

**FRANCIS “FERN”
BOTTOMS
McFARLAND
1915-1988**



**SEMINOLE’S
GRANNY
FERN’S
KITCHEN**

If you meet someone who lived in Seminole in their youth, they might have eaten at “Granny Fern’s Kitchen”. Chances are, their faces light up in remembrance of the best pie by the extraordinary woman known as “Granny Fern” McFarland.

Francis “Fern” Bottoms was born in Heavener in August 1915 and moved to Seminole in 1921. She grew up in a company-run oil town outside of Seminole, where her father was a roustabout for Carter Oil Company. Fern first saw Ray McFarland outside of Seminole’s Park Drug Store. He was dressed in a three-piece suit, with his foot on the bumper of a new Model A Ford. She thought he looked like Rudolph Valentino. He liked her as well.

Fern was a high school apprentice hair stylist at a local beauty shop and Ray was a drugstore clerk. For the next few days, she shopped at the drugstore every day, learning that Ray had grown up in nearby Bowlegs, come to Seminole in 1931 to work at the drugstore, and was a pharmacy student at the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

On their first date, they saw “It Happened One Night” with Clark Gable. Ray told Fern about a young oil field worker from Ohio a few years ago who tried to buy medicine at the drugstore but had no money. When he was denied credit, the young man said, “You must remember my name – Clark Gable. Someday I will be famous.” Gable did indeed work in Oklahoma, before heading to Hollywood.

After Fern’s graduation, Ray wanted to get married but Fern said they didn’t have enough money for the large formal wedding, with a real wedding cake, she wanted. Ray desperately asked what he could do to get the wedding she wanted. Fern had a quick answer. “Sell your prized possession, Model A Ford, and ride the autobus to pharmacy school.”

On September 22, 1934, Fern, in her gorgeous long white satin wedding dress, married Ray. It would be twelve years before they could afford another car! For two years Ray rode the autobus to school each day and Fern worked at the beauty shop – dreaming of owning their own drugstore.

In 1953 the McFarlands bought Central Drug Store, where Fern turned the old soda fountain into a thriving lunch counter. She would serve her famous barbeque, spaghetti, homemade bread and delicious pies. After school, their daughters would help out.

One day, a handsome dark-haired man, with a black mustache, asked for a discount but Fern refused. The man introduced himself as Ernie Ford but she didn’t know him. “But don’t you recognize me. I am known as Tennessee Ernie Ford and I’m on the radio every Friday night.” The tall stranger chuckled, “Have you ever heard of the song Sixteen Tons?” Fern’s daughter listened to the song. “You mean you are that Tennessee Ernie.” He was so captivated by her that he would tell the story for years afterwards, and for many years sent Fern a Christmas card.

In 1965, the McFarlands bought a bigger building to add a dining room and another room for Granny Fern’s Boutique. Ray retired in 1977 to enjoy travel and Arizona winters until Fern died in October 1988 at age 73. For years afterwards, traveling salesmen asked about the restaurant that served that good spaghetti and great strawberry pie.