**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Martha Rosenthal**

Interview Conducted by

Juliana Nykolaiszyn

November 25, 2014

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

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**Interview History**

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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**Project Detail**

The purpose of the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Martha Rosenthal is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on November 25, 2014.

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**About Martha O’Connor Armstrong Rosenthal…**

Martha Rosenthal was born on July 8, 1944, in Downey, California, to Murray and JoAnn O’Connor. Her father was in the United States military which led to the family moving multiple times in Martha’s youth. She attended several different schools made necessary by relocating for her father’s work. Martha graduated from high school in Germany while her father was serving there. Also during her childhood there were significant periods of time when Martha lived with her grandmother in Morris, Oklahoma. That cherished time in Oklahoma ultimately led to her settling in Collinsville, Oklahoma.

Following high school graduation, Martha enrolled in Oklahoma State Technical School in Okmulgee. When she finished her program there, Martha accepted a position with Sunray DX in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Martha continued to visit Morris, Oklahoma, and it was there that she met her first husband, David Armstrong. Martha and David had three children, Keith, Kyle, and Kerri. They had been married twenty-nine years when he passed away.

Martha was a stay-at-home mom while her children were young. When they were old enough, she began working with the school system in Collinsville, holding multiple positions such as teacher’s aide, bus driver, substitute teacher, and cafeteria manager. She retired with twenty-three years of service.

While attending a grief seminar, Martha met Gary Rosenthal who would become her second husband. They have been married eighteen years and between them they have eighteen grandchildren and great-grandchildren in all. Martha and Gary enjoy long talks, time with children and grandchildren, and worshiping together.

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| **Martha Rosenthal**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn  November 25, 2014  Collinsville, Oklahoma |  |

**Nykolaiszyn** *My name is Juliana Nykolaiszyn with the Oklahoma State University Library. Today is Tuesday, November 25, 2014. I’m in Collinsville, Oklahoma, interviewing Martha Rosenthal. Thank you very much for joining us today.*

**Rosenthal** Thank you.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Martha, let’s begin by learning a little bit more about you. Could you tell me the year you were born, and where you were born?*

**Rosenthal** I was born July 8, 1944 in Downey, California. My dad was stationed there. It was during the war, and my mother was there with her aunt who lived in Downey. That’s where I was born.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Could you tell me a little bit more about your parents? How did they meet?*

**Rosenthal** Well, my mother grew up in Oklahoma, but she went to California to visit her sister. My dad was stationed there in the Army, and they met. I don’t know exactly where, but they met somewhere out there. That’s where it all started.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Do you have siblings?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, I’m the oldest, and I have a sister who’s eighteen months younger. Her name is Judy. Then, I have a brother. His name is Pat, the only boy of all the girls. Then, I have another sister, Brenda, who lives here in Collinsville with me. Then, I have another sister, Connie, and then, the baby is Mary. We’re all getting pretty old now. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did your parents ever tell you any stories about the day you were born?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, but the only thing they ever told me was my dad came in and looked at me and said, “Oh, she’s ugly.” (Laughs) Of course, I guess all newborn babies don’t look too good, but that’s kind of been the story of my life, you know, “Ugly.” (Laughter)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Who do you think you most resemble in the family?*

**Rosenthal** Well, I think I look like my mother, but everyone says I act like my father. They’re both deceased now. I guess I got, maybe, the best of both. I don’t know.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Go ahead and tell me the names of your parents.*

**Rosenthal** My mother’s name was JoAnn Paschal, and my dad’s name was Murray Joseph O’Connor.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Looking back on your early life, can you just tell me about some of those early memories that you remember that just stick out in your mind?*

**Rosenthal** I remember going to kindergarten when I was—we lived in California. We lived in these tall apartment buildings. We lived on the top floor. We had to climb all those stairs. My parents, my dad was in the service, and my mom was a stay-at-home mom. I just remember my little baby brother, Pat, trying to crawl down the stairs. I remember my dad trying to teach me to tie my shoe. I remember that. I remember one Christmas when they woke us up in the middle of the night, because they said Santa Claus had come, but I didn’t believe that. I thought, “Santa Claus can’t go to every kid’s house in the whole world.” That just sticks out in my mind for some reason. I don’t know.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How long did you live in California?*

**Rosenthal** Until I was into my kindergarten years. I was five. We moved to Kansas. Then, we lived in Texas. My dad was always, they were always moving him. He was a military police after the war, so they were always moving us. I was going from school to school to school. I never went to one school more than one year, until we moved to Germany. My dad was stationed over there, and I went to the same high school for three years. It was great. (Laughs) I always said that when I got grown, I was going to live in one place the rest of my life. Since I was twenty-one, I’ve lived in Collinsville. (Laughs) That’s good.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did your father finish his career in the military?*

**Rosenthal** He retired from the military, and we moved to Texas, but I didn’t want to live in Texas. I wanted to live in Oklahoma. My grandmother lived here in a little town called Morris down by Okmulgee. After we came back from Germany, I was graduated [from] high school. I wanted to go to the tech in Okmulgee, which is now Oklahoma State Technical School. I went there and graduated. [I] met my husband in Morris. He saw me walking down Main Street, and he [thought], “Hmm, I’d like to meet that girl.” (Laughs) We started dating, and we married and moved to Collinsville. He had a teaching job here. We lived here for about twenty-nine years when he passed away.

I have three children. My oldest is Keith, my middle one is Kyle, and my baby is named Kari. The boys live here, Keith and Kyle, but Kari lives in Dallas. Then, I met my husband now, in Tulsa at a church function. I didn’t know he lived in Collinsville. Anyway, he remembered seeing me at school. I worked at the school. We married, and we’ve been married eighteen years now. We have thirteen grandchildren.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow!*

**Rosenthal** Yeah.

**Nykolaiszyn** *A lot.*

**Rosenthal** We have a lot. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Fun for the holidays.*

**Rosenthal** Yes, yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, talking a little bit more about your parents, how would you describe them?*

**Rosenthal** My mother, I don’t think she ever graduated high school. You know, I never asked her about that, but my dad, he was from Louisiana. His mother was a Louisiana-Cajun lady. She was a big lady, and when she would talk, she’d say, “Oh, that’s much more better!” I always thought that was so cool, but we never got to see her very much. She was a lot of fun. She taught me how to make gumbo, and she always made bread almost every day. She always blessed her bread, and I just thought that was so neat.

