

The William “Dick” Berwick Rachal Family

by Ken Pinter
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William Berwick Rachal and Lula Shaw Rachal

William Berwick Rachal was born to D.C. and Julia Bryan Rachal on 8 September 1885 at the family home in White Point (or a local hospital, this is not known). He was the eighth and last child born to D.C. and Julia.



By 1900 (the census), William was using the name Richard or Dick. The census recorded his name as Richard. Today, he is most remembered as being called Dick or Richard. He was only 14 at this census and was living at home but attending school. Their address was referred to as San Patricio County, precinct 7. The reason for his name variation is unknown.



In 1905, Richard, at the age of 20, married Lula Priscilla Shaw. She was born on 7 January 1883 in Corpus Christi, TX (or San Diego TX...there is a conflict of information here). They were married in San Diego. Lula’s father was Joseph W. Shaw. He ran a movie theater in San Diego. Lula’s birth mother’s name is not known and she apparently died before Lula’s 17th birthday because, in 1900 census, Joseph W. Shaw was listed as a widower living in Duval County with his mother Mary A. Shaw and his children Annie L. (18 years), Lula P. (17 years), Linton L. (15 years) and James B. (11 years). Lula’s step mother was named Nora Lee. Lula was fondly referred to by her grandchildren as “Gaga”. Annie (Aunt Annie) was fondly remembered by her great nieces and nephews and grandchildren.

It has been reported that Dick and Lula operated a hotel in Sinton in the 1908 time frame.

By 1910, William B. “Dick” Rachal was 24 and had two children: Bernice and Margaret. He was a store owner (possibly), with the census-stated occupation of Merchant, General Merchandise. The only known information on location is that they were in San Patricio County Voter Precinct #9. They lived near or next door to the P.A. Hunter family. Mrs. P.A. Hunter was his sister Florence.

In 1918, William registered for WWI military service. He was 33 years old. This data was found on his registration card:

William Berwick Rachal

Date of registration: 11 September 1918

Age 33

Occupation: self-employed farmer, address RFD #1, Taft, TX

Residence: Taft, San Patricio County, TX

Tall, medium build, dark eyes and hair

It is not known if he ever served, however, since fighting was halted on 11 November 1918 and WWI officially ended in 1919.

By 1920, William's family had grown to 7 people: William, Lula, Bernice (13 years old), Margaret (11), Hal (9), D.C. (5) and Rachel (almost 4).

Name	Born	At	Married	On	Died	At
William Berwick (Dick) Rachal	9/8/1885	Rosita		1905	9/26/1929	
Lula P. Shaw	1/7/1883	CC			8/22/1958	
Bernice Aurelia (Bea)	8/21/1906	San Patricio Co	Henry (Mac) McGregor	?	5/10/1983	CC
Margaret J.	11/18/1910	San Patricio Co	Joseph Otis McNabb	?	3/28/1991	CC
Hal Francis	1/1/1912	San Patricio Co	Virginia	?	1/22/1993	Midland, TX
Darius Ciriaque (D.C.)	6/26/1914	San Patricio Co	Frances Louise Pilant	9/1941	12/25/1991	CC
Rachel Mary	1916	?	James Dawson	?	--	--

They were living in San Patricio County, Justice Precinct 1. The census sheet had the town of Sinton written on it but it was later crossed off. William's occupation at this time was Life Insurance Agent. They were renting their home.

At some point in his life, he was a U.S. Marshal in Corpus Christi but the time frame is unknown. Later, he served in the appointed position of Sinton postmaster until the new presidential administration was sworn into office (which was probably either 1921 (Harding) or 1923 (Coolidge)). Postmasters were political appointees, so he lost his job at the next presidential term.

William spent time in jail in Huntsville in the 1924 - 1926 time frame due to a land deal that went bad, presumably based on some bad legal advice. Evidence suggests he might have been a victim of circumstance.

After his release from prison, it is thought he got into the real estate business. Unfortunately, he contracted pneumonia and died on 29 October 1929 at the young age of 44.

William was a self-taught violinist as well as a well-liked family man in San Patricio County. It has also been reported that he may have been a heavy drinker.

Six months after his death, per the 1930 census, his widow Lula was working as a bookkeeper at the local water company. She and four of her children were living in Corpus Christi in Precinct 1 on Hancock Avenue. Her home was valued at \$8000. Bea (age 22) was married and living with her husband in an apartment also on Hancock Ave.

Bea's occupation was listed as "none" (although she was trained as a nurse and later pursued nursing as a career) while her husband's occupation was Salesman, Confectionary. The other four children were at home: Margaret (age 20), Hal (18), D.C. (15) and Rachel (14). Margaret's occupation was Registered Nurse. Hal's occupation was Meter Reader for the gas and water company. D.C. and Rachel were in school.

