

Calvin Barbee  
"A Kinmundy Story"  
2016

As Calvin thinks about growing up in Kinmundy, he chuckles and says, "It's a different world." Dr. Miller came to the Barbee home to deliver each of the nine children in the Great Depression era. As one of the younger children, Calvin wore hand-me-downs. He said his family was poor, but they always wanted to look nice for church. He remembers his excitement about a pair of dress pants his mother was making. By Sunday, she didn't have the pockets sewn into the pants. Somehow, he held the pants together to wear to church while clutching his two-cent Sunday school money in his hand.

Calvin's dad was a horse expert. He would see a horse with a problem and buy the horse. Then he would diagnose and treat the horse making it ready to sell at a profit. Calvin could ride a horse as a toddler, which was good preparation for the future when he would ride nine miles to visit his future bride. His favorite horse liked to perform. On rides around Kinmundy, St. Peter, or Farina, she would dance when she attracted a group of children. Since a Model T Ford was the only motorized vehicle the family ever had, the horses were crucial on the 20-acre farm. They had 4-6 horses to allow for rotating teams to give the horses a day of rest.

One of the places the Barbees lived had an 11-acre peach orchard. Besides picking peaches at home, Calvin picked peaches for John Broom who had 200 acres of peaches. The pay was ten cents an hour, but since Calvin picked faster than the adults, he received a penny raise. He used some of his earnings to buy his first bicycle.

Calvin and his dad started an independent ball team in Kinmundy. They were renting pasture from Buck Miller on the current site of the baseball field. Mr. Miller wanted to get rid of the land as he was getting older and living in Florida. Calvin suggested Mr. Miller deed the land to the City of Kinmundy, and the City deeded it to the Lions Club. Calvin compliments the wonderful job being done to maintain the ballfield and feels it is a real asset to Kinmundy since it is constantly in use by the area's young people. On a section that wouldn't grow grass, they

brought out a team of horses with a disc and followed with a weighted harrow going round and round in circles until they had a ball field. South Central High School Coach Curt Jones reports that the infield still doesn't grow grass. As an adult, Calvin managed a baseball team and claims Glenn Doolen as one of his coaching success stories.

After graduation from high school, Calvin volunteered for the US Navy. He went from snow on the ground at Great Lakes to a different world in California. He spent 20 months, beginning in 1943, on the USS William C. Miller Destroyer Escort. While getting his sea legs, the cook would say, "Hey, Barbie, How about a good old greasy pork chop?" That's all it took for Calvin to head for the rail of the ship. When Calvin started steering the ship all over the ocean, his superior complained. Calvin's response was, "This is bigger than a horse." The officer replied, "So, you're an old country boy."

Calvin is proud of his military service. He proudly displays mementos from his Central Illinois Honor Flight from Marion to Washington, D.C. to visit the World War II Memorial and receive recognition for his service. He is still active in the Kinmundy Legion recognizing veterans from the Civil War to the present day.

After the war, Calvin married his high school sweetheart and settled in Kinmundy. As a Legion member, he helped with establishing the Fire Department. At first, a Model T engine powered the fire truck, which worked for fires in town. By the time the engine could get out in the country, the house would have burned to the ground. Legion members cleaned out wells to help raise the \$1500 needed to buy a fire truck. Water for fires in town came from a well located where the bandstand is now and supplied by Kinmundy Lake. Five fire engines pumped water out of it when fire destroyed four local businesses. The well didn't go dry. However, Jesse George noticed that the hoses were leaking and wouldn't reach all the way to his store. After that, new hoses to reach two blocks were purchased. Calvin says it just takes people to see the problem, and they will get it done. The current Kinmundy Fire Department continues to demonstrate that philosophy with its modern facility.

Calvin spent many years working for the Post Office from the Chicago Post Office to a B&O Mail Car to clerk in Kinmundy and rural carrier in Salem. When he worked in Kinmundy, he remembers a time when Charlie Boyd had written post cards to all of his insurance clients. The cards were placed in the mailbag on a hook at the railroad for train pickup. The bag broke, and postcards scattered from Kinmundy to Alma. Calvin and others went looking for the cards and believed they found most of them. Charlie didn't want to take any chances. He started over and wrote all the cards again.

Calvin is right. It is a different world with electricity, telephones, computers, modern transportation, and the list goes on. However, some things never change like the importance of dedication to God and family, patriotism and community service, a healthy lifestyle, and a positive attitude. Calvin is one of our "Kinmundy treasures " who exemplifies those ideals.