

**SALE, Ruth Hebditch**

**Born:** 12/28/1909 in HdG interview 9/8/2016 age: 105 died: 7/7/2018

What do you want to know about me?

*Well, any of your earliest memories.*

Earliest memory, someone drowned on the beach below the city park. He was awful looking. *(That's her first memory of Havre de Grace – a drowned man she saw.)*

*Do you know who it was?*

No, I was only about 13.

I used to come here to visit.

I didn't live here until 1925. I came here at 15 and started the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Had a hard time making friends. They weren't very friendly. I lost one grade because my mother died when I was 6.

Some people say and still say "Havre de grass" – I think Havre de *grace* is prettier. But some still say Havre de *grass*. I didn't like that name.

I married in Richmond after I graduated. I went to college. I took business. I got married in 1931 to Cecil Sale. I like Sal-A... It was a young girl in the Olympics, she says hers ... Sal-A

*(We can change it)*

Oh no, nobody would know me!

J.C. Hebditch was my father's name. I think he had a farm. I think he used to board the race track horses there.

*(What do you remember about the race track)*

I remember I used to go. My father used to bet sometimes. \$2. Yes, he betted for me. I won sometimes.

We used to go to the race track – the high school - and we didn't have to pay to get in.

A bunch of us from high school would follow the railroad track to the race track.

*(Did you ever get into any trouble at the race track?)*

Nooooo....We just wanted to see the horses. It was all new to me because I had never been to a race track or seen a race.

*(What was early married life like in Havre de Grace?)*

Married life? It was okay. Married, I think 50 years. I had 4 children, 3 boys and 1 girl.

*(You've seen a lot of changes over the years you've been here. Can you share any of the stories of life when you were a young mother?)*

I had a black woman come and did my laundry. She did the cleaning and laundry for \$9. I belonged to a lot of things, Hospital Auxiliary – a lot of things. Most of my friends have all died. I'm 106.

*(What would you like to share? What would you like to tell us?)*

I've been good. I was active in Sunday School and church and went every Sunday. I just thought the people were different.

*(What was life like in terms of technology – tv, phone, etc)*

The TV came into existence when she was just a little baby. 1937? Mostly boxing. They didn't have many shows. I think my father bought the first TV in Havre de Grace.

*(I have to ask, do you remember Kate Smith?)*

Kate Smith? Of course!!!

I wasn't too crazy about baseball, but I think the boys liked baseball.

*(Was there always a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade?)*

I don't know. As far as I remember they did. My husband got on City Council and he used to ride in the parade. Sometimes I'd ride, but I didn't like to.

*(What did kids do for fun?)*

Ice skated all over the bay – it would freeze over. I had an old rocking chair that I used to rock them in. It was my grandmother's, and I'd take it out on the ice and push them in it. In the summertime, we had a boat "Miss Coca Cola."

*(Did you do any crafts?)*

I just crocheted, knitting, things like that.

*(Did they have a theater here?)*

Oh yes. Yes. That was the main attraction when I was here in 1925. My dates would take me to the movies. Do they show movies now? *(No.)*

The double decker bridge was still here. I used to walk across it every Sunday. We walked over to Perry Point to see friends. *(Pretty long walk)* Well, we didn't have cars then. We walked all the time. Not like now when all the kids have cars.

*(Do you remember your first car.)*

I wouldn't marry until he had a car. My husband was impatient. So with several other people I learned to drive.

*(Do you remember phones as party lines?)*

Yes, I liked that. You could hear each other talk. The telephone operator, Joann, and the number was 484J ... anybody could come in and talk on the phone and the operator could hear everything you said.

*(Were you born in Havre de Grace?)*

NOOooooo. BORN: Newport News

I lived two years in Kentucky – dad was at Coca Cola plant in Campellsville. I liked Kentucky. They were very friendly. People would say howdy. Everyone was very friendly. I think I turned 13 just before I left Kentucky.

*(Did you ever have a bicycle?)*

Yes, but I never learned to ride until the war. Then I had to use the bicycle. My husband had to ride a bike to work every day. We used to ride everywhere, across the James River (*pretty sure she means Susquehanna*) and even late at night.

