

The Oral History of  
Norma O'Neil

Collected by  
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4th Hour U.S. Studies  
Oral History  
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## ORAL HISTORY

This interview is about the life history of Norma Jean O'Neil. She was born on the 8th of April, 1930 in Castle Gate, Utah. She has lived a great life and has wonderful children and grandchildren. She has had alot of special experiences in her life. She is a very talented lady and all of her family members think the same.

Mandi: What is your full name and why were you named it?

Norma: My name was Norma Jean McMullin and I don't know why I was named that.

Mandi: Were you named after somebody else?

Norma: Not that I know of.

Mandi: Did you have a nickname as you were growing up?

Norma: Yes, my father used to call me "Tilly", and it was after the cartoon character "Tilly".

Mandi: Have you had other nicknames as an adult?

Norma: Yes, "Mudhen".

Mandi: Why?

Norma: I don't know you will have to ask grandpa.

Mandi: What do family members call you now?

Norma: Norm!!!

Mandi: Where were you born and when?

Norma: I was born the eighth of April, 1930 in Castle Gate, Utah.

Mandi: Do you remember hearing your grandparents describe their lives?

Norma: Yes.

Mandi: What did they say?

Norma: That it was hard, they had to work hard for what they got, my grandfather used to run a creamery, tested the cream, and my grandmother was a midwife and a lady that went and took care of the sick people when they had diseases and things, so she was away from home quite alot because there was alot of sickness in their times.

Mandi: Do you remember your great-grandparents?

Norma: Yes.

Mandi: What do you know about them?

Norma: I know that they came here from Norway, and my grandfather on my mothers side was a polygamist, he had two wives and they were sisters, and they lived in Castle Dale, and my grandparents, great-grandparents on my fathers side, he was a polygamist and he had three wives and he came over from Nauvoo with the wagon trains, and his first wife died, and he married her sister and then when he got here, he married my great-grandmother, and they died in Leeds, Utah and thats where they are barried.

Mandi: Who was the oldest person you can remember in your family as a child?

Norma: My great-grandparents?

Mandi: What do you remember about them?

Norma: That they were hard workers and that they were good people, good honest people.

Mandi: Do you remember your family discussing world events and politics?

Norma: Yes, my parents were lived through the depression, I was only about three and I can't remember it because they kind of shielded me from the, the terrible things of it and we were still able to, they were still able to take care of us in the way that we, I guess you'd call us spoiled, that we didn't know, I didn't know what the depression was when I was a kid because I was to young to remember.

Mandi: Was there a chore you really hated doing as a child?

Norma: Oh dear, yes, I hated to wash dishes.

Mandi: What would you consider to be the most important inventions that have been made during your lifetime?

Norma: Oh, electricity, when I was a kid at home, we didn't have electric washers we had gas washers, we didn't have dryers, we hung it out on the line, or the bushes or the fence or whatever was handy.

Well all the modern things, they had automobiles but they weren't like they are now, and we didn't have ways to travel like kids do now days, I mean we went to town once a week, but kids go to town now everyday.

Mandi: How is the world different from what it was like when you were a child?

Norma: In some ways its better and in other ways its not, um, I'm sure that when I grew up there were probably drugs but not to the extent that they are now, I mean I'd never heard of all of these things until I got grandkids, and I'm sure it was there but I just was not aware or I, it was more hushed up or something that I don't remember all those things so some things are better and some are worse.

Mandi: What kind of books did you like to read?

Norma: Well, westerns.

Mandi: Do you remember having a favorite nursery rhyme or bedtime story and what was it?

Norma: I liked them all.

Mandi: Do you ever remember not having enough food to eat because times were hard for your family?

Norma: No.

Mandi: What were your favorite toys and what were they like?

Norma: Dolls, buggy's, dishes and they were, the dolls were um, china dolls and so were the dishes.

Mandi: What were your favorite childhood games?

Norma: Tag, and kick the can and hide and seek, we used to play stick horses alot.

