

# The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.





## Table of Contents

Introduction . . . . .	5
My Parents and Siblings . . . . .	7
The Rest of My Family . . . . .	11
My Home . . . . .	15
My Neighborhood . . . . .	19
Growing Up in the 30's & 40's . . . . .	21
My Childhood . . . . .	25
Childhood Jobs . . . . .	27
Family Outings . . . . .	31
Childhood Accidents . . . . .	35
School . . . . .	37
Military . . . . .	41
Work . . . . .	45
Volunteer Work . . . . .	53
Hunting . . . . .	57
Marriage . . . . .	61
My Family . . . . .	65
Extras . . . . .	69





# Introduction



**M**y name is Harley Ryan, and I decided to create a book about my grandfather's life. At the time of making this book he was 96 years old. Only four years away from living a century. Although I've spent a lot of time with him growing up I never really knew a lot about his life. Being able to hear stories from his childhood all the way to having children of his own, it has truly been an amazing experience. Now instead of trying to remember what he has told us, we will have this book to memorialize him for years to come and the next generations of our family.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

# My Parents and Siblings



I was born May 28, 1927, in Winchester, Virginia, to Robert R. and Mary Haymaker Ryan (Pictured above). I was one of eight children, being the fourth child to be born. My siblings are June Ryan Miller (1921-2019), Betty Ryan Hill (1923), Jean Ryan Drumheller (1925), Colleen “Connie” Ryan White (1931-2019),

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

John Allen Ryan (1934-2021), Jack Maddox Ryan (1937) and Patricia Ryan Straw (1940-2012). We were all born at home by Dr. C.R. Anderson, except Patricia. Back then, the family doctor would come to his patients' houses and assist women with their delivers. The earliest memory that I have of one of my siblings is of my eldest sister, June. When I was four years old, I remember her helping mama look after the younger siblings. My siblings and I got along good together. Below is a photo of all of my siblings and I.



Our daddy worked at the Arthur G. Jones Woolen Mill Factory at 635 Millwood Avenue in Winchester (Pictured to the right). He worked there six days a week and spent Sundays with us. Our mama was a homemaker. She also worked as an on-call midwife for two doctors, one of them being Dr. C.R. Anderson. This is what I admired most about mama, that she never stopped. I don't think I ever saw her sleep. I don't know how she managed

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

from daylight to dark either cooking, washing clothes or sewing for eight children and a husband.



The doctors would call her (all hours of the day and night) and she would go ahead of them to get everything prepared for the home births. She would receive \$10 for every delivery, but if the family couldn't offer to pay her at the time they would pay her back whenever they could. She would also fill in for the doctors' receptionists if they were sick or couldn't come in as well. After my siblings and I were all grown up, she went to work at Winchester Medical Center as a nurse's aide.

She was tough.

I don't think that I'm more like my father over my mother. I would say that it's 50/50. However, mama could be funny at times so maybe I got my sense of humor from her. I was the

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

funniest person in my family. The rest of them didn't have much of a sense of humor. I was famous for my tall tales. I also got my work ethic from my parents.

Mama was also the best cook in my family. June was good cook too, but the rest of them weren't too good. Jean and Colleen moved away and I never ate much of Betty and Patricia's cooking.

# The Rest of My Family

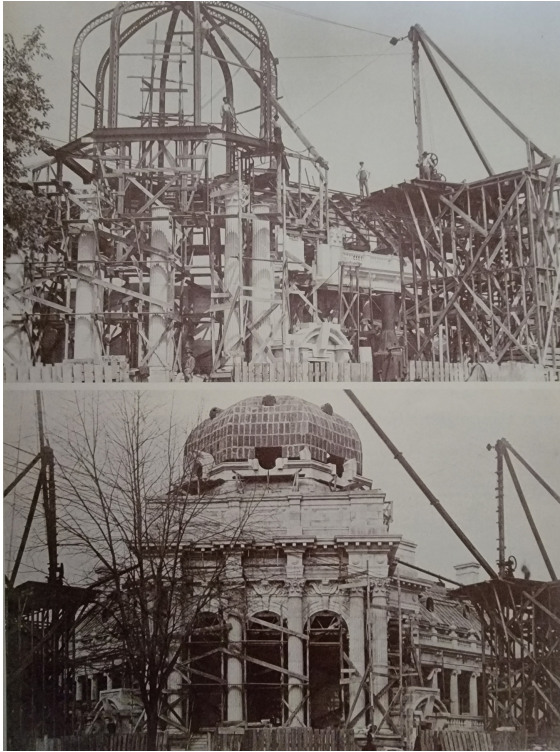


I was able to trace my family ancestry to my great great-grandfather, Johann Adam Haymaker, on my mama's side. He was born in 1734 and baptized in Hessen, Germany. He lived to be 72 years old, passing away in Winchester on April 1, 1806.

The original spelling of my maternal family's last name was Hammacker. When they came to the United States, they changed it to Haymaker because it was easier for people to pronounce and spell.



## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.



Some of my family members played a part in the local history of Winchester over the last 100 years. I come from a long line of brick masons on my mama's side and they helped build John Handley High School, the Handley Regional Library and the George Washington Hotel (Pictured above).