*(What was school like?)*

Well, I didn't like it here. Stella ?? was my 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. She taught us all manners. Some had manners, but very few.

I went to Richmond to Business College for one year - 1928. Stock market crash was in 1929. Then I got married. It was hard to get jobs. I got a job but didn't like it too much. I wasn't really prepared for college.

*(Why did you feel you weren't prepared for college?)*

The courses you take in high school, I wasn't prepared for college. I was doing okay. We'd been going together 3 years. We got married in 1931. He was always there.

*(Downtown Havre de Grace)*

I liked the carnivals here. Yes, I think there was a circus too. I think the Wallins ? lived here. I think one of the girls went to school with me.

*(Daughter: I know who she dated)*

Who?

*(Drennen?)*

He was 16 and I was 15. I thought I was too young to go on dates. He went to Sunday School. They had parties every so often and I'd see him. They had parties at homes of one of the members of the class. I went with him.

*(Did you go out to restaurants?)*

Not at that age. We were young, no one had money.

*(Tell me about your dad)*

He bottled Coca Cola and other drinks. He was a member of the church and went to church. He bought up a lot of property.

*(Do you have brothers and sisters?)*

Yes, but they're all dead - a two brothers and two half-sisters.

Her mother died when she was only 6 years old. – Marilyn (daughter) shared this.

*(Do you know what your Mother died from?)*

She hemorrhaged; she bled to death. It wasn't too hard because you don't know a lot at 6. My grandmother took care of me and I loved her so much.

I miss grandmother, but she used to switch me – my mother. You know, switch me on the ankles. My grandmother never did that. I used to do it to my daughter, too. She remembers it.

*(Did you do that to the boys, too?)*

I don't think they did anything bad! *(laughter)*

*(What were you telling me about her half-sister?)*

I had a half-sister named Doris that came in 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Miss America pageant. I was in Richmond. She was 9 years younger than me. I saw her on the newsreel at the movies. I think she started school in first grade when I was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I didn't see her a lot.

....

When we first came back in 1936, two of my boys went to the elementary – right across from the new one. They had colored schools. Now they're all one. The President, principals, leaders, everyone is colored now.

Did you see on television where the colored lady danced with the President? She was 106!

Published on Feb 22, 2016

A 106-year-old woman danced with youthful exuberance when she met President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. Virginia McLaurin was at the White House to celebrate Black History Month and became the Internet's latest dancing sensation after video of her bopping with the Obamas surfaced on Sunday night. Michelle Obama told the proudly dancing woman: "I wanna be like you when I grow up!" The encounter took place after McLaurin launched social media campaign in 2014 to meet them

[Video mentioned by Ruth re: 106 year old Virginia McLaurin meeting Pres. and Michele Obama](#)

*(Talks about difficulty seeing and hearing television)*

*(How did clothing change for women in the 100 years you've been here?)*

I used to have to wear long drawers and stockings.

*(Do you remember your first swimming suit?)*

My first swim suit wasn't like what they wear today. I always loved the water since I always lived around the water.

*(So you liked the water?)*

Well, I just happened to be born and lived around the water.

*(I believe she talks about Buckroe Beach near Newport News, VA. - actually Hampton, VA)*

They had a little beach down where the Yacht Basin used to be.

*(APG)* Everybody worked there. And when the war started (WWII) everybody came here. The girls all started marrying Lieutenants. Both of my half-sisters married Lieutenants. Bainbridge came after we came here.

*(Did you have best friends?)*

I did, but they're all dead. The Jacksons! I think he was mayor of Baltimore at one time. (?) I dated Mr. Goll before I got married. I'm glad I didn't marry him.

*(Why is that?)*

Oh.... All that baking.... Ooooooo... she worked hard.

*(Her daughter mentions Tom Blackson.)*

Tom Blackson.... They were contractors and built this house and others.

*(RE: Manners)*

My grandmother was very strict on that (manners) – you know, doing the right thing.

The people on the Proving Grounds were very nice.

I remember my father calling Havre de Grace “Little Chicago”. My father looked at this site and one in Front Royal. I guess he liked this because of the water.

He chose Havre de Grace. I used to keep books for my father when I was going to high school. I would keep track of all the money. I did real good in high school in accounting. I'd take the day's receipts, do the books, file the charge slips, and such.