Mandi: When you were little did you ever get into any trouble, and what happened?

Norma: I didn't but my brother sure got in alot.

Mandi: What about when you were older have you been in any trouble?

Norma: No not that I know of, and I wouldn't admit it if I did.

Mandi: What chores did you have to do?

Norma: We lived on a farm and I'd help milk cows I'd help haul hay, I washed dishes, I cleaned house, and all the wonderful things that go along with them things.

Mandi: What were your schools like?

Norma: Um, when I first started school they had four grades in one room and when I went to high school then they had the seven grades, I mean the seven classes, and they, they didn't have Jr. highschool and they didn't have kindergarten.

Mandi: How did you get to school?

Norma: On a school bus.

Mandi: Did you have to walk to your school bus?

Norma: Yes, I had to walk a mile to the bus and a mile home, and if it got stuck on the way I'd have to walk farther than that.

Mandi: What was your favorite subject in school and why?

Norma: Recess.

Mandi: What subject in school was always the easiest for you?

Norma: Spelling was easy, math was terrible, still is.

Mandi: Who was your favorite teacher and why were they special?

Norma: I don't know as I had a favorite teacher.

Mandi: How do your fellow classmates from school remember you the best?

Norma: I don't know I haven't seen them for years and years in fact I don't suppose I've seen over two or three of them since I graduated from high school.

Mandi: What school activities and sports did you participate in?

Norma: Ah, softball, and running, that's about all.

Mandi: Did you and your friends have a special hang-out where you liked to spend time?

Norma: No, because we all lived to far apart and we didn't have ways of getting together, I mean we didn't have cars to jump in and go over and sleep at the neighbors or whatever, in fact our nearest neighbor was a mile and a half away.

Mandi: Were you ever given any special awards for your studies or school activities?

Norma: I lettered in um, oh kind of in the gymnastic part of things.

Mandi: How many years of education have you completed?

Norma: Twelve

Mandi: Do you have a college degree?

Norma: No I've taken a few college classes, but I've never graduated from college.

Mandi: Did you get good grades?

Norma: I got better grades in college than I did in school.

Mandi: Did you like school?

Norma: Uh, yes and no I wasn't overly fond of it.

Mandi: What did you like the most and least about it?

Norma: I hated the idea of going so early and staying so late.

Mandi: What did you usually wear to school?

Norma: Dresses.

Mandi: Describe it?

Norma: Um, they didn't have shorts only for P.E. and you went, you wore dresses and in the winter time you wore long brown stockings and I hated them.

Mandi: Were there any fads during your youth that you remember vividly?

Norma: Yeah, saddle shoes, black and white saddle shoes.

Mandi: How old were you when you started dating?



Norma: Oh about sixteen.

Mandi: Do you remember your first date?

Norma: I think it was the Jr. Prom, I had gone to Golden Green Balls before that but it wasn't a date.

Mandi: Describe the Jr. Prom.

Norma: Well our theme for our Jr. Prom was deep purple and I remember my dress was a yellow formal and I think I had the matching shoes to go with it.

Mandi: Name a good friend that you have known for the longest period of time.

Norma: Vera O'Neil.

Mandi: How many years have you been friends?

Norma: Um, about fifty years.

Mandi: Has there ever been anyone in your life that you could consider to be your kindred spirit or soul mate?

Norma: Ah, not, not as, no not really.

Mandi: How did you meet the person that you would later marry?

Norma: I met him when I was about three years old.

Mandi: Do you remember where you went on the first date with your spouse?

Norma: No I don't.

Mandi: How long did you know them before you got married?

Norma: About fifteen years.

Mandi: Describe your wedding proposal.

Norma: Well he asked me to marry him a couple times and I said no I guess I got tired of listening to it and said yes.

Mandi: When and where did you get married?

Norma: I got married the seventeenth of December 1948 at my parents home in Ballard Utah.

Mandi: Describe your wedding ceremony.

