gasoline, tires, clothes, shoes, butter, bacon, sugar. We'd go up and sign up for our ration books.

And Mom would trade her coffee coupons to the neighbor next door to get the butter coupons for us kids because we hated that oleo margarine thing. It was like trying to put white grease on your toast. It was horrible. So she drank Postum or Sanka or something and would trade her coffee coupons with the neighbors to get the butter coupons because she said, "They can't eat their toast with that white grease on there." She'd get butter for us kids.

JE: So this was all leading up to December 7th—

MM: Uh-huh (affirmative). As, yeah—

JE: …because there was a war.

MM: …all this rationing and all and Dad gave me a nickel and he said, "Run out there and buy a paper and let's see what's going on."

My mother said, "What is this all about?"

And Dad said, "Well, they bombed Pearl Harbor."

She said, "So?"

He said, "That's part of the United States. Hawaii belongs to us and they bombed it."

She said, "Oh."

The next day, there was this big ad in the paper, "We Want Factory Workers." Well, I was in high school so I told them, "Hey, I know how I'm going to make my college money. You don't have to worry, I'm going to go to work."

Well, Boeing was already there. Bill Boeing had left the West Coast. He had left MIT, he was an engineer, but he got the aviation bug. He went to the West Coast, met some aviations buffs too, and they build the first B-17, right outside of Seattle, Washington, and flew it. He kept telling them, "You know, the War Department doesn't realize it but the generals keep telling everybody, "If we have another war we've got to have bigger and better bombers."

They weren't paying any attention to them, so they were building these little planes with pontoons and skis and flying lumber and stuff back and forth to Alaska. So they built the B-17 and Boeing found out that Wichita was a big aviation center. We had seven plants there, small plants and big plants, Beech Aircraft, Cessna, Boeing, Arial Parts.

He said, "You know, there's a big aviation center right in the middle of Kansas. I'm going to go check it out."

He came to Wichita and they had the defense plant going because we were training the British pilots. They were building the little PT-19s, little primary trainers. The British pilots were being trained in Wichita. Before World War II there was some being trained right here at Spartan.

JE: And Tulsa.

MM: Yeah, right here in Tulsa. Well, that night, when the paper came out all this camouflage came off of Boeing. Boeing had already built the plant, but they had it camouflaged.

JE: You said there was an ad in the newspaper the next day.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And that ad said what?

MM: Factory Workers Needed for the Defense Plant. Well, that was Boeing, they had taken all the camouflage off, and it was a building from here to there. Humongous building.

There were bringing the fuselage with wings unattached on the flatbed railroad cars from Chicago.

Ford Motor Company loaned us what they called the "pressers." And that would snap the wings onto the B-17s. Our quota was to have twelve to fourteen B-17s out on the runway every twenty-four hours. Boeing ran the clock around.

The reason they were all set up is when Boeing came to Wichita in 1935, he built the second B-17 and was testing it at night over the ranch lands and farmlands of Kansas.

The ranchers and farmers were calling the sheriff's offices the next morning, "What was that big boom in the sky? Our animals are running crazy. We can't get our cows back in the barns. We can't get the horses, they're all going wild. What was that boom? And don't tell us it was the weather." It was a starry night.

Well, the sheriffs couldn't tell them the truth so they kept saying, "Oh, it was the little primary trainers out there, the little British pilots were doing night maneuvers."

Baloney! Have you heard a B-17? I'm deaf in one ear from B-17s. I can't hear people when they talk soft.

So a second B-17 flew over Kansas in July of 1926.

JE: Bill Boeing was manufacturing these planes for the Defense Department. He had the contract, it was kept under cover, and then it finally came off as a result of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Chapter 07 – 7:50
Marina the Riveter

Marina Metevelis: And what's more, before World War II even ended Bill Boeing was back in Wichita building jets.

John Erling: This call for people to come out and work—

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative)?

JE: Did you go out the next day or when it—

MM: I stood in line with teachers, hairdressers, waitresses, high school kids. We were all out there standing in line.

I walked up to get my application and this man looked at me and he said, "Are you agile?"

And I went, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Do you do sports?"

I said, "All of them. Ice skate, roller skate, ride horses." I said, "I even climb trees."

He went, "Take this application over there and fill it out and come back."

So I did and he looked at me and he said, "You're in high school."

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Well, how would you like to be a riveter?"

And I said, "If you say so, okay."

He said, "You're going to go to sheet metal school for six weeks and then you're going to be an inspector."

I said, "What am I going to inspect?"

He said, "You're going to be climbing in and out of the blisters on the B-17s."

And I went, "What are the blisters?"

