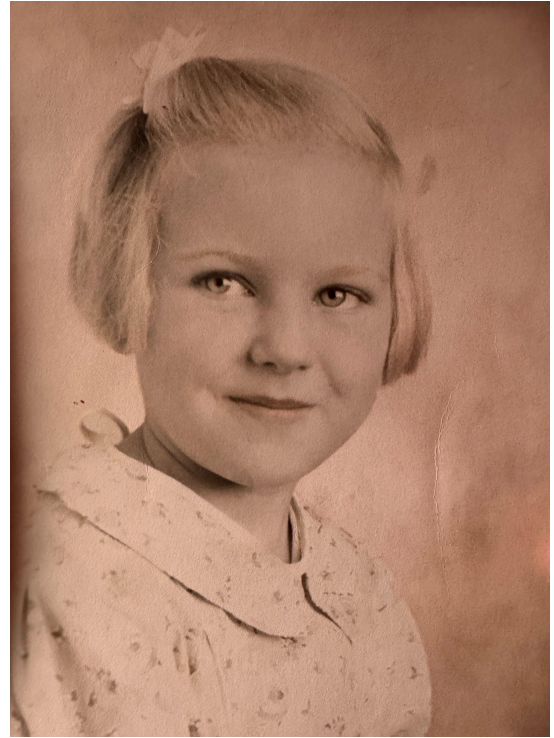


When sitting down to talk about her life, Evelyn Miller spoke with a raw honesty and poise of someone who has lived a life shaped by more than six decades of work, relationships, and dedication to taking life a day at a time. This is a written account of her life story, derived from interviews conducted with Evelyn.

Evelyn was born in 1934 in Snow Shoe, Pennsylvania, a small mountain town in the middle of the state where nearly everyone knew each other. Snow Shoe was not a city, but a close-knit community surrounded by farms and woods, considered part of Appalachia. This made it so Evelyn's childhood was shaped by neighbors, "lots of friends," and a constant routine. Evelyn grew up in town rather than on a farm, but the rhythms of a rural life were still present in her upbringing. She recalled Snow Shoe as a place where people were not



Pictured is Evelyn

wealthy, but where community mattered. As she put it, "We were poor, but I was happy." Although trains passed through the region, they didn't stop in Snow Shoe. Instead, they stopped in Bellefonte over the mountain, and as a child, Evelyn would ride the train alone to visit her grandmother in Altoona during the summer, where relatives would meet her when she arrived.

She had one sibling, an older brother named John, who was six years her senior. Because of the age gap, Evelyn often felt as though she had grown up as an only child. John later tragically died of cancer at the age of 50.

Her father, also named John, worked hard to provide. He labored on the roads, doing physically demanding work outdoors in all weather and also helped the local undertaker. Her mother, Martha, stayed home and ran the household. Evelyn, who remembers her parents fondly, described them as kind and dependable people who created a loving home despite limited means. Her paternal grandfather lived with the family her entire childhood and reached the remarkable age of 100, but to Evelyn, he was simply Pappy. She remembers him as old-fashioned, sitting in his rocking chair and singing songs, and tending to a small flower garden with a few vegetables planted here and there with which he would cook his own meals.



Pictured are Evelyn's parents

Evelyn's early years reflected a time of transition in America. She remembered party line telephones, outdoor toilets, and the excitement of getting indoor plumbing. The home itself was heated with wood and coal, and she remembers a large wood-burning stove that produced many simple but incredibly memorable meals. Her mother specialized in dumplings, home-baked bread, pies, and breakfasts of eggs, toast, and home fries. Growing up, Evelyn also remembers

her family raising a large number of chickens, and her mother would butcher them, making fried chicken that felt like a true Sunday meal. Her mother's cooking, and later Evelyn's own, became a legacy practice passed down through generations. She later became known in her own household for baking, especially at Christmas, when she made fruitcake and trays of cookies for her children. One dessert her family remembers fondly was chocolate cake served with lemon



pudding poured over top, a combination her children love and still occasionally ask her to make. Evelyn herself continued traditions like making potato candy at Christmas (see page 7).