She put my dad in the Army when he was very young. I think he was sixteen whenever she—she had three boys. She put one in the Army, one in the Air Force, [and] one in the Navy. My dad was stationed at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed. I wished I would’ve asked him more about that. You know, I never thought about asking him about his life in the Army when he was very young and about Pearl Harbor.

We didn’t find out until after he died that after the war, he was in the military police. He was at the Nuremberg Trials. He was a guard. After he passed away, we found these papers, these orders, and it told everything he was to take to be the guard there at the trials. I wished I would’ve known that. I could’ve asked him more about it. I thought that was very interesting. Then, I guess after that’s when he married my mom. We traveled a lot. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Who were you closer to, your mom or your father?*

**Rosenthal** Me and my dad, I think because we were so much alike, we didn’t get along very well. (Laughs) He always had to have the last say in everything, so him and I weren’t very close. I guess I was closer to my mom than my dad, but I lived a lot with my grandmother. I don’t know if it’s because we had so many kids. My mom had six kids. I guess because of that she let me stay a lot with my grandmother, because she wanted me to be with her. My mom and dad let me stay a lot with her. My grandmother probably shaped more of my life than my mom, really.

**Nykolaiszyn** *This is your grandmother in….*

**Rosenthal** My mother’s mother.

**Nykolaiszyn** *In Oklahoma?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, she lived in Morris, Oklahoma, a little-bitty town only about two blocks long. It’s a nice little town, though. I still have a cousin that lives there.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did she have a job, your grandmother, outside of the home?*

**Rosenthal** No, no. My grandpa worked on the railroad, and after he retired from the railroad, he had a bad stroke. Back then, they didn’t really do anything about people who had strokes. They had a hospital bed, and he was in the hospital bed. My grandmother took care of him. She was his caregiver. He couldn’t speak, and he couldn’t walk, so my grandmother took care of him. I would help her take care of him. I think maybe that was one of the reasons that my grandmother liked having me around because my grandfather didn’t communicate very well. I was there to help her. He was crazy about me. He gave me some old nickels, and I took them down to the store and spent them. Why did I do that? (Laughs) I wish I had those nickels back, but I had a pretty happy childhood.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did your grandmother teach you anything in the kitchen?*

**Rosenthal** Yes. I’ll tell you a funny thing we used to do. My grandmother had chickens. I guess that’s why I love chickens. I have chickens now. We had these chickens, and on Sunday, we’d have fried chicken for dinner. On Saturday night, we would catch the chicken with a coat hanger. I would hold it on this board, and she would chop its head off with an ax. Then, we would hang it on the clothesline for a little while and let the blood drip out. Then, we would dunk it in boiling water and pull the feathers. Oh, they stunk terrible. We’d pull all its feathers out, and then, we’d take it in the kitchen. She would gut it, and then, we put it in the refrigerator. The next day, we fried it, because we had fried chicken on Sundays. She taught me how to cook a chicken, or how to kill a chicken and cook it. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Those are good lessons to learn. (Laughs)*

**Rosenthal** Yes! Monday was wash day at Grandma’s. She had an old wringer washing machine, and we would start out by washing all the white clothes. We separated all the clothes, and we washed the white clothes. Then, we washed the rest of the clothes. We had three buckets, one with water, and we would rinse three times. Grandma said, “We got to rinse them clothes three times!” The last rinse had bleach in it, but that was just the white clothes. We’d hang them on the line. We always cooked beans on Monday when we did laundry, brown beans. That was the memories of my grandma. It was pretty cool.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Would you ever go to town with Grandma?*

**Rosenthal** Oh yes, but my grandmother didn’t drive. She didn’t have a car, and she didn’t drive, so we had to walk. It was about four or five blocks to town. We would walk to town. Everywhere we went, we walked. I went to school there, and I had to walk. It was probably ten, eleven blocks to school. No matter what the weather was like, you had to walk to school. My grandmother, when it was real cold, she wanted me to wear pants under my dress, because we only wore dresses back then. You didn’t wear pants to school. She would try to get me to wear pants under my dress when it was real cold. No, no, I didn’t like that. I didn’t want to, so I’d go a block down the street and take the pants off and get to school froze to death. (Laughs) I can remember that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Looking back on your father’s career in the military, how do you think he felt about his job?*

**Rosenthal** He liked being in the military. My dad was really strict, very strict, but one thing my dad never did was ever use bad language at home. I didn’t realize it when I was young, but now I realize it. That was an effort for him because I know in the military they use a lot of bad language, but my dad never, I never heard him say a curse word. When he said you do something, you do it, or you’re going to be in trouble. You learn very young to, when your dad says, “Move,” you move. You do it, what he says.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did your mom ever have a job outside of the home?*

**Rosenthal** No, not until my dad retired, and we moved to Texas. She got a job at the nursing home, and she worked there twenty years after—my dad also retired. He worked for NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] for a while as a guard at the NASA there in, it’s in Texas. They lived in La Porte, Texas, which is north of Houston. They have a NASA place down there. He worked there for about four years at NASA. Then, he went to work at this nursing home where my mom worked as a kind of security. He retired from there for twenty years. My dad had two retirements…

**Nykolaiszyn** *Oh my goodness.*

**Rosenthal** …but he went into the military so young, like sixteen. He had retired from the military very young. I don’t remember how old, but he was twenty-three years in the military. Then, he was retired from that, the second job, for about six or seven years before he passed away.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did your mom enjoy working in the nursing home?*

**Rosenthal** I guess the ladies, or the people that were in the nursing home, loved my mom because she was a very nice lady. She was very gentle. She was very good to the old people there, so they all loved her. She loved it, too. She liked the grannies. She called them her grannies.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, you have a lot of siblings.*

**Rosenthal** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Tell me a little bit about them.*

**Rosenthal** Well, my sister that’s eighteen months younger than me, we didn’t get along. (Laughs) We used to fight a lot when we were kids, but now she’s grown. She lives in La Porte, Texas, and she has three children and lots of grandkids. Then, my brother, he also lives in La Porte, Texas, and he only had one daughter. She lives here in Collinsville. (Laughs) Go figure, you know.

Then, I have my closest sister. She’s eight years younger than me, but she came to spend the summer with me one year between her junior and senior year. She met this guy, and they kind of dated and corresponded. Then, after she graduated, she came here, moved back, moved here, and then, she married him. Now she lives just down the road, and she’s my very best friend. I love her to death. Then, my next sister, she also lives in La Porte, Texas. They all do, except me and my best friend sister, Brenda, live here. They all live in Texas.