He said, "The gunners' positions." He said, "How much do you weigh?"

I said, "About ninety-five pounds. I'm five one, ninety-five pounds."

He said, "You'll do. Go fill that out and come back."

So (laughing) they hired me. I did the swing shift. I'd go to school in the morning, leave at two thirty, catch the bus home, jump into my coveralls, and carpool out to Boeing. If there wasn't another inspector left I had to stay there, because if those blisters weren't okayed, that plane couldn't fly.

JE: Tell us again, a blister was what?

MM: The gunner's position. There was the top gunner, the nose gunner, the belly gunner, the two gunners on the side, and the tail gunner. Every one of those gunners' positions I had to feel each and every rivet like this, to make sure it was smooth. Because those planes were not temperature controlled, it was just sheet metal riveted together. Panels of sheet metal. No amenities in them, no nothing, just tubes.

Of course, they had lots of fun teasing me about the communication tubes. I'm not stupid. I knew they were, they were the relief tubes.

Later on at the reunions, when I go to them, and I meet some of the old gunners, I go, "What was the big joke about all this drinking enough water?"

I found out that when the B-17s climbed up over 35,000 feet the bomb bay door would freeze. They couldn't land if those bombs weren't dropped. They had to drop those bombs or detonate them. So it was one or the other.

Well, the bomb bay door had to come open so they all drank water because it took warm water to get the wheel to turn. (laughing) They urinated on the bomb. I didn't know that until years later when I'd go to reunions.

Those B-17s could make it up there—they tried all kinds of motors and the Curtiss-Wrights were the ones that wouldn't freeze, above 35,000 feet. All the others they tried, the Electras, GEs, and all.

The British Lancasters and the B-24s would freeze—they couldn't go over 35,000 feet. But the B-17s could.

JE: There you have the coverall. Boeing Inspector it says in the back. So that coverall you just showed me, that was an actual coverall that you wore.

MM: From 1941. The original. It's white, they were white.

JE: They were white.

MM: They had to see me. Because that place, no temperature control; in the winter you froze, in the summer you baked. It was just sheet metal from here to there. It went from the south to the north, no air-conditioning, no heat, no nothing. I mean, we dressed for the weather.

The gunners all had padded suits, there was no temperature control. The poor guys, I'm sure they froze up there in those planes, but they all had padded suits. And I'm telling you, I just had on underwear and that darn thing, it was all I could do to crawl in and out of some of those positions. The gunners could only be five five, no taller, they had to be small.

Just like the astronauts. Do you know how many astronauts I met through my son?

JE: No, I don't.

MM: My son was working for NASA.

JE: Okay.

MM: He was a metallurgist. He went to foundries all over the world.

JE: Come back to inspecting these rivets. You did that with your thumb?

MM: Thumb and forefinger. I don't have fingerprints here.

JE: Tell us why.

MM: You have to rub each and every rivet, a rivet the size of my small thumb nail up to a big quarter-size rivet. But the ones on the blisters, the gunners' positions, had to be smooth. If the pressure ripped one little rivet it would just almost tear the blisters off. They had to be secure too because the B-17s were escorted by the little P-51 Navy Mustangs in order to keep the Nazi planes from picking off the gunners. They picked off the gunners first thing.

So I wanted to be sure that those blisters were perfect. If I had any doubt about one of the rivets, if there wasn't another riveter around, I'd have to grab a rivet gun and ream it out and put in a new one and make sure it was smooth as glass. Because I was responsible for that and I took my job seriously.

JE: So then we heard the term, "Rosie the Riveter."

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Did that actually come from a song?

MM: Yes, sir. Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: That term?

MM: It was a song and Barga did the picture of Rosie. I have a little Rosie kit up here.

JE: Yeah, I see that.

MM: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: You were an inspector but you also did some riveting, so you too were a Rosie the Riveter.

MM: Yes, I learned how to rivet. And they made me an inspector because I didn't mind climbing in and out of those blisters.

JE: How much were you paid?

MM: (laughs) I was making more money than my dad. He was bragging to all his city council when they'd have their meetings and all, "Marina makes more in a week than I do in a month at the dry cleaning plant." I was making from five to seven and if I worked overtime it was more, seven something.

JE: Five to seven dollars an hour?

MM: An hour.

JE: So—

MM: More than bankers. I could work seven days a week. I was bringing home money like crazy. And I was banking it but I bought my little brother and little sister radios for Christmas. During the Depression it was always, "I don't care what you want, if you need it we'll get it. But if you want it, you're just going to have to wait."

JE: Do you remember how big a check would be?

