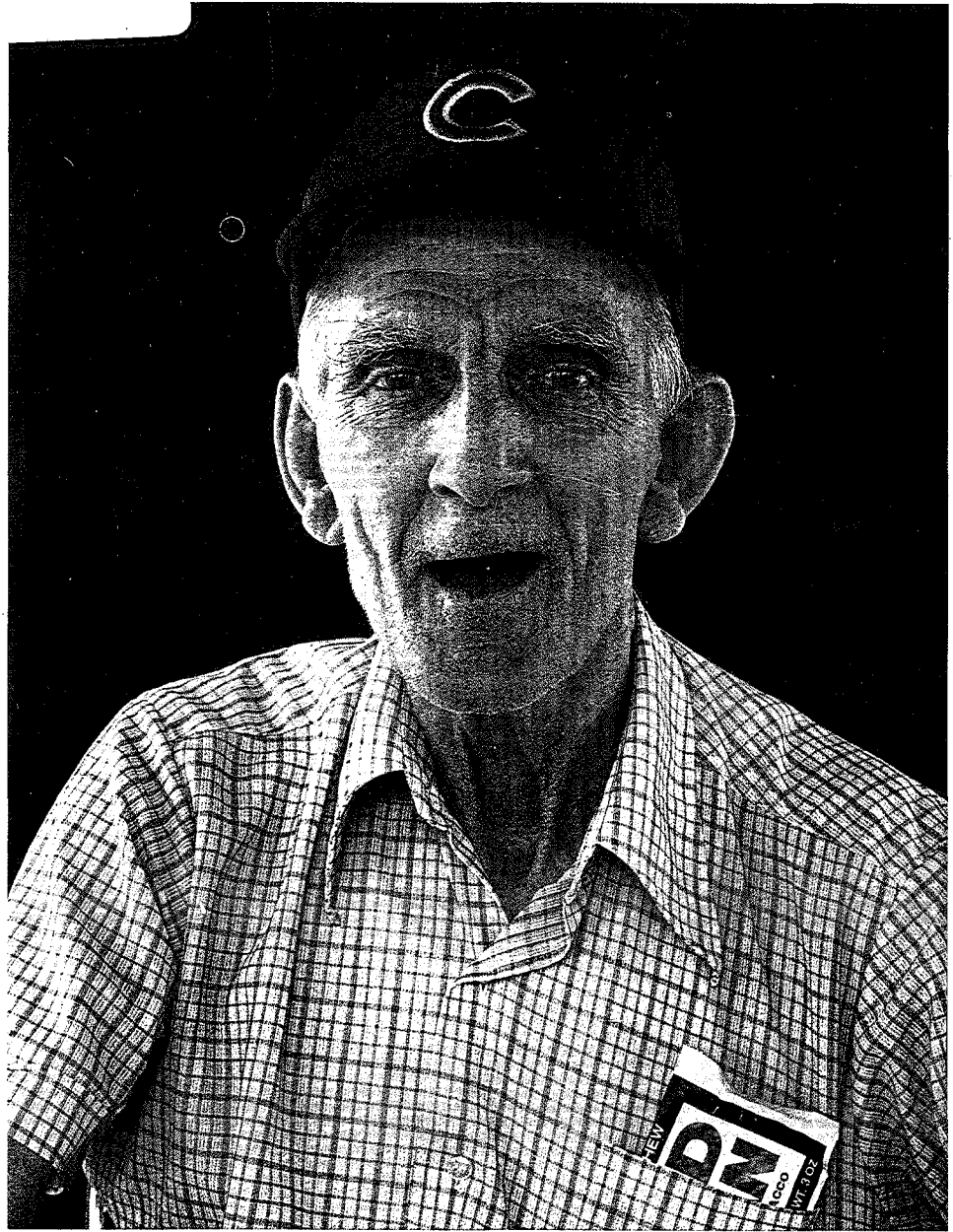


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THERE IS A SEASON

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THERE IS A SEASON

*To every thing
there is a season,
and a time
to every purpose
under heaven.*

Ecclesiastes III, 1

THERE IS A SEASON

Photographs by Raymond Bial

Narratives by Raymond Bial and Catherine Rutledge

Edited by Linda LaPuma Bial

Champaign County Nursing Home

Urbana, Illinois

1984

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Champaign County Nursing Home
1701 East Main Street
Urbana, Illinois 61801

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Most importantly we would like to thank each of the persons photographed for their enthusiastic participation.

GIFT

Introduction

Historically, stereotypes of aging have persisted in our society. Older persons have too often been viewed as useless and helpless. In recent years, organizations such as the American Association of Retired Persons and the Gray Panthers have clearly demonstrated that older persons can be active, creative, contributing members of society. While this positive image cannot be overstated, it must be also kept in mind that as we grow older all of us must deal with some very real concerns.

In undertaking this project we have tried to present a balanced view of older persons. This book was prepared to accompany an exhibit and public programs at Champaign County Nursing Home, Champaign Public Library, and Parkland College during late 1984 and 1985. The primary objective of these programs is to dispel myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions associated with aging and older persons in our society.

As the photographs and brief biographies suggest, the persons involved in this project have accepted old age with grace and dignity. They affirm the beauty of aging even as they struggle with the harsh realities that accompany this phase in their lives such as loss of hearing and sight, crippling arthritis, strokes, memory impairment, long term diseases, and diminishing finances. The participants in this project are all representative of this often forgotten segment in our population.

When photographed in June, 1984, all of the people were participating in the Adult Day Program at the Champaign County Nursing Home. They were involved in the day program for a variety of reasons, but shared one common concern – a growing dependence on others. Since the project began in the summer of 1984, one participant has died. Others have entered nursing homes. Yet the majority are quietly striving to maintain or regain their independence.

Most of us take sight, speech, the ability to walk, and other gifts for granted. However, the individuals portrayed on the following pages not only poignantly illustrate a deep appreciation for life, but are actually living life as fully as possible. They live marginally between the absolute freedom offered by good health and total incapacity. It is their courage and enthusiasm for life that we would like to acknowledge with this book.

Catherine Rutledge, RN, *Director of Adult Day Services*
Joyce Ettensohn, *Administrator*
Champaign County Nursing Home

September, 1984

Clarence McGraw

Born in 1909 in Urbana, Clarence McGraw is a lifelong resident of the community.

A taxicab driver for 33 years, he says, "I retired about nine years ago. I drove right up until then. Once you catch on to cab drivin' you can make a livin'. But you got to hustle – can't sit in a coffee shop.

"I had a lot of bad luck. Had a bad leg since I was four years old. Drove a cab because I couldn't do anything else."

However, he has also "worked on a farm, scooped coal, driven a garbage truck. I did it all!

"I was in the Depression in '32," he says. "I tell you that was rough."

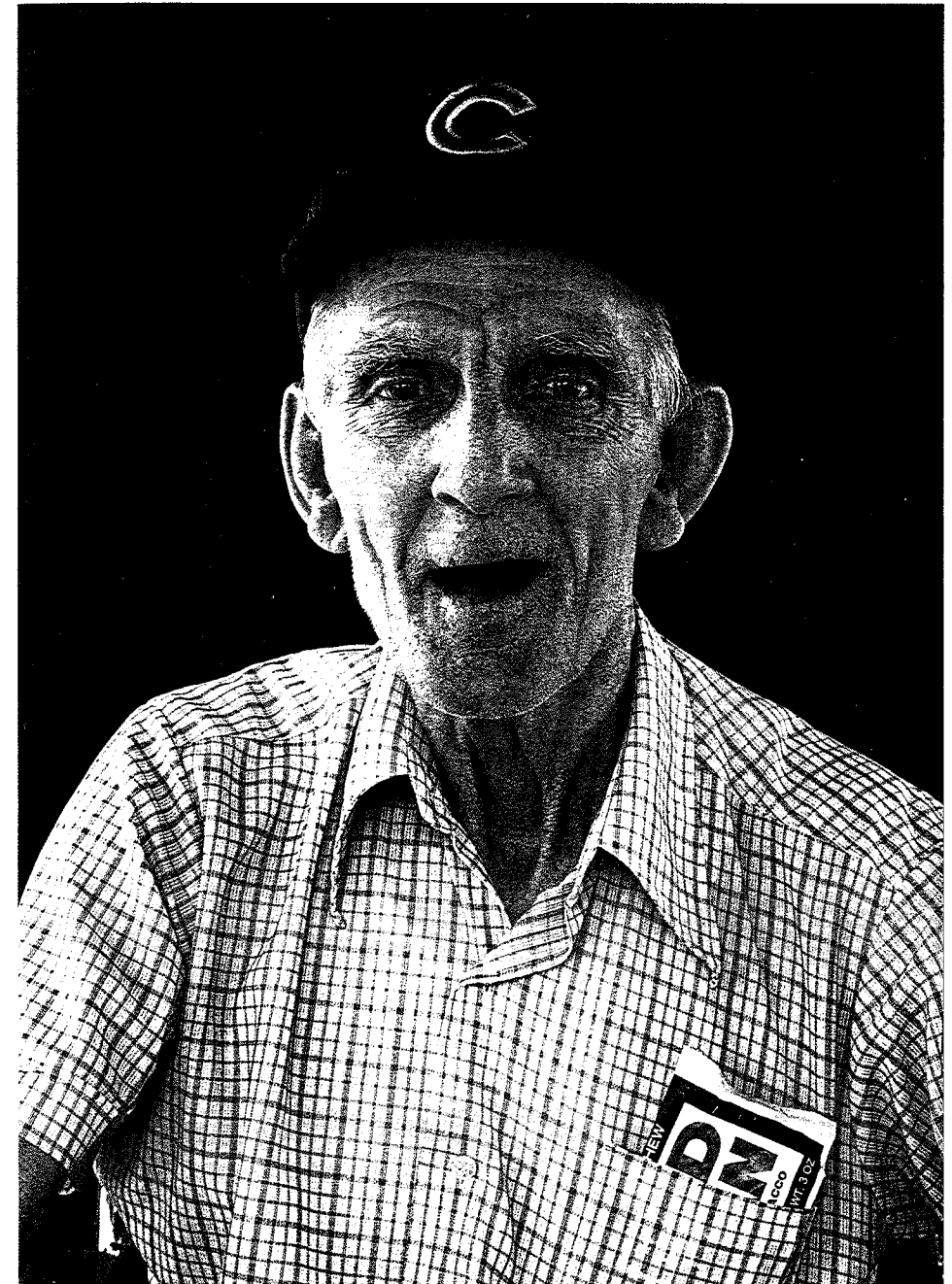
In the 1930s and 1940s, he also says, "I was a pitcher for ten years in the Twilight League, Commercial League – all of them. Would you believe it with a bum leg."

Regarding his other interests he says, "I don't drink. I don't smoke. I chew a little bit."

He is most proud of his family. "My children all have babies. They all have girls, with another one on the way. Grandma and Grandpa watch them on Saturday night when the children want to go out."

Although he still enjoys baseball he is now concerned with "my condition. My jumping hand – they call it tremors." He is also not very fond of "those hard x-ray tables. You see, I'm bony.

"I can't dress myself now," he says. "I can't untie my shoes. I can't even take off my britches. I'm not a baby, but there are some things I just can't do for myself."



Jim Buckley

Jim Buckley was born in 1898. "I was raised up on a farm. The little town closest to it was Oakville, Mississippi."

He worked briefly in a sugar refinery in New Orleans – long enough to earn money to have his teeth pulled – after which he went to Jackson, Mississippi, to be near his family.

For a while he worked on a farm again, then he worked with an "extra gang" on the railroad. "That's how I came up here. We went to Chicago, and Iowa, and we had a camp in Champaign."

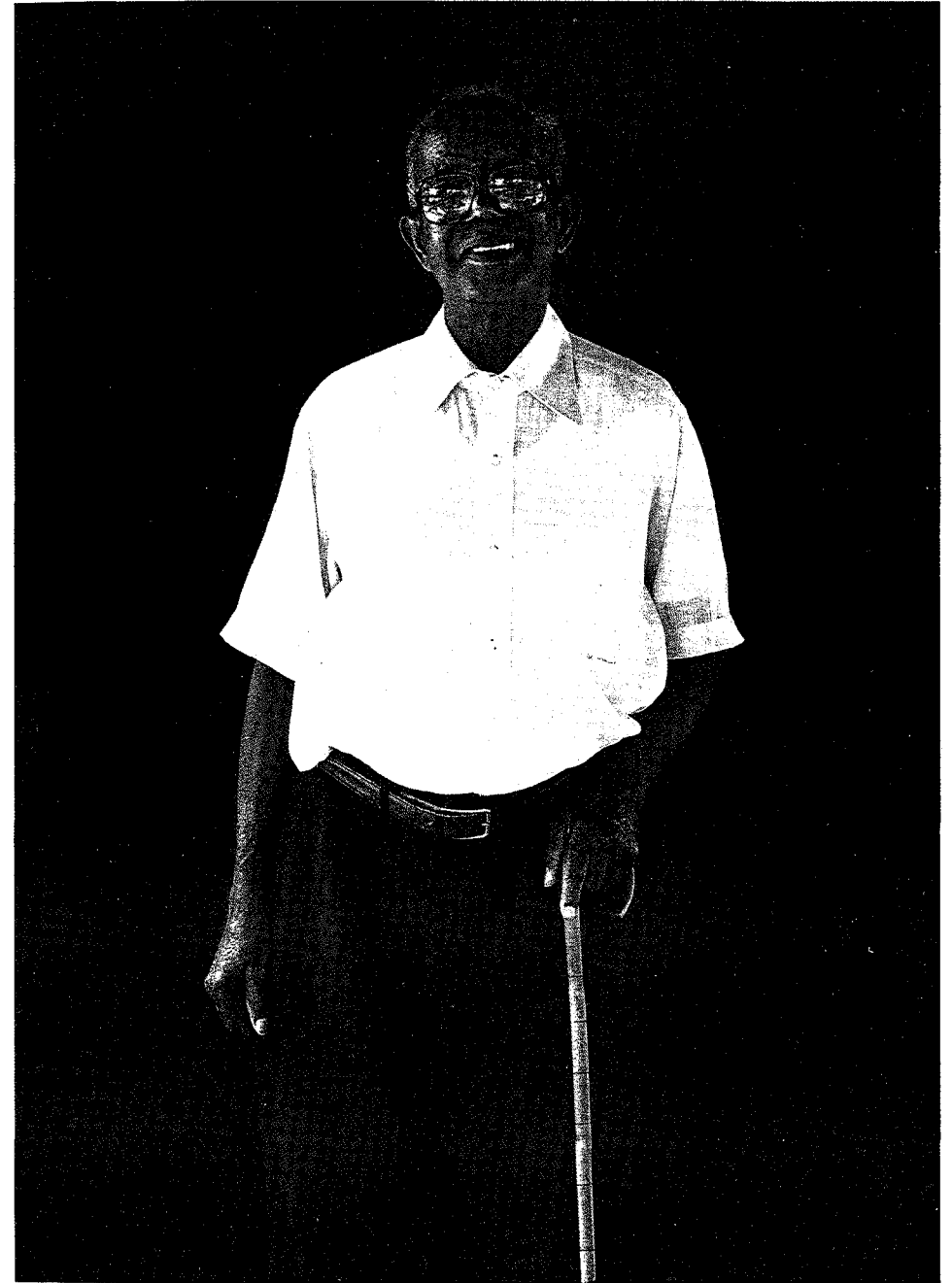
After leaving the railroad, he helped build houses in Champaign, then he washed dishes in a cafe on campus until his retirement.

"I like everywhere I lived pretty good," he says, but he's always been especially fond of "farming. I always liked to farm."

He also notes, "I had to work cheap, but I got by. The man wasn't payin' much, but I got by all right."

He now feels, "I'm proud to be 86 years old. I worked hard all my life. I thank God every day that I don't have to work that hard now! I feel certain that I will have all that I will need for the rest of my years. I don't worry much about anything. I hope other old folks don't have to worry how they'll get along."

His only concerns are that "I can't do like I used to. I'm kind of feeling my age."



Ruth Donaldson

Mrs. Donaldson was born on a farm in Kentucky in 1900. "My daddy was a tobacco man. He had 160 acres. Also some livestock."

From 1919 to 1984 she was a housewife in Paducah, Kentucky. "My six children are my main accomplishment.

"Even though my husband worked at a good job at the Illinois Central Railroad it was a struggle to raise six kids properly."

She liked to sew and, when she had the time, loved to work jigsaw puzzles.

Although she claims, "Nothing very outstanding has happened in my life – nothing that would make good reading," she is still proud of "almost sixty years of marriage to the same man and six children as well as 23 grandchildren (at last count).

"I definitely don't see myself any differently than when I was young," she says. "I had a stroke in April, 1984, and am trying to re-learn to do many of the simple tasks which were once easy for me.

"I think the same, but cannot do the same things. That's hard."



Irene Chapman

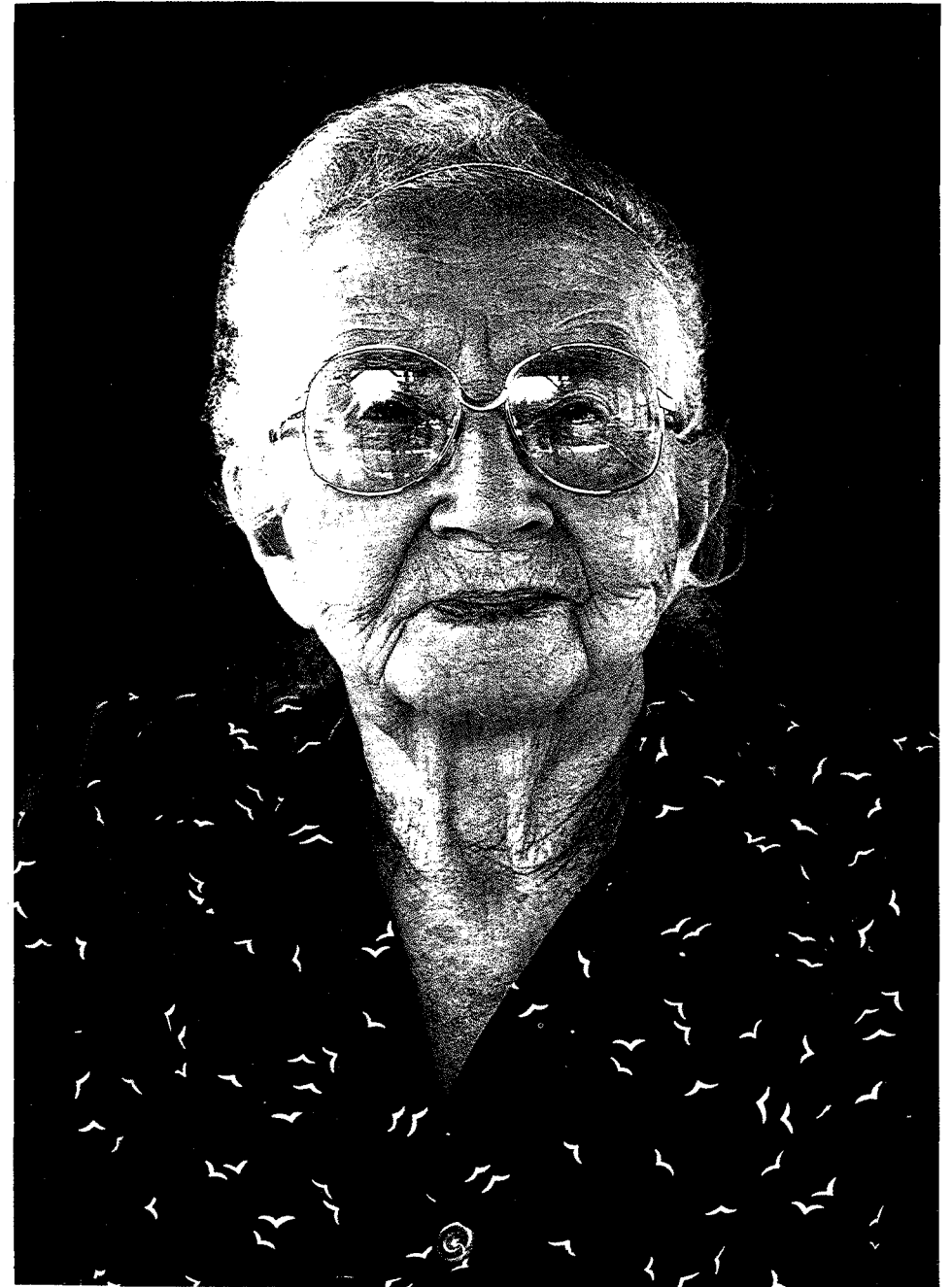
Mrs. Chapman was born in Fayette County, Tennessee, in 1890. She has lived in Champaign for the past two years.