Then, my baby sister, when she was born, I was sixteen years old when she was born. I thought she was mine, you know. We went to the hospital to get my mom, and I held her all the way home. I took care of her a lot when she was a baby, so she was mine, practically. I helped raise her. Her and I look a lot alike. Everybody teases us that she’s the before, I’m the after. (Laughs) They all live down in Texas. We just came back from a visit down there.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How often do you get to see your brothers and sisters?*

**Rosenthal** Oh, probably three or four times a year. They come—usually once a year they’ll come here, and then we’ll go down there a couple of—my other sister, Brenda, and I will go down there. My second sister, she has cancer, lung cancer, so we’ve been trying to go down there more to see her. We’ve been down there three times this last summer. [We] just now came back from a visit with her.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, you mentioned that when you were growing up you bounced around a lot when it came to school because of your father’s career.*

**Rosenthal** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *I want you try to walk me through some of the schools that really stick out in your mind.*

**Rosenthal** Okay, well, I went first grade in Morris, as I was living with my grandmother. I went first and second grade there. I had a teacher in second grade who was also a teacher [who] had taught my mom. I remember she was very strict. That was the only paddling I ever got in school was in second grade. She said I wasn’t paying attention, so she paddled me. That just broke my heart. I[t] was [a] pretty traumatic thing for me. We lived in Kansas a lot, different places in Kansas. My dad never would live on the military base. He always lived off base, and we would move around a lot from town to town.

I just remember I would always get frustrated because I would make a good friend, have some good friends, and then, my dad would say we’re moving. That was always pretty stressful for me. I didn’t want to move. I wanted to stay where I was. I had my friends. I wanted to stay there. Over the years, I had a lot of friends. I had to make new friends every time I went somewhere. (Laughs) Maybe that’s why I’m sort of outgoing, I don’t know, because I’ve always had to make friends. I’ve noticed my sisters are kind of like that, too. I don’t know if it’s a family trait, or if it’s something that we had to do to survive in school.

I went to high school. My first year, my freshman year, I lived in Enterprise, Kansas. I saw the very first microwave oven. They came to our school. I had home ec[onomics], my favorite subject, and they brought a microwave. We’d never seen them, didn’t know anything about microwaves, and they took popcorn. It was still on the, popcorn was on the cobb. They put it in a sack, and they stuck it in this little oven, it was pretty big, and popped the popcorn in just a few minutes. We were all just amazed at that. A microwave! They said, “Well, this is the cooking of the future.” I never saw another microwave for like ten years, (laughs) but that was pretty neat. I went to high school there my freshman year, and then my dad, at the end of our freshman year, we moved to Germany. I went my sophomore, junior, and senior year in Germany at the military school.

**Nykolaiszyn** *That’s a big culture shift.*

**Rosenthal** Yeah, but we lived on the military base. It was still different. We lived right by the gate that went out into the German town. We would go down to the German town. It was fun to listen to the people talk and speak German. We learned a little bit, but I wished I would’ve learned a lot more. We always talked about going stateside. Everybody always wanted to go stateside. “When we get back to the states, we’re going to the drive-in movie,” because we didn’t have drive-in movies in Germany. We were missing out on all the stuff that was going on over here like drive-in movies and dragging Main because nobody had a car. You didn’t have a car. We missed out on all that, but it might’ve been a good thing. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *How would you keep up with the latest music or the latest trends?*

**Rosenthal** Well, we had a television, but we only had the one station they want to show you, the military station. We had a teen club, and it was just down the street from where I lived. We had records, of course. They sold records at the PX [Post Exchange], so we would buy all the latest records. We would go to the teen club and play them and dance. We loved to dance. That was about the only entertainment we had was the teen club where we danced and listened to music. The little RPM, 45 RPM records, and we wore those out pretty good. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *What were some of the musical artists you were listening to?*

**Rosenthal** Well, it was in 1962. [There was], of course, Elvis, and the Beach Boys, and Frankie Valli, all the ’50s music. I graduated in 1962, so it was the good music, the rock and roll music. Not that stuff they have today! (Laughs) I still enjoy listening to the, on DIRECTV, you can get the station that has the oldies songs, so we like to listen to those.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you graduate from school in Germany?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, I did. I graduated, then we, well, I graduated in June, and then in October, we moved back to the states. That’s when I came to live with my grandma and go to school at Okmulgee Tech.

**Nykolaiszyn** *During your high school years, was there a subject that you felt drawn to?*

**Rosenthal** Home economics, my favorite subject. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Why is that? Tell me why.*

**Rosenthal** I loved to cook. I cook a lot. I still cook a lot. I love cooking and sewing, so that’s why I love, but I also love sports. PE, I loved PE. That’s what I concentrated on. I played volleyball. I played basketball. I was drawn to sports. I loved to compete. I was a high jumper in high school. We didn’t really have what they have now, but we would just, there were about four schools that we would play against. They didn’t have State or things like that. We just would compete against about four schools, but it was fun. I loved it. I love sports.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you do any other type of extracurricular activities in school?*

**Rosenthal** Well, I was in drama. I was in chorus. I just liked to do everything, so I pretty much joined everything. I had to really study hard to keep my grades up. It didn’t come easy for me. I had to study and work on that part, but the PE and the home economics was easy. I loved doing that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Were there any organized dances or proms?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, we had proms, and we had them at the officers’ club there on the base. I had dates for all my proms, and we would have extra—we had the teen club, which you could go to. It was open almost every night. You could go there anytime. We spent a lot of time there. They had a room where they had pool tables, but the boys wouldn’t let us come in there. “No girls allowed in the pool room!” We would sit around and visit. We’d get the guys to come in and dance a little bit, but you know boys. They wanted to hang out in the pool room. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Were you excited when it was time to return back to the states?*

**Rosenthal** Oh yeah. That’s all you really talked about. Going stateside, they called it. We would say, “We want to go stateside, do the things that the kids…” Of course, we had a theater, movie theater, so we saw all the movies. They had pretty much current movies, so we would see stuff that was going on. We wanted to do that. Yeah, we were excited about coming back to the states.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Anything stick out from traveling back from Germany?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, we flew back. We went over on a ship, and we flew back. We flew to North Carolina, and we got off the [plane]. My dad was going to be stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia. I’ll tell you a funny story. We picked up our car in North Carolina, and we drove to Georgia to Fort Benning. We were around there for about a month or so, and one night, I told my dad, I said, “While we’ve been gone, the black people have taken over the whole country.” I just thought that was funny later on after I thought about it. I’d never lived anywhere where there were a lot of black people. There were in the Army, but not in where we lived. I think that was funny. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Especially in the ’60s with the Civil Rights Movement.*