Norma: Ah, my uncle married us and at that time they didn't have receptions but the ladies that lived in our ward gave me a shower.

Mandi: Who was there?

Norma: My aunts and uncles, and my brother and my sisters were just babies about a month and a half old, and friends.

Mandi: Did you get along with your brothers and sisters?

Norma: Yes, very well, we had very good relationship, we still do.

Mandi: Did you have a honeymoon?

Norma: No.

Mandi: How would you describe your spouse? What do you admire most about him?

Norma: He's a hard worker, sometimes he is good to his kids, most the time he is onry.

Mandi: How long have you been married?

Norma: All my life, forty nine years.

Mandi: What wise advice would you give to a grandchild on their wedding day?

Norma: I'd give it to them before their wedding day I'd tell them to be darn careful and selective in their choice of a mate.

Mandi: How did you find out that you were going to be a parent for the first time?

Norma: Well I was in Price Trading and I fainted and my mother-in-law took me to the doctor and the doctor told me I was going to have a baby and that was five years after I was married.

Mandi: How many children did you have all together?

Norma: Four.

Mandi: What were their names, birthdates and places?

Norma: Ralph Gregory, the twentyth of April 1953, Price, he was born in Price, Utah, Laurie Jean O'Neil, was born the fourth of April 1956, in Roosevelt, Utah, Randy Vaun O'Neil, was born the thirtyth of November 1958, in Roosevelt Utah, Douglas Frank O'Neil, was born the ninth of November 1960.

Mandi: Do you remeber anything that one of your children did when they were small that really amazed you?

Norma: No I don't think I know what you mean by that.

Mandi: What is one of the most unusual things that one of your children did regularly when they were small?

Norma: When they were sent to their room as punishments they jumped out the window and go do what they wanted anyway.

Mandi: What was the funniest thing you can remember that one of your children said or did?

Norma: I remember Greg when he was just little we took him into the resteraunt and asked him what he wanted to eat, he kept telling us long beans, and he wanted french fries.

Mandi: If you had it to do all over again would you change the way you raised your family?

Norma: Probably not.

Mandi: What did you find most difficult about raising children?

Norma: I don't know, I, its all hard, but its harder now.

Mandi: What did you find most rewarding about being a parent.

Norma: The satisfaction of how they grew up and how they turned out in their lives was a great satisfaction to know that I had done a pretty good job of raising them because they've never been a really trouble to anybody.

Mandi: Did you spoil any of your children?

Norma: Every one of them, just as rotten as I could.

Mandi: How?

Norma: In any way that they wanted or needed or whatever I would do my darndest to see that they had it.

Mandi: Were you a strict or lenient parent?

Norma: Well my husband said I was too lenient I thought I did just fine.

Mandi: Did you find that you had to treat each of your children differently?

Norma: Oh yes, there are none of them alike, their personalities are every one different, their desires, their wants, their needs are all different.

Mandi: How did you first hear that you were going to be a grandparent and how did you feel about it?

Norma: A Greg and Cheryl told us that we were going to be grandparents and I thought it was wonderful.

Mandi: Are there any special experiences that you have had in your life?

Norma: Only in the church, and I've been the primary president, and the counselor in the primary, I've been the ward and stake sunday school coordinator and I've worked in the baptisimal part of the temple in the Manti Temple and thats the greatest and the best experience I've had in my life.

Mandi: In your whole life?

Norma: In my whole life, the whole thing.

Mandi: How many grandchildren do you have?

Norma: I have sixteen.

Mandi: What are their names?

Norma: Ok, Greg and Cheryl have Kendall is twenty, Steven who is eighteen, Teri is seventeen, Tamara is thirteen, Ralph is eleven. Laurie and Sheldon have Shelli who is eighteen, Mandi is sixteen, Kristi

is fourteen, and Josh is eleven. Randy and Lori have Brian is sixteen, Sherri is fourteen, A.J. is eleven, Travis is nine. Doug and Ellie have R.J. is fourteen, Brittany is eleven, and Jordan is ten, and they are all the joy of my life.