My father also served in World War I. He was only in a couple weeks before the war was over and was stationed at Ft. Mead. His grandfather served in the Civil War as a confederate soldier.



## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

My maternal grandparents were Clarence and Annie Haymaker. Annie was a stay-at-home mom as they had nine children, and Clarence was a brick mason. I didn't spend much quality time with Clarence.

On the weekends, we would visit my maternal grandparents. We would walk to their house since it was only two miles from our home. My cousins would often be there at the same time so we played while my mama and her siblings visited their parents. My maternal grandparents had 32 grandchildren. We also had Haymaker Family Reunions when I got older.

On occasion we would spend the night with my maternal grandmother and I remember helping her collect eggs from her chickens. They didn't have a basement so the chickens would make their nest and lay eggs in the tiny crawl space under the house. I was the skinniest so I would have to go in the crawl space and get them. She would be able to tell if the eggs were good or bad by holding the eggs up to a light. I don't know how she did it.

My paternal grandmother was a cook and a domestic worker for another family. Later, she worked at John Handley High School as a lunch lady. She would stay with us half of the year then would stay with my aunt in Baltimore, Maryland, the other half of the year. My paternal grandfather died young so I didn't get to

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

meet him.

Both of my grandmothers were sweet old ladies. In 1948, they passed away within three months of each other in our house.

A family member I would have liked to have gotten to know better was my uncle Scott. He was my mama's favorite sibling, and that is why she chose Scott as my middle name. He got married and moved to Martinsburg, West Virginia, so we didn't see him as much as mama's other siblings. He was a brick mason like their father and started Haymaker Brick Laying Company in Martinsburg.

# My Home



We lived at 606 S Cameron Street in downtown Winchester when I was little. The house was a two-story house with three rooms downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. The rent for this house was ten dollars a month. Everyone chipped in to help pay rent so I got a part-time job as a paper carrier when I was old enough.

One of the bedrooms was for my parents and the other bedroom was for us, eight children. There was no bathroom in the house, we just had a closed in flush toilet on the back porch. With the toilet, there was a water tank above your head and when you put the seat down it would open a valve and put water into the tank. Once you were done using the bathroom, the seat would go back up and it would trigger the valve to flush the toilet. The only source of running water for the house was inside in the kitchen. That's where mama did all of the cooking and in the evenings we got sponge baths with cold water. We didn't have hot water and

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

just had a wood stove. We ate in the kitchen at a plain table that was about eight feet long and four feet wide. We had two benches on both sides and mama and daddy had chairs at the head of the table.

There were no refrigerators or freezers back then either so we would keep perishables in an ice box. There would be a delivery man that would come by to deliver ice. When you needed ice you would hang a card outside your house which had the amount of ice you needed written on it (25lbs, 50lbs, 100lbs, etc.). He would stop at your house and chip off the amount you needed off a large block of ice. We would take the extra ice chips that would fall while he was doing this, shave them on an ice plainer and make snow cones out of them. This was a treat for us, adding vanilla or lemon flavoring to them.

Later, they converted the attic into a bedroom for me because all of the girls. It wasn't insulated so it was cold in the winter and hot in the summer. It wasn't a great big room either, probably eight feet long and six feet wide. There was a neighborhood boy that I would go ride bicycles with and I set up an "alarm system" in my room so he could let me know he was outside. I tied a rope around my bed frame and had the end of it hanging out of the window down the side of the house. If I wasn't awake yet, he would come into the ally in between our house and the neighbor's and pull on the rope to wake me up.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

The house we moved into on Kent had four bedrooms upstairs and one bedroom downstairs. The rent was forty dollars a month and my sisters and I would pay rent. This house had a bath, wash basin, heating and hot water. The stove was gas from coke gas, which was manmade by burning coal. I eventually got my own room there, and moved out in 1953 when I got married. Two of my brothers and sisters were still living there when I left.

The landlord lived two blocks over from us on Germain Street and he had a cow. He would take her up to Handley High School during the day, tie her up to a tree so she could eat grass. His name was Kip Grim and he always wore suspenders and a badge. He used to say that he was a policeman, but I don't think he really was.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

# My Neighborhood



**T**here were about eight to ten houses in our neighborhood and all the children would play in the street while their parents sat on the porches until it got dark. This is what families did before air conditioning because it was cooler outside than it was inside the house. Even after dark there would still be a lot of commotion sometimes. Nowadays, you don't see anyone outside in neighborhoods.

One of my fondest childhood memories is riding in an automobile for the first time around the neighborhood in 1931. I was four years old and one of our neighbors had bought a Ford Coupe. All the children on the street would take turns riding around the block or two in the rumble seat. (The rumble seat was exterior seat which folded into the rear of early motorcars. You would lift the seat lid in order for someone to sit in it and would keep it closed if you weren't using it.) My daddy didn't get his first car until 1948 when he was in his 50s. I didn't get my first

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

car until I was 22, which would have been around the same time.  
It was a gray 1938 Oldsmobile.