Dick Rachal's Pistol

It is worth noting that there was a Colt pistol, which was given to Dick Rachal, probably as a gift for his service while he was U.S. Marshal. The inscription on the pistol says "W.B. Rachal from R.H. Welder". The Patent is also inscribed and reads "PAT Sept.19 1871 July 2.72 Jan.9.75.



This gun is documented by Colt and is a beautiful family heirloom. It passed into several hands through the years, but at one point was given back to D.C. Rachal, son of Dick Rachal, because it was thought that the pistol should remain in the Rachal family. It is now in the possession of Scott Newberry, grandson of D.C. Rachal. Its value was somewhat diminished by one owner who decided to have the silver pistol plated with nickel, presumably to make it easier to clean. Nevertheless, it is still a treasured item.

D.C. Rachal, son of Dick and Lula

D.C. Rachal was the fourth child born to Dick and Lula Rachal. He was born on 26 June 1914 possibly at the White Point ranch. The Dick Rachal family moved a few times back and forth between White Point and Sinton.



At the age of 2, D.C. developed polio. He was fitted with a leg brace which he wore for a number of years afterwards.

In 1919, when D.C. was about 5, the famous 1919 hurricane hit Corpus Christi and White Point. He and his family lived in a home next to the Spohn Hospital on North Beach. They all went to the hospital, a four story building, for shelter. The storm hit the area around noon and kept up its fury for 12-15 hours. It completely destroyed the Rachal home and flooded the bottom two floors of the hospital. Many hospital patients, possibly over half, lost their lives to the storm. D.C. and his family survived but lost their home and temporarily lost their new Maxwell car. The car was later found and was dried out and made operational.

In 1929, when D.C. was about 15 years old, he was able, with the help of a neighbor who was a member of the fraternal organization Freemasonry, to enter the Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas for treatment and surgery on his leg affected by polio. He was taken there by his Aunt Annie (assumed to be Frank S. Rachal's wife Anna), in their 1928 Model A Roadster. He was there about 3 months. It is interesting that in a letter that he wrote to his sisters Bea and Margaret, who were attending nursing school, in October 1928, he signed his name as Decuss.



In 1933 at the age of about 18 or 19, D.C. entered the University of Texas. He stayed one semester until his funding ran out and then he was forced to drop out. He did, however, retain his job in the State Senate helping produce the weekly Senate Bulletin. At the end of the current legislative session, he returned to Corpus and got a job as a dry cleaning truck driver.

In 1935, D.C. went to work for the Packard dealership operated by Otis McNabb (D.C.'s brother-in-law) and Ned Collins in Corpus. Sometime later, the dealership went broke so D.C. found employment at a local Chevrolet dealership and then The Roy Murray Motors Ford dealership in the 1940-41 time frame as a car salesman.



It was during this time that D.C. met Frances Louise Pilant. Frances was the switchboard operator for Roy Murray. Their courtship was hampered by the fact that Frances moved to San Antonio, but D.C. would drive back and forth to San Antonio to win her over. Finally, in September 1941, they were married.

More information on Frances Louise Pilant is presented in another report

D.C and Frances had two children:

Name	Born	At	Married	On	Died	At
D.C. Rachal	6/26/1914			9/1941	12/25/1991	Robstown
Frances Louise Pilant	10/14/1919				7/25/1976	
Diane Claudia	11/26/1942		James Newberry Ken Pinter	? 12/30/1989	-- --	-- --
Mary Priscilla (Prissy)	9/4/1946		Dick Moody Richard Cobb	? ?	-- --	-- --
Betty Wade	1926			2/13/1977	--	--

D.C.’s work experiences from 1935 until he married in 1941 set the stage for his life time career: selling cars.

When WWII started, the US government froze the production of automobiles in favor of producing war machines, so D.C. found himself unemployed. He went to work at a Humble gas station for about 6 months working 16 hours per day, but soon changed to selling Borden’s ice cream products during WWII.

After the war, D.C. founded his own used car dealership in Corpus Christi. From there, in 1949, he moved to Kingsville with his young family and bought a Jeep/GMC dealership. After three years, in 1952, he sold this dealership and moved his family again to Robstown where he partnered with Happy Hopper, D.C.’s cousin, to buy the Robstown Motor Company. He and Happy called it Rachal-Hopper Ford and it was “right on the corner, right on the price” at Avenue A and Fifth Avenue in Robstown, TX.

In July 1976, D.C. lost his wife Frances to lung cancer. In 1977 he was remarried, to Betty Wade of Corpus Christi.

Later, by 1963, the dealership was renamed D.C. Rachal Ford. In 1979, D.C. left the dealership as an active owner and sold it to Bob Lacy. He continued to maintain an office at the dealership until he died on Christmas Day, 1991, of complications due to skin cancer.

Note on Bernice Rachal McGregor

Bernice Rachal McGregor applied for and was accepted to the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She was able to demonstrate that she was descended from James Taylor White, born ca 1710-20 in Virginia, and that he “rendered material aid to the cause; patriot”.