MM: Oh, I'd be coming home with checks almost five, six hundred, maybe seven hundred fifty dollars a week.

JE: So you contributed a lot to the family then?

MM: I think so because Dad kept one delivery truck because they had to deliver the dry cleaning and he was riding his bicycle in order to have enough gas for the truck.

Of course, he always had a garden. He was an agrarian. He always had a garden wherever we were.

Mom cooked the vegetables out of the garden. She had a chicken house. Poor people would come to the back door looking for food and odd jobs. It was a horrible Depression.

Of course, we all know about the Oklahomas and all of them going to California. But there were a lot of people in Wichita too without jobs, even though they had the huge packing plants for the cattle trail when they came through.

Chapter 08 – 5:20
Marina Gets Married

John Erling: Do you remember some of the war songs that were popular then?

Marina Metevelis: Big bands.

JE: Did you see them?

MM: Oh, yeah. I danced to all of them. We had sock hops at school. I still swing dance and I still do aerials.

JE: What were the names of some of those bands?

MM: There was Eddie Duchin and Glenn Miller and Guy Lombardo and Charlie Barnett, Tommy Dorsey, the Dorsey Brothers. Some of the singers were Doris Day—

JE: Did they have a big dance pavilion in Wichita and these big bands would come through?

MM: They did in Kansas City, Missouri. Down by the old airport; they used the hangers in there. Where I met most of the big bands was when they'd come up to the army hospitals after the war when Don was going from one army hospital to another. The USO would bring the big bands.

JE: Did you see them in person? Any of them?

MM: I couldn't go to all of them because I was working.

JE: Yeah, but you heard them on the radio?

MM: Oh, yes! I had the records.

JE: How long did you work at Boeing as an inspector of rivets?

MM: Well, I started in December. I went to school for six weeks. In January, the end of January, I was at Boeing working in the plant. That whole year of '42 I was there clear up to December.

And my mother and Don Metevelis talked me into getting married. Because he told my mother that, "I'm under secret orders and I have to marry Marina before I go overseas."

And my mother said, "You might as well marry him because he is an officer. You'll be an officer's wife," and blah, blah.

And of course, I guess I went uniform crazy. He looked good in his uniform. I knew him though, I grew up with him here in Tulsa.

JE: What was the age difference?

MM: He was twenty-one.

JE: And you were?

MM: Eighteen. And I was crazy. I was crazy but my mother was just ragging me that whole year. "I don't want you working in that plant with all those men!"

And my dad kept saying, "What men? They're all at war."

JE: There were mostly women that were working there then.

MM: High school boys, there were some old 4Fs, but it was mostly high school kids, waitresses, teachers, moms, hairdressers, but it was mostly women. And not only that, the minute we'd roll out twelve to fourteen B-17s, the girl pilots from Fort Cobb, New Mexico, that were taught to fly the B-17s were coming in by the plane load to fly those up to outside of Seattle where they put the machine guns and the machine gun belts.

The machine gun belts were nine yards of nylon with the bullets. And they were wrapped around a wheel in a box on each side of the blister. And the machine guns were like this, out of the blister. Two machine guns to a blister.

The term, "You got the whole nine yards," is where that came from.

JE: That's how many—

MM: The nine yards of nylon ribbon that held the bullets.

JE: Why did they use nylon?

MM: No friction. Nylon has no friction. You couldn't get nylon anything because they were using them for parachutes and machine gun belts.

JE: I think it's also what tethered the gliders to their main planes because there was a stretchability in them, so nylon was a major product for the Army.

MM: Yeah. Finally, she just said, "That is no place for a lady. I don't want her in that plant." She just kept ragging me that whole year.

Finally I thought, "Oh, well, if he's going overseas and she wants me out of Boeing, okay, I'll marry him." We got married.

JE: And how many years were you married?

MM: Oh God, sixty-two years. He died in 2003. I married him in December of '42, all of '43 I followed him from army camp to army camp. We went from Tullahoma, Tennessee, Camp Forest, to Camp Phillips in Kansas, to Winter something in the Arizona desert because at that time they were going to send the 80th Division to join Patton's army in Africa. Because they were having that big campaign there. And then they were going to go do the Ensile Beachhead and go up through Italy.

You know, when he was training over there for the invasion he left Christmas of '43 and went across on the Aquitania, which was a sister ship of the Lusitania. But they brought him back on the Queen Mary.

Anyway, I came back to Wichita and I was working for Cessna and I was there six months. But I wasn't riveting, I was doping wings.

JE: What year would that have been?

MM: 'Forty-four.

JE: And what does that mean, "doping wings"?