Mandi: What advice do you have for your children and grandchildren?

Norma: Be strict but not overly do it in a loving way but you still need to make it known that you are not going to put up with this kind of stuff your going, they've got to tow the mark, no dating untill they're sixteen, and this kind of thing and don't renig.

Mandi: As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Norma: Well I thought I wanted to be a nurse, the blood and stuff just didn't appeal to me.

Mandi: What was your first job?

Norma: I worked in an A&W.

Mandi: What kinds of jobs have you had?

Norma: Oh, I've worked in drugstores,I worked in Huish drugstore, JC Penney, Christensens, Sprouse Reitz, First Security Bank, Headstart, and that is about all.

Mandi: How did you decide on your career?

Norma: I don't think that was a career.

Mandi: Did you make enough money to live comfortably?

Norma: I didn't, Ralph did.

Mandi: How long did you have to work each day at your job?

Norma: Eight hours.

Mandi: How old were you when you retired?

Norma: I would imagine about fifty.

Mandi: What were the hardest choices you ever had to make, do you feel like you made the right choices?

Norma: The hardest choices was moving away from my family to come out to Price and I don't know that it was right but were here so.

Mandi: Who was the person that had the most positive influence on your life?

Norma: Probably my mother and dad.

Mandi: What did they do?

Norma: They taught me that if you wanted something you worked and earned what you got, they taught us to work hard and to be honest and that you just didn't get things for nothing.

Mandi: Is there a person that really changed the course of your life by something that they did?

Norma: No.

Mandi: How would you describe yourself politically?

Norma: I don't know, I don't suppose I any one party I usually listen vote for the one I think will do the job no matter what his polotics are.

Mandi: Are you conservative or liberal and why?

Norma: I don't know.

Mandi: What U.S president have you admired the most and why?

Norma: Probably Franklin D. Roosevelt, because tried to put everybody to work for a job, and now a days its just they want in there to be big deals.

Mandi: As you see it, what are the biggest problems that face our nation and how do you think they could be solved?

Norma: I think drugs is a big one, and I don't know how to solve it.

Mandi: How tall are you?

Norma: Five foot five.

Mandi: What color was your hair as a young child and then as an adult?

Norma: Blonde and light brown.

Mandi: What color are your eyes?

Norma: Blue.

Mandi: Where have you lived as an adult? List the places and the years you lived there.

Norma: I Roosevelt, from 1953 to 1977, Price 1977 to now.

Mandi: Why are you living where you are today?

Norma: Cause Ralph got employment in the coal mines and we moved to Price.

Mandi: Do you wish you lived somewhere else?

Norma: Yes out in Roosevelt where the rest of my family are.



Mandi: Describe your general health.

Norma: Pretty good.

Mandi: What kind of illnesses or health problems do you remember having?

Norma: I've had my appendix out, I've had a hysterectomy, I've had a colostomy, I've had hernia operations, I've had my tonsils out and I think that's all.

Mandi: Do you have any health problems that are considered hereditary in nature?

Norma: Yeah, high blood pressure.

Mandi: What do you do regularly for exercise?

Norma: I like to work in outdoors, in my flower gardens my vegetable gardens and I like to walk and that's about all.

Mandi: Do you have any bad habits now or in the past?

Norma: Oh yes I used to drink coffee by the gallons.

Mandi: Have you ever been the victim of a crime?

Norma: No.

Mandi: Have you ever been in a serious accident?

Norma: No.

Mandi: Has anyone ever saved your life?

Norma: No.

Mandi: Have you ever saved anyone else's life?

Norma: No.

Mandi: Have you ever been hospitalized?

Norma: Yes, lots of times.

Mandi: For what?

Norma: For all my surgery's.

Mandi: If you could change something about yourself what would it be?

Norma: I'd like to be a better person than I am.

Mandi: Have you ever had an experience that you would consider to be supernatural or psychic?

Norma: No.

Mandi: What do you usually dream about?