**Rosenthal** Yeah, the ’60s. I had a good friend in high school. She lived right across the street from me, because we lived in military housing, and she was black. We were great friends, and you know, I never thought about whether she was black or white. We were just friends, and she’d come to my house. I’d go to her house. She loved to play sports too, so we had that in common. When we came back to the states, it just seemed like down south, in the south, there were a lot more black people. I didn’t think it to be bad. It was just an observation by a very young girl. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Yeah. Do you still keep up with anybody?*

**Rosenthal** I went back to one—I found out by accident about. They have an organization, and it’s just people that went to high school on military bases. Just by accident, at the airport, I saw this lady wearing a t-shirt. It had that on. I asked her about it, and she gave me the number to call. I got in contact with some people that I went to high school with. They had a reunion, and of all places, Las Vegas, which I said I’d never go to Las Vegas. (Laughs) Anyway, I went to the class reunion, but most of the people at the reunion were military contact people. I mean, their parents were in the military. They are now in the military. A lot of them lived back east, and they’re just different. It was fun to do that. One time was enough for me. Those people were getting old, you know.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Oh sure!*

**Rosenthal** Yeah, and here I am still young.

**Nykolaiszyn** *(Laughs) Of course!*

**Rosenthal** Of course! Yeah.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Looking back on your education, which spanned a lot of unique experiences over not only in the U.S, but [also] Germany, what do you think about the education you received?*

**Rosenthal** I wish I would’ve learned more. I think most all people would look back and say, “I wished I would have paid more attention or studied harder or took different classes,” but at the time you’re just wanting to, you’re just thinking about having fun, you know. [You’re] doing fun things and just do what you have to do to get by. I wished I would’ve learned more. I wanted to go to college so bad, but my dad, he said, “Oh, women are supposed to stay home and have babies and not go to school or to college.” I didn’t have any support there, but my grandmother helped me go to Tech, which I graduated and got a job in Tulsa at Sunray DX.

I worked there for a couple of years until I quit to have kids. I wanted to stay home with my kids. When my daughter was in second grade, I went to work at the school. My husband was a teacher at school. I got a job at the school working as an aide, teacher’s aide. I loved that. Now I look back, and I wished I would’ve went to school to be a teacher because I love that. That was so much fun. I worked in kindergarten for like sixteen, seventeen years as an aide, and I can look back and think, “I wished I would’ve become a teacher”, just being with those kids. There never was a day when I didn’t want to go to work. I loved my job working with those kids. They were so funny.

The kids were so funny. Kindergarteners say the funniest things. One day, I told this little boy, I said, “I want you to stand on one foot.” He walks over and stands on my foot. (Laughter) One day, I asked this little boy, I said, “If you were going to cut an apple in half, where would you cut it?” He said, “In the kitchen, of course! Where else?” That was so funny. I wished I would’ve written down all the funny things the kids said to me. The kids loved me, and I loved the kids. We had a great time together. Of course, I did playground duty, so I got to go outside and play with the kids. I wasn’t like the teacher. I didn’t have to do the disciplining. I just had to….

**Nykolaiszyn** *You had the fun part. (Laughs)*

**Rosenthal** Fun, fun. It was great. I loved it.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How long did you work in the school system?*

**Rosenthal** Twenty-two years.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow, always in kindergarten?*

**Rosenthal** No. I was an aide first for second and third grade. Then, that kindergarten job came open, and I took that, but the first job I had at school was a bus driver. I was the very first woman bus driver in Collinsville. I have something. I’m the first of something! I had my picture on the front page of the *Collinsville News.*

**Nykolaiszyn** *How did that come about?*

**Rosenthal** Well, my husband’s best friend was a principal there at the school. One day, we were there talking. I thought, “Well, I need to get a job.” He said, “Well, they need bus drivers really bad.” I said, “You think I could do that?” My husband said, “Sure.” I thought, “Hmm, I can do anything if I just put my mind to it.” I went. My husband actually taught me how to drive the bus. He drove a bus, so he actually taught me how to drive a school bus. They didn’t have classes back then. You just had to go pass the test to get your CDL [Commercial Driver’s License], and you could drive a bus. That’s what I did. That was the worst job I ever had. Ugh!

**Nykolaiszyn** *(Laughs) How long did you drive the bus?*

**Rosenthal** I drove it one year, and then, I decided not to do that anymore. I didn’t do it for a long time, and then, they got really desperate for bus drivers. They came and said, “Would you drive a bus again?” I said, “Oh, all right.” They were desperate. I did it for actually three years, but it’s the worst job ever. I feel so sorry for bus drivers, school bus drivers. (Laughs) People do not know what a job that is.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What was the most challenging part of that job?*

**Rosenthal** The challenging part is keeping the kids under control. Now, in the mornings when they first get on the bus, you know, they’re sleepy. They just sit there and don’t do anything, but by the end of the day when you take them home, they are wired. They’re just climbing out the windows and screaming and then, fighting. Oh my gosh. One time, this was back when, the first year I ever drove the bus, I had these two girls. They were high school girls. They were fighting. I stopped the bus and put them off. I said, “Get off my bus! I don’t want fighting on my…” They weren’t my regular riders anyway. I don’t know where they came from, but anyway, I said, “Get off my bus! I’m not having people fighting on my bus! Get off!” They did. I left them. [You] couldn’t do that now. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Oh no! (Laughter)*

**Rosenthal** It paid pretty well, so I could do it before school and after school. I know my husband, my teacher husband, he drove a bus for many years. Probably twenty years, he drove a bus. After he passed away, the first time I had to go back to school and drive a bus, I cried and cried because I thought, “All those years he drove a bus, he never complained. He never griped about the kids.” That’s all I did was gripe about it. (Laughs) Although, I was good to the kids, and they loved me. I know they did, but I don’t like disciplining. You know, that’s hard for me to discipline. That’s why I really didn’t like it, and it’s such a responsibility.