She has spent most of her life in Memphis where she raised her six children.

Widowed in 1929 she worked until 1964 sewing curtains and drapes. She also had time to do volunteer church work and still makes lap robes for residents of a nursing home in Tennessee.

She came to live with her daughter in Champaign when she could no longer live with her sister in her house in Memphis.

Her life changed most drastically when she had to give up her home.



Annie Bell Hill

Mrs. Hill was born down south in 1901. She has lived with her daughter and grandchildren in Champaign for the past several years.

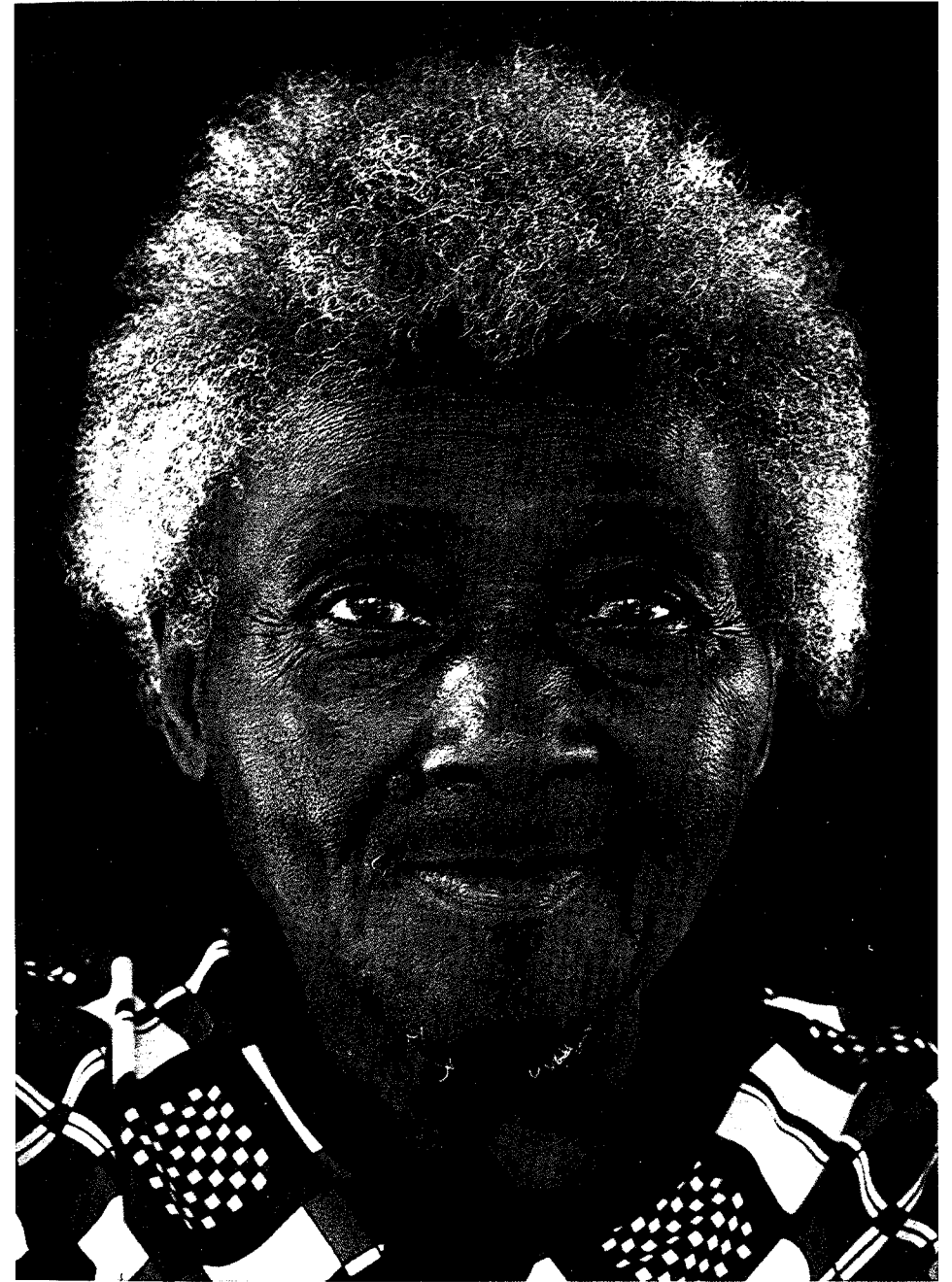
In addition to raising her family, she has always liked to fish and, if her health were better, she would be fishing right now.

Although poor health limits her activity, she maintains her sense of humor and deeply appreciates the loveliness around her, especially in small things. One of her favorite expressions is "Ain't that pretty!"

She notices the flowers and trees in the yard at day care, the pictures on the walls, the colors and patterns of clothes, a new vase on the table, and so forth. Through her sensibilities those around her often rediscover facets of their environment.

As she was growing up Mrs. Hill did not have an opportunity to be educated, but recently learned to read and print her name.

She says, "Getting old is what folks are supposed to do, but being sick ain't good."



Ed Staehling

Born in Danforth, Illinois, in 1888, Ed Staehling spent most of his life in Chicago. He moved to Champaign about a year ago to be near his daughter.

He has taught at the high school and university level. For the last nineteen years prior to his retirement he was in charge of real estate for Commonwealth Edison in Chicago.

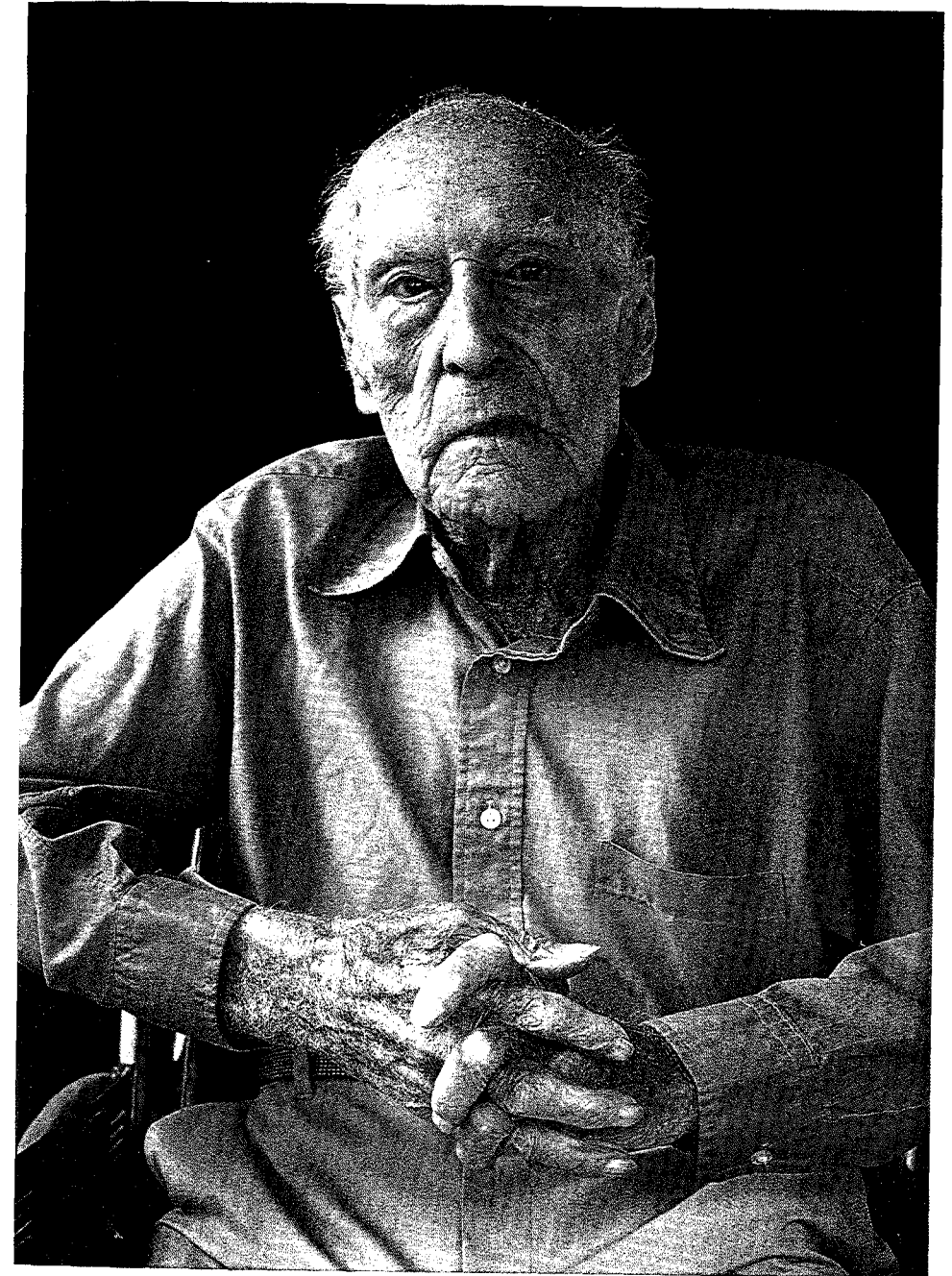
"I belonged to the Coast Guard Auxiliary in Port St. Luce, Florida, after retirement. My chief hobbies were hunting and fishing, and I was always interested in boats."

When asked what were his strongest memories he says, "There are so many I couldn't name one. Possibly, my retirement. I really enjoyed active retirement, mostly in Florida for 23 years (for 16 years I spent summers at our home in Wisconsin). I have been awful busy."

He is especially proud of his "active retirement, including search and rescue and lifesaving in the Coast Guard Auxiliary. I have been pretty active all my days. I was always pretty self-confident." At age 85 he was still giving boating lessons off the coast of Florida.

He has no complaints about the way America treats its older citizens. "They respect us. Any of us can do whatever we'd like to do. Housing and help are available. Of course, I suppose that is not so in all parts of the country."

However, as for life in general, he contends, "The world is different and not for the better either."



Art Brunk

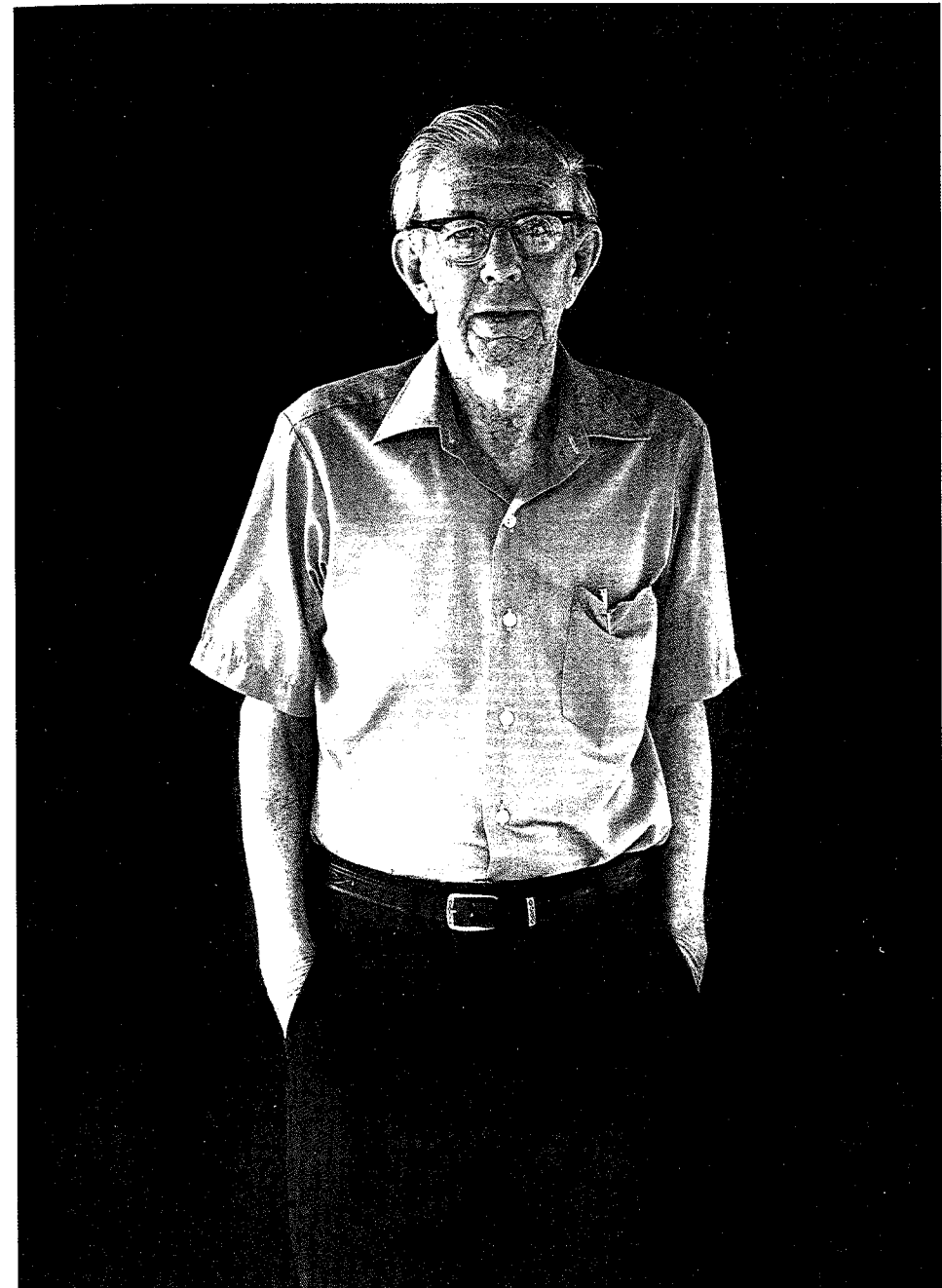
A native of Harper, Kansas, Mr. Brunk came to Urbana in 1945 when he was 41 years old.

He worked as an insurance agent from 1948 to 1974. He also worked for the Illinois Department of Public Welfare in the Division of Delinquency Prevention.

He has always been very interested in helping young people. In his early adult life he was a scout master and for many years he worked with young people – especially underprivileged children in Southern and Central Illinois. When he went into the insurance business he continued his work with young people through the Presbyterian Church of which he was a member.

His seven grandsons and two granddaughters have always been a special delight to him.

He enjoyed camping and each summer took car trips with his family. According to his wife, “he had an enthusiasm for living and a capacity for fun matched only by the kids he worked with.”



Ruth Weber

A native of Illinois where she was born in 1917 Mrs. Weber lived in Centerville before coming to Champaign just prior to her marriage at age eighteen.

She worked for a while with her mother at Eisner Bakery, then at an egg plant.

She and her husband and three children always liked to go out on picnics. Mrs. Weber also enjoyed bingo and card games, and still plays cards at home in the evenings. She is also very fond of jigsaw puzzles.

Widowed several years ago she now lives with her daughter and grandson.

She enjoys being old. "One does not have so much to worry about once the kids are raised." She does what she can to help others and lives simply, but, as she says, "nicely."

She is very proud and happy about her recovery from a severe stroke several years ago. She remembers being told she would not walk again. Today walking is one of her favorite pastimes.



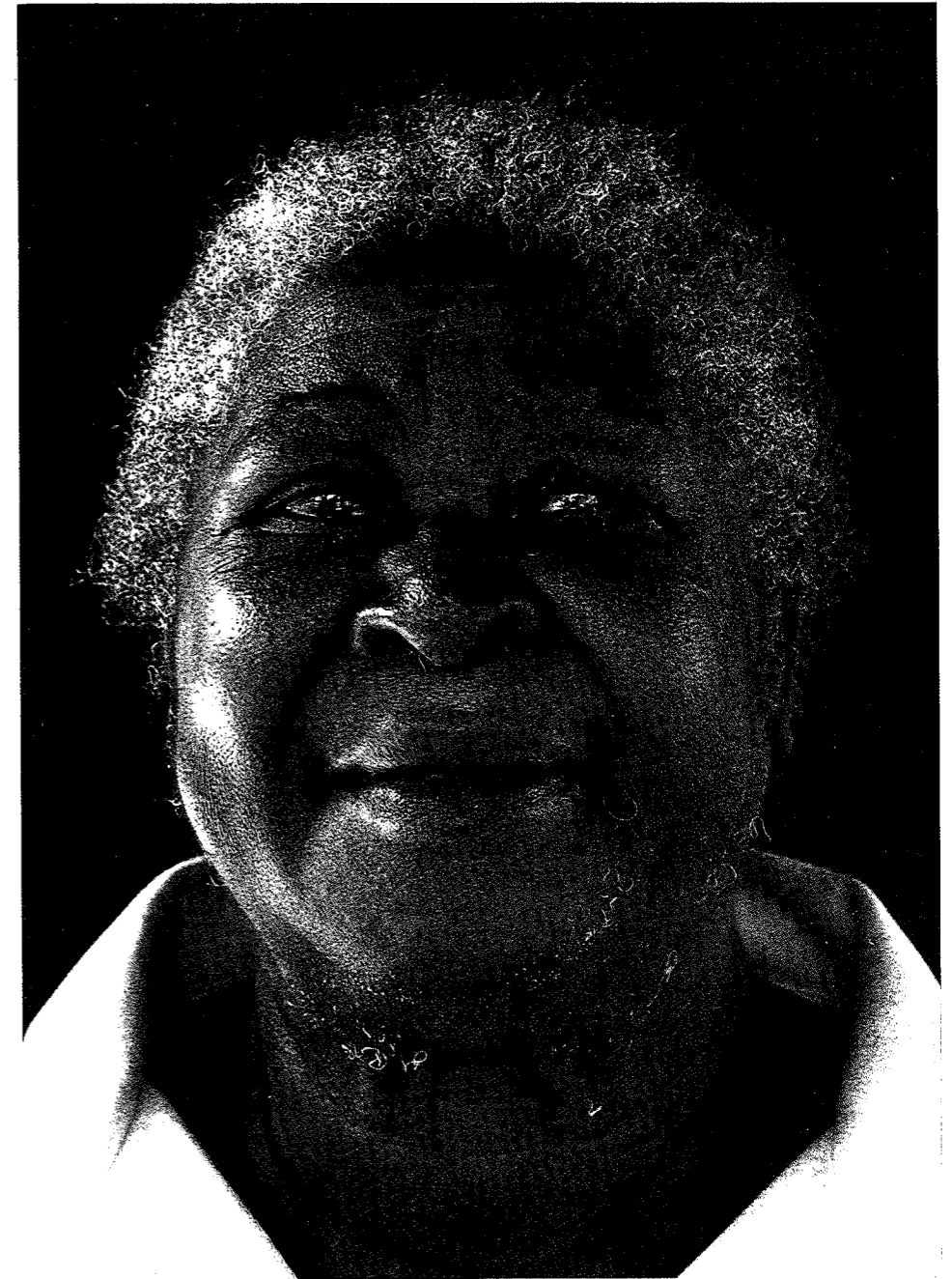
Ruth Ray

Originally from Pulaski, Illinois, Mrs. Ray has lived in Champaign for the past 53 years – since she was 17 years old.