*(After you got married you didn't work?)*

I didn't work after marriage. I volunteered at the hospital and worked there. I guess I always have done a lot of volunteer work.

*(Besides your children, did you have other family that lived here also?)*

Yes.

*(For someone whose lived to be 106, which I think is amazing, what wisdom would you share with us)*

I think you should return good for evil. Just forgive 'em. Try to do good things. Have some manners. Especially when you get old, you have to treat them with respect.

The lady that comes to give me a bath, she calls me Miss Ruth. She lived in Georgia for a while after she got married. She calls me Miss Ruth. She doesn't call me Mrs. Sale or... Ruth.

*(So you would encourage people to forgive and return bad things with good things. I think that's very wise. But I think it's hard to do sometimes.)*

Yes, it is.

*(Now you've celebrated a lot of birthdays. Do any of them stand out to you? Any gifts or anything that was super special?)*

I remember getting a tricycle. I was happy with that. It was red.

*(Did you have any pets growing up?)*

I guess I had a cat, a dog. Her daughter asks if she remembers Laddie.

*(How many grandchildren do you have?)*

Hmmm... (Looks at daughter)... How many do I have? 3 of mine (Marilyn), 2 of Jack's, 3 of Sonny's and she has 8 great grandchildren.

*(That's what's probably keeping you alert, keeping up with all these great grandchildren.)*

Yeah, I used to send them all money for the birthdays, but I have to stop now.

*(Talking about the economy a bit.)*

Things were cheap during the depression if you had a job. Things are very high now. I used to go to the store and take \$80 for the whole week. We shopped at Siebert's grocery downtown. And they'd deliver.



Yeah. They'd pick up your laundry, your shirts and sheets. And bring it back all folded. I had a wringer washer and a clothesline.

*(What do you attribute a long life to?)*

I put Avon cream on every day.

*(What's the trick to living a long life.)*

Well, I guess I forgive a lot of people for what they've done. I started to smoke but never really learned. I'm glad I didn't. My half-sister smoked until she died, she died at 87. The other one died at 50 and she smoked. She died from cancer.

*(Did you ever drink?)*

Who?

*(You!)*

Yeah, I drank mixed drinks at parties – never just to drink.

I loved to dance. We went to the Country Club in Swan Creek. I could do the Charleston. I loved to square dance. They used to square dance in the park. We'd square dance for special occasions.

I loved to dance when I was a teenager. I wanted to take ballroom dance lessons. Oh yes, I loved to do the Charleston. We had Christmas parties in the basement and we'd do the Charleston.

*(Do you remember Cecil Hill? He's the one who told me about you.)*

He's a nice fella. He has nice manners.

*(You mentioned carnivals earlier. Can you tell me any more?)*

I think we used to go to a carnival. She took me to the carnival. I didn't tell my father and he was upset. I know how you worry when children go places and don't tell you.

*(So who took you to the carnival?)* Some friends. But I was only about 15.

The carnival was fun. They had rides. I love Ferris wheels.

***INTERVIEW NOTE:*** *This was a challenging recording. Mrs. Ruth Sale was so generous with her time and patient with me. But she has difficulty hearing and would sit up and move around frequently in her hospital bed. She was very sharp! But I'd hold the microphone close to her because her voice was often quite soft ... and the reason I sound like I'm shouting is because I had to speak up for her to hear me and I'm close to the microphone (because I'm holding it). Crazy! Not the usual balance. And it made it difficult to even correct in editing. I kept parts of the audio, even if difficult to understand, and did my best to translate, because this particular interview really touched my heart. It's not often I get to interview a person who has reached the age of 106!*

*I thank Cecil Hill, Sr. for telling me about Ruth. I am so pleased that Ruth put up with me. It was a beautiful afternoon and, I must admit, her wit was quite obvious throughout the interview. Delightful.*

*I must also thank Janice Frederick, painter whose studio is Faces 'n Places here in Havre de Grace. She gave me a ride to meet Ruth and her son, Robert and daughter, Marilyn. While she waited, she created a portrait. It's beautiful and was also challenging as Ruth moved about and the room was darker than she would have liked to work on a portrait. Again, a delightful afternoon!*