# Growing Up in the 30's & 40's



**L**ife back in the 30's and 40's when I was a child is completely different compared to today. People talk about those being the "good ol' days", but they were terrible.

We had no television back then, but did have one radio in the house. The fire company had a television and that's where everyone would go hang out to watch television. They would take up donations to help pay for it. I didn't have my own television until 1953, after I was married and had my first child. They weren't like today's televisions, they had antennas, with only a couple channels and there was no remote. You had to get up to change the channel on the television. So I didn't have a favorite cartoon, but I did enjoy reading the comic strips in the local newspaper, especially Li'l Abner and Dick Tracy. (Li'l Abner series was about a clan of hillbillies in the impoverished mountain village of Dogpatch, USA, and the Dicky Tracy series

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

followed a tough and intelligent police detective.)

We didn't get a telephone until about 1937 and even then you didn't have your own phone line, you had a party line. You would have to share the line with three or more other people. If your neighbor was on the phone, you would have to wait until they were done to make your phone call. You could actually listen in on other people's conversations and you could tell when people were listening to yours. You could hear the phone click when someone got on, then if you didn't hear it click again you knew they were listening.

There weren't a lot of stores back then either, but everybody had a neighborhood grocery store. There was one about every ten blocks. Ours was a few hundred feet from our house. I would take a grocery list to the store to get filled on a daily basis. The groceries would be charged to our account and we paid the balance at the end of every week when my daddy got paid. My daddy's paycheck was about \$10 a week. If you couldn't pay they would carry your balance over to the next week.

There were A&Ps (The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company) in town, but only rich folks went there. You had to pay cash when you bought your groceries. They didn't have charge accounts. The county people went to Bailey's Market when they came into town, which was located at 2 S Cameron Street where the Court

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

Square Autopark is now. They would hitch their horses outside where there was troughs and feed bags from them to eat and drink while their owners shopped inside. Bailey's sold everything from hardware to animal feed.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

# My Childhood



I had a pretty happy childhood despite growing up through the Great Depression and World War II. I was a well-behaved child and didn't put up much argument or give sass. My siblings and I never got many whippings.

Some of the games I would play when I was young was play kick the can, marbles and hide and go seek since we didn't have a

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

television. With marbles, you would draw a line and a circle then place marbles inside of the circle. If you knocked the marbles outside the circle, you got a point and would keep shooting until you missed, then it was the next person's turn. We would have marble tournaments in Winchester and if you won those you would go to Nationals in Wildwood, New Jersey. I also liked to play spin the bottle.

My favorite toy was my train set. I had to set up the tracks and push the trains around the tracks by hand since they weren't electric powered yet. I didn't read much as a child besides my school books, but I loved listening to ghost stories. The older children in my neighborhood would tell them to me. We would also sit around and sing. My favorite song that we would sing was "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

When I wasn't playing, in school or with the family, I was working my part-time jobs. I was a paper carrier for the Winchester Star (formerly the Winchester Evening Star), worked in a bakery and sold peanuts at baseball games on Sundays.

# Childhood Jobs



When I was nine I got my first job at the Winchester Star. I started out as a helper because you had to be 14 to have your own paper route. So until then I would help the paper carriers on their routes. Then after so many of the older boys with part-time jobs graduated, I moved up to preparing the papers for out of town mail instead of carrying them. I have a lot of memories from my time at the Winchester Star. I even got my nickname from working there.

My childhood nickname was Blondie, but not because I had blonde hair. One of the older men I worked with at the Winchester Star was a fan of major league baseball and one of his favorite players was Blondie Ryan so that's what he called me and it stuck.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.



I was also able to buy my first bicycle because of my job as a paper carrier. This is what I bought myself for my tenth birthday, making it one of my most memorable birthdays as a child since we didn't really celebrate our birthdays. I went to Buettner Tire Company on the 600 block of South Braddock Street and purchased a Wings bicycle, which can be seen in the photo above. It was red with white stripes. The bicycle cost me \$12 and I had to pay 50 cents a week on my bill. I made 75 cents a week as a paper carrier and that is how I paid for it. The older boys in my neighborhood taught me how to ride a bicycle. They put me on the bicycle and rode alongside of me for a while until they thought I was ready then just gave me a big push.

The first major news story I can remember living through as a child was because of my job as well.



## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

In 1937, a man shot and killed a Frederick County Sheriff's Officer and wounded a State Trooper. I was about ten years old at the time. The Frederick County Sheriff's Officer, who was also one of our neighbors, and a State Trooper went to make an arrest on a county man from the Mt. Williams area for making moonshine and he opened fire on them. After learning what the man had done, the police got a search party together to look for him. He wasn't at his house when they arrived so they turned his dog loose and it took off into the woods, leading them right to the moonshiner.

While waiting for the papers to be ready at the Winchester Star (which was right across the street from the courthouse) I would go over and listen to the trial from the open windows. There was no air conditioning back then, hence the windows were open. The man was found guilty during the trial and sentenced to death. He was transported to the prison in Richmond, Virginia, where they did executions and was killed by the electric chair.