“I’ve done a little of everything. I’ve cooked. I was a maid.”

She also raised her four adopted children “from six years up, until they graduated from high school. One boy is a minister; one girl is a principal in New Orleans. Another is a secretary and the last daughter sings with an orchestra in Champaign.”

She remembers “scraping and scrambling to get that house. We got it during the time of the Depression. My husband wasn’t making very good money and neither was I.”

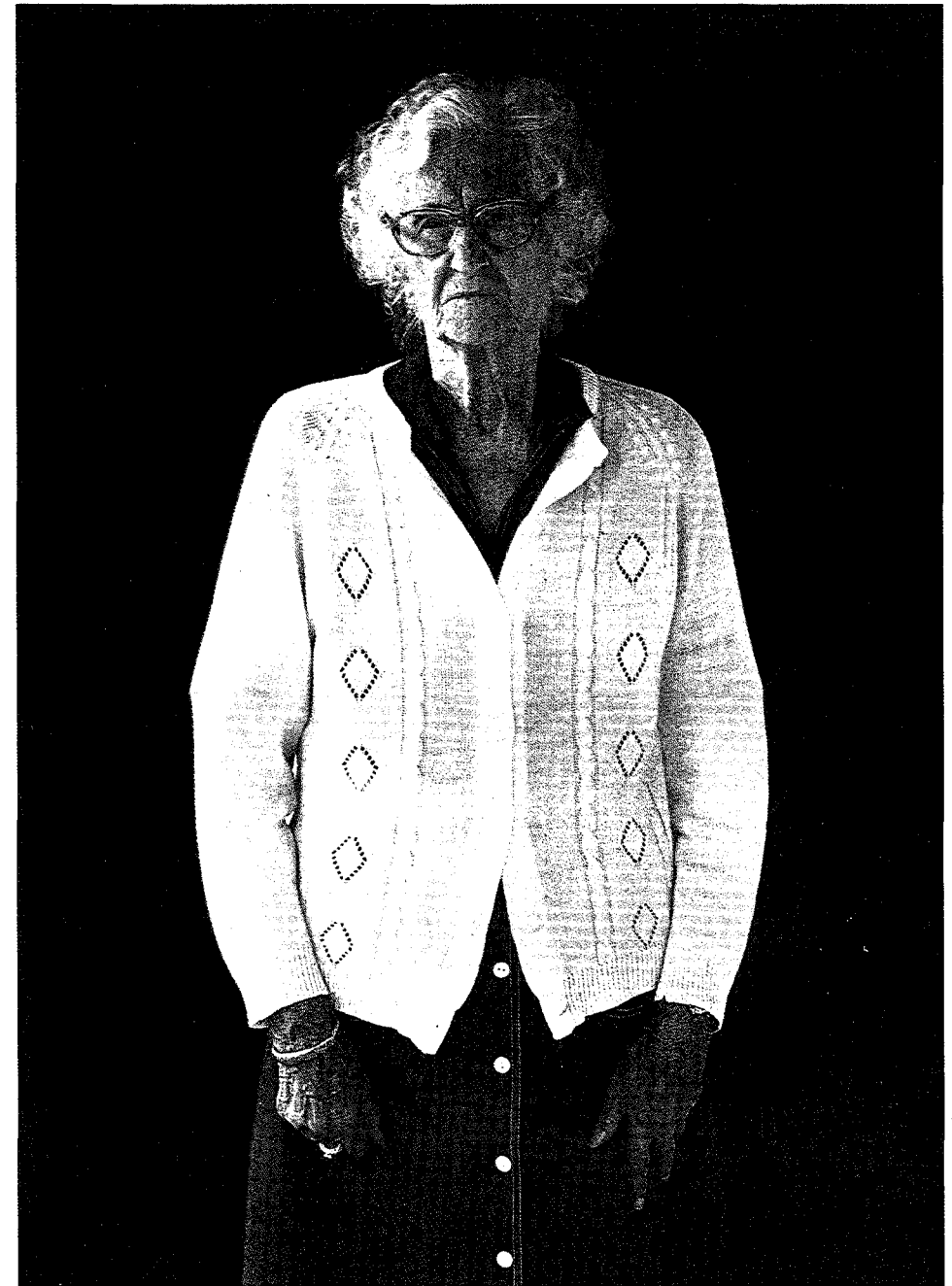


Ruby Bartlow

Mrs. Bartlow was born in Effingham, Illinois, in 1900. She has lived in Champaign County since 1919, except for a few years when they lived on their farm in Vermilion Co. In their later years, she and her husband vacationed annually in Missouri and Minnesota. "I've tomcatted around a lot. I've had hot feet," she says.

A housewife and a mother, she and her husband raised five children (three girls and two boys). "They're all grown now, on their own, with their own families.

"I like to do anything, but work," she kids. Nonetheless she recalls, "I canned a lot and worked in the garden. I worked hard." Mrs. Bartlow also taught herself to play the piano, guitar, and violin. She still enjoys playing the piano.



Larry Schaff

Born in Urbana in 1896 Larry Schaff has lived all of his life in Champaign County.

His father was a farmer in Urbana Township and Mr. Schaff himself did some farming. Although retired now, he still takes an active interest in the running of the family farm and business.

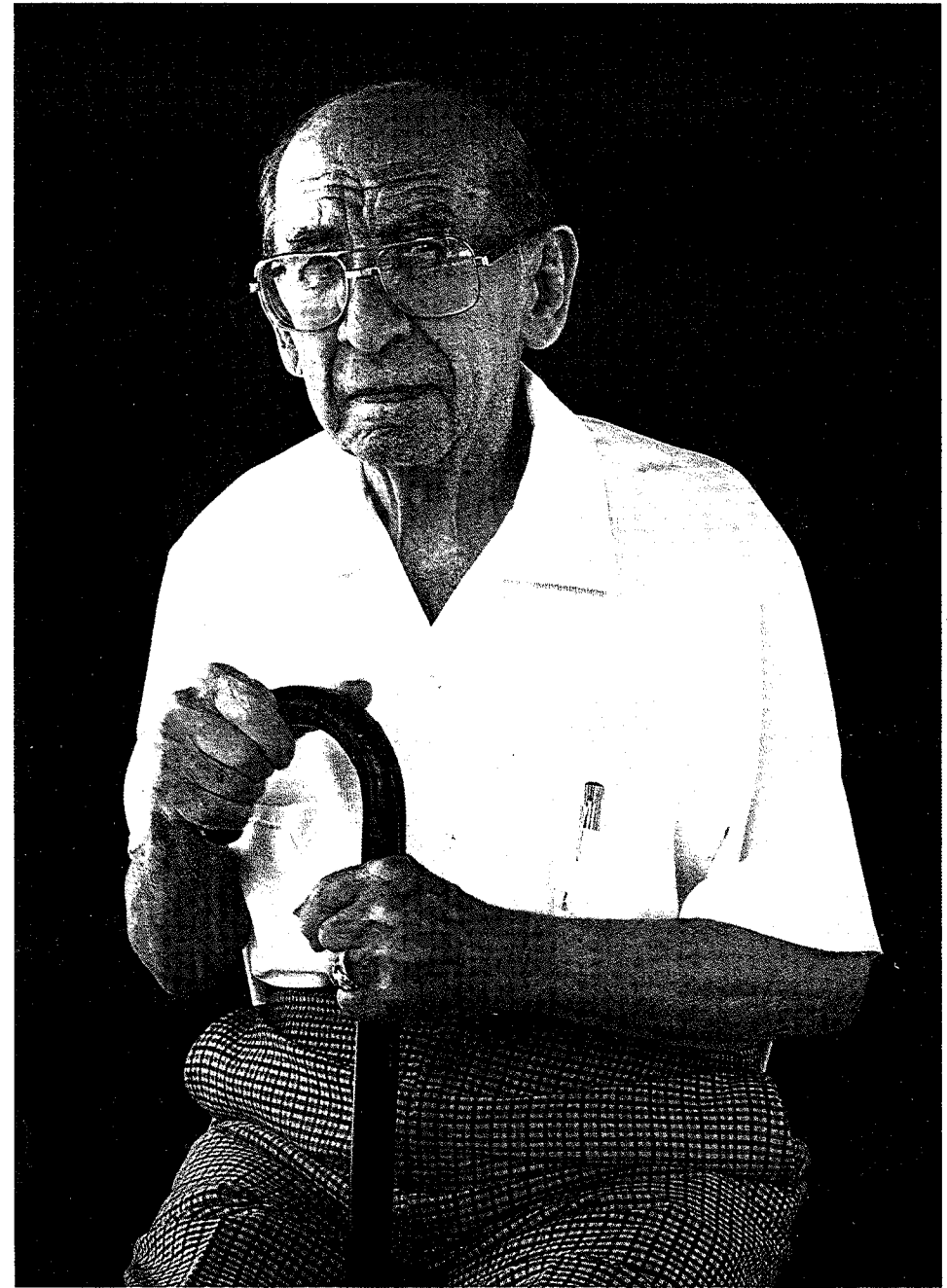
For many years he was an implement dealer and most vividly recalls the conversion from horse-drawn machinery to tractors. "Had to do it all at once. Had to sell horses and equipment, and bring in tractors practically the same day."

He earned a reputation as a fair businessman as an implement dealer in Champaign County, notably during World War II when there was a shortage of farm machinery and parts. He refused special favors and maintained a policy of first come, first served.

He also extended credit to farmers, in at least one case saving a farmer from bankruptcy.

Always fond of children, he used to keep candy and Coke on hand for them in his store.

"I always liked tractor pulls," he says. "That was always a big deal. Even today. We're getting a piece of equipment ready for the State Fair." Otherwise he says, "I had very few hobbies which is a handicap now. Old age is not so bad," but he dreads the thought of being useless or a burden.



William McClain

Mr. McClain was born in Kentland, Indiana, in 1900. He died in June of this year.

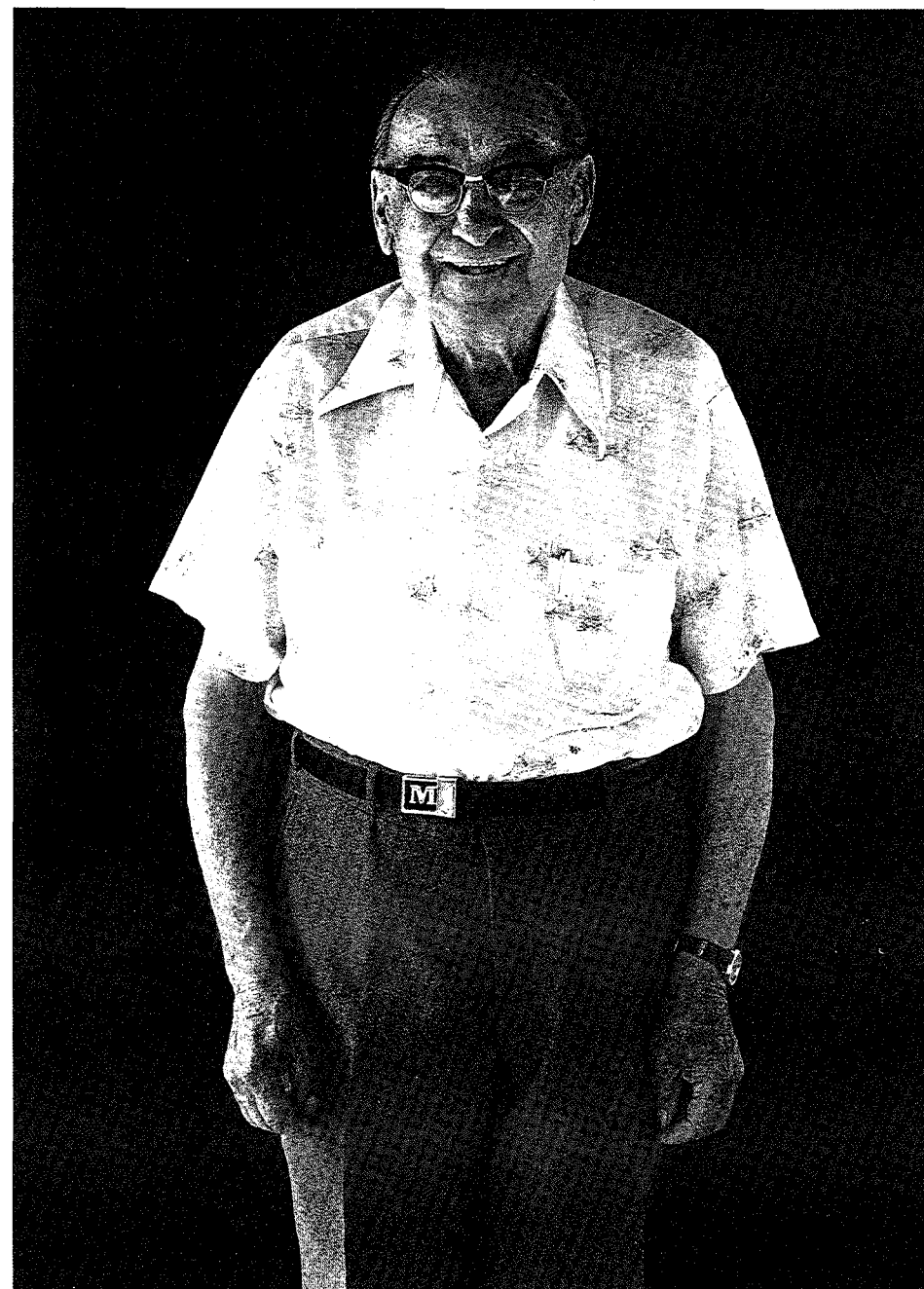
As he was growing up Mr. McClain's father was a lumberjack and the family moved from camp to camp, eventually settling in Milford, Illinois.

Mr. McClain was always interested in fishing, hunting, and farming. During World War II he also owned a small Singer sewing machine shop on Main Street in Urbana.

Although he did not believe parents should live with their children in old age because they would be a burden on them, he did live first with his son and then with his daughter after his wife died and his health failed.

In the last year of his life, despite serious health problems, he lived each day as fully as possible. He loved pool and taught the game to several other day care clients. He also thoroughly enjoyed a good story and the companionship of friends and family.

He felt older people should "keep going."
"Life is as good as you make it."



Orpha Neumann

Born in 1895 in Deloit, Iowa, Mrs. Neumann has lived in Urbana for the past four years.

"I was a rural school teacher in western Iowa before I was married. After that I was a homemaker. I lived in Northwest Iowa all my life until I came to Urbana."

Her strongest memories are of "raising a family during the Depression and later our move from the farm into town."

As she raised her three children, she says, "I made and quilted many quilts. I also enjoyed sewing for my daughter and doing fancy work and crocheting."

At this point in her life she says, "It's harder for me to talk since my stroke. I'm always concerned that people will not understand what I mean to say."

"For the past four years I have become somewhat dependent on others for my care. Before that time I lived in my own home and took care of my own needs."



Clara Cruse

Mrs. Cruse was born in 1906 in Branch, Arkansas, which she describes as "just a country town." She has lived in Champaign for "40 years or more."

As she raised her two daughters she also worked at an Illinois glove factory for eighteen and a half years. Then she worked in university housing for thirteen years. She has also worked briefly in the Eisner bakery department.

"I had a lot of interests," she says. "I did crocheting, quilting, and lots of baking." She also liked to travel and has been to Spain and Germany. However, she has always been most pleased with "just the raising of my family, which is always such a joy."

She says, "I think older people are afraid of being forgotten. Families are so busy today. It's easy for younger people to say, 'I'll visit Grandma next week.' But next week sometimes seems years away to the lonely. Older people need to know they're cared about. Even if you're in a nursing home with lots of people around, you miss your family and can be very lonely."

She describes herself as "Just an old grandma and that's what I enjoy most. I have seen my own children grow up, now they're raising their own."

"I now like to see my great grandchildren. I have twelve of them. I'd like to see them grow up and go to school."



Art Hardyman

Mr. Hardyman has been a carpenter and a cabinet-maker. "I remodeled my own home in Homer."

"When I was a young man just starting out I worked for three years at a grain elevator. The owner kept telling me he was saving my wages for me. He never did pay me. Once in a while you run into folks like that. Not often I hope!"

Mr. Hardyman also loved cars. "In the early 1920s I got a Ford and thought I'd never get it paid for. I owned a lot of cars. "Once I drove all the way to Florida.