MM: The small reconnaissance planes for Cessna, they use this fabric, but you had to take a brush and dip in this bucket and you'd put this stuff on the wings. Because they were attached to the fuselage. But you had to dope these wings in order to harden this material that they were using. It was some kind of a duck cloth or something. It was heavy, like they used for tents and things. They'd come in sheets and we had to dope these sheets and then the girls would come along and cut them and we'd tuck them under and dope them. It was sort of like a glue.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MM: But we called it "doping the wings." And that's what I was doing for Cessna.

Chapter 9 – 7:27
Tulsa, 1949

John Erling: You came to Tulsa in 1949.

Marina Metevelis: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Your husband was with you then.

MM: Don was brought back. He was injured in the invasion.

JE: In the Normandy Invasion?

MM: Yes. He went in on Omaha Beach.

JE: Okay. When you came to Tulsa then, you came together here and lived here.

MM: Yes. Being that he was an infantry unit commander he had to stay on base with his men. I lived in attics and basements. There was no housing for us wives. Wherever little army camp we went to there was always some little town. And they'd put a cot in a ceiling or a basement and call it a bedroom. And that's how we lived.

If the girls got pregnant they had to go home; there was no place to have a baby. I was lucky. Every time they'd move our 80th Division they'd send me ahead to go to the Chamber of Commerce in whatever little town was close to that camp, and rent everything I could so they could come to be with their husbands and not have to go home. Most of the 80th Division were all Easterners, Yankees. (laughs)

JE: I'm trying to get you to Tulsa.

MM: Okay.

JE: You came to Tulsa—

MM: When they brought Don back Christmas of '44, they sent him to South Carolina. Then they went to Sam Houston, then we went to Springfield, Missouri, then they sent him to Bushnell in Utah. We were there three and a half years because they were working on his wounds. And he got his medical discharge at Fort Douglas in Utah, Christmas of '45. We came to Tulsa, lived in a basement, and the army called him back for more treatment on his arm. They were digging shrapnel out of him for years. He had to go to Hot Springs in Arkansas. So he was there almost another three or four months.

But I lived in a basement, right there off of West 3rd.

JE: You settled down in Tulsa now.

MM: Uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: And that's in 1949.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: What do you remember of downtown Tulsa? Name the stores that you would have shopped in.

MM: I want you to know that during World War II south Boston from 2nd Street to 1st Street were nine walkup little hotels. There was no housing. And if it wasn't for the vets thing we wouldn't have had a house by TU. That's where we finally moved into a house because he got his VA thing and we got this house.

Downtown was bustling. They closed down nine theaters. There was the Orpheum, the Ritz, the Palace, the Rialto, the Cozy, the Brook. They shut them all down.

JE: Why?

MM: No parking. Then they started imploding and tearing down. They tore down streets, they tore down Vandevers. The barons had come in and got a lot of the other things moved out because they wanted that row of buildings. And one was trying to outdo each other with their building.

And when Waite and Wiate Phillips, the twins, found out that Burch and Clint Mill had built a hotel in a business building on the other side of Main Street, they said, "We're not going to let them have that." So they imploded, tore down all these beautiful buildings to make parking lots.

In 1950, Sears moved out, which was the end of Tulsa, that was the boundary, at 21st and Yale and all the downtown merchants were laughing and going, "Look at Sears. They moved clear out in the boonies out there."

Sears turned around and said, "We have parking." The theaters moved and a lot of the businesses disappeared because they were making parking lots.

Well, of course, thank God, they kept that strip of the oil barons' buildings because of the art deco, which was the big mode of the day. And the—

JE: Right. And—

MM: ...tunnels.

JE: And we'll get to that.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: But did you have the feel of segregation then in 1949 and '50?

MM: Oh, heavens yes. I couldn't understand, even though my father-in-law told me all about the Race Riot because he was helping hide his black delivery boys. And they were hiding some of their friends—

JE: Is that whe—

MM: ...down in his basement.

JE: Yeah.

MM: In 1921, the last of May.

JE: Right. But the segregation in 1949 and '50, '51, is very real and you saw—

MM: Absolutely. Blacks were not allowed to shop downtown. Now before the war, even, if some lady living in the other part of town wanted to pick up some merchandise, she had to give a note for her black maid to come into downtown Tulsa to go to the department store like Brown Duncan or Clarke's, Renberg's, Palace Clothing—

JE: Vandevers.

MM: Vandevers, Street's. They had to have a note and they'd come into the floorwalker in the department stores and hand him the note, saying that Mrs. So-and-So had an order to be picked up.

The floorwalker would go and get the article and give it to the maid. She had to stand almost right in the big middle of the store and wait for the floorwalker to bring her the merchandise.