Then on Sundays at baseball games that were held in town for the local Winchester baseball team, I would help the concession stand sell peanuts. They would give me bags of peanuts and I would go up and down the stands asking fans if they would like to buy any. For every bag I sold, I got a penny or two. The bags of peanuts were 10 cents apiece. I would do this on Sundays and carry papers during the rest of the week.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

I left the Winchester Star and went to work at the Raffmen's Bakery when I came back from serving in World War II.

# Family Outings



We didn't go on vacations when I was a child because my daddy didn't earn vacation time back then. However, we did do things as a family together on the weekends like visiting my maternal grandparents and my mama's friends and going to church.



We would go to church on Sundays at the Centenary Reformed United Church of Christ on 202 S Cameron Street (Pictured above). This was the first church built in Winchester around

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

1749. One of my earliest childhood memories is going to Sunday school there and after we went to so many classes we got a free bible. We would walk from our house a couple blocks up and I was active in the church until I was in my late teens.



Another fond memory I have of my childhood is riding in the caboose on the Winchester Western Railroad (Pictured above). We would ride the train from Winchester to Hayfield to visit a friend of my mama's that lived in the county. It would delivered freight to the different cities (Hayfield, Cross Junction, Gore, etc.) in the county and held about 20 passengers. It was ten cents to ride on the train. We liked to call it the "weak and weary"

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

because it would go so slow.

The thing I looked forward to the most when I was a child was Christmas and being with family during the holiday. My favorite song at Christmas time was “Silent Night.” My favorite candy as a child though were the chocolate rabbits I received in my Easter basket each year.



I also enjoyed the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival, which started in 1924. With living on Cameron Street we weren't very far from the festivities and our kin folk would come to our house to use the bathroom when they were downtown for the festival. During Apple Blossom, I would participate in the pageant (ninth to twelfth grade) that took place on the steps and esplanade of Handley High School. FACT: The pageants started in 1925. From 1931 to 1959 Dr. Garland Quarles, Superintendent of Winchester Schools and principal of Handley, wrote and directed the outdoor pageants. In later years students from neighboring counties in West Virginia were bused in to take part in the pageant. All

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

together each pageant required 800 to 1,200 school children. The pageant earned a reputation as being one of the most beautiful outdoor extravaganzas in the nation. My favorite celebrity I saw during Apple Blossom was Lucille Ball, who was Grand Marshall in 1964 (Pictured on the previous page). Back then they would get big name movie stars like Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Arthur Godfrey, etc.

# Childhood Accidents



I had many accidents when I was a child.

When I was 11 years old on the Fourth of July, I had a fire cracker go off in my hand and I had to get ten stitches. Then I can remember two times that I was knocked unconscious.

The first incident, a neighborhood boy and I went to take his father lunch while he was helping build a house on Tennyson Avenue in town. We had to climb the scaffolding to the second floor where they were working and I slipped. I hit all the scaffolding on the way down and it knocked me unconscious. One of the electricians working on the house had a car and drove me to the family doctor. Luckily, I didn't suffer any serious injuries.

The second time I was knocked unconscious was when I fell into the Town Run. One day when I worked as a paper carrier, we decided to play touch football while waiting for the newspapers

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

to be printed. I went for a pass and just kept running, ultimately going too far and falling into the Town Run. The doctor's office was a block away so they took me there and there's where I remember waking up.



# School



From first to third grade, I went to John Kerr Elementary School at 203 S Cameron Street (Pictured above). Then fourth through twelfth grade, I went to John Handley High School at 425 Handley Boulevard.

One of my earliest childhood memories is running home during recess on my first day of school. Our house was about four blocks away from John Kerr. They sent us outside for recess and I took off running and went home. They looked for me, but my mother

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

found me because she was home when I got there and she brought me back. I ran away because I didn't want to be a school, I didn't like it. That's what I looked forward to the most when I was a child, getting out of school every day and going home so I could take my shoes off. They had a hard time keeping shoes on me when I was little. I always went barefoot.

I walked to school every day until I bought my bicycle and then I would ride it to school. We didn't have school buses when I was a child so we didn't go on school field trips.

I would take peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to school for lunch. They weren't my favorite, but I didn't have much of a choice. My favorite lunch was bologna sandwiches. We didn't get those very often though. Sometimes mama would bake cookies and put them in our lunches along with milk in our thermoses. Once I got my part-time job, I would eat the lunch that they served in the school cafeteria.

I don't remember getting into trouble at school, but I do remember what happened to children when they were bad at John Kerr. If you were rowdy, they would send you to sit on a bench outside the Principal's Office called "The Bad Box."

I would get teased when I was young for being thin. It kind of hurt my feelings, but the people who teased me have since passed on so I got the last laugh.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.



In high school, my favorite subjects were typing, history and math. I would say that I was an average student. On a scale of one to ten, I was a six. My favorite teacher was Ms. Holt. She was my tenth grade typing teacher. I took an interest in typing so I enjoyed her class. Above is my senior class photo.

I played on the football team at Handley as a defensive end. I was also a member of the Boys Cadet Corps and a hall mentor. In the Boys Cadet Corps, we would do military drills with WWI surplus rifles.