I mean, you have those kids, somebody’s precious children, in your hands. What if something would happen to one of them? You could never live that down, you know? That would haunt you. I worried about that. Those kids are so precious, and if you’d ever…you know, we all make mistakes. You could be driving along and do something and have a wreck and hurt a child. How sad, how sad. Although, when I was an aide on playground teacher, I had many broken arms of kids falling off of toys. I can spot a broken arm because I’ve seen so many of them. (Laughs) It was fun. It was so much fun.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Do you ever hear back from any of the kids?*

**Rosenthal** Yes. In fact, I do volunteer work for Saint John’s [Hospital] in Owasso. I do pastor care, which is we go and pray for people. I go in this room to pray for this boy. Well, he was a man, and he said, “Mrs. Armstrong!” That was my name before, Armstrong. He said, “Mrs. Armstrong, it’s you!” Several times, I’ve ran into people that remembered me from school. There’s a boy that rode my bus, he married a girl from our church. He said, “I had the biggest crush on you,” which I didn’t know that back then, but he said, “I had the biggest crush on you! I loved you so much! You drove our bus.” (Laughter)

**Nykolaiszyn** *What subjects did your husband teach?*

**Rosenthal** He was a sixth-grade social studies teacher at the middle school. After he passed, I had so many kids come to me and say he was their favorite teacher and how much they loved him. You know, he touched a lot of lives. He was a good guy. I have two sons that are a lot like him, and they’re great.

**Nykolaiszyn** *You kind of told me a little bit about how you met your husband, your first husband. What was dating like?*

**Rosenthal** (Laughs) He followed me home, actually. He saw me in the main street of Morris, and he followed me home. He gets out of the car, and he walks up. He said, “I’m Dave Armstrong, and I’ve been wanting to meet you. I’ve noticed you around,” you know. I said, “Oh really?” We talked a little bit, and then, he asked me for a date. I said, “Okay,” but then the next day, I call my cousin who lives in Morris. I ask her, I say, “Do you know a David Armstrong?” She said, “Oh yeah, I’ve known him his whole life.” I said, “Well, is he a good guy?” (Laughs) She said, “Yes, he’s a good guy.”

He had went to Northeastern [State University]. That’s where he went to school. His dad had passed away when he was young. He had to work his way through school. He would work a semester [and] go a semester. He finally got finished. He was five years older than me, so he was already out of school and teaching when we met. Anyway, we had that first date, and then, I didn’t hear from him for a whole week. I thought, “Hmm, he must not have liked me.” We had gone to the movies.

About a week went by, and I was in this little restaurant in Morris, which they only have one little restaurant. He came in there, and he came and sat down by me. He said, “What are you doing?” I said, “Oh, I’m just having a little snack.” He said, “Would you want to go for a ride?” I said, “Sure.” We went for a ride, and we got to talking, which we didn’t talk much on that first date. You know how it is when [it’s] your first date. You’re kind of shy. Then, we really started talking, and then, we really got along well. We had been dating for about a month, and he said, “Have you ever been to the Morris Lake?” Well, I never had. I said, “No, I’ve never been to the Morris Lake. Where is it?” That was where all the kids parked. I knew that, but I didn’t tell him. I thought, “Oh, I’m going to get to park.” That’s what you did back then to date. You went mostly out in the country somewhere and just sat and talked and made out. (Laughs) We had our first date in July of 1965, and then, we married in December of ’65.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow! How did he propose?*

**Rosenthal** He just said one day, “Would you like to get married?” I said, “Yes, I would.” (Laughter) We got married in Okmulgee.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What did your parents and your grandmother think?*

**Rosenthal** Well, it was Christmas time. We got married the day after Christmas, which is—don’t do that. That’s terrible. (Laughs) Nobody comes to your wedding when you get married the day after Christmas! My grandmother knew him. Of course, he grew up in Morris. Everybody knows everybody in Morris. My grandmother knew him, and she liked him. She knew who he was, but she really didn’t know him. She went to the bank one day, and she asked the banker about him. The banker said, “Yeah, he’s a good guy.” Then, my grandmother was sold. He was a good guy, but Grandma didn’t get to come to the wedding, because my uncle that lived in Tulsa had came and got her and didn’t want to bring her back for the wedding, so she wasn’t there.

We just had a very small, little wedding. My mom and dad, they didn’t come either, but his sisters were both there and his mom. Yeah, it was a fun wedding. It was cute. We got married at these people’s house. All the guys were in this bedroom, and there was this big football game going on. I think it was OU, OSU, probably. I don’t know. Anyway, we had to postpone the wedding thirty minutes until the football game was over! I teased him about that for the rest of his life. (Laughter) “Had to put off the wedding thirty minutes to watch a football game!”

**Nykolaiszyn** *Sounds about right.*

**Rosenthal** Yeah, yeah.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you have a honeymoon?*

**Rosenthal** Did I what?

**Nykolaiszyn** *Have a honeymoon?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, we came to Collinsville. We had rented a little apartment. He had rented this little apartment. We came to Collinsville, and we spent our honeymoon in that little apartment. (Laughs) Then, later, couple months later, he took me to Grand Lake, and we rented a little cabin and had a honeymoon.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How would you describe your husband?*

**Rosenthal** He was a really good person, a good, Christian person. He was gentle. He was very quiet. He didn’t say very much. He never talked, and I didn’t realize that until after I married this husband I have now. He talks to me, and I thought, “Oh, this is great!” You know, he’d say, “Well, let’s plan to do this or that.” I thought, “I’m not used to that because Mr. Armstrong never talked.” I called him Mr. Armstrong a lot because that’s what the kids all called him. He never talked. He was real quiet. My middle boy is a lot like him. He will not tell you anything unless you ask him directly. That’s the way he was, but he loved kids. He loved teaching.

You know, he didn’t have a lot of drive. Of course, he put himself through school, but he was content to be in the classroom. He had his master’s. He got a master’s from Northeastern. He could’ve been a principal, but he just never wanted to do that. He was content being in the classroom with the kids and driving the school bus. (Laughs) He loved doing that, so he never wanted to be an administrator. He just wanted to be a teacher.

**Nykolaiszyn** *A noble career.*

**Rosenthal** Yes, yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, you had three children with Mr. Armstrong?*

**Rosenthal** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How did you find out you were going to be a parent for the first time?*

**Rosenthal** Well, we were married, let’s see, we were married in December, and I had a job in Tulsa. April Fool’s Day, I came home and told my husband, I said, “I got sick at work today and had to go see the nurse, and she told me I was pregnant.” He goes, “What? You can’t be pregnant!” (Laughs) Anyway, that was an April Fool’s joke. Then, my son was born in August, so I don’t exactly know when he was conceived, but I wanted a banana split. I thought, “Hmm, I never want to eat a banana split.” Someone said, “Oh, it’s a craving. You’re pregnant.” “Oh no, surely not,” you know. Anyway, I was, and I was excited. I wanted to have kids. That was my goal. I wanted to have lots of kids.