Aunt Kellie was kind of a rebel too because I was always saying something, and she'd say, "Shh! You'd better not say too much."

But anyway, I was very aware that there was bootleggers around and there was all this undercurrent. That's why I was so interested in Tulsa and Oklahoma history, because it was so different.

JE: But you—

MM: Of course, you know, we had bloody Kansas where they were doing all these civil wars and one thing and another and the abolitionists and the Freedmen and the Indians and what-have-you.

But Oklahoma's history, oh, there's so much to it and I'm learning more every day.

JE: You were about twenty-seven in 1949, then, when you came here—

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...to make these observations.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Restaurants? Any names that—

MM: Oh! The blacks had to come to the back door. They came around to the back of the alley to pick up their food. They were not allowed to come in and sit.

Don't you remember the big standoff they had in that drugstore in Oklahoma City? Some blacks walked in and sat at the counter in this drugstore, and they had this to-do over that. Yeah, blacks had to go through alleys and places like that in order to get their food or their merchandise or whatever it is they needed.

JE: And they—they lived in Greenwood area. They were not welcomed in downtown Tulsa at all.

MM: Only the workers were allowed in downtown.

JE: Do you remember the names of restaurants that you ate in or that the public ate in?

MM: Oh, there was Bishop's, and there was two cafeterias, one was on Boulder, close to the YWCA. It was on Boulder and the YWCA was across from the mail. It's gone. That big cafeteria—Nelse's was there, I remember it.

I remember a cafeteria that upstairs in one of the buildings that was torn down. I'm trying to think of the name of it. Aunt Kellie would take me there for tea. It was a real nice restaurant, upstairs.

Then there was one in the bank building at 4th and Main, which is now First National. Cress and Woolworth's, the dime stores, they're gone. J. C. Penney, Froug's.

I worked at Froug's for a while in the jewelry department. I had my son in 1950, and that's when we got our little house by TU, with his VA.

Chapter 10 – 6:24
Marina Tunnel Tours

John Erling: Well, let's talk about this tunnel tour and the buildings and let's begin with the Philtower that was built in 1927.

Marina Metevelis: Right after World War I, all these oil barons were sailing back and forth to Europe. Of course, they had homes in the Maple Ridge addition and then they decided, "See ya." They decided that they'd build their mansions.

Well, Skelly had this big mansion and then Sinclair had this big mansion. Phillips had this big mansion and the Travis brothers built their two mansions next door to each other on Peoria. Now one is the Tulsa Garden Center. And then the other mansion is now the Tulsa Historical Society.

JE: And we have Philbrook.

MM: Philbrook is further over. That was all just kind of pasture land. And a lot of them even just picked it up, they didn't even pay for it. Because it was there. Philbrook had runoffs so they wouldn't flood.

One of the big areas, which is the Pearl District, it flooded all the time, next to the Oak Lawn Cemetery there at 11th and Peoria.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

MM: That place just flooded all the time. I remember my uncles talking about it. Underground, I don't know how many feet, there's a huge pipe that carried off the excess rainwater clear down to the river. I remember at one time, one of the mayors wanted to make a canal out of that like they did in Oklahoma City. But there's so many businesses there that wouldn't hear of it.

JE: Yeah. Let's bring you to the Philtower building. We want to talk about the tunnel between the Philtower and the Philcade. Tell us about the Philtower building, who built it?

MM: Five Phillips brothers moved down here. Frank and Casey went to Bartlesville because they had the Nellie Stone Oil Well. They've got the Phillips mansion there and Woolaroc and the Phillips Museum, Phillips building.

Waite and Wiate were twins. So Waite came in and built the Philtower on that corner, right there at 5th.

JE: And Boston.

MM: And across the street is the Philcade. So when Waite saw the Mayo brothers come in and Mayo Hotel and the Mayo building, he said, "Uh-uh (negative), we don't want them to get all of the traffic down that way." So he builds the Philcade as a department store. It was an exclusive department store. My aunts shopped there. He made it really uptown.

Well, Josh is on the corner and he builds the Mid-Continent building, the big white building, and he's bragging to all the other oilmen, "I've got the first skyscraper in Tulsa."

Waite thought, "Oh, no." So he puts the tower up on top of his building so it'll be taller than Josh Cosden's.

They waited a few years, and then here comes Reading and Bates. This was in the early '80s. "Uh, we want a building in the oil baron's area but there's no place to put it. So who's going to let us put it on top of one of your buildings?"

Phillips went, "Oh, no, you can't have our buildings."