I dated Helen Gene LaFollette in high school. We dated for two and half years, and went to prom together in 1948. Helen got a scholarship to nursing school in Kentucky so we decided to go our separate ways instead of doing a long distance relationship.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

I am not friends with my classmates from school because most have them has passed away and the ones that are still living don't live around Winchester. We celebrated our 65th high school reunion in 2013 and about 20 of my classmates were in attendance.

In 1945, I was drafted into the military for World War II while I was still in high school. After the war was over, I came back home to finish school and graduated in 1948.

# Military



I was drafted for World War II when I was 18 years old after having to register for the military on my birthday in May. When I was 17 I tried to join the Navy, but they wouldn't take me because I'm colorblind. I wouldn't have the ability to distinguish between colors, especially those used for signal lights, flares, flags, etc. However, they said men who were colorblind would be good for the Army because they would be able to spot the enemy in camouflage better than people who weren't colorblind.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

My first reaction when I found out that I had been drafted into the Army for WWII was excitement. I wanted to go into the military. My father was too old to be drafted for WWII and my brothers, Johnny and Jack were too young at the time. The age range was 18 to 35.

Since my father worked in a woolen mill they made army blankets and made materials for army uniforms for WWII. Americans helping make supplies for the war would ultimately help end the depression. My sister June's husband, Lawrence, was drafted in 1943. She moved back home while he was overseas. My other sister Jean went into nurse training in hopes to help out with the war.

On July 10, 1945, I was sent to Ft. Meade in Maryland. The other recruits and I stayed there two days to get our uniforms then got on another train. They didn't tell us where we were going. We pulled into an undisclosed train station, got onto buses and finally ended up at Camp Croft in South Carolina. This is where we received our basic training. They gave us rifles and we did infantry training, which included practicing shooting on the range, learning how to use hand grenades and machine guns. We would do 25 mile hikes and would carrying 50 pound backpacks, which had everything you would need during combat. A few recruits died of exhaustion. Some also died when a machine gun

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

jarred loose and fell. When we would crawl under the barb wire they would shoot machine guns that had live ammunition in them. Paul Harvey, a news commentator from Washington, D.C., had a nephew that got killed at Camp Croft. So every Sunday he would get on the air and say, "Write to the boys overseas and pray for the boys at Camp Croft."

On August 6, 1945, they dropped the atomic bombs on Japan and the war was over. Even though the war was over, we finished our training and were set to go to San Francisco to fly to Japan for occupation. I didn't get to go because while we were waiting they called three of us and told us to pack our bags. We were put on a train to Ft. Jackson, spent a few days there then we were sent Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. Since I had some typing experience, they told me I would now be a clerk typist and was to discharge soldiers from active duty and type up their records. There were 16 million personnel in the military at that time. We discharged a million men and they would come through the base 24 hours a day. When the soldiers came in during the day, there would be ceremonies and they would walk across the stage and get their discharge papers. I did this for 17 months, ending my military career. I was at the corporal level when I was discharged.

They said that if we would have invaded Japan that we would have lost 400,000 soldiers.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

One of the best parts of my time in the military was basic training in South Carolina. All the recruits were housed in an army barrack that was two stories and held 30 personnel on each floor. I enjoyed getting to know those 30 men, who were from all over the United States.

If I could do it over, I would join the military again. When they chose me to be a clerk typist, I didn't want to go. I wanted to stay in training. However, I'm glad I didn't continue my military career. 15 or 20 of the men I bunked with in basic training were high school graduates and I wanted to do that. I could have gotten my GED, but I wanted to go back to school on a day-to-day basis and finish my high school education just like a normal student. I wanted to go across the stage, shake my principal's hand and get my diploma. The G.I. Bill paid for my books and I received \$75 a month in assistance.

I would encourage today's generation to join the military. I think it is good training and you learn discipline and respect for authority. It would be good for everyone to serve. My time in the military definitely changed me as a person. It made me grow up fast. The real heroes of WW II are the men who were killed in combat and the mothers and fathers who scarified their children to war.

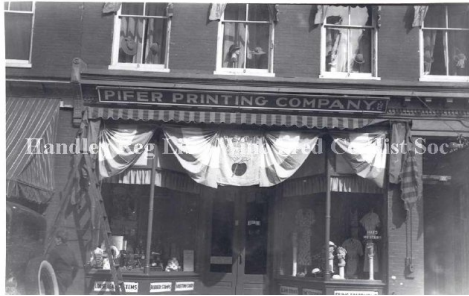


# Work



Once I got out of the service and graduated high school, I went to Pifer Printing on North Loudoun Street (Pictured on the next page). I would help with deliveries and this is how I learned how to drive. The full time delivery trucker taught me. When he left, I took his position and stayed there for two years.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.



During my time there, I witnessed the Raylass' Department Store (Pictured below) explosion on June 26, 1948, caused by a gas leak. This was a major accident for Winchester and was definitely big news.



