On September 1, 1942, on Gardner Branch in Salyersville, Goldie Prater was giving birth to a baby girl; the baby was not due for two months, but she was in a hurry to be born, and has been in a hurry to grasp everything life has to offer ever since.

“Even though I was a 7-month baby, I done good.” That baby girl was our own Katie Prater!

What would Magoffin County be without this illustrious and adventurous lady? Katie has lived a most interesting and exciting life, beginning with her early childhood and school years, through high school and working away from home, to marrying and moving far away and eventually coming home to stay, Katie has done it her way.

Even before Katie was old enough for school, she established her place as the braver one of her siblings. Katie has four sisters, Jerry Conley, JoAnn Hayden, Dora Conley and Mary Emma Connelley, and one brother, H.C. Prater.

When school started in 1929, Katie went. She loved school, especially recess. She said they still had the outside toilets and basketball court and the lower grades all went outside to play when weather permitted.

Katie remembers when the small school was consolidated with other small schools in the county, and her classmates and she went to the big new brick school (where the community center is now); she remembers the town kids showing them how to flush the toilet!

Katie has many memories of milestones that have happened to her and to Salyersville. She was one of the first band members in the Salyersville High School, where she played the clarinet. She was in the band when they played for the dedication of the cornerstone for the new school, the year the first Miss America visited here.

In 1942 Katie graduated from the Salyersville High School and shortly afterward, she (along with several of her classmates) went out of state to find work. This was when the Second World War was going on and the United States had gotten into it. Katie remembers the rationing, and her first job at a Wal Green’s Drugstore. She liked that well enough, but Katie was adventurous and wanted to try something new, so she applied at Simplex Radio.

Well, Katie said when they did the interview, they commenced asking her how many words a minute she typed and how fast she took shorthand. She said, “What?? I never took no shorthand!” This experience and the fact that they said she “talked funny” put Katie off from that job and she decided to become a WAC. Now, she was not legally old enough, but she said she got a blank birth certificate and forged her age! But alas! The marching was so grueling, in the first practice (Baby Doll shoes didn’t help!) that Katie knew right there and then she didn’t belong in the WACs.

Katie, not to be outdone, next tried her hand at welding. That’s right; during the war many women used their talents and got jobs considered to be “man’s work” up until that time. She didn’t get to be a master welder, but she did learn to weld. She was becoming a “jack of all trades,” you might say. She even taught school for a time in 1944 at the right hand fork of Middle Fork.

Katie says all these things are funny now, but back then she was learning who she was and what she wanted out of life, and pretty soon she knew she wanted to be with a certain young man just back from the Army. It was in Cleveland, Ohio in March 1946, on the banks of Lake Erie that she met James Dolan. They were both at the St. Patrick’s Day Parade there and he just swept her off her feet. Their whirlwind courtship ended in marriage and they lived an exciting and adventurous life. From Erie, they moved to Meadeville, Pennsylvania, then to Detroit, Michigan. Here they enjoyed many football and basketball games, as James was a big sports fan.

When they moved to Marion, Ohio a few years later, Katie says it was like “old home week,” as so many of the residents there were from Kentucky and many from this area. From Marion, Katie says they moved to Astebula, Ohio, and of all the towns she has lived in, Astebula is her favorite. After moved to Interlaken, New York and Tucson, Arizona, which provided opportunities to visit Mexico,
Katie says they finally come back to her favorite little town, Astebula, Ohio.

In 1964 Katie finally came home to Magoffin County. She recounts how when James Dolan died, she had his funeral at the Methodist Church, even though he was a Catholic and at that time there was not a whole lot of religious tolerance and understanding in this area of different religions. Katie had a store in Falcon for about 10 years, she said, Prater’s Grocery. Katie married Walter C. Arnett in about 1979 and moved back to Aberdeen, Ohio, then on to Gallipolis; but this time she didn’t stay away long, and moved and moved back home to for a good year or so later. Well, you’d think Katie would be tired and want to settle down. Wrong! Katie got a job as toll collector on the Mountain Parkway, and she worked there until the tolls were lifted in about 1985.

Katie has also been a chauffeur, taking her client to places such as Florida for vacation. She has a degree with the Higher Restaurant Association, she is certified as an EMT, and has 2 business classes and 33 added college hours from PCC.

Katie Dolan Prater is a legend around here, and some of her civic accomplishments are:

- President of the Magoffin County Homemakers for 10 years
- Long-time member of the Prater Memorial Methodist Church
- Charter Member of the Historical Society
- Member of the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution)
- Member of the Women’s Club
- Board Member for the Senior Citizens

As most of you know, Katie has announced most of the Founders Day Baby Pageants, parades and Little Miss Pageant. Why, Founder’s Days wouldn’t be the same without Katie being involved in some way. And Katie was the very first Mrs. Magoffin.

I think you all know we are very proud to honor this illustrious Lady, Miss Katie Prater!

*Katie Prater dictated the above story to Betty Williams shortly before she died.*