

COFFEE WITH MISS BEAVERTON



It's Friday morning and time for coffee at Miss Beaverton's house. She's Virginia McCulloch, or Virginia Evans when she became the 2nd Miss Beaverton in 1930. The visitors come from near and far but most of them come from just down the road – McCulloch Road.

Sometimes as many as 20 but usually around a dozen people (most of them named McCulloch) show up ready for coffee and some good conversation. I was number eight but only the third not named McCulloch to show up – as the morning passed about 10 more drifted in. "Mom used to come to my house on Mondays but for the last few years we all decided to come here on Fridays," said son Bill McCulloch.

You see, Virginia doesn't get around as much as she used to – she's only 94. She does still drive to church on Sundays but 'I take the back roads, after all I'm a great-great grandmother and darn proud of it

too!’ She continued, ‘I never really felt old until someone pointed out my son was a great-grandfather. Then I thought I was old.’

Every year Beaverton has a 50-year high school class reunion and all graduates from previous 50+ classes are invited. Virginia goes every year along with her 5 sons – the sixth, Bill, will be eligible in a few years.

Virginia Evans moved here with her parents, five brothers and a sister from central Ohio in 1915 when she was two years old. Her father, Allison Campbell Pennington Evans (for obvious reasons known as ACP) bought 80 acres of stumps on Lyle Rd. and eventually started farming sugar beets.

Yes, there was a town of Lyle just down the road, which was a growing town at the time with a store, a school and a sawmill. The railroad stopped in Lyle from Coleman on its way to Beaverton and the first community project started by the Evans family was to build a church.

Kids had simple ways to entertain themselves back then. For her first eight years of education Virginia went to the Lyle School. They rolled a hoop with a stick, used the railroad tracks as their balance beam and played pom-pom pullaway in the schoolyard.

As a freshman her older brother Sandy drove her to Beaverton High School in the family Model T Ford. ACP was instrumental in helping ensure that Virginia was riding a school bus by her junior year, making the Beaverton Consolidated School District one of the first to offer busing to rural students.

Then in 1930 Virginia won the Miss Beaverton contest in its second year. Those good looks genetics obviously run in the family because in addition to her winning the pageant a niece, grand-niece, great grand-niece and granddaughter have also been crowned Miss Beaverton.

Shortly after graduation she married one of the local boys, Willis McCulloch II, who in 1933 was named the National Future Farmer of America. Right about that time Virginia started working in the family business, the McCulloch Riverside Dairy, wrapping and delivering one-pound blocks of butter. She did that for seven years until they closed in 1940. During that period, she got something new – a Social Security number. It isn’t a single digit but it does have a few 3’s in it.

Most people start thinking about retirement after a half-century but not this woman. After her daughter graduated from high school, Virginia at age 58 went off to college to become a hearing technician. When Willis decided to retire from the rigors of farming, they took up skiing.

So with my cup of coffee, sitting next to Willis McCulloch the fifth, surrounded by her sons, daughter, grandchildren and a few greats thrown in, I had a chat with Miss Beaverton.

ROR: Is it true your father didn't approve of your bathing suit in the Miss Beaverton contest?

Virginia: Oh my, that's true. He didn't take to modern dress very well. I don't know what he'd do today (a son says in the background, 'he'd die a happy man!'). My father turned his head when I came out with my suit on. L.J. Budge who had a drugstore got the town involved in a statewide water carnival and that's how the Miss Beaverton pageant started.

ROR: You married Willis in 1932. How did you meet him?

Virginia: He quit school after the 8th grade because he was going to farm the homestead. His father was already 70 and thought he was getting too old to farm. The Ag teacher talked Willis into going to high school. Willis had big shoulders and big arms and I thought he was very handsome and brawny. He was a great football player too.

ROR: He was a pretty good farmer also...

Virginia: Yes, after we were married he was chosen the State farmer and National Future Farmer of America. He went to St. Louis, Missouri to get his certificate. That was the first time he'd ever been out of Michigan.

ROR: What is the first movie you remember going to?

Virginia: I remember going to Gladwin to see Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde (1931) – it was SO creepy, YOU'D remember that one! I wasn't allowed to go to dances because they had *alcohol* there! But my parents thought it was ok to go to the movies.

ROR: I've heard from a reliable source that you worked for a bootlegger. Is that true?

Virginia: Well, yes I guess so. It was during Prohibition and this fella came around to buy frogs to sell to restaurants. We'd catch'em and put'em in our stockings. He'd buy them from us and put them in a box and go down to the train station in Lyle but in the bottom of the box he had jars of moonshine (liquor). Everybody seemed to know about it but he got away with it for quite a few years. I guess people liked his frog legs (laughing).

ROR: What do you remember about the Depression?

Virginia: My father bought me two housedresses for one dollar. People wouldn't believe that today. They wonder why I save everything and don't want to throw things away. There's some use for just about everything.

ROR: You've seen some big changes over the years. What are the biggest changes you've seen?

Virginia: Well, we went from buggies to cars before I went to high school. There was the man in the moon and then they put a man ON the moon when I went to college but that was quite a few years later. I'd say the biggest change would be in the roads. I remember the first time we drove to visit relatives in Ohio. We got up at 3:00 a.m. and got down there by suppertime. My dad got a list of towns and when we drove into one we'd stop and ask directions to the next one. We had no maps. I'll never forget we stopped at a place where they were building something and a carpenter drew a map on a block of wood for us.

ROR: What are your first recollections of Christmas?

Virginia: My favorite Christmas, I must have been about seven when we got up and looked for the presents under the tree. There all wrapped up in the chair was my new baby brother. I got a nice big doll that year for Christmas but I didn't pay much attention to it because I had a REAL baby to look after.

ROR: When did you get your first TV?

Virginia: We got a TV in the late 40's from my sister-in-law. She married a doctor and we got one of their old TVs. We watched Amos & Andy and I remember watching Queen Elizabeth's wedding (1947) – that was a big thrill.

ROR: You're a mother, a grandmother, a great grandmother and a great-great grandmother. So how many McCullochs are out there?

Virginia: Well, I had seven children (six boys and a girl). I've got 17 grandchildren and 16 great-great grandchildren but I'm really not sure about the ones in between (there's 30 great grandchildren, we counted'em up). Not too bad from one marriage (57 years). Willis was my one and probably I'm guessing at my age, my only one for me (laughing). Oh, I've lived an interesting life and am very proud of my family. It's all happened so fast...

ROR: And we're so glad you've shared it with us. Your family is too big for a tree – you have a family forest. Thanks Virginia.



Virginia McCulloch 1913-2010