Norma: I don't know.

Mandi: What church, if any, do you attend regularly?

Norma: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, I'm one of the mormons.

Mandi: Describe your religious beliefs.

Norma: I beleive in Jesus Christ and I beleive he gave his life for us and that we through his attoning sacrifice we can have life eternal if we will live as we should live.

Mandi: Do you beleive in after-life?

Norma: Yes.

Mandi: What was the most stressful experience that you ever lived through?

Norma: Probably when I had the colostome.

Mandi: What helped you get through it?

Norma: My faith in my church and in Jesus Christ.

Mandi: What is the scariest thing that has ever happened to you personally?

Norma: Scariest thing? I think going through surgeries like I did there for a while, I mean four surgeries in three years is a little uptight business.

Mandi: What musical instruments have you earned to play?

Norma: The clairnet and the piano.

Mandi: Would you consider yourself creative?

Norma: I don't know, my children think I can do anything.

Mandi: What things have you made that others have enjoyed?

Norma: I like to crochet, I likecrochet afghans and give them away, I like to crochet doilies and give them away, and I hope that my grandchildren and children have enjoyed those.

Mandi: How would you describe your sense of humor?

Norma: It's great!!!

Mandi: What is the funniest practical joke you have ever played on anyone?

Norma: I don't think I've ever played them on anybody.

Mandi: What activities have you especially enjoyed as an adult?

Norma: I like to go picnicing, I like to crochet, I like to camp, I enjoy going deer hunting, I enjoy sleighriding and that kind of thing or I did used to.

Mandi: What are your hobbies?

Norma: I like to read, I like to crochet, I like to work in the flowergardens, I like to collect arrowheads, I like to collect indian things, jewelry, anything to do with indians.

Mandi: What is the most amazing thing that has ever happened to you?

Norma: I don't know.

Mandi: What is the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you?

Norma: Just after I was first married, Ralphs dad had his teeth pulled and we went out to Dicks' to have dinner and when we got through I kept insisting he have a toothpick and insisting and insisting and insisting and finally he says Norma I don't have any teeth, that was the most embarrassing.

Mandi: Have you ever met any famous people?

Norma: No.

Mandi: What organizations or groups have you belonged to?

Norma: None.

Mandi: Have you ever won any special awards or prizes as an adult?

Norma: I won a blue ribbon in the fair for my tablecloth.

Mandi: Describe a time and place when you remember feeling truly at peace and happy to alive.

Norma: I don't know.

Mandi: What is the most beautiful place you have ever visited and what was it like?

Norma: Probably when we went to Canada, Its very clean, its green, it has beautiful flowers and the lakes and glaciers, bears, elk, goats, lots of wildlife, and it is just a beautiful place to go.

Mandi: What is the longest trip you've ever gone on?

Norma: To Canada.

Mandi: What has been your favorite vacation?

Norma: My favorite vacations is when I go with my family, like when we went to Yellowstone with Randy and those kind of things, I like to go with my family on vacations and things.

Mandi: What was the favorite place you have ever visited and what was it like?

Norma: Um, probably Canada, thats the farthest I've been.

Mandi: What pets have you had?

Norma: Oh I've had dogs and cats and horses and thats about all.

Mandi: Do you have a favorite story about a pet?

Norma: Yes, Beautiful Jo.

Mandi: Whats the story?

Norma: He was a dog that had his ears cut off.

Mandi: Why was his ears cut off?

Norma: Because some man got mad at him and cut his ears off.

Mandi: Is there anything you have always wanted to do but haven't?

Norma: I would like to go back to Nauvoo and to the church sites, I'd even like to go on the mormon trail, where the covered wagons came.

Mandi: What is your favorite style of music?

Norma: Western.

Mandi: What is your favorite musical instrument?

Norma: Guitar.

Mandi: Who is your favorite musical group?

Norma: Not a group it is George Strait.

Mandi: What is your favorite song?

Norma: Oh I don't know I like them all.