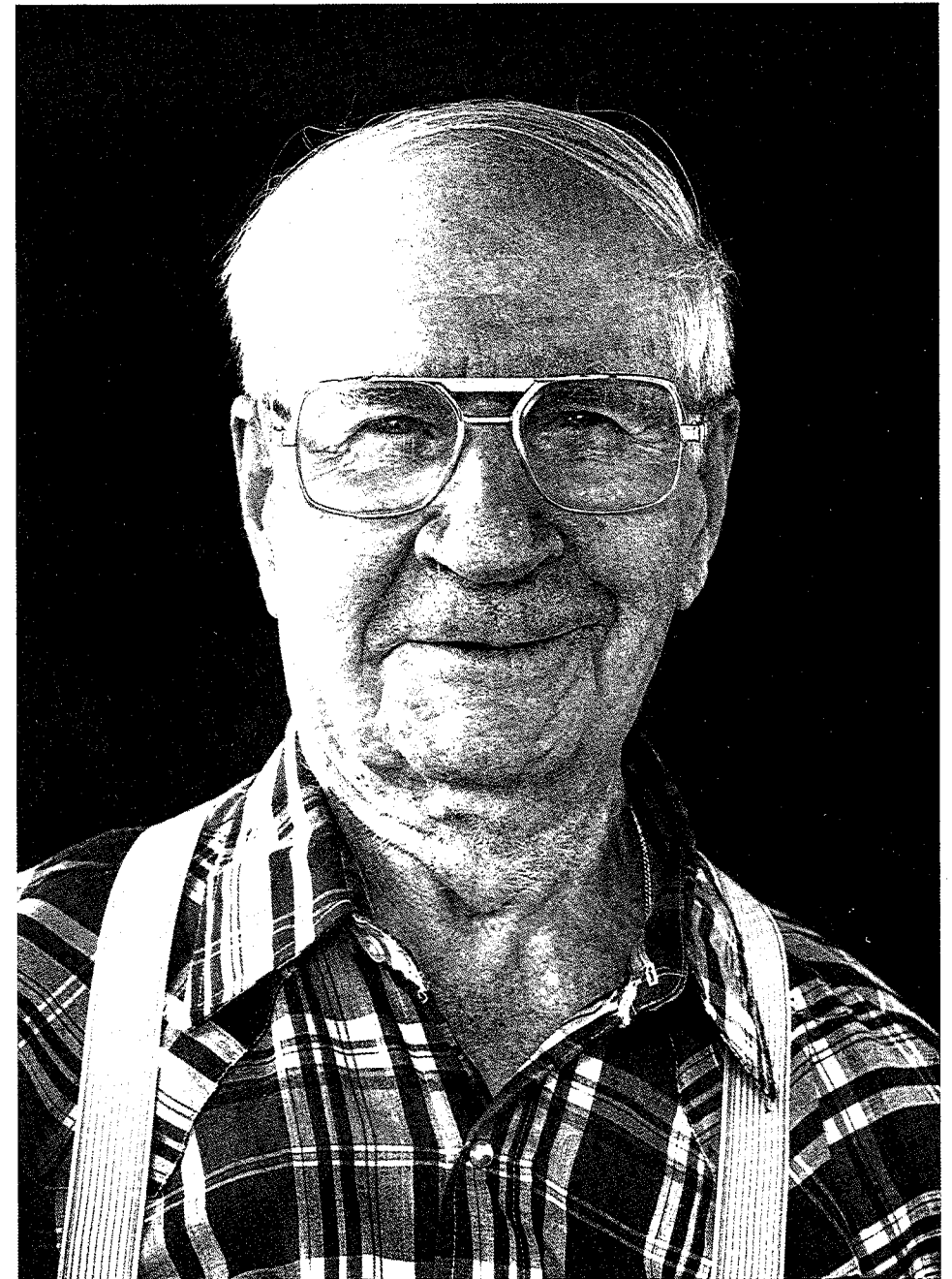
"I've had a happy life. Some folks thought I was stubborn, but I just did what I thought was right."

He is most proud of his two children. "They're real nice people."

He says, "I've seen a lot of change in the towns around here. They are still changing. They call it 'progress'!

"I'm concerned about living alone. I have a real nice apartment in a building with a lot of other folks my age, but when I can't get downstairs to visit, I'm all alone. It makes time go by too slowly.

"At ninety and a half years old I can't do what I used to for myself. Oh, I get my meals and take care of myself, but I can't get out alone."



Flora Frederickson

Mrs. Frederickson was born on a farm southwest of Armstrong, Illinois, in 1894.

“Oh, I had so many occupations,” she says. “I taught school for six years before I got married. Then I raised the kids and lived on a farm. When I was about 53 we moved to town (Rankin), then about seven years later my husband died. Then I went to work for many years as a cook in a restaurant, then in a school.

“I loved to work with flowers. They were always in my yard. My favorites were Blue Bells, Sweet Williams, Crocuses, Narcissus, and Apple Blossoms.

“I also went to visit people when they were sick. Spent some time with them when they felt sad.”

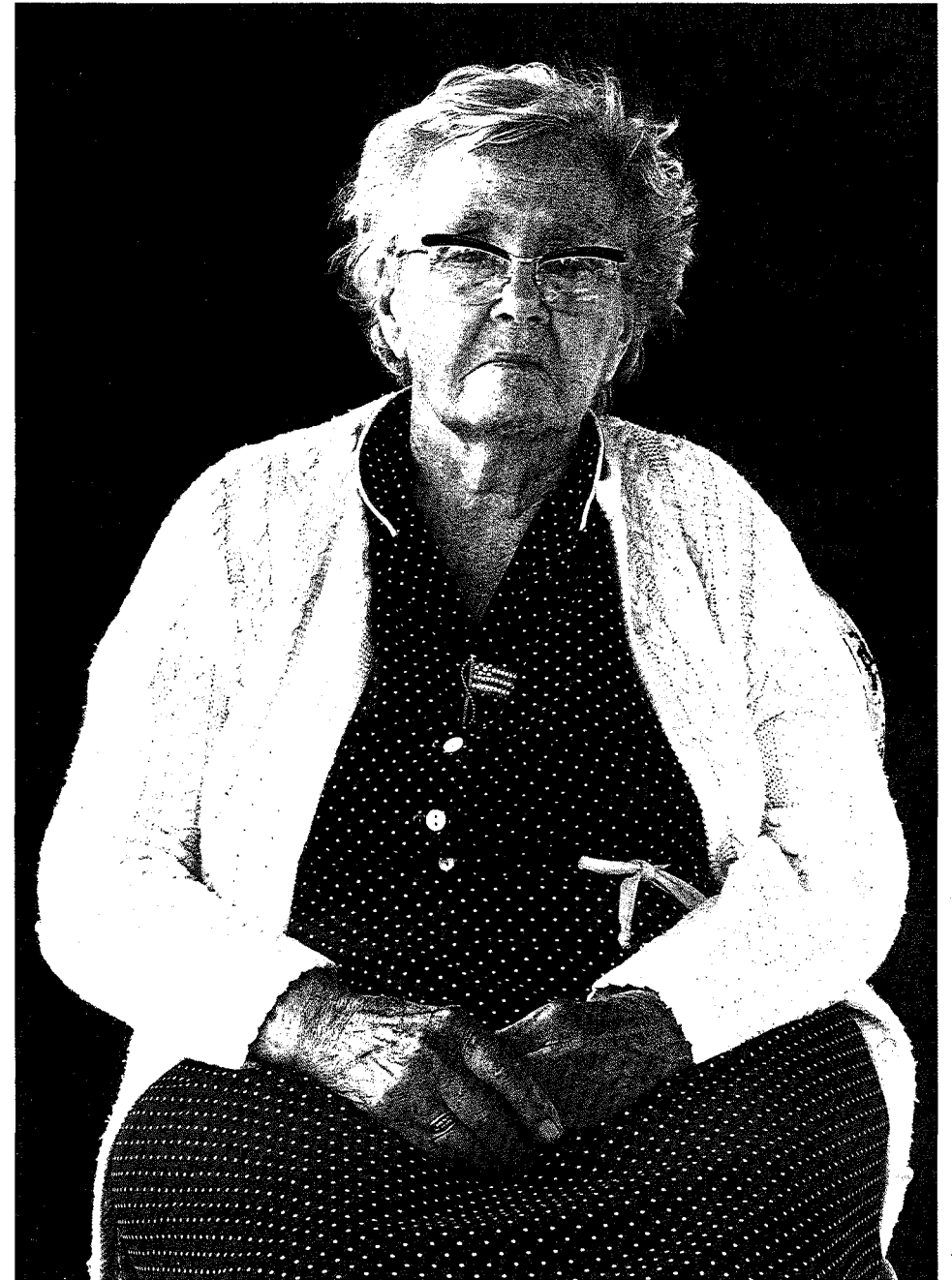
She raised three children (two girls and a boy). “I worked and saved my money to help each of them.”

She is especially proud of “my education – what little I’ve got. I enjoyed every bit of it and wished I could go further.

“I was happy enough until I had this fall. That slowed me down and I can’t hardly take it.

“I keep thinking about when I get better. I’d like to settle down in a little place and enjoy myself. Just listen to the birds. I’ve got so many friends. I’d hate to leave here (Day Care) though.

“I do have a lot of grandchildren to live for. I’ve got plenty of them – nine. Some great grandchildren too. Besides them, though, I’m kind of sad.”



Cora Williams

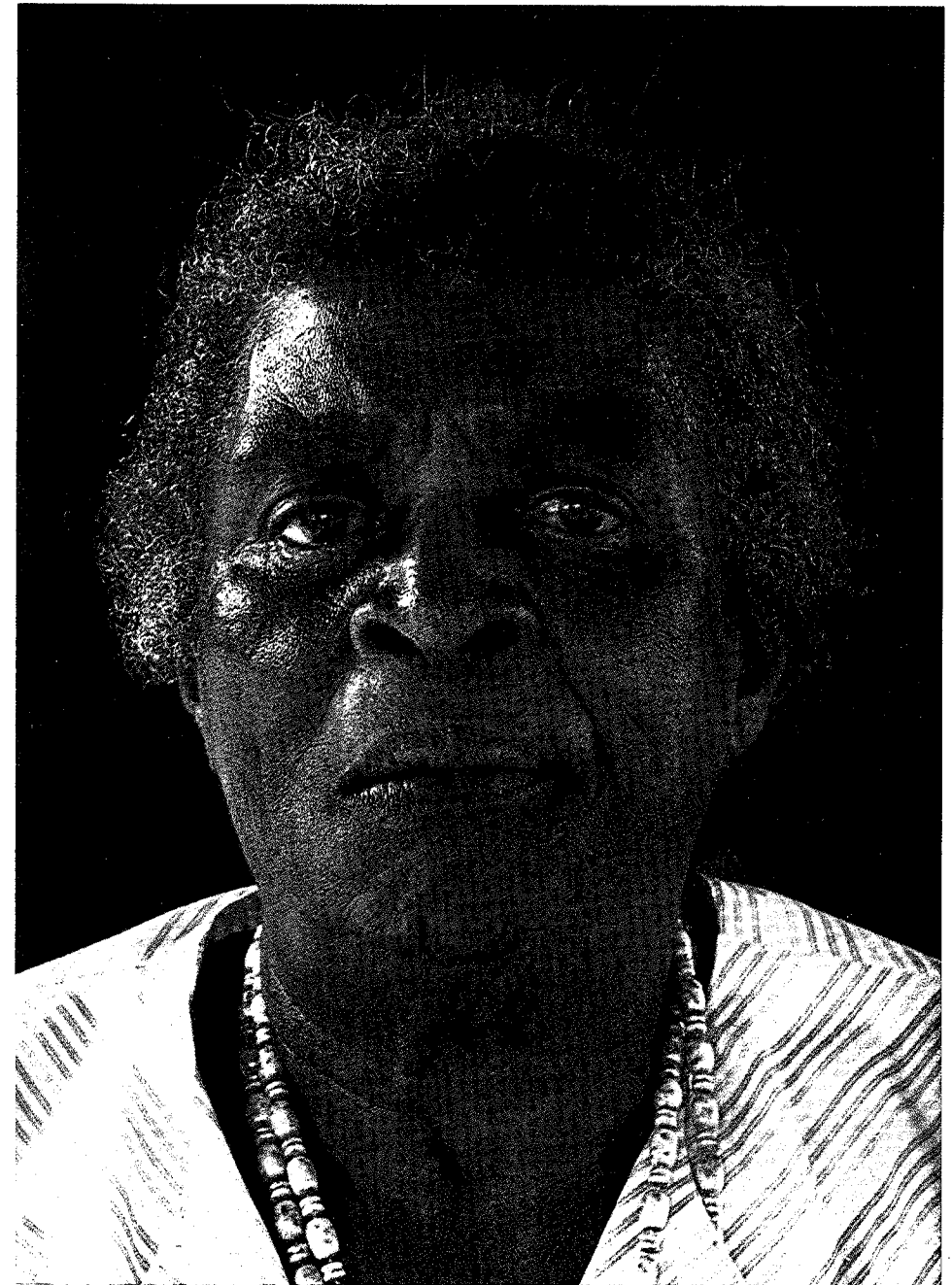
Born in Shelby, Mississippi, in 1905, Mrs. Williams has lived in Champaign since 1957.

A mother and housewife, she had fifteen children. When she had time she also “loved to sew – made all my children’s clothes. I could go to town and look at kid’s clothes, then go home and make some like in the store. Never did buy a pattern or anything like that.”

She is very proud of her children and grandchildren. “I love children!”

She is now most concerned with her physical condition. “My daughter has to do for me now. They have to work and do most everything for me since my stroke in 1977.

“I’m real fortunate to have my daughters and all the grandchildren around me. I’m happy but wish I could do more for the family. I used to love to make big meals for all the family. I can’t now.”



Ethel Jones

A native of Illinois, Mrs. Jones “did housework for others to make ends meet when my kids were growing up.” She also owned a restaurant in Detroit for a while.

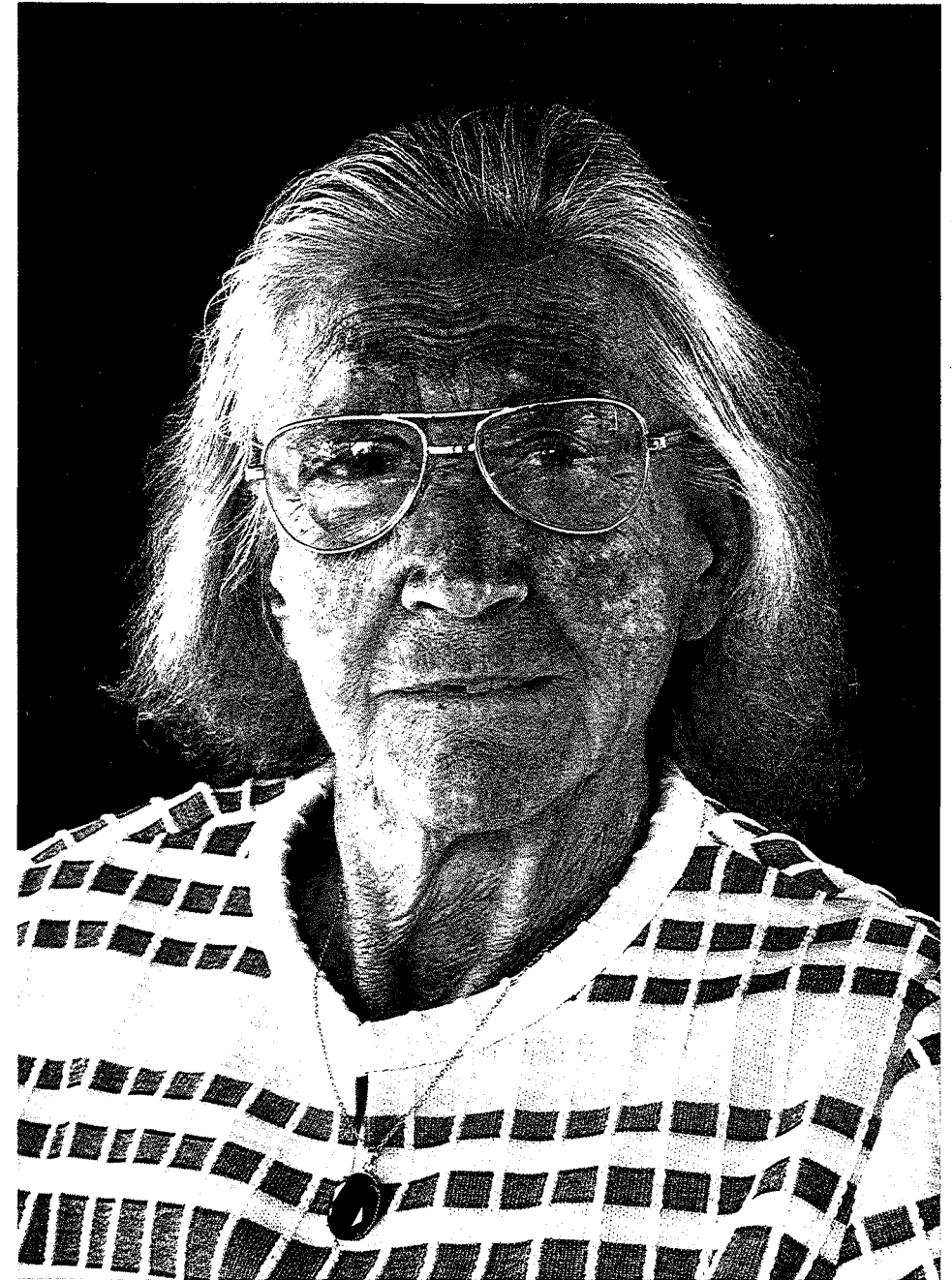
She has always loved the out-of-doors. “Hiking, picnics – and especially fishing – were my favorite activities. Even walking was nice. I loved pretty parks and trees. I still like to be outdoors. I like the pretty garden at the Day Center.”

She vividly recalls, “struggling to feed my kids when they were young. We were real poor. But I always took care of my kids. Did the best I could for them.”

She now lives with her son who is not well. “That worries me. Who will take care of him when I’m not here?”

“I cannot do so much for myself or my son now. But I’m trying – always going to try, but I don’t think that’s enough.”

Mrs. Jones is now residing in a nursing home.



Ernie Bair

Originally from Winamac, Indiana, where he was born in 1912, Ernie Bair has lived in Rantoul for the past 36 years.

He taught at Rantoul Township High School from 1958 to 1973. He's also been an insurance salesman and a management analyst at Chanute Air Force Base.

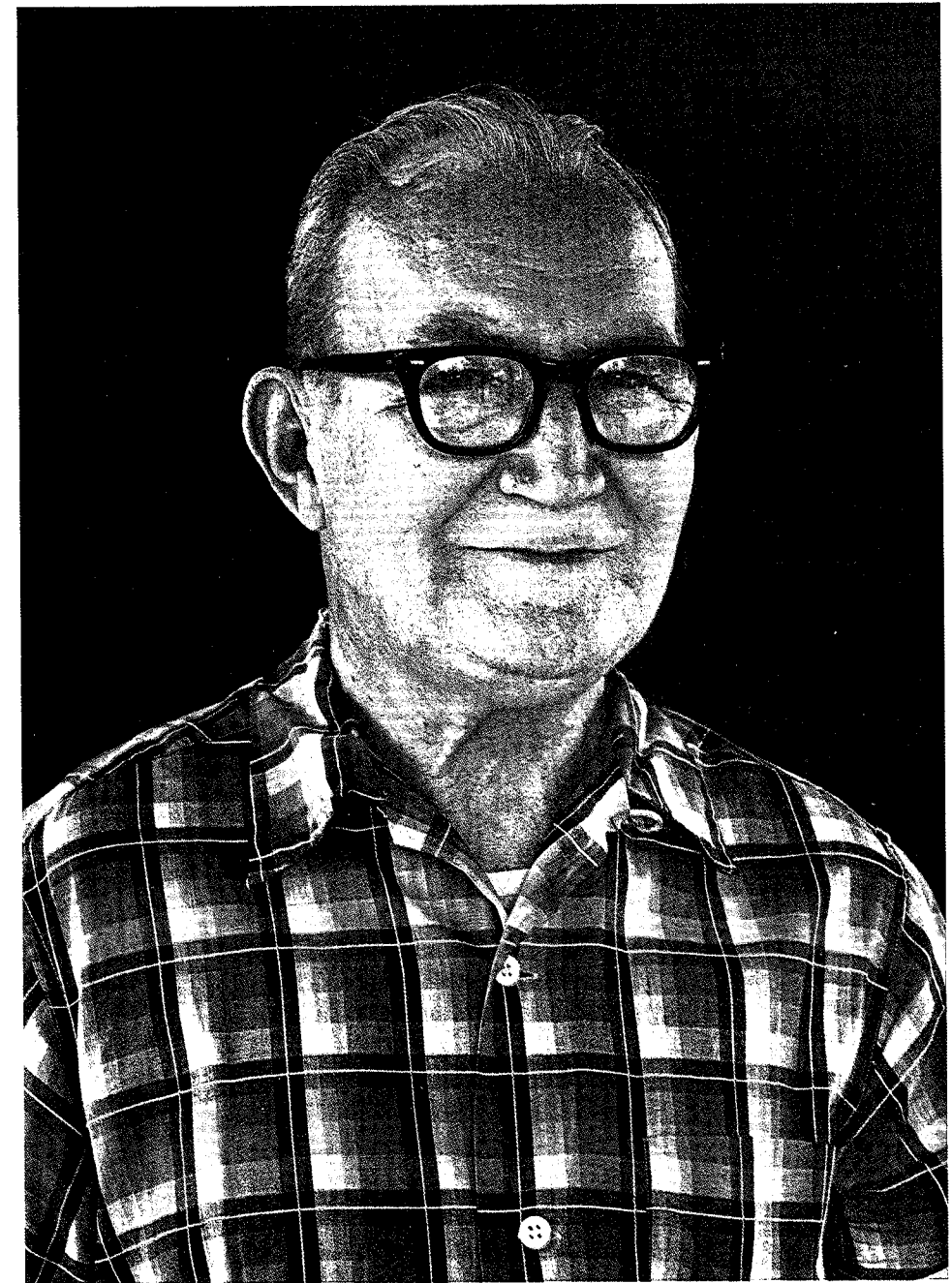
Having raised two adopted children and having hosted eleven children from other countries, he is especially proud of "my family, the children we entertained, and serving eight years on the Rantoul City School Board."