Pictured is Evelyn

Evelyn described herself as “very bashful” as a child, but school was still a positive experience for her. She attended a regular schoolhouse in town and later traveled over the mountain to Bellefonte to continue her education. While some children in the area left school early to help their families, Evelyn completed her schooling. Shortly after graduating, at just 16 years old, she married a young man she had known most of her life. His name was Cordis, often

called Cord, and his father lived only a few doors away. Their familiarity with one another was typical of small-town life at the time.

Cordis served in the United States Air Force for 22 years, and Evelyn's married life quickly became one of movement. They were stationed across the country and beyond, including South Carolina, Illinois, Colorado, Cape Canaveral, Pennsylvania, and Labrador Canada. At nearly every posting, Evelyn gave birth, sometimes once and occasionally twice. Starting in 1953, she had 11 children in 12 years. Two were stillborn, and of the remaining nine, six are living today.

Life as a military spouse required resilience and constant labor. Evelyn worked through pregnancies, often continuing her duties until labor began, then returning again as needed. She raised children largely on her own while her husband worked long hours, and later, she supported the family financially as well. Cordis eventually left to help care for her brother, John, in California, and did not return. Despite being a single mother, Evelyn ensured that her children were raised, educated, and supported. Many of them moved back home at different points, sometimes with children of their own, and Evelyn remained the steady rock of the family.

After deciding she had finished having children, Evelyn began working for the post office, where she remained for 21 years. Her workdays were long and demanding, sometimes beginning in the early hours of the morning. She worked consistently, balancing employment with motherhood, and had a sense of pride in her reliability. Before working at the post office, Evelyn held a wide range of jobs. She waitressed in several restaurants and also worked as a grill cook at Gallagher Drugstores in Huber Heights, Ohio, where customers sat at a counter while meals were prepared in front of them. She cut chickens in a butcher shop, cooked in a bar, and

even worked in a Chinese restaurant while living in South Carolina. She also did seasonal office work for Elder-Beerman during Christmas time.

Faith also played a role throughout her life. Raised Methodist, Evelyn was active in her childhood church, singing in the choir and helping with church responsibilities. She later converted to Catholicism to marry her husband, though she eventually returned to Protestant congregations. Church remained a place of community and connection, even as her attendance changed over time.



Pictured are Evelyn's husband and children

Loss has been a recurring theme in Evelyn's later years. She has outlived five of her children including one son who passed recently. Her husband died after suffering a stroke, and her brother John passed years earlier. Even so, Evelyn continues to speak of her family with care.

She remains especially proud of her children's lives including those who followed military careers like their father and those who pursued caregiving and service professions.

Now living in Vandalia, Ohio, Evelyn spends much of her time at home. She enjoys unhurried mornings with a large cup of coffee and looks forward to conversation. She still talks fondly about food and everyday comforts, mentioning a lasting preference for Chinese takeout, especially General Tso's chicken and an appreciation for sides like crisp home fries and coleslaw. What stands out most in her story is not the loss she faced, but her unwavering endurance. Evelyn's life has been marked by work, devotion, and survival. She has lived through poverty, war, constant relocation, and deep personal loss, and she continues to meet each day with an admirable persistence that you find very rarely.

Evelyn's Potato Candy Recipe

Ingredients

- ½ cup plain mashed potatoes
 - 6-7 cups powdered sugar, plus extra for dusting
 - Creamy peanut butter, for filling
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Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the mashed potatoes and 1 cup of powdered sugar.
2. Gradually add the remaining powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time, mixing well after each addition. Continue until the dough is firm enough to be molded into a ball like pie dough.
3. Roll the dough into a rectangle approximately ¼ inch thick.
4. Spread a thin, even layer of peanut butter over the dough, leaving a small border around the edges.
5. Starting from the longer side, carefully roll the dough into a log.
6. Using a sharp knife, slice the log into pieces ¼–½ inch thick.