Mandi: Who is your favorite singer?

Norma: George Strait.

Mandi: Who is your favorite movie star?

Norma: John Wayne.

Mandi: What is your favorite movie?

Norma: McClintock

Mandi: Who is your favorite artist?

Norma: My grandchildren, they are Kendall, and Shelli and Steven.

Mandi: What is your favorite painting?

Norma: Shelli's lake and trees, Steven's river and hills, and Kendall's eagle and mountains.

Mandi: Who is your favorite poet?

Norma: Probably Joyce Kilmer.

Mandi: What is your favorite poem?

Norma: Trees.

Mandi: What is your favorite TV program?

Norma: Medicine Woman.

Mandi: Who is your favorite author?

Norma: Louis Lamour or Zaine Grey.

Mandi: What is your favorite book?

Norma: Any one that they wrote, I like the Sackets.

Mandi: What is your favorite season?

Norma: I like December, and I like the Easter time.

Mandi: What is your favorite tree?

Norma: Apple.

Mandi: What is your favorite flower?

Norma: Roses, red ones.

Mandi: What is your favorite holiday?

Norma: Um, its a toss up between Christmas and Easter, those are my favorite.

Mandi: Why Christmas?

Norma: Its a time when, its a more loving time, where people show love to each other more than other times.

Mandi: Why Easter?

Norma: Because its the kind of the birth of everything, like in the springtime, flowers are blooming the little animals are being born and its a renewing of the seasons I guess.

Mandi: What is your favorite color?

Norma: Peach.

Mandi: What is your favorite sport?

Norma: I like to play horseshoes.

Mandi: Who is your favorite athlete?

Norma: My granddaughter Teri.

Mandi: What is your favorite animal?

Norma: Deer.

Mandi: What is your favorite meal?

Norma: All of them.

Mandi: What is your favorite fruit?

Norma: I like bananas.

Mandi: What is your favorite vegetable?

Norma: Corn.

Mandi: What is your favorite candy?

Norma: Anything thats sweet.

Mandi: What is your favorite cookie?

Norma: Chocolate chip.

Mandi: What is your favorite drink?

Norma: Diet coke.

Mandi: What is your favorite restaurant?

Norma: We go to Chuck-a-Rama alot, and China City, I like chinese food.



*Brian, Norma Jean*

BRIAN O'NEIL'S FAMILY STORIES

Brian O'Neil  
April 24, 1995

English 1 Period

O'Neil, Norma Jean. 8 April 1930. Castle Gate, Utah. Personal Interview. Price, Utah. 16 April 1995

When my grandma and grandpa were little they lived just down the road from each other. When they needed something they would just run up the street to barrow what ever they needed.

Ralph and I grew up together, so we have always known each other. There was this one particular day that my mother needed a tub so that she could wash clothes. She asked me to go ask Estella, Ralph's mom, if we could borrow her tub for a while. I went and asked and she told me that Ralph would bring it up.

I returned home and helped mom get the laundry ready to be washed.

It had been a while before Ralph finally showed up. He was carrying the tub with his hands and he had walked up. I asked him why he hadn't rode the horse over. He just said that he didn't want to.

Later on I found out that your grandpa tried to ride the horse. Only his horse was gone, so he had to ride Queen. Queen was a mean old horse, she was jumpy too. When ever she heard something rattle, she would take off running where<sup>ever</sup> she wanted.

Estella told him that he should walk the tub to grandma, but he was stubborn and knew that he could handle old Queen. He got on and told his mom to hand him the tub. She lifted the tub up to hand it to him, and the tub rattled. Queen jumped and took off down the hill with your grandpa on the back.

He finally got control of the horse and took her back to the house. His mom told him he had better walk the tub over to grandma's house. He didn't. He wanted to try again. She lifted

the tub and it rattled again. Off went Ralph and Queen again.

He got control again and went back to the house. He tried it again. It didn't work, same thing happened. He tried this seven times before he gave up and walked the tub to our house.