He remains primarily interested in "the education of young people, particularly my five grandchildren."

In his lifetime he has seen "the growth of population, the advent of space technocracy, progress in transportation, improvements in communication, education, and entertainment.

"I think older persons should always be shown the respect they deserve. They should make as many decisions as possible about their lives. Let us decide what's good for us.

"I'm now retired and cannot see well. However, I feel fortunate to be able to participate in club activities and play with my grandchildren, whenever possible."



Vivian Cardiff

Born in Barton, New York, in 1925, Mrs. Cardiff has lived in Urbana since 1953.

“My first job was as secretary to the shipping manager at a knitting mill – we made undershirts for the Navy men during World War II. I wanted to join the Air Force, but they said I was sick and had to recuperate for a couple years. Then I got married and got three step children and started on the five of my own.

“During the time I raised my children – in between washing, cooking, and patching clothes – I enjoyed doing ceramics. After my divorce I had to work at a cafeteria as a salad server. I had to support the children.”

Among her strongest memories, she recalls, “that I should have married my first boyfriend when I was fifteen. He came back into my life ten years ago, but died at the age of 72.”

She is most proud of “my children, especially my son, Leon, (8-ball to me). He’s in the communications department in the Air Force. He’s flown with Senators, Vice-presidents, and the President. I’m proud of my other kids, too, but 8-ball stands out. He even served 18 months in Vietnam.

“I guess I feel good about myself – not ecstatic, because I’d like some things different. But I always say people should do the things they like and keep going. I love dancing.”

I’ve changed for the better. I enjoy myself and my four grandsons and one granddaughter. They give me joy.”



Alvin Meyer

A lifelong resident of Champaign County, Alvin Meyer worked as a farm-hand "out where Country Fair is now. All there is now are the old farmhouse and silo. It's built up all around."

Among his many chores he says, "I drove cattle to the barn to milk." However, he was especially interested in horses. "I once trained a horse for a sulky. I had to put him into a pace – took him down a country road. That's hard to do."

"I was always thinking about ridin' horses. I always liked horses. My dad had two. I used to ride them to school and to church. That was when horses had the right of way. Cars had to get off the slab and let the horses go by.

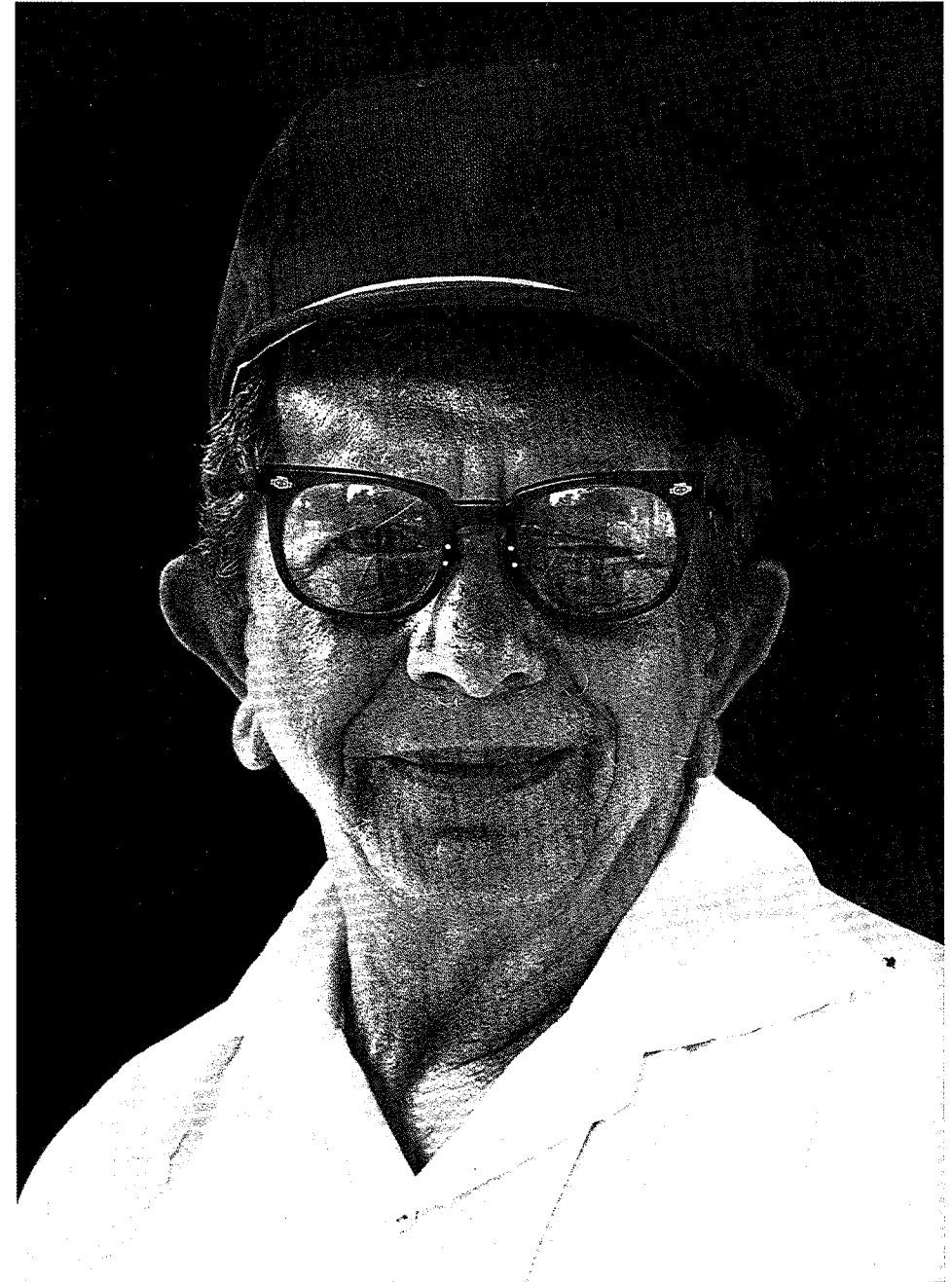
"I had a horse where I taught him how to dance – he had a diamond on his forehead. I used to be able to stand on a horse. Used to ride two harnessed horses down a country road – just tear down the road!"

When the farmer he worked for died "way back when" Alvin had to leave the farm. He has since worked as a roofer, busboy at the Pullman Hotel, Lindales (now Red Wheel), the Moose Lodge, and the Inman Hotel. "I done a little cookin', and was a bellhop, dishwasher, potwasher – pretty near everything.

"I also worked on construction, mixing concrete. Last job I had was in Chanute pourin' concrete for that big runway."

Even with his varied experiences he says, "I like to think back about the farm. All you'd hear is the birds and the livestock hollerin'. It was so quiet."

About his age he says, "There are a lot of things I can't do now. I can still ride though."



Myra Spitz

Originally from Humboldt, Illinois, Mrs. Spitz has lived in Urbana for the past 43 years.

She was a housewife. She always had “a big garden” and she especially enjoyed the many hours she’s spent as a volunteer in the Champaign County Nursing Home Auxiliary.

She can no longer do all the things she would like – notably being able to live alone – but still enjoys people (especially young children), singing, playing cards, and helping others more disabled than she.

“Being old is nothing special!” she says. “I still enjoy each day and especially if I’ve helped another.

“I do miss being around children now. When I was younger my friends had children. I loved them. Now I look forward to seeing my friends here and helping those I can. My only concern is that I forget a lot.”



Stanley McCallum

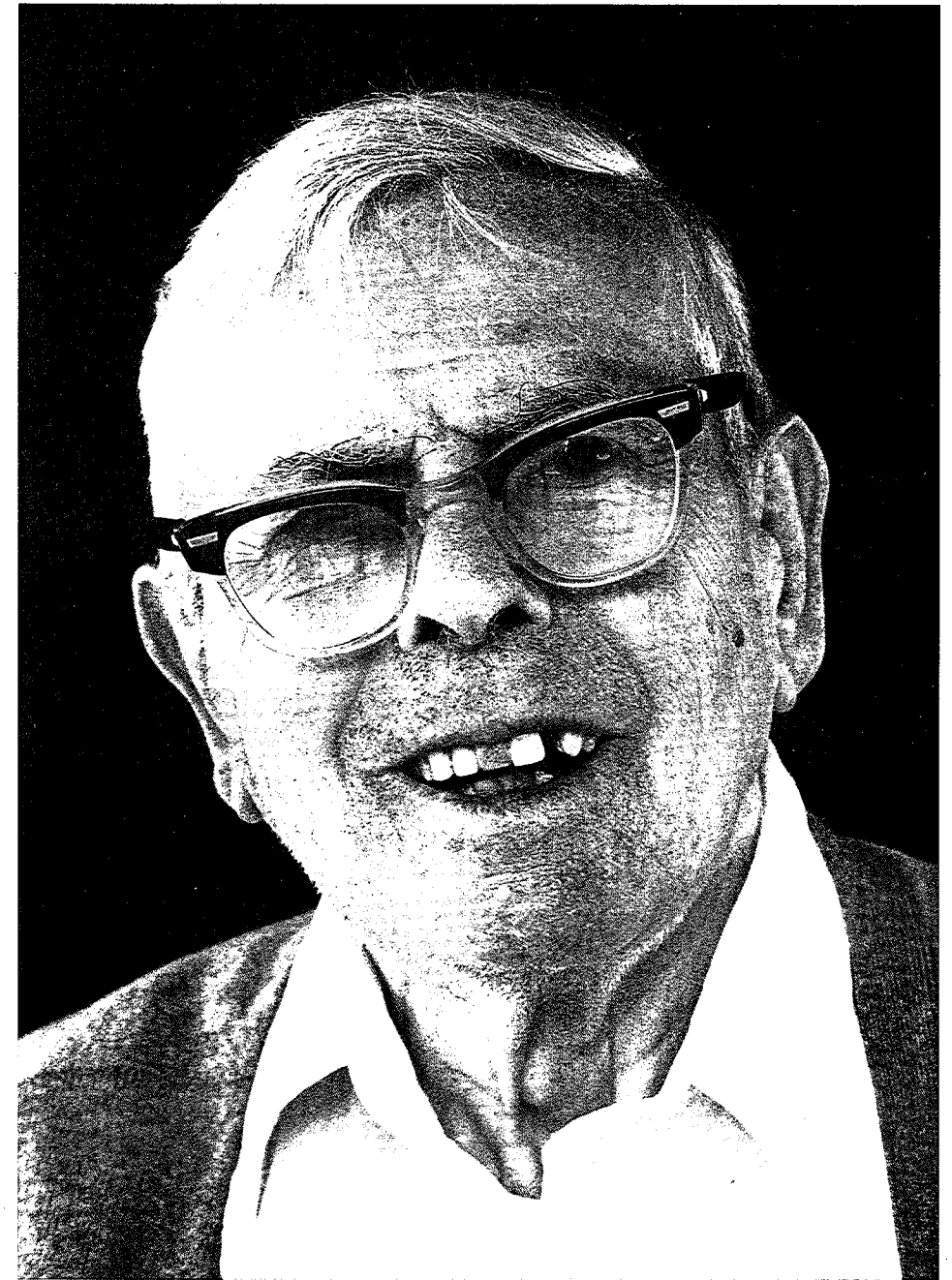
Born in MacDuff, Scotland, in 1904, Mr. McCallum “worked on a troller in Scotland until I came to the U.S. in 1921. Here I worked for many years at the Ford plant in Detroit – on the assembly line.”

While in Scotland, he says, “We caught fish, especially fat herring. Sometimes we went out thirty miles, but mostly fished along the coast.

“When at sea I befriended a golden eagle who was hurt. The eagle became a pet, returning to the boat each day and I would feed it.” He also recalls inadvertently catching a whale.

He notes, “My wife and I loved to travel all over the world, and we did. I always loved music, too, and wrote several hymns.”

Now, he says, “I’m not able to take care of myself very much. I have to depend upon my daughter and her family for so many things – helping me walk, doing my cooking, helping me to bed, and so forth. I’m frustrated because I cannot express my thoughts correctly at times. I’m an old man.”



Blanche Taylor

Mrs. Taylor was born in "Oklahoma – near Perry" in 1912. She has lived in St. Joseph for the past 26 years. "My daughter, Shirley, and her husband came to get us. They carried our furniture and everything.

"I lived at home and raised my children. I know I'm not supposed to say 'just a housewife' so I won't.

"I was too busy with my home and children to do much else – raising up my family trying to live – although I enjoyed reading when I had the time. I do remember making fudge 'bout 3 to 4 times a week. It took a lot of sugar. I made it and my children ate it. They really liked it. I wish I had a piece now, but I guess I wouldn't be able to eat the sugar. Oh well.

"I'm proud of the work I was able to do. To have good health and to have taken good care of my children.

"The way I have to live has certainly changed. Everything used to be so hard, but now it isn't. I have some rest now, which I didn't used to get. I could say I really enjoy my life now."



Essie Jefferson

Born in 1896 in the “hills of Mississippi,” Mrs. Jefferson came to Champaign five years ago by way of Arkansas.

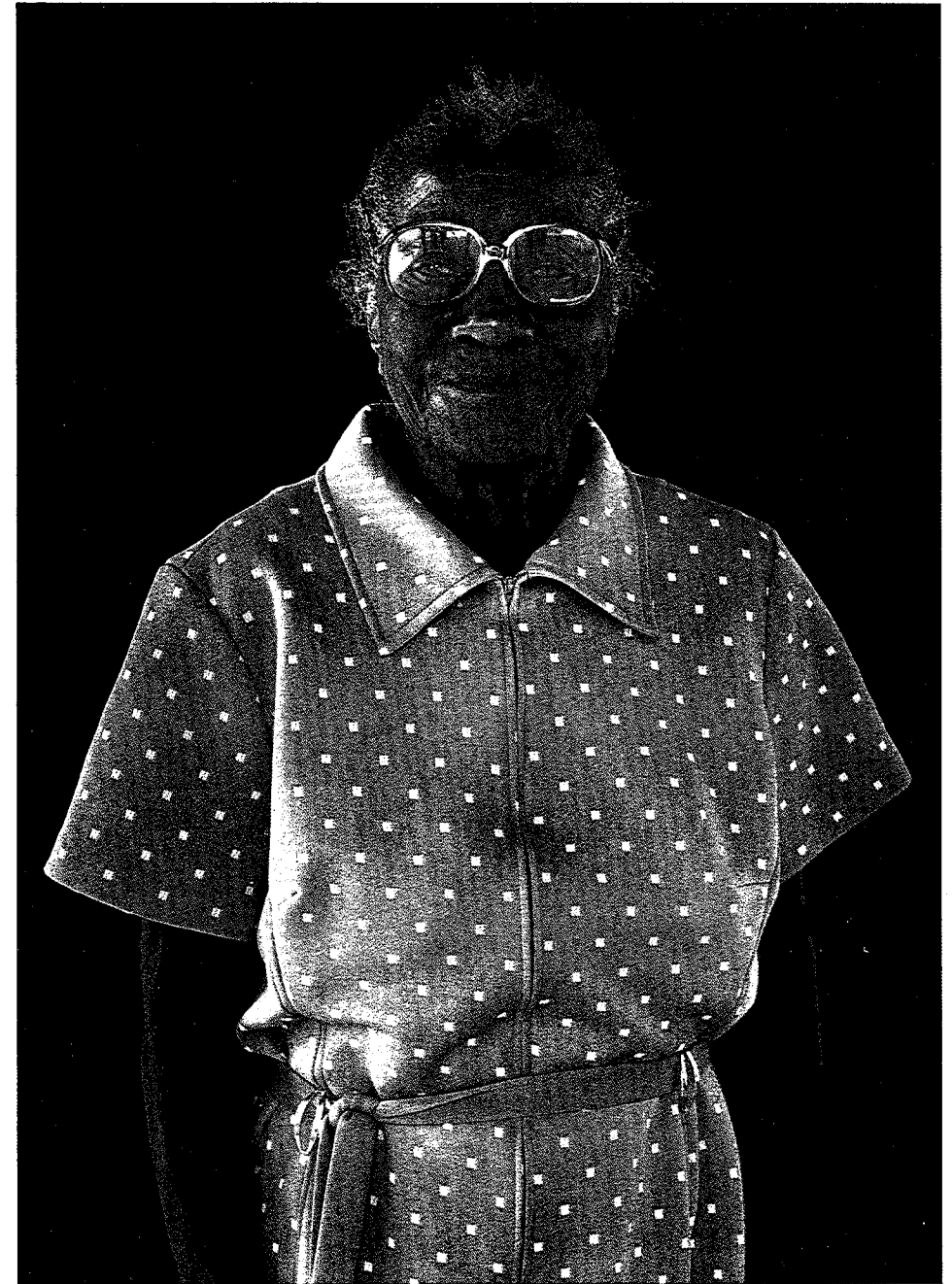
In raising her two children by “farming the fields – chopping and picking cotton, thinning the rows of corn,” she says, “We had to raise and pick it all.

“After my husband died I moved to Arkansas.” She lived there with her daughter for several years, then moved to Champaign with her daughter and her family.

She fondly recalls “going to school and church in Cherry Grove, Mississippi.

“I stay in town now,” she says. “I did in Arkansas too –while I worked at the town mill. Before I was always in the country on farms. Living in town is a much easier life – sitting down, not doing any work in the fields.”

She now spends her time, “mostly thinking about what I’m going to do. Most days I just want to have a nice time, visiting some of my friends.”