Josh Cosden, he didn't care, he was a daredevil anyway. He said, "Yeah, you can put it up on top of my building. It's okay."

Well, that was an engineering feat because it is resting, it is not attached. I take people downstairs and show them what's holding it up. It's cavaliered on top, twenty-four more stories are on top of the Mid-Continent building and there's six inches of space between the two buildings.

They had to fortify all those columns down underneath the Mid-Continent building in order to hold up those twenty-four stories up above.

When I tell people that and then I take them down in the basement and show them what's holding it up, they go, "Oh! My God!"

I go, "Well, that's the way they do it. It helps in earthquake areas and now that we're having earthquakes it's a good thing they did that. (both laughing)

So anyway, I do my tunnel tours. I've got one this afternoon at four o'clock and I'm doing a group from Fort Smith, Arkansas, that's coming in.

This journalist wrote a story in a magazine in Fort Smith.

JE: Right.

MM: And I've got people coming in from Van Buren and Fort Smith in droves.

Anyway, now you knew that those tunnels were flooded three years ago.

JE: Right, but let's go back to the Philtower—

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: ...and then Waite Phillips lived in the top floor of Philcade.

MM: They all had gorgeous, gorgeous penthouses upstairs, up on the top floors because they entertained their clients. The Phillipses had apartments for their families and they said that because Tulsa had so many bootleggers and bank robbers and what-have-you, and they kidnapped one oilman, they said, "We need the tunnels for protection."

It was a twofold purpose. They had the tunnels where they could come in and out. And if they entertained clients up in their penthouses the bellboys from Tulsa Hotel knew where to go to get the hooch and the girls. Because May's Rooms were right there on 1st Street and she had that whole block practically.

JE: Who?

MM: Pauline Lambert that had May's Rooms.

JE: May's Rooms was a hotel.

MM: It was a cathouse.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MM: Like that big two-story red brick mansion south of Southern Hill Country Club.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MM: So the oilmen would just call the bellboys at Tulsa Hotel and they knew where to go get the hooch and the girls and bring them down the tunnels and take them upstairs to the penthouses.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MM: See, those guys had so much money they didn't care. They could do anything. You couldn't touch them.

JE: So Waite built Philtower and Philcade.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Wiate wasn't here then.

MM: Waite has his initials on everything in the Philtower. Across the street, under the tunnels that went under 4th Street, the part that is under the Palisade now is caved in because when they were doing the fancy brickwork for centennial celebration in 2007, they caved in the part. I can show you when I take you through the tunnels—the door was blocked.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MM: But that original tunnel, part of it that's under the street is still there.

JE: Yes, Waite was a twin and Wiate was the name of his brother.

MM: Yeah, Waite and Wiate. Waite stayed here. Wiate went down to New Mexico to be with the other brother that had the ranch down there.

JE: Wiate died in 1902.

Chapter 11 – 9:40
Tulsa Junior College

John Erling: Let's talk a little bit about the history of Tulsa Community College. Tulsa Junior College, how did it start?

Marina Metevelis: It started in '68 when Oral Roberts, the president of Oklahoma Natural Gas, and the Chamber of Commerce decided that we've only got two private universities here.

And of course, Truman passed the act that we should start junior colleges, because he wasn't a college grad and he thought that was terrible. Harry was the President and never got a college degree. Although he and my dad were going to the University of Kansas City, he still felt like we should have junior colleges, especially for the boys coming back. They should be able to afford an education.

So Chamber of Commerce, the president of Oklahoma Natural Gas, and Oral Roberts were adamant, "Yeah, we'll have a junior college."

JE: What year is this that we're talking about a junior college?

MM: This, I'm talking about '68, when they were bringing up the plans for a junior college. Dr. Phillips had come from Washington down to Dallas and he took over this huge department store and made it a junior college called the Metro, in downtown Dallas.

They saw that coming up so they were checking it out and they invited him to come here to Tulsa and draw up a plan for a junior college here.

JE: Al Phillips.

MM: Dr. Al Phillips. A lot of people don't know that his middle name is McKenzie.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MM: But I do. (laughing) Because my husband—Don was mapping out the routing for the mail. My husband was with the Post Office. He met Dr. Phillips and after they settled on the Sinclair building, he said, "Now we have to have an address for your location."

And Dr. Phillips says, "Oh, yeah, just call it 10th and Boston or 9th and Boston and we'll call it the Metro Campus or something like that."

And Don said, "I'm sorry, sir, but you've got four corners. We've got to have a number." So they settled on 909 South Boston.

Dr. Phillips says, "And what is it you do?"

Don said, "Oh, I'm teaching postal leadership courses at OU and I go there twice a week."

