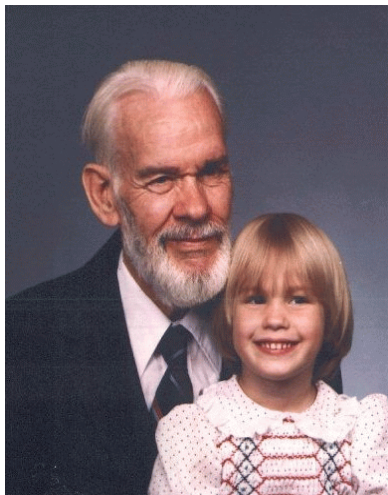


## Noah M. St. Clair, Sr. - Short Autobiography #2

*This is an autobiography written by Noah M. St. Clair, Sr., at an unknown date and covering his childhood only. Noah was born 3 March 1914 in Taney county to James Alvis St. Clair and Lillian Lucettie Evans. His ancestry goes back three generations in the Taney/Christian county area (paternal side) and in Miller county. (maternal side) The original manuscript is in possession of his son, Noah (Mike) M. St. Clair, Jr., who prepared this document. The original is typed, but with quite a number of obvious typographical and spelling errors. In this version these errors have been corrected. In the few places where words were inserted to clarify the meaning I believe was intended, you will find those additions in <angled brackets>. It appears that this story was intended to go further. I also believe that dad started a rather extensive story of his life sometime during his last ten years or so but I am not aware of its whereabouts. If anyone reading this is aware of any other material written by or about him, his parents, or his brothers and sisters, I would appreciate your contacting me: Mike St. Clair, 327 North 800 East, American Fork, Utah 84003; (801) 492-1666; e-mail: mike@saintclair.org.*



Noah M. St. Clair, Sr.

<I was> born to James Alvis and Lillian Evans St. Clair March 3, 1914, the ninth of thirteen children. My birthplace was Day, Taney county, Missouri. Day was about eight miles north of Branson and four miles west of Walnut Shade, on the banks of Bull Creek, where my father operated a grocery store, blacksmith shop, and water powered grist mill. Our family lived in the back of the building where the store was located. This building also housed the post office. My mother was Postmaster. It is interesting to know that during the time there was a post office at Day, one of my uncles and two cousins were also postmasters there.



James Alvis and Lillian Evans St. Clair

At the time of my birth, my father was building a new home on the property, and just before it was ready for the family to move in, it caught fire and burned to the ground. I don't think my father ever recovered from that disaster. Soon after that, we moved to a farm nearby and were there for a year. This farm was very near to the estate of Rose O'Neil, the creator of the Kewpie Doll<sup>1</sup>. Her place was named Sunnybrook Farm <he probably meant Bonniebrook>. At the end of that year, when I was about two years old we moved again to Stone County, Missouri. where my-father took over management of a farm, grocery store, and Ferry boat across the White River. We were there until we bought a farm about a mile from the ferry, and the post office department decided that the community needed a post office and they asked my mother to be postmaster, which was named Sammy Lane, it being about four miles from the site of Harold Bell Wright's novel, "The Shepherd of the Hills."



Kewpie Doll

My mother opened the post office in a little room that my father built on the side of the house, some time in 1919. Mother was postmaster there until the office was discontinued in 1941. The mail was

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<sup>1</sup>Dad reported to me that there was a family tradition that Rose used his oldest sister Myrtle Ivy St. Clair as a model in her creation of the Kewpie.

brought to Sammy Lane by horseback from Cedar Valley, four miles away, where a connection was made with a route which originated at Hollister, on the Missouri Pacific Railroad, and terminated at Blue Eye, Missouri <I believe Blue Eye was really in Arkansas>, which was on the Arkansas border. Now, Sammy Lane wasn't a metropolis, a city, a town or even a village. Our nearest neighbor was about two hundred yards away, the next a half mile.

There were two telephone lines through our neighborhood; The White River line and the Hollister line. Part of the community used one, Part the other, and in order for all the community to be in touch with the rest, a switch was installed in our house, and if anyone on one line wanted to talk with someone on the other line, they would ring my mother and she would close the switch and ring the other party, then disconnect when they were through. Because of this, we had two telephones in our house. Another unique thing about this telephone service was that when a lightning storm was threatened, one of us would have to go outside where both lines had a hook and eye arrangements, to disconnect them, because of fear that if lightning struck them it would set the house afire.

We went to school at the Center Point School House, (which was also used for Sunday School, pie suppers, and elections). This school was one room, with a well-house attached and out houses detached. There was a big flat top heating stove in the center of the room, and discipline was enforced by distance of a students (we were called scholars) desk from the stove. During cold weather, the teacher came an hour early and lighted the fire so the room would be warm, at least near the stove, when the "scholars" got there. We had seven classes. (The seventh and eighth grades were taught in alternate years).