Ben Ward

In 1902 Ben Ward was born “in Sammy Green’s house on Perkins Road, about ¾ of a mile from where I live now.” He graduated from Urbana High School in 1921.

A lifelong resident of Urbana, he was a janitor at Lewises and the University of Illinois for a total of 55 years. He also worked for two years during World War II in a defense plant in Toledo, Ohio. “I was always ready for work.”

He enjoys reading, “mostly Western stories.”

He says, “I enjoy being old. I get some breaks in my expenses – 10% off on a lot of things. We do need more and better housing for older persons. The waiting list to get into an apartment is too long. I could be dead before I get into one. One disadvantage of being old is that relatives think you’re a swell guy, but they don’t have time to help you much. Another disadvantage is that you can’t do all the work you once did, but I can still do a lot. Am taking care of myself and can make my own decisions. Younger people should not make decisions for us. Old does not mean senile.”



Jessie Huffman

Born in 1904 in Philo, Mrs. Huffman has spent the greater part of her life on farms in East Central Illinois. For 39 years her husband worked at Sloan Station near Ivesdale. He also worked on farms in Bement and Royal.

"I just worked as a housewife all my life – a lot of company, a lot of cooking, a lot of canning," she says. "I wanted to be a nurse. But I didn't have the money. There were eleven in our family.

"I just made a good home, raised a good family. I like to do for others."

She recalls the day of her marriage when her husband had to return to work in the fields that same afternoon and she moved in with her mother-in-law's home where she and her husband lived for the next ten years. "All I've known is just work."

Even with all the work raising her three children, she says, "I've had a wonderful life. I don't have any regrets . . . I had a happy married life."

As for now she says, "I'm seventy-nine years old and I walk with a cane." Nonetheless, although she recently lost her husband whom she took care of for several years, she says, "I feel that I can have a new life.

"My doctor says, 'You look like you're goin' to a party.' I said, 'Why not? It's what you make of yourself that's important.'"



Alma Gems

"I was born on October 19th, 1902, in Epenwohrden, a small village in the northern part of Germany. I lived there during the first World War, 1914-1918. After the end of the war prices went sky high and they kept on rising day after day. Unfortunately, the wages did not follow fast enough, so that by the time the money reached us, it was practically worthless. Two of my sisters were in the U.S.A. at that time. They sent us once in a while a few dollars, that was a big help. I received four Marks and twenty cents for a dollar. In 1923 I decided to go to the States and earn some dollars for myself. In Spring, 1923, I came to La Grange, Illinois. I worked for several years in a private home for eight dollars a week. In Fall, 1923, I went to night school in Hinsdale and also took some private lessons in English. After a few years I took a business course at the Gregg Business College in Chicago. After finishing it, I obtained a job in the office of a railroad company as assistant bookkeeper. In 1930 I went for a trip to Germany which I enjoyed very much. After coming home I had to go to work to build up my savings account which was very much depleted. My trip took care of it. In 1931 I met my husband at a German Day celebration. A year later we got married. We have one daughter. She was and still is a real joy to us.

"It's nice to be old! I say that now that I am feeling better and can do much more for myself. I felt useless a few years ago when I was too sick to care for myself in any way. I did not care if I lived or died. No activity is a gloomy life.

"I think old people must fight to keep doing as much as possible for themselves. When you start letting people wait on you and do everything for you it is a bad way to live . . . I cannot read now for very long periods. But I keep my mind active by talking to people and listening to people.

"I like the way kids are brought up now. They are not taught to keep quiet unless spoken to, but to express themselves. That helps them in later life."

When she was young, Mrs. Gems recalls, "I was a very shy child, sometimes afraid to answer when people talked to me. I wanted so much to be liked and talk free, like other children, but it took a long time to overcome this shyness.

"For instance, once we visited my uncle and aunt in a different town. My uncle was a school teacher, very stern and respectful looking. My aunt took me in the kitchen and offered me all sorts of goodies and asked what I preferred.

"I was so choked up I could not bring a word forward. She called me a very stubborn child. I had trouble holding the tears back. I remember several instances like that."



Henry Schrock

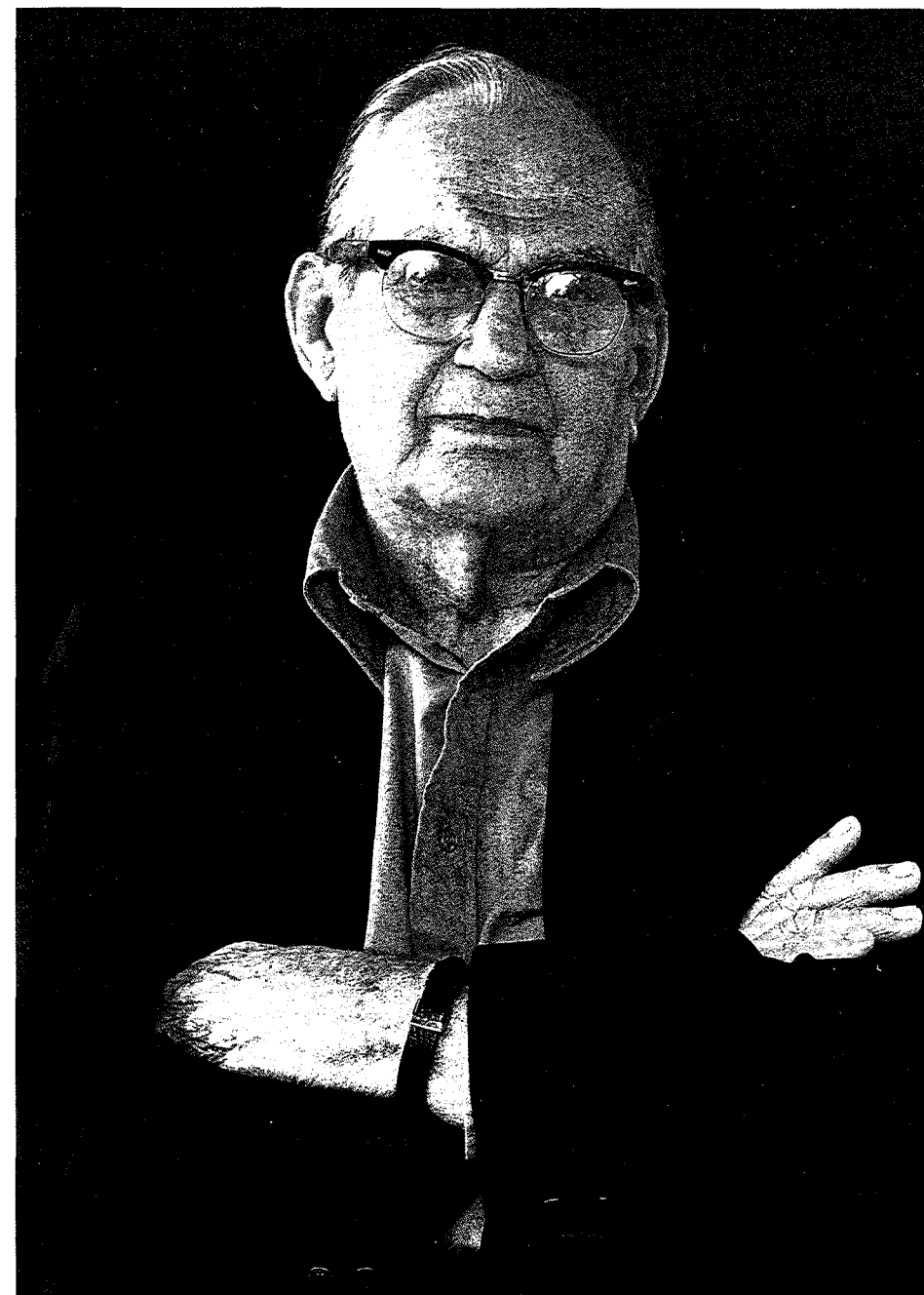
Born in Eureka, Illinois, in 1897, Mr. Schrock has lived in Champaign County since 1915. "We moved to Missouri when I was five. My dad helped his relatives out there and lost what we had afterward. When I was about 18 we all came back and settled in Champaign County because my mom's brother and his wife were here."

He farmed for 25 years, then sold real estate and insurance for State Farm Mutual.

When he was younger Mr. Schrock liked to play baseball and he has always done a lot of reading and enjoyed traveling. "I took a 10,000 mile trip by bus in 60 days in, I think, 1975. I saw 40 states, five provinces of Canada, and two provinces of Mexico. That was some trip!"

He is especially proud "of my Christian upbringing and that I raised my children that way too. And I'm proud of my wife's help.

"I feel very fortunate to be old in our society. We do a lot for older persons. Programs such as this one – housing, and health care all make our lives easier and fuller. My dad didn't have any of this. If I had good legs now, life would be wonderful!"



Dora Saunders

“My primary occupation was a homemaker, wife, and mother for my husband and four children in Annapolis, Maryland, where I lived from 1925 to 1983.” Mrs. Saunders came to Champaign just a year ago to live with her daughter. “We had many close friends in Annapolis,” she says, “and I still miss them very much as well as the old, familiar things of my home.”

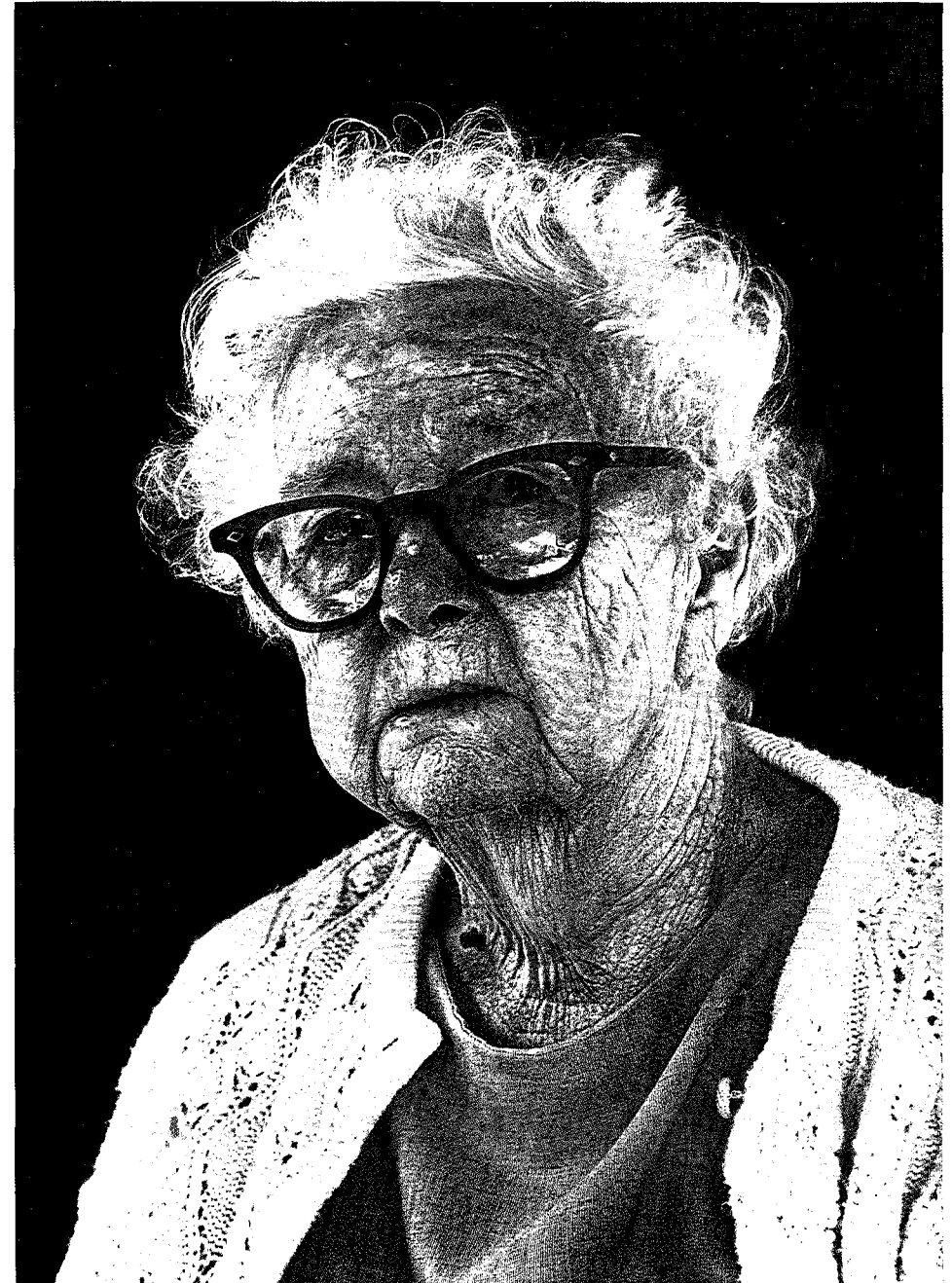
“I was very active in the Methodist Church, working for the Board of Child Care and sewing for rummage sales and bazaars. My first employment was as a seamstress. I was nine and sewed men’s shirts by hand. Each stitch had to be perfect or it had to be done again and we were paid by the piece. I worked in a store office after school until my marriage.”

Mrs. Saunders has warm memories of “my childhood in the country in Maryland with so many friends and cousins, so much laughter, so many good times.” She also thinks of her grandchildren “who live such happy, carefree lives.”

She is most proud of her husband “who was a brilliant scholar and musician and a wonderful father, and my four children, with their varied lives and accomplishments.” Her husband was a librarian for the U.S. Naval Academy for 43 years, until his death in 1957.

In her lifetime Mrs. Saunders has seen families change drastically. “Families are broken up and spread apart now. My mother had very few material possessions, but she lived close to all her brothers and sisters on land where our family had lived for 200 years. When I was a child, children knew their aunts and uncles and many members of their family. Now families are lucky if they see each other on holidays.”

As for herself she says, “I think I’m doing well for my age. I try to do as much as I can for myself, but life has turned around for me. I used to take care of others and now others take care of me.”



Charlie Heath

Born in Cooksville, Illinois, in 1913, Mr. Heath came to Champaign after completing his college education.

He started working in a funeral home at age 17 in Saybrook, Illinois. He also worked in Normal, Moline, and Streator before opening his own funeral home in Edinburg, Illinois, in 1940.

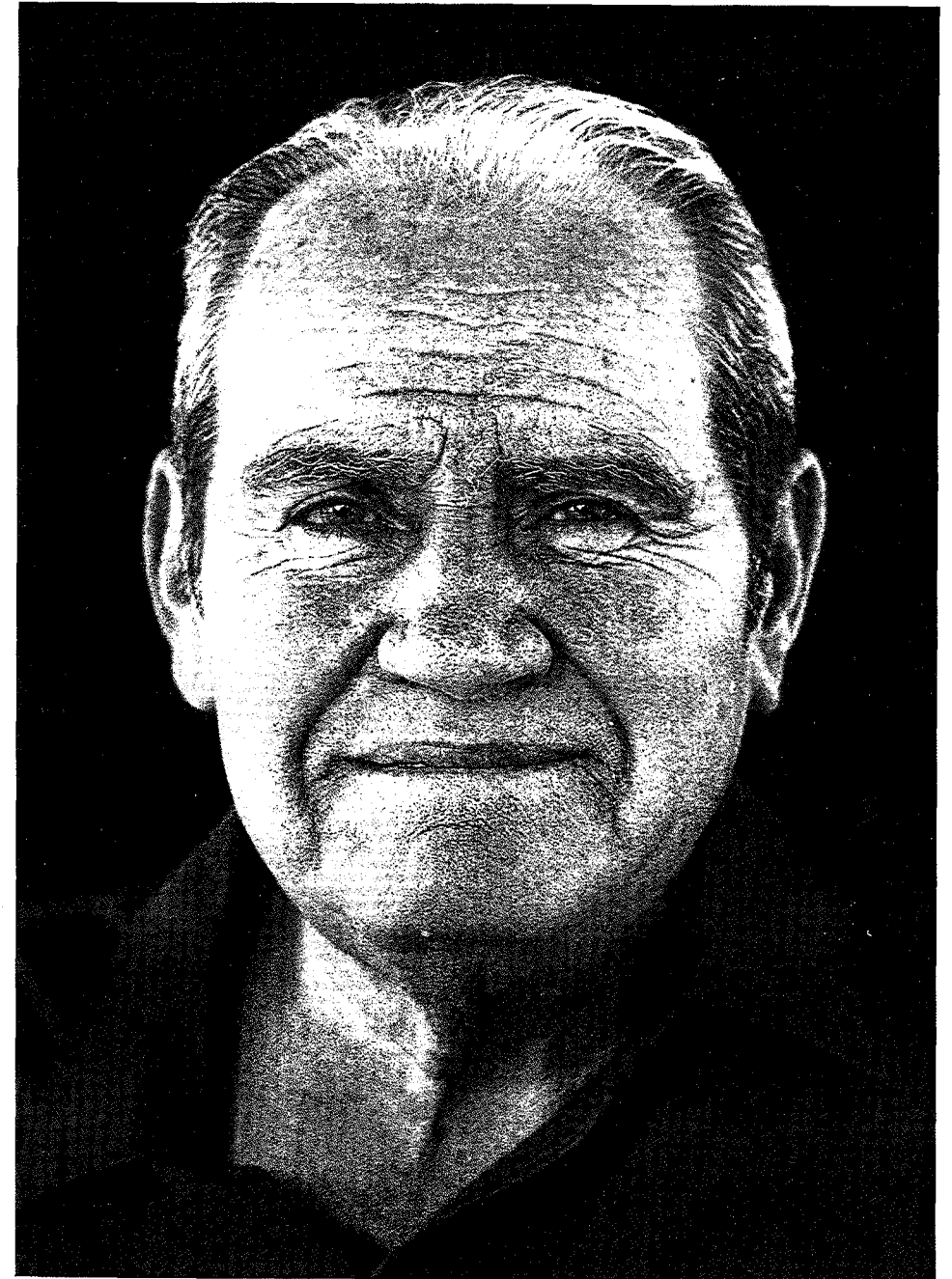
In 1946 he opened a new funeral home in Champaign, building the business by himself. In 1965 he named his sons as partners.

He was also elected Champaign County Coroner in 1964, 1968, and 1972. In 1972 he was also president of the Illinois Coroner's Association. In 1975 he took medical disability from his position as coroner due to a stroke.

Recently, he was honored by the Illinois Funeral Director's Association for being a licensed funeral director for over 50 years.

He was the first county chairman of the Heart Fund and was actively involved in a number of civic and fraternal organizations.

He says, "I'm proud of the things that I accomplished."



Thelma Raper

A lifelong resident of Champaign, Mrs. Raper worked at Collegiate Cap and Gown for over twenty years – until her retirement at age 62.

