

Interview with Sarah Ruth McMinn Walker on April 26, 1980
at her home at 3669 S. 860 E. Salt Lake City, UT
By Jamie Kearl Burnett and Alan Kearl

S. Ruth McMinn met F Edward Walker in Buffalo, OK in the late 19-teens. She worked at her father's bank and he worked at a competing banks. The banks were on opposite corners of the street in Buffalo, OK. Her father who had previously been a rancher in Texas started in Buffalo when the town started with her two brothers and Father. The couple met through business dealings, exchanging money clearing checks, etc. Ruth "played the field" however going with the hardware store owner's son and other young men of the town.

Ruth lived in a big house on the edge of town and it was often the center for company. People would come at night to visit and her mother always had cakes, hams and baked chicken on hand to feed the hungry guests. They'd stay for a long time usually, but eventually went home that night. Her father loved to have people around and always joined in the fun.

In her day, dates consisted of dances, watermelon busts, hay rides and other adventures. The fun had to be invented then and Ruth felt she would be the worst of the worst if she grew today because she loved adventure and the unusual.

She and Edward dated for 2-3 years and one night they were over at some friends home and got talking. The friends said, "you could get married tonight, we'll get the preacher." So they did, right that night. But didn't tell anyone else for some reason (she didn't recall why). They went on with their lives for a week. Ruth lived with her brother and his kids (her brother's wife had died) and her father (her mother had died) and they had a housekeeper. Edward had a room in town, his mother lived in Austin, TX., his father was dead. Within a week people found out about the marriage and her father gave her a reception. (Of note, the reception invitation is dated 28 October 1921 as is the marriage certificate --- I guess the earlier elopement was never recorded.) After the reception, Edward and Ruth got a room in town, it wasn't common for people in that area/class to have a honeymoon in that day. Later they got a house.

Ruth continued to work for her father's bank until they moved away. Their daughter, Mary Frances Walker was born a little more than a year later (9 December 1922). About a year and a half after her birth, they moved to Oklahoma City, OK and Edward went into the construction business. A few years later he sold out and pocketed \$2,500 and went into the insurance business.

The young family moved to Salt Lake City, UT in August 1931. They drove into town through Parley's Canyon. Ruth had never seen so many mountains and thought she'd never see a city again. It seemed to take forever to get through the canyon and she saw the beautiful Salt Lake valley. It was summer and green and Ruth thought it was very pretty.

While traveling from Oklahoma City to Tulsa, they carried all their drapes in the back seat and little Mary had to set high above the top of them until they dropped them off at

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Aunt Ethel (McMinn) Dick's, there in Tulsa. They shipped their belongings by train to Salt Lake City.

When they first arrived, Edward worked for Mutual of Omaha for a man, but bought him out a couple of years later and became the owner of the agency. The offices were on the second floor of the Continental Bank building. Later he had his own office built and later yet, owned a couple of buildings in downtown Salt Lake.

Edward was a Commander in the Navy. He worked in the reserves at Selective Service office at Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City. When World War II started, he was moved to active duty and Ruth managed the insurance office. (According to daughter Mary, it was during the war years that the insurance agency prospered because Ruth was a good business woman.)

Edward was a good at sales, he loved people and he knew them. He belonged to every club and even has letters from George Albert Smith. He lead such a fast-paced life that Ruth couldn't keep up with him. He was a devoted church goer and was always on a committee to raise money and was the chair person of the board of directors of the church (Central Christian Church) for a long time. His co-workers, were chagrined since most were of the Mormon faith and had tried to convert him and Ruth. They finally gave up saying, "Well we've made you Mormon even if you won't be baptized." Ruth thought Mormons were quite friendly and didn't feel there was much difference between them and other Christians but remembers they were always trying to get her to join.

Edward sold the insurance agency in April 1949 in order to finish out his retirement with the Navy. One July morning in 1949, he went to do some errands then to get his haircut, then out to his Fort Douglas office, when a truck suddenly crossed his path killing him instantly. Ruth was faced with the task of selling office buildings, collecting money and setting up a trust fund which has lasted her until now. She didn't let his death get her down. She always figured what was done was done and she should make the best of any given situation.

Ethel (McMinn) Dick had by this time been in Salt Lake City for several years working for the insurance agency and offered much needed consolation. Ethel moved in and they lived the rest of their days offering each other companionship. Ethel had come to Salt Lake in the late 1930's after she and her husband divorced. At first when she came to Salt Lake she helped Ruth take care of their brother's three children (Dick, Marty and Olive Ruth) who had come to live with Edward and Ruth following the death of their father (Charles). About this time, Ethel's son was in the Air Force and had engine trouble while on a flight over the Appalachian Mountains. His parachute failed and he died. Later she worked at the Insurance Agency and became a "crack" bookkeeper. Ruth said that in all her years she never saw Ethel make an error. Ethel was a perfectionist and a real tomboy in her early days. She played baseball, ran, raced the horse and buggy with "the best of them".