

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
 Marvin J. Wilber Interview Abstract  
 June 7, 2018

Interviewee	Marvin J. Wilber
Year of birth	1926
Place of birth	Robinson, Pulaski County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Connie Fetters
Interview date	2018-06-07
Interview location	Maysville Community Center; Maysville, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Wilber, Marvin J.          Wilber, Billie          Lee, Harold Dr.          Tucker, Raymond          Fetters, Connie          Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas          Maysville, Benton County, Arkansas          Southwest City, McDonald County, Missouri          Apples          Baseball          Cemeteries          Doctors          Education          Farming          Hospitals          Hunting          Japan          Military          Newspapers          Politics          Railroads          Recreation          Schools          Small town life          Telephones          Television          U.S. Army          U.S. Postal Service          U.S. Civil War          World War II</p>
Description	<p>Meet ninety-two-year-old (in 2018) Marvin J. Wilber. His stories take listeners from Maysville to Japan and back to Maysville-- from a lifelong love of baseball, to World War II military service, to experiences as farmer, postmaster and barber.</p> <p>Born at home on the family farm in Robinson Arkansas, Wilber moved to Maysville around the fifth grade. For the first time the family had electricity; there was a basketball court; and friends to play kick the can. When the creeks froze, there were skating</p>

parties with horses pulling wagons and sleds. After finishing grade school in Maysville, he went to high school in Southwest City, Missouri. Southwest City, unlike Gravette, would pick up Maysville students and did not charge tuition.

During World War II there was a good market for hides. Teenagers, like himself, hunted several nights a week. Hides brought more money than a job. While hunting one night he found a burial ground with markers that dated to the Civil War. The weather and the railroads impacted Maysville. Wilber remembers his family, and that of his wife, Billie, talking of lots of apples growing east of Maysville until the killing freeze of 1929. Billie's parents told of hearing the ice damage as it happened. Another impact, when the railroad went to Gravette and not Maysville, some businesses left town.

The Maysville that Wilber grew up in had three grocery stores, a hardware store, a newspaper, a local hospital thanks to Dr. Lee. The downstairs of the hospital housed the popular movie theater. Wilbur laughs remembering the old western serials that ended each week just as the horse was jumping over the bluff. Saturday was a busy day in town as families from the surrounding farms brought produce to be traded.

After graduating from high school, Wilber joined the Army. He was sent to Japan as World War II was ending. He viewed firsthand the life of that country's residents. He met his brother in Saipan. Together they visited the graves of relatives killed in Japan during World War II.

A few years after his discharge, Wilber and his wife moved just outside Maysville. He became a barber; she a beauty operator. Barbering was not what he wanted, so he did some farming. He and Billie bought a local grocery store, adding feed and fertilizer products to the store's shelves. When the job of local postmaster opened in the 1960s, both of them studied for the test. Wilber credits getting the job to lots of studying and the points he got for previous military service. He stayed with the Postal Service until the 1980s. At that time, Wilber returned to farming. He farms today with assistance from his children. He helps oversee the Maysville Cemetery.

A life-long love of baseball began with summers filled with games; every town had a team. A highlight was the field getting lights. There were the teams of the Apple Blossom Men's League and American Legion. Wilber was both a player and a coach. Today Wilber continues to follow the St. Louis Cardinals and New York Yankees. A Razorback fan, Wilber and family attend Arkansas baseball games.

Wilber calls the advent of the telephone the biggest change he's seen. He has, and uses, his cell phone. He says you can find anything, including baseball statistics. He remembers the introduction of television. People who had TVs shared them with each other. It was at Raymond Tucker's home in the early 1950s that Wilber watched the World Series with friends. He got his

	<p>first television in 1954.          Want to meet this man? Visit Maysville, his home since 1937. You'll likely find him at the Maysville Community Center, out riding with his family, or on his way to a baseball game.</p>
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Interview sidebar	<p>Wilber's experienced many changes in his 92 years. He says "I believe this telephone has been the biggest change of anything I've ever seen. When we got up here we'd had a telephone...two longs/two shorts for ringing that went to central office and then onto the neighbor you were calling. Now you can get the weather on it, you can get anything... [I] have a cell phone, not a fancy one, but one that works" [00:52:58]</p>