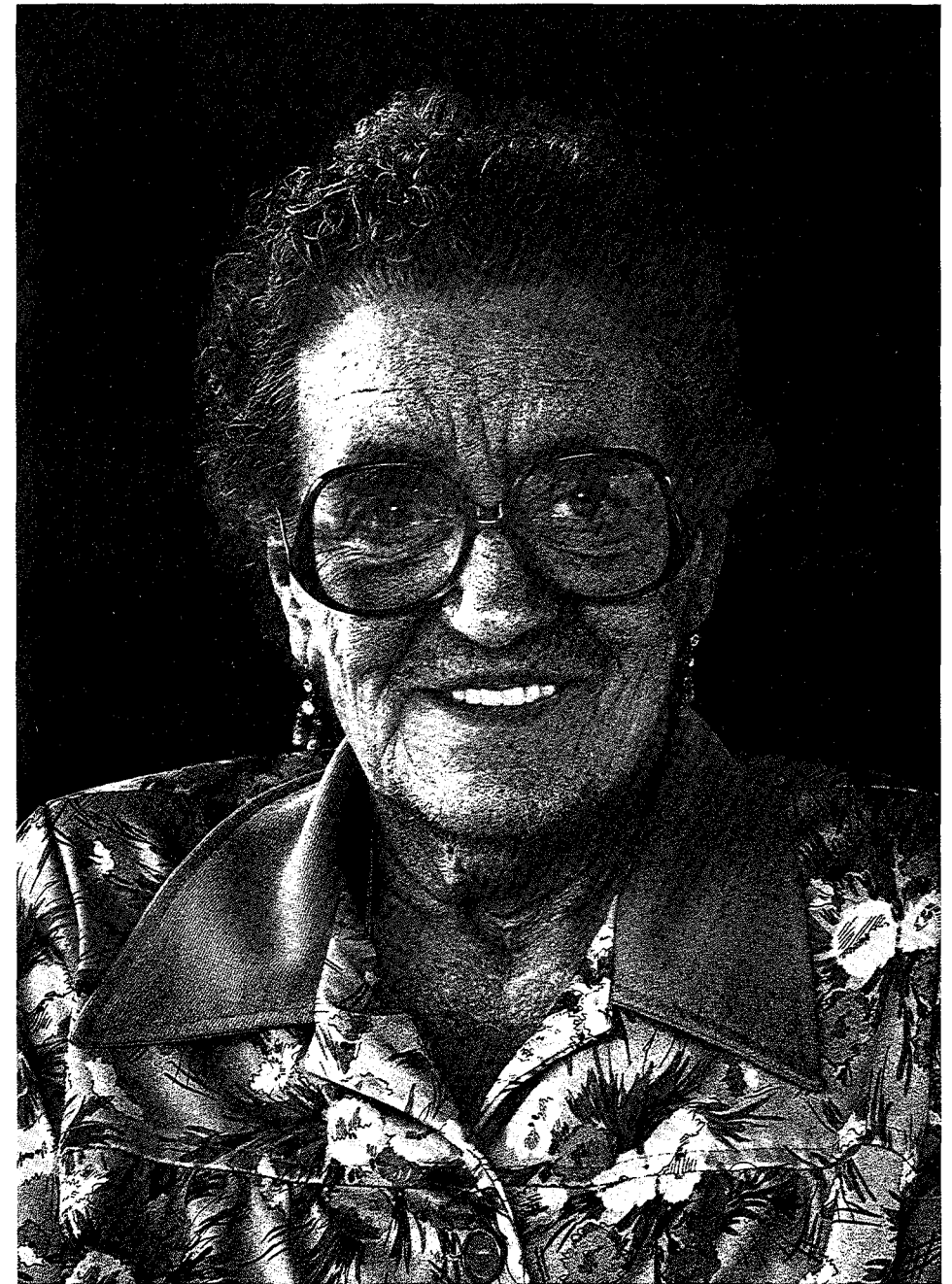
During World War II she and her husband also jointly owned a cab. He drove at night and she drove during the day.

She raised five children and is most proud of her family. “I didn’t get to finish high school, but all of my children have been able to finish school. That was my biggest goal as a mother. I would not let any of them quit.”

She has warm memories of visiting her son in California. “The automobile gave me a chance to be independent and gave me a chance to go places I couldn’t go before.”

Now she is most concerned with her health. “I have a real dislike for the idea of going to a nursing home. I’m afraid I’ll get worse and my family will have to put me in one.

“I cannot be as independent now. I’m proud that even though I did not have much schooling I could support my kids and our family always had enough to eat, and to this day I can pretty much support my needs – pay for what I need.”



Emery Scott

Emery Scott was born and raised on a farm in Urbana Township.

In 1931 when he got married he moved to his own farm north-west of Thomasboro and worked there for the next twenty years.

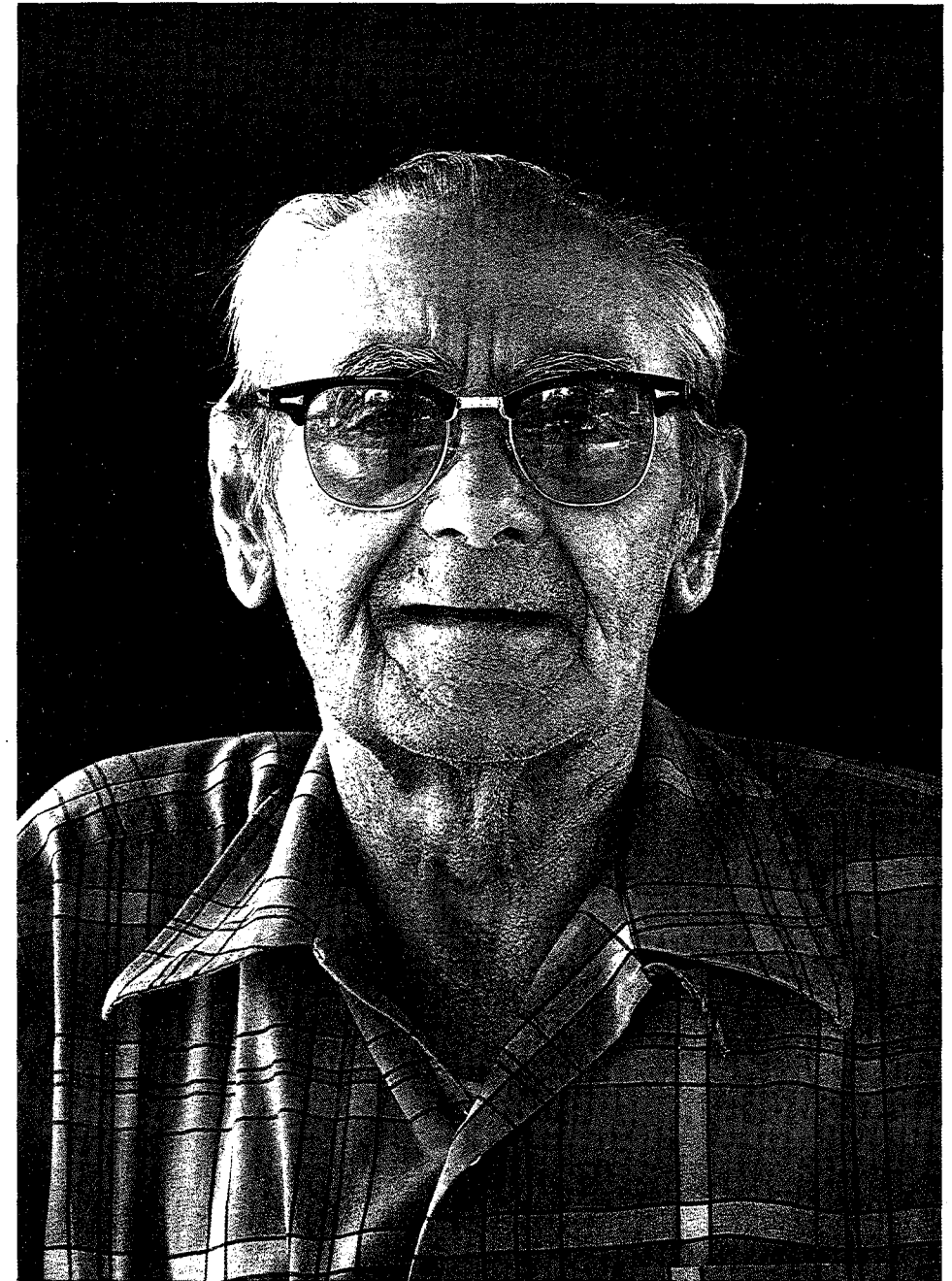
Then he moved into town and worked as a janitor for five years. "During my spare time I raised a big garden and when I wasn't working or doing that I loved to sleep.

"There are so many things I did and had to get done. I always enjoyed my boys' football games and track meets. That is if and when I could get away. One thing I'd have to say was when my son, Tom, played football against the Bloomington team and he scored two touchdowns and set up two touchdowns. He also made 17 tackles. Yes, I'm proud of my son. Now he works at DeKalb Research and coaches a softball team."

Mr. Scott acknowledges, "Time goes faster from winter to fall than it used to. Anymore it doesn't seem like it's spring before it's fall again.

"You pretty near have to go along with everything. Oh, I worry sometimes, mostly because my kids might get hurt – they're so active – but not much about myself. I get out and enjoy my family.

"Yeah, I'm gettin' older all the time. It's creeping up on me. But I am just about the same as I always was. I do the same things I used to enjoy, just not as often."



Blanche Graffis

Mrs. Graffis was born in 1898 "in Pulaski County, near Star City, Indiana.

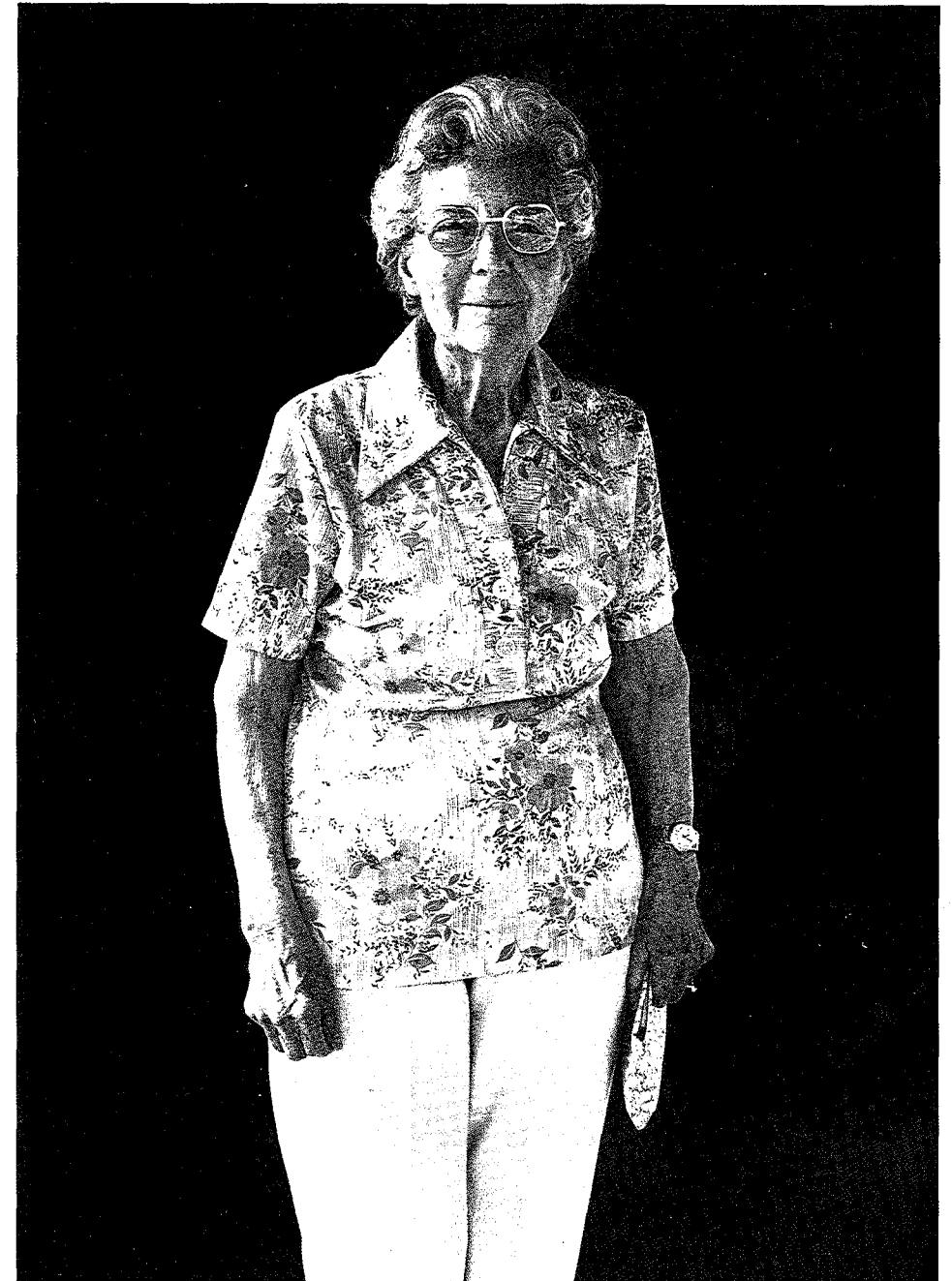
"I was a farmer's daughter, then a farmer's wife. When I was still at my father's home I gave music lessons and I worked out at \$3.00 a week. As a farmer's wife I raised chickens, milked cows, made garden, took care of three children, etc., in Cass County, Indiana.

"At church I was pianist for ten or twelve years. I enjoyed Ladies Aid at church and made many friends. I belonged to Home Ec club where the lessons were a help in homemaking and I made a lot of friends there."

She vividly recalls, "Washing dishes for eleven people, baking pies for the family every Saturday after I was twelve. I sorta dreaded to milk cows." She also fondly remembers, "My boys ran their little tractors under the table."

She is now concerned about the "money it will take to take care of me since I am going blind. I always think about my health – whether I'll have to go to a hospital or nursing home.

"I seem so helpless to what I used to be, but I can still mostly take care of myself and be friends with others."



Barb Baggerly

Barb Baggerly was born June 25, 1919, in Chatham, Illinois.

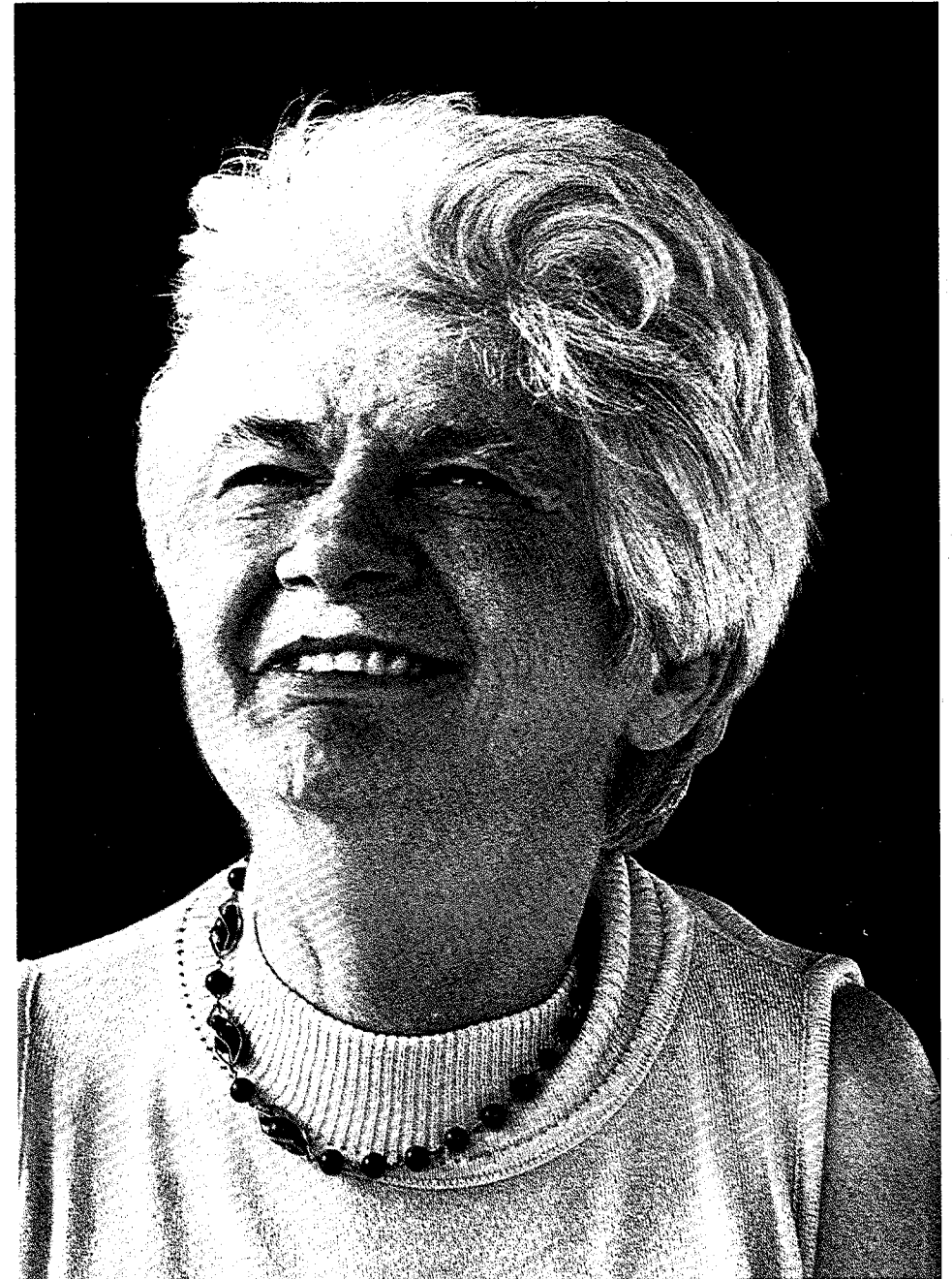
For many years she worked as a waitress at various restaurants in the Springfield area in order to support her three children. She also worked in a factory during World War II.

She most strongly recalls raising her children, "being a single parent when being one was not commonplace."

She now has six grandchildren "ranging in age from 26 years old to 2½ years old."

Although she is now unable to do much physically, she still enjoys music and maintains a sense of humor.

Understandably her primary concern is her health. However, she says that while "the outside person has changed, the inside person is pretty much the same."



Marilyn Brown

A native of Paducah, Kentucky, where she was born in 1909, Marilyn Brown has lived in Champaign since 1970. "I was separated from my family when I was very young. My brothers and sisters (four of them) were sent to an orphanage and I was adopted in 1921 at the age of twelve. In 1958 my husband took me back to Paducah to see if I could find any of my folks. I went to my old school teacher and she said she had just had a letter from my brother, Willis. He was living in Illinois. I contacted him and one by one found the rest of my family – even my mother. Our reunion was so happy. In the 1960s my sister, Maggie, and I became real close and we are still together – living in the same apartment building. Maggie, who is older, has helped me a great deal since my stroke. She's always telling me, 'You can do it.'

"I did domestic work and helped raise other people's children. I did not have any of my own.