Dr. Phillips said, "If we get that college going, you could teach that course right here in Tulsa. And you don't have to be going back and forth to OU."

Don says, "Okay, whatever you say." But he says, "I don't have to teach it," he said, "I got twenty-five supervisors I can send you and you can take your pick."

Well, that's how they started that business. But the two years from '68 to '69 Dr. Phillips was being torn apart by all the politicians here. And one of the worst ones was Bill Poulos, north side representative here. A good guy, but he wanted the college here because he said, "North Tulsa is dead." He said, "We've got to have something to bring the traffic in."

Well, all the other politicians wanted the college in their district. You should see some of the sites they were picking. Right downtown in the railroad yards, Union Depot, there was, I don't know how many acres they said they could have down there.

Well, Phillips is kind of a visionary because they were building all of the expressways. He says, "We can put it downtown, pick a spot downtown, because all the expressways are coming in this way and you've got all the traffic.

Sinclair, I told you he was from Independence, Kansas, his folks owned Midland Valley Railroad. He had his own private car. He'd get in every morning—he had a barber, a valet, a cook, and a chauffeur. He'd ride his private car into Union Station. A chauffeur would bring him to his office in the Thompson building.

Well, he was a little upset because all the oilmen were building their buildings right next to each, all up and down Boston there, and he thought, "Well, I want a building there too."

Well, here comes Atlantic Richfield and puts up their building, which was the Sinclair building. He was telling Atlantic Richfield, "Hmm, you've got a seven-story building and you put it over there by Boston Avenue so it sticks out like a sore thumb."

See, they were all jealous of each other. You should have heard them at those meetings there. (laughing) My uncles would come home and they'd just tell stories. They were all like little boys. "I got more than you have so I can do this," or "I can do that."

Well, anyway, Sinclair was bugging Atlantic Richfield, "You're going to move to Houston or someplace so I want your building. But you're going to put an escalator in it."

They were going, "Harry, you're crazy. You don't need an escalator."

"Oh, yeah, yeah. You're going to put an escalator in it and I don't care what it costs, I'll buy it. I'll buy it."

"Okay."

Well, he moved from the Thompson building and built this little Sinclair building cattycorner from Central High School, which now is Loft Departments. But he wanted that building because it was close to Boston Avenue Methodist Church. And it would stick out.

So finally, Atlantic Richfield moves but they put in the escalator for him.

I get to Fort Scott, Kansas, they had just built the new college there, and the lady in the college art department said, "Did you know Harry Sinclair?"

And I said, "Yeah."

"Well, you knew he was born in Independence, Kansas?"

"Yeah."

"And he railroaded into his office every day on his private car?"

"Yeah."

"Well, you knew he limped?"

I said, "Yeah, I knew he limped, I met him. I thought maybe he had polio as a kid or something."

"Oh, no, no, no. He limped because he shot himself in the foot."

I went, "You're kidding?"

And they went, "No, he shot himself in the foot years ago because he wanted disability."

JE: Harry Sinclair? Who had an oil company? You—

MM: He had everything.

JE: Do you really believe that?

MM: I know he limped. Now they're telling it. I don't repeat anything unless it's in print. I don't tell it to everybody. No, I don't because even though the families are all gone and all—

JE: So did you ever talk to Harry Sinclair?

MM: Oh, yeah, I met him when they were all in the Rock Lodge, which is the Benson building. See, when Josh Cosden built his building that was the Presbyterian church, so they moved up to 7th and Boston.

Then here comes Waite and Wiate Phillips and that was the Boston Avenue Methodist Church bunch. There's a plaque on the sidewalk. So they moved up and built the Boston Avenue Methodist Church. Those guys were moving everything out of that block along there because they were trying to outdo each other putting up their buildings. And they were going back and forth to Europe, shipping everything over here, putting it on flatbed railroad cars, and bringing up marble, artwork, chandeliers, all this stuff was coming from Europe and being brought in by the railroads.

And of course, the cattle barons were responsible for getting the railroads into Tulsa because they were tired of moving the cattle trail clear up to Kansas to Newton, north of Wichita. Because that was the big railroad hub. The sicker cattle stayed in Wichita because there was four packing plants in North Wichita.

The not-so-sick cattle got to Kansas City. The other longhorns that were stronger and better went clear up to Chicago.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MM: To the yards up there.

JE: Well, let me come back here now to Tulsa Junior College.

MM: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: What year did Tulsa Junior College open?

MM: We opened in September of 1970. Tuition was $7.25 an hour. We had the first three floors. The Board of Regents of Oklahoma gave us the first three floors and the basement of the Sinclair building. Because they were moving out to Houston too.