On the last day of school my seventh grade year, our teacher, Miss Foote, asked me to stay after school, and suggested that I should try to go to high school. My response was, "Where? Blue Eye is 12 miles and Reed Springs is 12 miles, and Hollister is five miles but across Long Creek, so how could I?" She asked me if I knew about the School of the Ozarks. I replied that I didn't.( Now, I have to detour on my story to explain about and illustrate how provincial our little community was. Across the White River on the East was the Missouri Pacific Railroad, which followed Roark Creek from Reed Springs to Branson, on through Hollister on the way to Arkansas, as near as three miles from our home. I heard the trains whistle every day, but I never saw a train until I was 12 years old.)

Miss Foote suggested that I ask my father to go there (would you believe, five miles away) and try to get me admitted. He did and about the first of August (I was 13 then) we got a letter saying I was accepted, and should arrive there on a certain day. On the appointed day, mother stuffed a change of clothes, including socks in a meal sack, father tied the sack behind the saddle on our old black mule, and away we went, one walking, one riding the mule, trading off now and then, and I was delivered to an entirely different environment than I had ever even dreamed about before.

Now, I must devote a few lines to the School of the Ozarks, because of the profound influence it had on my life. It was established in 1906 for the express purpose to bring more education to deprived youth of the Ozarks region, mostly southwestern Missouri and northeastern Arkansas, where high schools were few and far between, and most families were too poor to send their children away from

home and pay board and room for them.<sup>2</sup> The school was initiated by the Presbyterian Church, and supported by private donors of all persuasions. A student was expected to pay for his books, and work at assigned tasks 16 hours a week. (We were assigned extra hours of work to pay penalties for breaking the rules, however no one ever got reduced work hours for being good!) In addition to the sixteen hours per week during the school terms we were expected to stay during the summer months eight weeks and work forty-eight hours each week.

There was quite a variety of work to be done there, such as tending crops on a large farm, building maintenance lawn mowing, cooking and serving meals, laundry, machine shop, canning factory. During my senior year, I was assigned to work as secretary to a minister of the Presbyterian church to work in the Ozarks Region as a missionary, and I traveled quite a lot with him, and I remained through the following summer to make up some of the previously mentioned hours for misdemeanor behavior.

After high school, I returned to the family farm and helped out there for three years. At about that time a new high school was built in Blue Eye and our little Center Point District was consolidated with Blue Eye so five <of my> brothers and sisters were able to ride the school bus to that school and get their high school diplomas.

During the three years that I was at home <after high school> with the family, my father and I tested each other many times until one spring day when I was breaking ground (plowing) to plant a corn crop, I stopped the team and started to change the plowshare for a sharper one, he showed up and raised some objection to my changing the plowshare in the middle of the day, and I handed him the wrench and went to the house, packed up my clothes, and said goodbye to my mother. I walked to the School of the Ozarks to ask Mr. Good, the president for advice and direction. After talking a while, he suggest that I stay there for a few days and help to set up a taxidermy collection that had been donated to the school. This turned into about two month's work, after which there was an opening to work in a gas station, which didn't last very long. Then I got employment at The English Inn, which was the only hotel in the vicinity, where I worked as desk clerk, bell hop, dining room waiter, and kitchen helper, all at once. When the summer tourist season was over, I went to work at a truck stop restaurant with about the same varied duties at the hotel.<sup>3</sup>



President Robert McGowan  
Good of School of the Ozarks

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<sup>2</sup>Dad was always very devoted to the School of the Ozarks, serving for many years as president of the Southern California Chapter for their Alumni Association. I visited there with dad in the 1970s and he showed me the dorm he stayed in, the building where he use to stoke the heating plant, the museum, etc. We bought some Ozark's poetry, folklore, and music books in the bookstore and ate some great home-cooked food in the Friendship House. Dad also explained that his uncle William Asa St. Clair had done much of the stone work on the older buildings. A poorly planned dream I have for the future is to make some sort of significant memorial donation to this great little college in memory of dad and it's importance to him. I have a copy of a history of the school, Flight of the Phoenix by Helen and Townsend Godsey; Point Lookout, Missouri: The School of the Ozarks, 1984.

<sup>3</sup>Although the story doesn't go on far enough to explain it, they clearly reconciled shortly after this. During the summer of 1936 dad came to Idaho with his dad and perhaps some brothers for the potato harvest. Here he met mom and they married that fall. This would have been at age 22, about five years after finishing high school and within a year or two after this story ends. I believe that this might not have been the first summer he made such a work excursion with his dad.