I would go get drinks and snacks from Anderson grocery nearby for the ladies I worked with and had just passed Raylass' when the explosion happened. It almost took the tray of drinks and snacks out of my hand. If I would have been ten seconds sooner I would have been right in front of building when it exploded.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

Glass went everywhere and the mannequins from the storefront blew out onto the street, making it look like actual people had been blown out of the store. I went in and saw Raylass' employee, Chris Spanos, with no clothes on because the blast had burned them off and assistant manager Lawrence Owens, whose clothes were hanging off him in shreds. It turned out that his skin and clothing fused together and were hanging from him in sheets. The Railway Express delivery truck was there at the time so they put injured in the back of the truck and took them to the hospital along with Omps Funeral Home and an ambulance. 18 people were injured in total, and Lawrence succumbed to his injuries later in the Winchester Memorial Hospital.



When I left Pifer's, I went to work as a stock boy at Newberry's Five and Dime in downtown Winchester (Pictured above). Most of my sisters worked there too, June, Betty, Jean and Connie. This is where I had the worst boss in my working career. Newberry's had a second location in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and it burned down. So they sent their stock boy to the store in

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

Winchester while they were rebuilding and he became my boss.

One day I was putting up some glass piggybanks and separating them like I had done many times before and he told me he didn't like the way I was stocking. I told him that I would do it his way the next time I had to restock them and he said no, I want you to do it now. I went to the manager and told him it wasn't going to work out with this guy being my boss so I left and went to the Farmers Livestock Exchange. Later on, the guy called me to apologize and wanted me to come back. There was no hard feelings. He was just a control freak.

The best job I ever had was being an office manager at the Farmers Livestock Exchange in Winchester. The business was selling and buying cattle. I learned a lot about animals and what happened to them after they were sold. For example, once cows couldn't have babies anymore they were bought to be used in hot dogs and steers were used for steak. I liked learning this information.

We would only have a sale one day a week for 24 hours, Monday at 8 a.m. to Tuesday at 8 a.m. The rest of the week I worked in the office by myself. During the sale, I would have six or so women there to process paper work part-time. We would also have to weigh the animals and assign them to certain pins.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

One thing I found surprising about working at the Livestock Exchange is that sometimes I would see animals that had been in a fire with their hair burned off and some would even die before they came in for the sale. They were canners and cutters and turned into hot dogs. The truck drivers would come in and say “Make sure you kill the dead ones before you kill the live ones.”

While I worked I got used to the smells that came with it, but other people did not. We would go to Jenny and Dick’s Diner down the road for lunch sometimes and their two daughters were the waitresses and when we would walk in they would say, “Here comes the stinkies.” The smell of manure would get into your clothes. Then when Martha and I would drive around and I would get behind a cattle truck, she would ask “Why I wouldn’t pass the stinky thing?” I didn’t notice the smell since I worked at the Livestock Exchange.

I enjoyed working this job, but there were no benefits and I didn’t receive vacation days or sick leave. So I decided to put in an application at the local ABC store in downtown Winchester, and worked there for 35 years from April 1952 to July 1, 1987. My co-workers and I are pictured below and at the beginning of this chapter.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.



I started working as a clerk waiting on customers then moved up to assistant manager in 1962 and became the manager in 1970. There were 12 stores in our district, which included Front Royal, Berryville, Leesburg and Warrenton. When I was a clerk, I also acted as a relief clerk. If managers from one of those stores was out sick or on vacation I would fill in as acting manager. Instead of having the assistant managers cover those days they would send me because they trusted me more.

I didn't ever get in trouble at work, but I did play a lot of pranks on my co-worker at the ABC Store, Raymond Newbaugh. He would always have a new car so that's what most of our pranks revolved around and our other co-workers would help me with them.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

He would park his car out back and one day we got a copy made of his car key. When it would rain, we would open the trunk and put a bucket of water in it. He would take the car back to the dealership and they would look over the car, only to find nothing wrong with it. Then when it would rain again, we would put more water in the trunk and he would take it back to the dealership. I don't know how many times we did that.

Then he would brag about what good gas mileage his car would get so when he stepped out we would go buy a gallon of gas and put it in his car to make him think he was getting even better gas mileage. Then the next week we wouldn't put any gas in it so he questioned why his mileages per gallon went down and repeat the cycle over.

Once when it was raining, Newbaugh had gotten a new pair of rain galoshes and we stuffed the toes with newspaper. So when it came time to close up and leave, everyone was waiting on him and he couldn't get his shoes on. We were all like, "Hurry up Raymond, we want to go home!"

Until this day, we have still never told him we pulled these pranks on him.

The best advice I have when it comes to work is treat your co-workers how you want to be treated.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

If I had to go back in time and start a brand new career, I would be a forest ranger. I always liked the mountains and I would go hunting a lot. After working inside most of my adult life, I would rather have a career where I spent most of my time outside, in the mountains.

Outside of work, I also volunteered my time at Friendship Fire Company.



# Volunteer Work



Like every kid, I wanted to be a policemen. However, the fire company was across the street from John Kerr so after watching the firetrucks and hearing the sirens blaring, it made me want to be a fireman.

