

Marjorie Abbott  
Battle Creek

Marjorie Abbott doesn't remember having a hamburger until she moved to Battle Creek. After that, she thought it was the greatest thing to get a nickel hamburger at the Ritzy for lunch during the school day.

Marjorie and her family lived about 13 miles outside of Ionia, off highway 66 with her two half-brothers who were quite a bit older and a border collie dog who followed her everywhere. Being the baby of the family, she always got most of her father's attention. This was during the depression, and her father Arthur was in constant search of a job. At one point he was determined that he wanted to be a chicken farmer, but that didn't work out as planned. He applied to work as a road worker with the WPA, Works Progress Administration, that began replacing gravel roads with asphalt ones only to later land a job at the Oldsmobile plant in Lansing. While there, he earned a government inspector license, and the chicken duties were permanently left to her mother Albertina. Albertina had an amazing green thumb, so much so, that Marjorie said, "she could put a twig in the ground and make it grow". Her mother was also good at baking, and she recalls a time when she accompanied her mother to the grocery store. She was fascinated by the bread wrapped in cellophane because she had never seen bread that wasn't fresh out of the oven.

She had a secondhand bike she used to like to ride, but when she was twelve, her father felt she needed to have a new bike. Her mother was furious because, she said "you just don't spend money like that". The family was attending the Ionia Free Fair and her father saw a new bike and decided Marjorie was going to have it, so he bought it for her on the spot. She kept the bike for a long time only giving it up after she started riding the bus once the family moved to Battle Creek after her father was transferred.

Before the move, she had been attending school in a one room schoolhouse across the street from their home. Now that she had moved to a bigger town, her school was many times larger than any other school she had attended. When her father took her to school for the first time, the bell rang as they were walking down the hall and she was overwhelmed by the number of students who poured out of the classrooms into the hall. She graduated from Battle Creek High School in 1943, at the age of sixteen with a class that numbered over 500.

She got her first job while she was in school. The Bijou Theater put in the paper that you could get a permit to work there if you were fifteen. Even though she was fourteen, she thought it would be great to have money of her own. She went down to the theater hoping they would think she was fifteen. The hiring manager did, and she got the job. She felt so classy in her uniform, and she thought she "really looked like somebody". She recalls having so much fun helping people to their seats with her flashlight.

Once she graduated, she went to work as a clerk at Liggett Drug Store. Her young age and inexperience presented an issue one day, when a young soldier came in asking for prophylactics. Naively, she took him to the brush and comb counter because the store carried Pro-Phy-Lac-Tic brand combs at the time. He told her "Miss, I don't think you know what I want". She finally had to get the store owner Percy involved. After he had helped the soldier, he attempted to explain to her what he had meant by prophylactics. Flustered after she still wasn't sure what he meant; he got an older female clerk to explain it to her. Needless to say, she was very embarrassed by the whole situation.

After her father was transferred again, she didn't want to move. Her father understood, so he arranged a job for her, making small parts for planes during the war. This afforded her enough money to rent a room. She went on to work for Michigan Bell Telephone and when the men came back from the war, that is when she met her husband, Robert. It turned out that he had been living around the corner from their house and went to the same school. They started dating in October, got engaged in December and were married in February of the following year. They were married for 48 years until Robert passed away. They had three boys, Mark, Patrick, and Kim. Marjorie kept herself busy by doing crafts, sewing, knitting, and quilting. Marjorie and Robert traveled to Florida in the winters for ten years and would take their travel trailer to Maggie Valley, North Carolina.

She loved to sew and make clothes for her children when they were young. Marjorie feels one of her accomplishments was a dress she had made for her oldest brother's wedding. It was fairly plain, so she embellished it with lace and her brother could not help coming up to her at the reception to tell her just how pretty it was. She also feels that raising her three sons is one of her proudest accomplishments. These days Marjorie is an avid reader and especially loves books about the Amish. Her advice to the younger generations is *you just have to live each day as it comes and not to just jump into things.*