



EWING FAMILY NEWS

Descendants of William Alexander Ewing

The End of An Era

The Children of Ira and Salome Ewing

The passing of Eldon Ewing on January 6, 2014, marked the end of an era... the last of a family generation that personified hard work and determination. He was the last living child of Ira and Salome (Coxley) Ewing, which was a family that included ten children... two of which died at birth but the remaining eight lived long lives and established themselves as part of what is referred to today as the "great generation."

All of these Ewing children were born in the first two decades of the 20th century, a time when electricity was not yet common in rural areas, roads were not paved and houses were heated with wood, kerosene or coal stoves. Horsepower was actually provided by horses — or mules or oxen, especially in the first decade of the century. By the end of the second decade steam or gasoline-powered equipment was replacing some of the animal-driven machinery. Trains moved more people and commodities than any other form of transportation.

During this period, the United States added the last three states in the original 48... Oklahoma in 1907 and New Mexico and Arizona in 1912. A "day's work" often extended from sun-up (or before) to sun-down and would commonly yield less than a dollar income. A man was judged by the truth of his word and the strength of his handshake. One of the highest compliments that he could receive was to be called a "working fool."

Medical science was still primitive. Many rural doctors were self-educated or started out as veterinarians and then evolved into "people" doctors. Bacteria were known but viruses were yet to be understood. Common diseases were often lethal, especially among children, and the average life-expectancy for people was around 48 years of age. The Ewing children defied those odds. Eldon Ewing lived eight months beyond his 101st birthday, a record among his siblings but not the only centenarian in the family. His oldest brother,



Ewing family about 1920 or 21— (Front, left to right): Dean, Forrest, Eldon, and Mabel. (Back): Ray, Salome holding Mary, and Nellie. Frank is not in this picture, perhaps he was holding the camera.

Frank, had lived to 101 plus two months. The shortest lifespan among the Ewing children was 76 years and the average longevity of the siblings was over 93 years. Added together, the ages of the eight Ewing kids totaled 746 years. Note: the family longevity record belongs to aunt Ila (Mills) Coxley, wife of Salome's brother. She attained an age of 102 years plus four days (1894 - 1996).

All eight of the Ewing children were born in rural Marshall County, Kansas, during years when economic conditions were challenging, especially for those who eked out a living on a small farm. They all learned at a young age that survival was the primary task at hand and that all who were old enough had to do their part in sharing the work that put food on the table and clothes on their bodies. Most of the time they lived in conditions that would be considered poverty today, but they were not the only ones. Their neighbors were all living the same way. And most of them would bristle at the suggestion that they should accept charity... charity was for the poor — and they weren't POOR! The poor were forced to live in institutions or situations that were not fit for human beings. No, they weren't poor — they just didn't have much. But, they had acquired everything they owned through hard work and what they didn't have... they learned to live without. They were all instilled with a pride and a work ethic that would guide them the rest of their lives.

The Ewing kids would have their strength and resolve tested often in their early years as the family struggled to maintain itself. By the early 1920s their father was suffering from bouts of depression and self-doubt that finally caused him to be incarcerated at the State Hospital in Topeka in 1922. The social stigma that resulted from that event was enormous for the family — but they persevered. Then, a few months later, their mother died suddenly from complications that accompanied her tenth pregnancy. Once again, the children rallied. They lived together on their uncle's farm, the older ones caring for the younger, for over a year until they were separated by the county court and all but the two oldest were doled out to families that would take them in. Fortunately, an effort was made to allow them to maintain contact with each other occasionally. Even though they all were able to deal with the trauma of these early years, many of them would not talk freely about these events in later years, not even with their families.

As adults, each of the Ewing children would again be tested repeatedly, each in their own way, as they lived through some of the most challenging economic conditions of the century... the Great Depression of the '30s and World War II. And through it all, their conditioning in early life guided them as they established families and provided a level of living comfort for themselves and their families.



The Ewing kids, about 1936 at a reunion in Belleville, Kansas. From left to right: Frank, Ray, Nellie, Forrest, Eldon, Mabel, Dean and Mary.



William Franklin "Frank" Ewing
1902 - 2003

Frank married Cordelia Harrison, from Bigelow, in 1927 and spent the next decade farming in Marshall County. Two children were born into the family during that time. He moved his family to Ohio in 1938 where three more children were born. Returning to Kansas in 1946, they lived for three years in Rice County, then moved to the Wichita area where the family would stay.

Ray Alexander Ewing
1905 - 2004

Ray married Gwen Williams in 1927 and they lived and worked on the Edwards Ranch near Irving until 1934. They bought a farm in the Big Blue Valley in 1941 and lived there until the Tuttle Creek reservoir became eminent. Their family, which included four children, moved to the Vermillion area where Ray farmed and worked in area butcher shops. In later years, he and Gwen lived in Frankfort. Ray was a life-long resident of Marshall County.



Nellie A. (Ewing) Duncan
1908 - 2001

Nellie married Fae Duncan and they lived for a while in Rice County, near Little River. Nellie and Fae had four children. They moved to Americus, near Emporia, and lived there the rest of their lives, being active in the community's business and governing functions.

Forrest Clyde Ewing
1910 - 2008

Forrest moved to Phillips County, near Phillipsburg, during the depression and was active in the farm community there. He married Opal Thompson in 1937, who tragically died in a flash-fire in 1941. He married Ramah Siegrist Thompson in 1942 and remained active in the Phillipsburg community the rest of his life. Forrest's two sons live in Phillips County.



Eldon Merle Ewing
1912 - 2014

Eldon married Virginia Anderson in 1936 and they bought a farm in the Reserville area of southern Marshall County where they raised their family of five children. He was active in the area's school, township and governing boards for years. Virginia died in 1988 and Eldon retired from the farm in 1991, when he married Gretchen Gibson and moved into Frankfort. He was a resident of Marshall County his entire lifetime.

Mabel Augusta (Ewing) Fetterman
1914 - 2013

She preferred the name "Jean" most of her adult life. Entering nursing school after high school, she lived in the Kansas City area for a while and then moved to San Francisco where she worked in the office of Standard Oil Company in 1952, later transferring to Salt Lake City and then on to Denver where she retired from the company. She then lived a while in Agra, Kansas, near Phillipsburg, before moving to Vero Beach, Florida. She lived the last few years of her life in Frankfort.



Dean Clarence Ewing
1916 - 1996

Dean left Marshall County when he joined the Marines in 1938, rising to the rank of Major. While in California, he met and married Elizabeth Herbst. Following active duty, they moved to St. Louis, MO, where Dean entered the building trades and worked in carpentry while raising a family of five children.



Mary Elizabeth (Ewing) Mleynek
1919 - 1995

Being only three years old when her mother died, Mary was raised by her grandparents, Gus and Nancy Coxley. She grew up in Frankfort, KS, and married Anthony Mleynek in 1938. They moved to Wichita to work in aircraft production during WWII and then moved to Arizona a few years after the war. They went back to Marshall County numerous times over the next few years before making Arizona their permanent home in 1966. Mary and Anthony's family includes five children.



**The Ewing kids
at a 1980s reunion.
Seated, left to right:
Mabel, Mary, Nellie and Frank.
Standing: Dean, Eldon,
Forrest and Ray.**