When I was 16, I joined the Friendship Fire Company in Winchester (Pictured below). I got to ride on the fire truck and I started bingo night, which was held once a week and all the funds raised went to support the upkeep of the fire company. In 1954, I became the youngest president for the fire company, at

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

the age of 27. I was a volunteer firefighter for 20 years.



One of the craziest things I ever did was while I was volunteering was climb a water tower. National Fruit Product Company Inc./White House Foods had a water tower out in front of their building for the plant's sprinkler system. The water tower was about 40 feet high and held 5,000 gallons of water. One day, an inspector came to look at the sprinkler system and found there was no water in the tower. This was a fire hazard so National Fruit had to call the fire company to pump water into it.

Once we started pumping water into the tower, one of the older firemen said that he would buy a carton of cigarettes for the person who would climb the ladder to see how much more water they needed to finished filling it up. I was smoking cigarettes at the time so I said I would do it. It scared the hell of out me

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

climbing up the ladder, but I was also scared going back down too. About half way down they had two ladders that joined together so there was an extra space between the rungs and when I went to step down to the next rung I damn near fell off the ladder. It was crazy!

Two of the most memorable calls I was involved in were a search for a plane crash in 1947 and to fight a forest fire by Skyline Drive in 1949. On Friday, June 13, 1947, a DC4 airplane went missing over the Blue Ridge Mountains near Leesburg on its way to Washington, D.C., from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. 50 people were traveling on the plane and all died in the crash, including a ten month old baby. Based on a news clip, this was the third major disaster in the last sixteen days during that time. At the wreckage site, I saw body parts scattered around, the baby still in the mother's arms and a man still strapped into his seat, but the lower half of his body was missing.

When I wasn't at work or volunteering at the fire company, I would go hunting.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

# Hunting



Pictured above is the Big Man Hunting Club, which includes George Haymaker, Johnny Ryan, Fred Genuis, Bubie Agler, Phillip Haymaker, Howard “Hawk” Haymaker, Joe Orndroff and Kermit.

When I was 10 years old, I started hunting with daddy and we would hunt rabbits and squirrels. We would walk from Kent Street to the old landfill (out on Greenwood Road), which was about five miles. There we stayed in an old house on someone’s

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

property that daddy knew. You could only kill six to eight rabbits per day. Daddy and I would walk back home after we caught our limit and mama would fry them for dinner. First, we would skin them then quarter them by front legs, back legs and back. Daddy would eat the brains. I bought my first shot gun when I was 12 years old for \$12 secondhand.

We would also catch fish, but did it illegally. We would go down to the Opequon Creek and cast a net across the creek and beat the water along the bank to draw the fish into the net.

There were very few deer when I was little since they were endangered from overhunting so I didn't kill my first deer until I was 21 years old. I was in the Big Man Hunting Club that was made up of Haymaker men and a few of my friends. In 1962, I killed my biggest deer, which was a 14 point buck. We all entered our deer into a state contest that was for hunters west of the Blue Ridge in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and I placed fifth (Pictured below).



## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

My favorite trips that I have taken were the hunting trips where we stayed in the George Washington National Forest for a week or two at Vance's Cove near Star Tannery, Virginia. We also went on a fishing trip to Canada, but I didn't really like it. You had to wear a head net and sleep with a net because the mosquitoes were so bad.

One time while we were at Vance's Cove, I killed a bear and swore I'd never kill another one again. When I shot it, it stood up and cried. I didn't like that it had similar behavior to a human. I also killed the bear illegally because I didn't realize that bear season went out the week before in Virginia and didn't come in until the week after in West Virginia. So I hid it by covering it with rocks and leaves. The next week when I went to retrieve it when bear season was open in West Virginia, I ran into a hunter who said he found a bear and took it for himself. Since I had shot it illegally, I didn't say anything about it being mine.

For the last 50 years, I have leased a cabin in the mountains of West Virginia on the Capon River near Bloomery. We would stay up in the cabin during hunting season and then would occasionally go up to the property for upkeep, which included mowing, cutting wood and more.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.



# Marriage



I was married to Martha Bowers Ryan for 61 years until she passed away on April 16, 2014. Above is a photo of our wedding day with our parents.

I actually knew Martha my whole life (going to Sunday School together), but didn't start hanging out with her until after high school. Everyone our age would hang out at the bowling alley and she asked me if I wanted to be her bowling partner because she wanted to join the mixed doubles league. We won a couple tournaments and got trophies. After bowling together for a while

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

we started dating and dated for four years from 1949 to 1953.

Once I got a good job with a good salary, I decided it was time to take the next step and get married. I told my father that I was going to leave him and settle down and his response was, "Maybe you better stay awhile and settle up before you leave." My proposal to her wasn't anything special because I wasn't very romantic. I just asked her if she wanted to get married and she said yes.

One of the most romantic gestures I ever made for Martha was giving her a nice gift on Valentine's Day when we were dating. I was only making a dollar an hour at the time and paid three dollars for the gift. It made her happy so it was worth it.

On Feb. 21, 1953, Martha and I were married at her mother's house. It was just my parents, her mother and her sister Ann. We were married by Pastor Hill. He was the pastor at the Market Street United Methodist Church cross from John Kerr Elementary School.