**Nykolaiszyn** *You had three children.*

**Rosenthal** I have three.

**Nykolaiszyn** *When it came time to name your children, [did] any family traditions come into play or family names?*

**Rosenthal** No, I was reading an article in the paper about a football player whose name was Keith. I thought, “Hmm, I like that name Keith”, so that’s why I named my oldest son Keith. I wanted to name him after my husband’s father, but he didn’t want to. I don’t know why. I never did figure that out, but anyway, we named him Keith.

Then, my middle son, I wanted to stay with a K, so we named him Kyle. We did put my husband’s first name as his middle name, so it’s Kyle David. My daughter, Kerri, I wanted another K name. I liked Kerri, so we just made it with a K instead of a C. That’s how they all got—and I gave her my middle name, which is Jo.

I thought years later, I wished, my name was O’Connor. I should’ve named one of my boys Connor! I didn’t even think about that. That would’ve been cool, but you know, you don’t think sometimes. You don’t give it a lot of thought. You should give it some thought, but I wanted easy names that they could spell easy and write easy because sometimes you get a long name. It’s hard for kindergartners to learn to write their name when it’s long.

**Nykolaiszyn** *This is true. (Laughs) When your kids were younger, did you continue to work, or did you stay home?*

**Rosenthal** Well, after my son was born, I didn’t work anymore. After my oldest son was born, I was a stay-at-home mom. I didn’t go to work until my daughter, my baby, was in second grade. The principal at the school called me. I substituted when they needed someone. He called me and said, “I got an opening. Do you want it?” I said, “You bet I do!” I went up. I had to go fill out the paperwork and got a permanent job at the school and worked there for twenty-three years? I don’t remember exactly.

After my husband died, they had an opening in the cafeteria, which [meant] I would go down on my lunch hour and help the ladies in the cafeteria because that’s a hard job. When someone didn’t show up, they would have trouble serving lunch. On my lunch break, I would go down and help them in the cafeteria. The lady that was in charge was going to retire, and she said, “Do you want to come and take my job?” I said, “What? I never worked in the cafeteria.” She says, “Well, you love to cook.” I said, “Yeah, I do.” She went and talked to the assistant superintendent. They were so good to me at the school. (Laughs) They let me do whatever I wanted.

**Nykolaiszyn** *You worked in the cafeteria.*

**Rosenthal** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Would you guys make everything by scratch?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, we made everything by hand back then. We made our own pizza. We made our own bread. Kids love chicken and noodles. We got a lot of turkeys from the government, so we made a lot of chicken and noodles. The kids just loved them. Even now, if I see one of the teachers somewhere at Wal-Mart, she’ll just say, “Oh Martha, please come back to work!” “No.” (Laughter) I enjoy not working. That was a hard job. I worked twelve years in the cafeteria.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Oh, I bet.*

**Rosenthal** It was hard work. I always think, “Why did I give up kindergarten?” It was fun. I enjoyed it. The kids would just love, you know, I made bread, and they loved that. Of course, the lady before me did too. It’s all different now, though. Cafeteria’s different.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How early would you have to get started?*

**Rosenthal** I got up before five, and I tried to be at work at five thirty. I even beat the janitor there, to make bread and cook turkeys. We always had a big Thanksgiving dinner because all the grandparents would come. It was fun, though. It’s hard work, though, hard work, but maybe that’s what kept me strong. (Laughter) I loved the people I worked with. The ladies that we worked together, we’re still good friends.

**Nykolaiszyn** *That makes all the difference.*

**Rosenthal** Oh yeah, oh yeah. Who you work with makes a big difference. You want to work with people that you like, and you get along with, and they get along with you.

**Nykolaiszyn** *When your family was growing up in the early years, were there things everybody liked to do together?*

**Rosenthal** No. (Laughter) My mom and my dad never came to any of my sporting, because my mom was home with kids, so they couldn’t very well come to my volleyball games, basketball games.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What about with your children?*

**Rosenthal** Now, my kids, I said, “I’m going to be there. I’m going to my kids’ stuff”, so I did a lot. Both my sons were wrestlers. [We] always went to OSU to the wrestling state tournament every year and loved it, Iba Gallagher Stadium. We always went every year to the wrestling state tournament. They don’t have it there anymore, but we always had a lot of fun doing that. My son played baseball. We traveled. Oh, we went to New Mexico, Colorado, Chicago, playing baseball with my middle son. He was a pretty good baseball player, so we had a lot of fun doing that. [We] went to so many of those little elementary wrestling tournaments. Oh my goodness. (Laughs) It was fun. I loved it.

**Nykolaiszyn** *I’m going to switch out my tape here. You’re doing good!*

**Rosenthal** I was telling my daughter-in-law, her sister’s little boys are wrestlers, and they went to a tournament, I guess, last weekend. I said, “Oh, I feel for her.” (Laughter) “I know what she’s going through,” but you wouldn’t change it for the world, you know.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Would you take family vacations?*

**Rosenthal** Baseball.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Baseball?*

**Rosenthal** Yes, [to my son Kyle’s baseball games in several states].

**Nykolaiszyn** *Worked around the kids’ schedule?*

**Rosenthal** Yeah. We would go to my mom and dad’s. My mom and dad liked to camp. They had a camper. We’d go to the lake camping. That was our spring break every year. We’d go to Conroe, Texas. There’s a lake down there, and [we’d] catch tons of fish. The kids loved it, so my boys, they’re right now in the Kiamichi Mountains hunting, deer hunting.

**Nykolaiszyn** *It’s that time of the year.*

**Rosenthal** Yeah, and they love to fish. They love to hunt, [and] so did my husband, their dad. They love to fish and hunt, and he taught it to them. They love to do it, too. That’s where they are right now is the Kiamichi’s hunting deer.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, Mr. Armstrong died in ’94?*

**Rosenthal** Yeah.

**Nykolaiszyn** *That was probably a tough time for you.*

**Rosenthal** You know, I never really worried about it. I’m very religious. I don’t know if you call it religious, but I trust the Lord to help me. I never worried about it. I just knew that he would take care of me and everything would work out all right. It was a heartbreaking time. [It was] stressful because I thought, you know, “Can I survive?” He had dropped his insurance, and he was retired only a year, not even a year before he passed away. I didn’t have any kind of insurance. Now, I [received] some of his retirement. I thought, “Well, can I survive?” I thought, “Yes, the Lord will take care of me”, and he did! He did. He gave me a wonderful husband. My husband is the sweetest man you’d ever, ever want to meet.