And then in '75, the Board of Regents of Oklahoma got us the whole building. We remodeled and it is now the Metro Campus.

Dr. Al Phillips was there for twenty years. When he retired, Vice President Dean VanTrease came in as president. And because we had expanded to other campuses he decided that we were a community college. So he changed the name in June of 1996, because we had four main campuses.

Metro was the first one. Northeast Campus was the second one. Southeast Campus was the third one. And West Campus was the fourth campus. We also now have nine satellite campuses all around Tulsa. And over twenty-eight thousand students attending.

JE: How many years have you worked now for them?

MM: I started in July of 1970. I was a reference librarian because that's what I started at at Will Rogers High School in 1965, fall of 1965.

JE: And you're still here.

MM: I am still here. And I'm trying to get a permanent location for all the historic paraphernalia, ephemera, and everything of the college. I'm trying to keep the history together because as far as I know, even though I belong to Oklahoma Museum Association and the Oklahoma Historical Society, we're about the only community college that has the historic collection of the college.

So I've got about forty-one years' worth of artifacts, documents, players, everything that belonged to the college. I'm trying to keep the history.

Chapter 12 – 4:38
Teaching at 87

John Erling: You know, you're remarkable, you're eighty-seven years old and you have all this energy. Is there anything that you think you did or are you just lucky? Give us a reason why you have all this energy and activity at eighty-seven?

Marina Metevelis: Well, I think being a tomboy when I was a kid. I was always active. I was curious. My dad would go on his business trips and Mom had my little sister and brother, and I was such a tomboy that she'd send me on my dad's business trips. And Daddy would park me in a library or a museum while he attended his business meetings. Picked me up for lunch and then take me back to a library or a museum. So I grew up going through museums and libraries. I read everything I could get my hands on. I guess I was just a curious kid. I love history, I love archeology. I love teaching, I substitute teach now because I'm trying to take care of the collection.

JE: You're substitute teaching now at eighty-seven?

MM: Yes, sir.

JE: What are you teaching?

MM: I was sanctioned to teach Oklahoma History because when I was working for Tulsa Public Schools they took me out of the library at Will Rogers High School and put me on the substitute list. I was working for twenty different principals. I was a fill-in, so if someone was out sick or something, I was teaching Art, I was teaching English, I was teaching Spelling and all of that. And I loved history but I couldn't teach Oklahoma History because I'm from Kansas.

So Dr. Swan at Park Elementary years ago said, "Why is it you can't teach History?"

I said, "I'm from Kansas."

He said, "Well, that's not going to stop you." He said, "I'm going to go get you the test papers from TU. You're going to take the test—I know you'll pass it." And he said, "Therefore, you can teach Oklahoma History."

Well, I want you to know, I'm still learning Oklahoma History. I'm still going around to the small ghost towns, whiskey towns, and talking about their history.

I was asked, "What is considered a ghost town?" We had 153 ghost towns and whiskey towns all through Oklahoma, clear up into southeastern Kansas. A ghost town is now a town that has no mail service. Ghost towns were built up wherever they hit oil, coal, lumber, or a farming area, that was the town that grew up overnight because of whatever it had to offer at that time.

But if there was no mail service and people were moving out it's considered a ghost town.

The whiskey towns were the black towns that were supported by the oil barons and the politicians of Oklahoma because the blacks could go back up in the hills and make moonshine whiskey. Because the cattle barons were adamant about having whiskey for their cowboys when they were coming through on the cattle trails.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). Students listen to this: If you were their age, do you have any advice for them?

MM: I love the Socratic method of teaching. I want those kids to ask questions. I hate to walking into classrooms and see them sitting there Twittering and Facebooking and all that. They're not learning the history. And Oklahoma has such a vivid, vivid history. It was a wild state—it still is, because there are still KKK and some of the old elements that started this state still around.

And now I am just delighted when I see some of these little ghost towns coming back to life. Because people are retiring and they can find land cheap and build their homes and then put out a lot of their land for pastureland. So they've got a nice place to live, they're close to a big city, and they have all the amenities of retirement. I think it's great.

JE: Yeah. Well, you're great.

MM: Well, thank you.

JE: And, I mean, to accomplish what you've done and do what you do to this very day is absolutely amazing. And I want to thank you for sharing your thoughts with us here today.

MM: Well, I have to keep moving because I have arthritis. And a lot of people don't know that I swing dance. And I do aerials.

JE: That is absolutely amazing. Well, keep doing it.

MM: Thank you.

JE: And thank you for talking to us.

MM: Okay.

Chapter 13 – 0:33
Conclusion

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