Here is the marriage announcement from the Winchester Star.

Miss Bowers Bride Of Robert Ryan

"Miss Martha Amelia Bowers, daughter of Mrs. Robert M. Bowers of 564 N Braddock Street and the late Mr. Bowers, and Robert Scott Ryan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ryan, also of this

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

city, were married on Saturday evening at 8 o'clock. The ceremony was performed at the home of the bride's mother by the Rev. E. G. Hill, pastor of the Market Street United Methodist Church.

The bride wore a street length dress of champagne colored lace and jersey with seed pearl embroidery on the collar and cuffs. She wore black accessories and carried a prayer book topped with Brandywine roses.

Immediately following the ceremony a reception was held for members of the immediate families.

Mr. and Mrs. Ryan will make their home in this city."

After 61 years of marriage, I believe the secret to a happy relationship is to never go to bed angry.



## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

# My Family



After we got married, we bought a house at 221 Opequon Avenue for \$8,500 and our mortgage was \$54 a month. Below is a photo of me on Opequon Avenue.

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.



Martha and I had two children, Ann Scott Ryan (whose nickname is Scottie) and Robert Scott Ryan, Jr. (whose nickname is Bobby). Scottie was born April 28, 1954, and Bobby was born January 26, 1960. Martha chose the names of our two children. Ann's first name was for her sister and her middle name Scott was after my middle name. Then Bob has my name so he is a junior. At the beginning of the chapter, I'm pictured with Scottie and Bobby when they were little.

I felt proud to be a dad when Ann was born. She was born during the annual Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival. While Martha was in the hospital, I went to the square dancing event and celebrities Patsy Cline and Aunt Jemima were there. I gave everyone from the Friendship Fire Company cigars as well at the event. The next day when I went back up to the hospital to visit

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

Martha and baby Ann, she asked me what I did after I left the hospital and I told her I went home. She answered back, “No, you didn’t.” The nurse that was taking care of Martha was also at the event that night and told her that I was really celebrating. So I got caught, but I didn’t get in trouble.

Martha did most of the raising of Ann and Bob since she was a stay-at-home mom. This was one of the most difficult times in our relationship when I wanted Martha to be a stay-at-home mother. We would go from two incomes to one, but I knew we could make it work with just my salary. Once the children were old enough, she went to back to work at Sears.

I have some memorable times with Ann and Bob that involve them getting their driver’s license.

I remember when Ann got her driver’s license and took the car to go driving with Bob. She ended up getting into an accident on Pine Street. She was at the stop sign and couldn’t see so she kept inching her way out into the street and hit a car coming the other way. She thought about giving up driving after that and didn’t tell me about the accident until after I got home from work.

I remember us having a hard time trying to convince Bob to get his driver’s license. Once he finally did, he drove everything at Perry’s Engineering where he worked and wanted to drive tractor trailers for a living. It was just funny because we kept

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

hounding him, but after he got his license you couldn't get him to stop driving.

Scottie was the first to leave the nest and it was kind of sad. She was a daddy's girl. I would take her everywhere with me, the Fire Company and to the houses of the my co-workers. She moved out of the house because she was marrying her now husband, Frank Snapp. Although I was sad, I told Frank, "Don't bring her back."

Scottie and Frank had two children, Amy and Andrew. Then Bob married his now wife, Lisa Hoover Ryan, and they had one daughter, Harley. In May 2022, Andrew had a daughter, Martha Snapp, with his fiancé, Beth. At the age of 96 years old, I became a great-grandfather.

The things that I am the most proud of in my life are the family I built with Martha and raising our two children, my time in the military and having come from a large family.



## Extras



This is a story about how one of my best friends, Bill Genius, drown in the Shenandoah River on the fourth of July. Bill, I and four other friends were at the wide part of the Shenandoah River fishing on the bank and it was hot so we decided to swim the river, but the water was up a little bit so we probably shouldn't have gotten in.

I got in the water and swam about halfway in the strong current, but it was too far to go back so I kept swimming, making it over to the next bank. I hollered back and said not to try it since the water was rough and to come over the bridge to pick me up because three of the friends we were with couldn't swim. However they didn't listen to me and they dove into the river. Bill and my cousin made it halfway and Bill said that he wasn't going to be able to make it across so he was going to swim back. I tried to tell him to swim to me instead of going back since it was closer, but he went back and my cousin finished swimming

## The Life of Robert S. Ryan, Sr.

across and made it to the bank I was on. Bill swam back and was 20 to 30 feet away from the bank when he went under. I didn't even think about it and I dove back in to look for him. Our friends tried to tell me where he went under and I would dive down to try to find him, but I couldn't. It was getting dark so we called the police and the next day I went back to help with the search party.

The police had boats in the water with graving hooks that they threw into the water to catch anything that was along the bottom of the river. When the hook would get hung up, I would go down to see what it was caught on and one of the times it finally caught Bill underneath the arm. I swam back up to the surface to tell the police I had him and they hauled him up to put him in the boat.

This was one of the craziest things I had ever done, looking for him when the river had a strong current.