**Nykolaiszyn** *When we started off for an interview, you told me a little bit about Gary. Tell me a little bit more about him.*

**Rosenthal** Well, his wife died a year before Mr. Armstrong died, but I didn’t know him. I didn’t know anything about him. Two years went by, and I had a good friend named Alice. Her husband had passed away, so I took her to a seminar in Tulsa, at Christ United Methodist Church, for grief. Gary walks up to me, and he said, “Do you live in Collinsville?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Well, I’ve seen you before at booster club meetings and stuff like that.” I didn’t remember him at all. He said, “Where do you go to church?” I said, “I go to the tabernacle.” He said, “I know your pastor. We went to high school together.”

I called pastor and asked him, “Do you know Gary Rosenthal?” He said, “Oh yeah, I’ve been trying to get him to come to church for a long time.” I invited him to church, so he started coming. We started dating, and we got married. It’s been great. It’s been great. I say God is good. He is so good. You know, he gave me Gary. Gary’s just the sweetest man ever. He treats me so good, so kind. He’s just so nice. I love it.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, you have a lot of grandchildren.*

**Rosenthal** Together, we have thirteen.

**Nykolaiszyn** *That’s a lot of grandchildren. Holidays, I’m sure, are fun.*

**Rosenthal** Oh yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How did it feel when you first became a grandparent with that first grandbaby?*

**Rosenthal**  It was a girl [and] my oldest son. (Laughs) “I was a grandmother!” [I thought,] “Oh my gosh! I’m not old enough to be a grandmother!” Of course, I was, but oh, we just loved her to death. I mean, grandkids are special. They’re better than your own kids. You love your grandkids, I think, more than you love your own kids. Your own kids, you had to take care of. You had to, you know, struggle with them, but your grandkids, you could just love them and love them. You’re not responsible for them. You just love them, spoil them, give them candy, and send them home. (Laughter) I love it. It’s great.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Has being a grandparent changed you in any way?*

**Rosenthal** I think it has. I think I’m more caring as a grandmother. I see things differently as a grandmother. I feel things differently. You just want to enjoy them. Your own kids, you’re trying to discipline them, provide for them, take care of them, but your grandkids, you don’t have to do any of those things. You just want to love on them. You see only the good in them. You don’t see any bad, only the good. They’re special. They’re smarter than any other kids. (Laughs) They’re cuter than any other kids. They’re just special.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What do they call you?*

**Rosenthal** Grammy. Now, my grandson in Texas, he calls me Grammy, and Monica, my daughter-in-law, her kids couldn’t say Grammy, so they just said, “Mimi.” They call me Mimi. All the rest of them call me Grandma, Grandma Martha.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Favorite part about being a grandparent?*

**Rosenthal** It’s just enjoying them, loving them, playing with them. I’m a shark. When I go over to Monica’s and Kyle’s, the two grandkids, I’m the shark, and I’m trying to catch them to eat them. We’re running all over the house. They’re squealing. They’re laughing. They’re having a ball, and I’m trying to catch them. I’m the shark. We just have fun, just fun, fun, fun. [You] don’t have to worry about getting on to them about anything or how they’re going to act when they go somewhere. You’re just having fun, laughing. You need to laugh.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, we’re in November right now. We’re approaching the holiday season. Looking back on your childhood, do you have any memorable holiday memories?*

**Rosenthal** I remember when I was in high school at Christmas, my dad was making cookies. Just the smell of the cookies, and the Christmas tree, and him in the kitchen working, making cookies for us, I don’t know, that just touched me. I always think about at Christmas my dad making cookies. [I think about] just the smell of the cookies, and the decorations, and my sisters and I sitting around talking. It was fun. I always remember that. When I smell cookies, I think about that.

[It’s] just the time, and you know, you don’t realize when your children are young. You don’t realize what memories, what is going to stick in their mind. What’s going to, are they going to remember? It’s real important, I think, to have those smells around. I would always, when my kids come home from school, try to have something [that] smelled good in the house, because you’re always so hungry when you get home from school. I have something, cookies, or—they say bread baking in the oven will stay in a kid’s mind, if they smell that a lot at the home. It just makes them think of home, so bake lots of bread. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *What’s your favorite holiday meal?*

**Rosenthal** Oh! Turkey and dressing, and mashed potatoes and gravy, and cranberry sauce! That’s the holidays.

**Nykolaiszyn** *We’re right around the corner from Thanksgiving, so where’s the big family celebrations?*

**Rosenthal** Well, my son Kyle, he just lives a mile over here. He has a big house, great big house, new, nice house. I cook all the food and take it over there, because we have so many, you know, running around, we need a lot of room, so we’ve done it for the last three years. I cook most of the food, and then, my daughter from Dallas comes and her husband and little boy.

Then, on Wednesday night, my sister that lives here and all her family, we all get together at my son Kyle’s. We have snacks. I love snacks. Don’t you? (Laughs) [We have] chips and dip and sandwiches. We’ll do that on Wednesday night, get together. There’s so many of us. We just have a ball, a blast. The kids are all running around playing and just everyone’s talking. It’s just great. I love it. We’ll do that on Wednesday night, and then, Thursday, I’ll be cooking, Wednesday night and Thursday morning.

Then, we’ll eat about two o’clock over at Kyle’s. Everyone will come, and just being together. Just being together and loving each other, that’s what the holidays are.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Are there any food traditions that have been passed down to you that you’ve passed down to your children?*

**Rosenthal** You know, I’ve thought about that. People should make traditions. I was telling Monica she should have, on Christmas morning, something every year, the same thing. [She should] make a tradition. We never did that, and I wished we would have because that is something that kids draw on memories, when you have traditions. I said, “Have chocolate chip pancakes every Christmas morning, and that’ll become a tradition.” I wished I would’ve done that, but I didn’t. We were just trying to survive. (Laughter)

**Nykolaiszyn** *You know, it’s kind of hard to sum up seventy years, right?*

**Rosenthal** It’s gone by so fast. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Thinking about your adult life, what have been some of those really important times in your adult life?*

**Rosenthal** Well, this year, on my seventieth birthday, they gave me a party. I’d never had a birthday party. They gave me a birthday party on my seventieth birthday. All my kids and my grandkids and my sister and all her family all came to the birthday party. That’s going to be a lasting memory until the day I die. I’m going to treasure that memory of that birthday party that the kids gave me. It was wonderful. No presents! I didn’t want any presents, but just having them there together celebrating seventy years. It seemed like a long time. (Laughs) Anyway, it was great.

