

Jesse McKinley “Kink” Martin



Jesse McKinley Martin about age 13 soon after moving to Dalton.

Jesse McKinley Martin, the first son of Herman and Mary Martin, was born in Bancroft, Nebraska on October 29, 1896. We don't know the origin of his name Jesse, but his middle name McKinley was given because William McKinley, a popular politician, won the presidential election a few days following his birth. But neither the names Jesse nor McKinley seemed to identify him. Somewhere along the line he became known as “Kink,” which was probably a shortened nickname for McKinley. When the Herman and Mary Martin family moved from Bancroft to Dalton in 1908, Kink was nearly twelve years old. We don't know how many years of school he completed. He worked with his father in the blacksmith shop from the time it was established in 1908 until Kink left Dalton to move to California, probably in the late 1920s.

As the oldest boy in the family, a lot of responsibility fell on Kink's shoulders, but he had a wonderful sense of humor and wide variety of interests. He enjoyed cars, which were beginning to become more commonplace. He had a Model T Ford and liked to show off by driving it around the town flag pole which was in the middle of the main intersection of town. With several of his brothers or friends in the car and the rumble seat, he would drive around the pole in increasingly smaller circles so as to see just how tight a circle he could make with the car.

In 1916, Dalton built a new two-story brick school building. Kink's younger brother Cliff has told the story that Kink, then about twenty years old, commemorated the opening of the school by hanging by his heels from a second story window. Cliff said Kink was very acrobatic and always liked to do unusual things in order to be the center of attention. Kink participated in local boxing and wrestling events held in Dalton and Sidney. The February 13, 1920 *Dalton Delegate* newspaper reported the week's preliminary event was won by McKinley Martin.



Jesse McKinley “Kink” Martin, 1927 at age 30.

The Herman Martin family established a movie “theater” above the drug store and ran movies for the townspeople every Friday evening. Kink was responsible for running the projector and the story is commonly told that whenever the film broke or the reels needed to be changed, the people would just sit and talk until Kink would get it going again.

Kink was also interested in the ladies, and they in him. On leap year, the *Dalton Delegate* ran mock advertisements offering the town's most eligible bachelors, all of whom were guaranteed to be as represented. Kink made the list in January 1920: “McKinley ‘Kink’ Martin is one of the best on our list. Good as gold and true as steel. Considering the goods, a high bid is expected.”

Very little social activity escaped the notice of the newspaper, and the March 26, 1920 *Dalton Delegate* noted that, “McKinley ‘Kink’ Martin and friend Walter made their usual weekly trip to Gurley Saturday night. We sometimes wonder what attractions the boys find down there.” Kink married Eva Gustin, from the local Dalton area on December 16, 1925. They were divorced after only a few years of marriage.



Ornamental iron fence and Martin gate enclosing the Martin family area at the Dalton cemetery designed and built by Kink Martin.

Kink had worked regularly with his father in the blacksmith shop and had become an expert craftsman in designing and fabricating ornamental iron furniture and other items as well as making just

about anything one could imagine out of iron or steel. He was an excellent welder. Following Herman Martin’s death in October 1934, Kink made an ornamental iron fence and gate to enclose the Martin family grave sites in the Dalton cemetery. It was very impressive and admired by many, but with changes in cemetery rules, the ironwork was taken down in the 1950s.

Sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s, Kink moved to southern California. His younger brother Chet had moved there in 1927 and might have encouraged Kink to join him in the area making him aware of job opportunities. Kink became employed by Murray’s Ornamental Shop in South Pasadena, California. Kink made iron and steel fabricating and ornamental iron work his life’s career and spent the remainder of his working years at Murray’s.

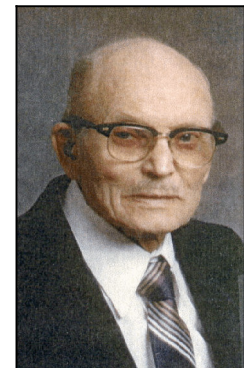


Bunny and Kink soon after their marriage in 1937, with his mother Mary Martin in Dalton.

Kink married Adeline Kirk on July 14, 1937. She went by the nickname “Bunny,” and while little is known about her, she had a good sense of humor and was well-liked by the Martin family. They lived in Alhambra, not far from his brothers Chet and Clarence.

Kink and Bunny had a Spanish-style home with a back yard where they had large, tall cages in which they raised and kept exotic birds. Kink was always interested in his siblings and their families. With the untimely death of his brother Chet, Kink stood in and gave

away Chet’s daughter Carmen at her 1957 wedding. Bunny died June 4, 1948. Kink had no children. He died at the age of 89 on November 23, 1985 and is buried in Whittier, California.



Jesse McKinley “Kink” Martin, early 1980s.