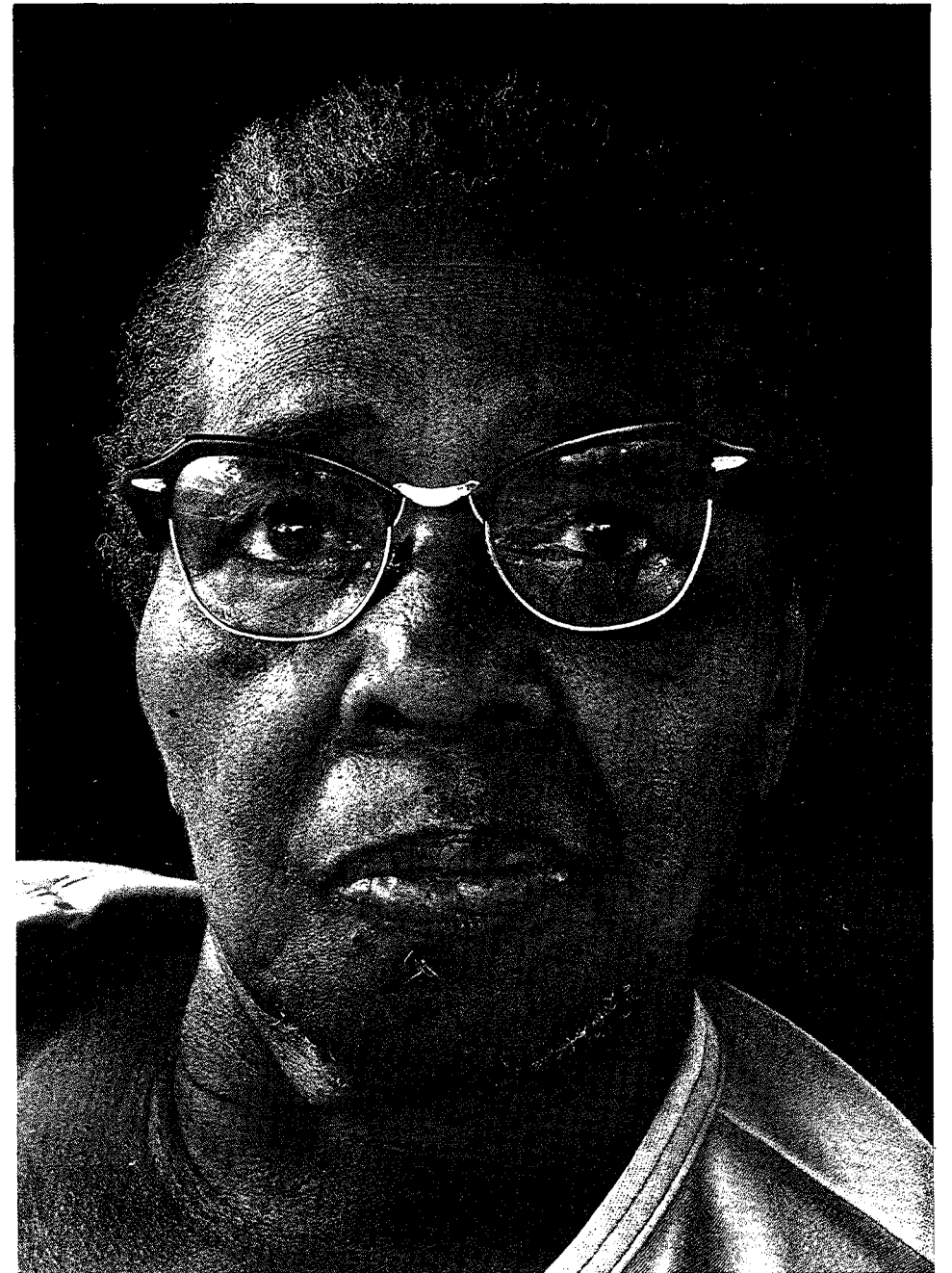
"I loved most of the children I took care of, and I'm proud of all the community work I've done since retiring.

"I like to sing and loved to dance. Also did volunteer work with the Democratic Party, church work, and senior citizens.

"I've had a stroke now and cannot talk as well. I used to love to talk to people, now I'm afraid they won't understand me, though it's good to get out and try to talk with other people."

She is most concerned "about my relationship with God. I want to be close to Him, but sometimes I'm not as prayerful as I want to be.

"I'm handicapped now. I never was before! I know I have to keep trying to improve. Maybe I will."



Dorothy Lyke

Originally from Long Island where she was born in 1907, Mrs. Lyke now lives in Champaign with her son.

“I worked for the lighting company in New York State before I was married. After I got married I quit and took care of the children.”

Mrs. Lyke’s primary interest has always been “my family. Being a mother. I had a baby the first year. The years go by so quickly – I wish I could live them all over again. They were the best of my life.”

She is most proud of her children. “They’ve been so good and didn’t give me any problems. They have good jobs and good lives for themselves.

“I have nothing to complain about. All my family is married and I’m a great-grandmother. I’m proud of them all, and I’ve never had any real trouble or anything.”

She says old age is like any other time in life – there are good and bad things about it.

“We all change from day to day, but there hasn’t been anything drastic with me. In opinions and things I feel about the same as always. I cherish friendship more now and care less about bridge and parties and things like that.”



James Walker

A native of Indianapolis, Dr. Walker came to Urbana 37 years ago to join the staff at Carle Clinic.

He arrived in Champaign, a young man thirty years of age, after four and a half years in the South Pacific during World War II and specialty training at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. His entire medical practice was spent at Carle Clinic.

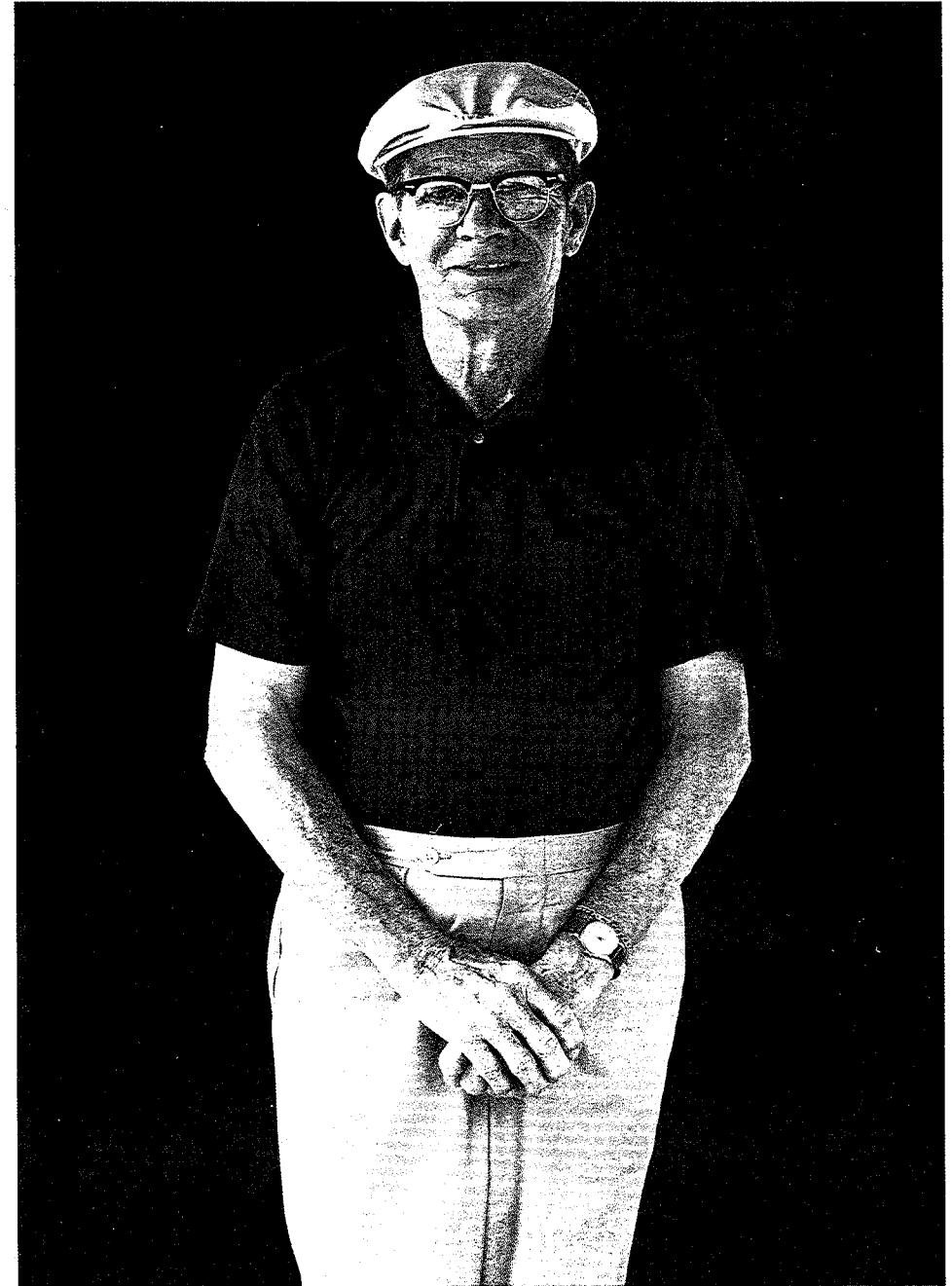
He is especially proud not only of his professional achievements, but the growth and success of the Clinic, of which he was board chairman at age fifty. During his career he also prepared and delivered scientific papers and was active in all specialty groups.

He has always valued his family, including his grandson, Scott.

His interests included photography, stamp collecting, and sports, notably golf, bowling, and fishing. He has golfed and fished all over the world.

During his lifetime he has seen tremendous advances in medicine, notably treatments for infections, pneumonia, and polio.

Six years ago he was diagnosed as having Alzheimer's Disease. He took early retirement and his primary concerns now are his fear of the future and what may be a long decline in mental health.



Helen Baker

A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, Mrs. Baker has lived in Champaign since her husband took a position with Christie Clinic.

"I went to three different high schools. My father studied in a seminary my first couple years. When he was ordained we moved. I was high school queen in my senior year – just there one year, but lots of friends and fun."

Prior to her marriage she taught history, French, and music in high school. "When I was young and teaching I couldn't keep my job and get married, too. That's quite different now!"

After her marriage in 1935 she worked in her husband's medical office doing bookwork and helping with patients until 1952.

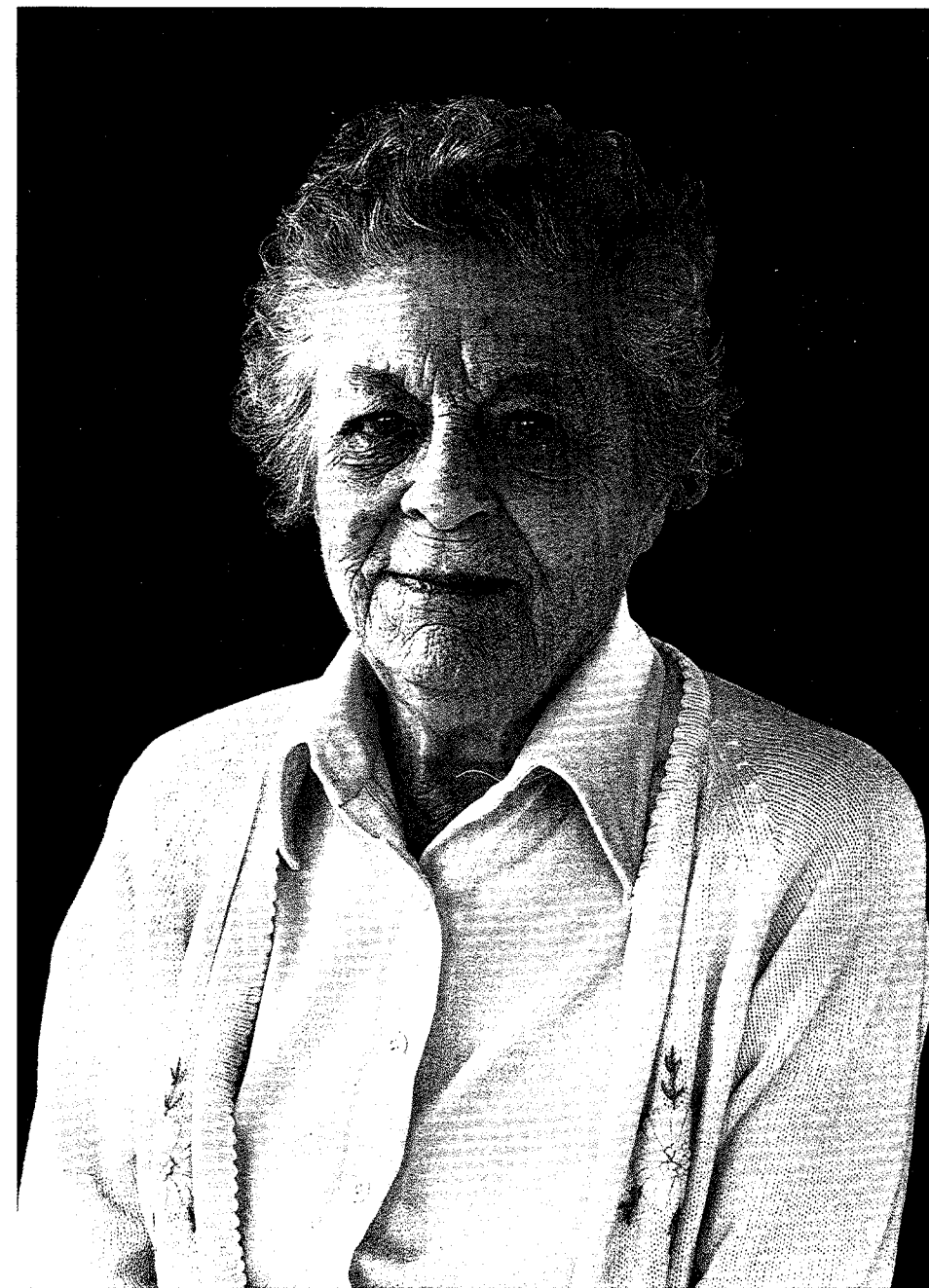
While raising four children she also managed to find time to play the organ for the church choir and to participate in book clubs. "I started a women's city choir in Hayfield, Minnesota, and enjoyed playing bridge."

Despite her varied interests, she claims, "I think raising kids was my real vocation.

"I like being old. I don't have to worry about raising kids in today's world. I think this community is doing a lot for older people. Maybe older people need to think about what they should be doing to take care of themselves. You know old does not mean helpless!

"My only concern is my bum hip. I want a hip replacement and want to be able to walk again. I'll have it done as soon as my blood count improves and the doctor says okay.

"I feel good about my present life. I still enjoy many things – my neighbors, my family, reading, keeping current on the news, cards. A few things that I cannot do I miss – like having big parties – but I'm happy now and wouldn't change much, even if I could."



Frank (Pete) Beccue

Mr. Beccue has spent almost all of his life in Villa Grove, where he was born in 1913.

He worked briefly as a boilermaker in a railroad shop during the steam engine era and also drove a milk wagon in Vandalia, Illinois. However, he worked primarily as a painting contractor in Villa Grove.

Married for 51 years, he and his wife raised six children.

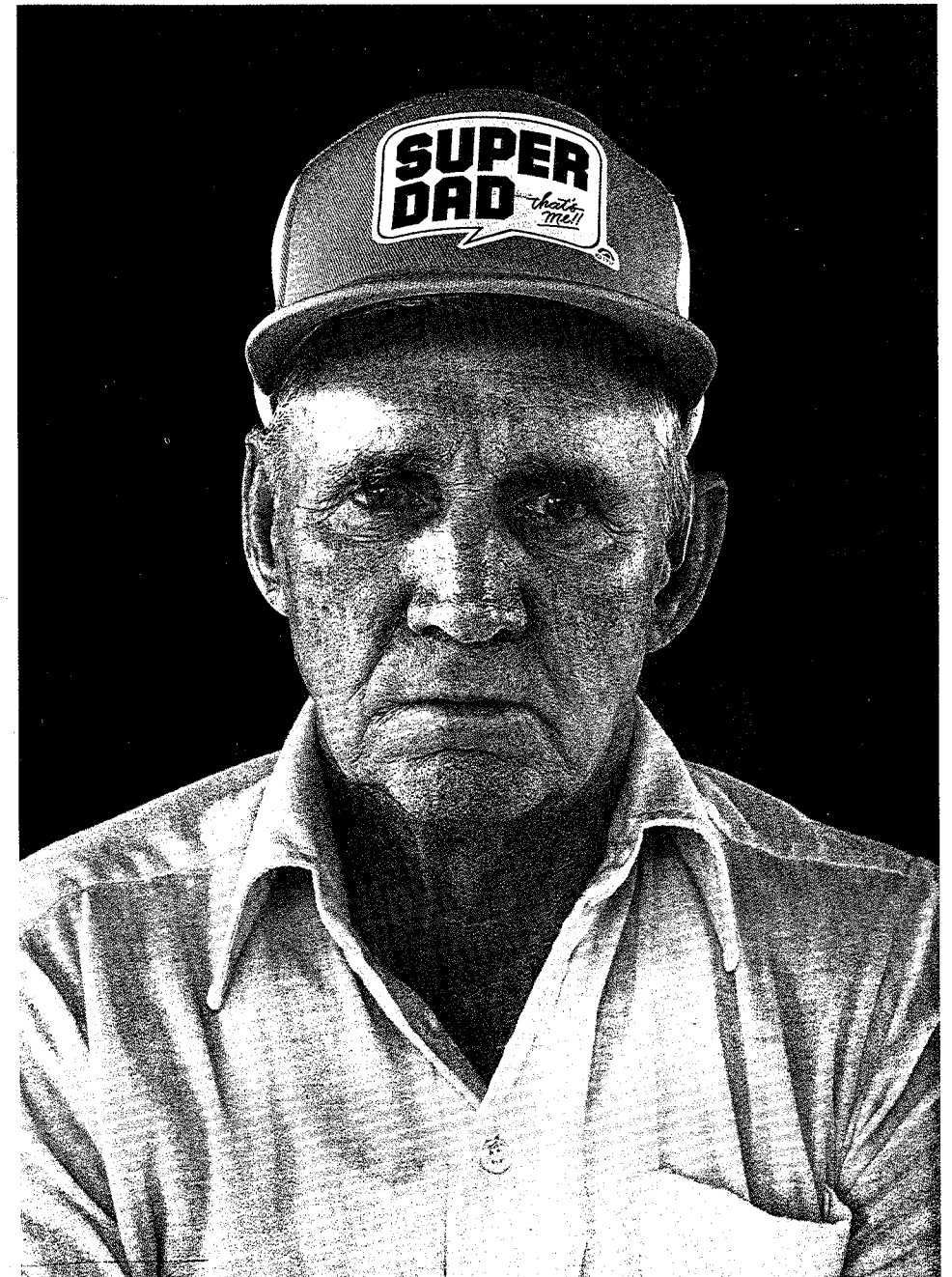
"My wife died two years ago. That changed my life," he says. Then he had a stroke which rendered him incapable of taking care of himself.

Having been pretty much on his own since he was twelve, Mr. Beccue is now most bothered by his lack of freedom and dependence upon others.

"Until my stroke, being old was fun. I got to go fishing whenever I wanted, spent time with my family and friends, and did what I wanted when I wanted. It was like being as free as a kid again, but with more privileges and fewer responsibilities.

"I feel that if I have some knowledge to pass along to younger people it is to take care of yourself. Your health is one thing that cannot be replaced, so be good to yourself."

His only regret is that he wishes he had been more attentive to his children as they were growing up, especially now that they are taking such good care of him.



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