Then, having children, of course, having your first baby. It just seems impossible that I could have a baby. You know, I mean, come from me, of my own…that, to me, it was, I couldn’t—he was three months old. I would still look at him and think, “Oh my gosh! Look at this baby. I produced another human being! How awesome is that? God is so good.” You know, God loves us very much. I can see a little inkling of that is how much I love my children, and God loves us a lot more than we love our own children. It’s just such an awesome thought, how much God loves us. I love my children [and] I love my grandchildren, but God loves us even more. He loves them even more. It’s an awesome thing.

I love to preach. Pastor won’t ever let me preach. (Laughs) We’re Baptists. Women don’t preach in the Baptists. (Laughter) One time, I got up to give an announcement about the ladies’ meeting. I said, “Well, I wanted to preach today, but pastor wouldn’t let me.” (Laughter) Everybody laughed. It was funny.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Tell me about a perfect day. What’s a perfect day for you?*

**Rosenthal** I have a lot of them nowadays. (Laughs) We get up when we want to. We don’t set an alarm. We don’t have to, we just, when we wake up, we get up. We shower. My husband usually gets up first. He showers, and then, I go in and shower. Then, I come in and make breakfast. He comes in, and we sit and talk and have breakfast. Then, we have Bible study together, and we pray together, and we talk. That always still gets to me that we talk. We talk about things. We talk about our family, our kids, what we’re going to do. Just sit and visit together and pray together. Oh, how awesome that is. Then, we go get the newspaper, and we read the newspaper. I piddle around in the house, usually in the kitchen. Then, I fix lunch, and we have lunch. Then, we just watch TV or do whatever we want to do. Go for a ride! It’s just spending time together, talking and just enjoying each other’s company. That’s a perfect day to me.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Looking back on your early life and your parents, of all the things you’ve learned from your parents, what do you consider the most valuable lesson?*

**Rosenthal** Being honest. Telling the truth was something my dad was real strict about. You told the truth, and you don’t lie about anything. You tell the truth. That’s something that’s real important to me. My mom was a very kind person. I think that I have her kindness, or I try. Or compassion, I think it just comes naturally. That’s probably what she gave me most was compassion for others.

**Nykolaiszyn** *You’ve been living here in Collinsville for a long time.*

**Rosenthal** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Tell me about Collinsville and how it’s changed through the years.*

**Rosenthal** Well, when we first came here, the bank was down on Main Street, just a little hole in the wall. (Laughs) Now, they have a nice, big bank. We played Owasso football and basketball because Owasso was a really small town then and so was Collinsville. We played each other in sports. Now they’re grown, but Collinsville has grown a lot in the almost fifty years that we’ve lived here. It was just a little community, and you knew, especially if you worked at school, you knew everybody. All the teachers lived in Collinsville. Everybody knew everybody. You would go down Main Street, and you’d know most people. They had a Collinsville newspaper, and when you read about someone dying in the paper, you knew that person. If someone got married, or anything that happened in Collinsville, you knew those people, the old, patriotic people that lived here, Mr. Bayouth down on Main Street, the little stores down there, the people that lived here. Now, you don’t know anybody, and you don’t know the kids at school anymore.

When I worked at school, I would see a kid, and I’d say, “You’re so and so,” because he looked just like his parents. I remembered his parents when they went to school. It’s not that way anymore. There’s so many more people that live here, and you don’t know people anymore like you did back when it was a small town. That’s the big change, I think.

There’s a lot more homes here now, new additions and new stores. I remember they wanted to put a Wal-Mart here in Collinsville. The founding men, the guys that ran the city, said, “No, because it’ll ruin our little town”, so we never did get that Wal-Mart. We still don’t have Wal-Mart, but that was the way it was back then, you know. City council guys, they’re the old men that ran the Burnside, Heinrich’s, and Bayouth and had their little stores downtown. They’re not there anymore. They’re all gone. I guess Wal-Mart did put them out of business. (Laughs) We never did get that Wal-Mart in Collinsville.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, you were born in California…*

**Rosenthal** Yes.

**Nykolaiszyn …***and you live here in Oklahoma. What is special about Oklahoma to you?*

**Rosenthal** Well, this is where my grandmother lived, so to me, it was home. Home was Oklahoma. When my dad was in the service, you met people from everywhere, from all different states, but in the yearbook, you put where your home was, and I put Oklahoma every time. That just reminded me [of] even when I was kid and I would walk down the railroad tracks at Morris and walking, just, you were free to do whatever. You weren’t afraid to walk down Main Street. You weren’t afraid to walk across town and walk down the railroad tracks and walk to your friend’s house. It was small community. Everybody knew you, and you knew everybody. Oklahoma was just home because that’s where my heart was. I think the people of Oklahoma are wonderful people. They’re caring and kind, and it’s just, to me, that’s special. When you care about people, that makes you special. I think Oklahoma’s special because they care about people.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Looking back on your life, what accomplishments are you most proud of?*

**Rosenthal** Well, my three kids. They’re pretty good kids. The fact that I have stayed true all these years to what I believe, my core values, my belief in Jesus Christ the savior. I’m proud because I’ve stayed true to that, to my beliefs. I think people in Oklahoma are that way. They’re true to what they believe.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How would you like people to remember you, not just the general public, but your family?*

**Rosenthal** That I was a kind, caring person. I had strong beliefs, and I held to them. I loved my children and cared about them. Everybody’ll say, “Oh, she was a nice lady.” (Laughs) That’s it. “She was a nice lady.” That’s what they’ll say.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, we’ve talked about many things this morning. Is there anything else you’d like to add, anything you want to bring up before we sign off?*

**Rosenthal** I want my grandchildren, when they see this, to know that I loved them very much. I cared about them, and they’re all very special. I want them to have the strong beliefs that I have. Your life will be much better if you believe in God and be true to your beliefs and live your life so that nothing you will, that you won’t look back and say, “I regret doing this” or “I regret doing that.” Just live your life to the fullest. Be true to what God has given you.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Thank you very much for your time this morning.*

**Rosenthal** Thank you! I’ve enjoyed it.

**------- *End of interview*** *-------*