

NEIGHBORS

Friends lived next door for 75 years

By **TABITHA GOODLING**
Sentinel correspondent

BUNKERTOWN — When you live next door to someone, sometimes you see their comings and goings as time goes by, but never really know the people who live inside.

Helen McKee and Mildred Spade are lifelong neighbors who have watched each other through all of the milestones.

They grew up playing together in their neighboring backyards.

They watched each other go out on dates and knew when the other came home.

They saw the other come home with a husband and settle next door.

They were there when each lady had her children and again when grandchildren came to visit.

They mourned with one another as spouses passed away.

And they take time to sit and visit over coffee and remember it all over again.

Mildred Adams Spade has lived in the same house for 78 years of her 85 years on earth. This January marks 75 years her good friend Helen Miller McKee moved next door. They have been neighbors ever since.

Helen was only 4 years old when she moved to Bunkertown. Her dad, John Miller, purchased the general store next to Mildred's home. Mildred, 10 at the time, lived with her grandparents and her mother.

They never dreamed, the ladies said, they would be

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— Mildred Adams Spade

neighbors a lifetime.

“We just took it day by day,” Helen said.

“Bunkertown has always been my home,” Mildred said, “It wouldn't be home to live anywhere else.”

The ladies sat inside Helen's dining room and recalled making mud pies and cutting paper dolls from the Montgomery Ward catalog. They shared memories of Helen's younger siblings being held and babysat by Mildred's grandmother. “Both my mother and grandmother were deaf,” Mildred said, and although they spoke well, they read lips.

Helen, the younger of the pair, would often act silly.

“I remember singing as loud as I could and then mouthing to her (Mildred's mother) ‘You didn't know what I was doing did you?’” Helen said, and recalled Mrs. Adams replied “Yes, I do, you were singing!”

Mildred took her new little friend to fifth grade to “visit for a day.”

Helen recalled she spent most of the day blowing “spit bubbles.”

The two laugh as they remember those times.

When the teen years ar-

rived Mildred fell in love with classmate Clarence Spade and got married. Her mother had sold the house she lived in to Clarence's father. He offered to let them live in the house where Mildred grew up.

Prior to their marriage Helen used to watch Mildred go out the door on dates, she said.

Eleven years after Mildred got married, Helen took her turn down the aisle. She married Don McKee and moved into the second side of her parents' house. For a short time the couple moved to Florida to find work, but then moved back to Bunkertown. They bought a house across the road from Mildred and Clarence, which is where Helen still resides.

The Spades raised four children and the McKees had two. Helen's son and Mildred's youngest son built a two-story tree house and hung out in it as teenagers.

“One night we thought they were in the tree house and here some friends drove them to Red's Diner,” Helen recalled.

As time wore on, the ladies saw grandchildren come and go from the neighboring homes.

They have attended the same church their entire

lives — Bunkertown Church of the Brethren — and have been active together in various ways.

They attend McAlisterville Senior Center and both help with Meals on Wheels.

Within the last few years, both Clarence and Don have passed away, and so the widows make a lot of time for one another — even if it is just for coffee in the other's home.

Helen said the best part of having the same neighbor for 75 years is a simple one.

“We're friends forever, I'd say.”



Sentinel photo by TABITHA GOODLING
Mildred Spade, left, and Helen McKee celebrate being neighbors for 75 years this January.

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