PART TWO: TRANSCRIPTS

President Obama’s Kansas Heritage Project

In partnership with

BCTV
Butler Community College
102 S. Haverhill Road
El Dorado, KS 67042

DEDICATION

We dedicate this collection to our oral history narrators and to grandparents everywhere. It is they who hold fast the bonds of community from one generation to the next, and the next, through time.

This project is supported by the Kansas Humanities Council, a non-profit cultural organization dedicated to promoting humanities programs across Kansas. More information is available at kansashumanities.org.
Transcripts Index

These are 22 transcripts of the included 16 oral histories representing 17 Kansans, as well website clips and productions. They are included with a separation sheet between each, in the following order:

1. Clarence Kerns (03/03/2009)
   a. Clip: 3 pages
   b. Full Interview transcript: 49 pages
2. Caroline E. (née Lewis) Short (03/03/2009)
   a. 37 pages
3. Margaret (née McCurry) Wolf (05/21/2009)
   a. Clip: 4 pages
   b. Full Interview transcript: 23 pages
4. Clifford Stone (2008; 4A and 4B, 2 DVDs)
   a. 52 pages
5. Forrest Robinson (06/09/2010)
   a. Clip: 3 pages
   b. Full Interview transcript: 41 pages
   c. Feature: 8 pages
   a. Clip: 3 pages
   b. Full Interview transcript: 41 pages
7. Virginia (née Dashner) Ewalt (06/21/2011)
   a. 43 pages
8. Mary Frances (née Kennedy) Lawrence (06/21/2011)
   a. Clip: 3 pages
   b. Full Interview transcript: 19 pages
9. Bill Dennett (07/09/2012)
   a. 20 pages
10. Nina June (née Swan) Parry and Nelva (née Seaburn) Wentz (10/01/2012; 10A and 10B, 2 DVDs)
    a. 42 pages
11. Lois Olsen-Cox, née Olsen (10/04/2012)
    a. 22 pages
12. Raymond Teegarden (04/03/2013)
    a. 23 pages
13. Margaret (née Lewis) Shirk (04/24/2013)
    a. 24 pages
    a. 48 pages
15. Esther (née Gonzales) Mayes (11/05/2013)
    a. 31 pages
16. Berry Harris (09/02/2015)
    a. 40 pages

Q. (Interviewer): Quite awesome.

A. My wife is deep in genealogy, and she has just been amazed that, that it couldn't happen anywhere else in the world but here. And that's what Obama has acknowledged himself.

Q. Exactly.

A. It, it really couldn't. Sometimes I wish that he'd less stress so much that he is a black person, but he's 50 percent white. I wish he'd stress that a little more. But he is an intelligent person. There's no question about that.

***
This was to the 55-year reunion, May the 11th, 1990, and we received this letter from Stanley Dunham, and Madelyn. It says, "My wife and I have one daughter, Ann. We have two grandchildren, Barack and Maya. After leaving Kansas, we lived in Seattle for five years. Then we moved to Hawaii where we have lived for over 30 years. I am retired after 20 years in the furniture business and 20 years in insurance. Madelyn retired as vice-president of the Bank of Hawaii. Sorry, I can't be there. It would be a long ways to go for a golf game. Signed, Stanley Dunham."

***

Now, our class did not have a 20-year* reunion because in 1945 most of us were scattered all over the world.

Q. Mm-hm.

A. So in 1955 we had our first real reunion. And at that reunion, uh, Stanley Dunham was living here in town, and he and Madelyn were there. That's the last time I saw Madelyn. And Ann, undoubtedly, she would have been 13-years-old so she must have been in the middle school here. They lived on Olive --

Q. That was what year again?

A. That would have been '55.

Q. Okay.

A. So she would have been 13. And -- but the schools keep no

*[1945 was to have been the 10-year reunion, not 20-year. --Editor’s note]
records unless you graduate from high school. So they don't have any record of her being in school, but I wouldn't be too surprised that my oldest boy might have gone to school with her at middle school, but you know, you don't know all the kids in the school, because he was born in 1943. So the chances are they were close to the same age. But at any rate, they did live on Olive and lived here then. And then, the only other time that Stanley ever came back was in -- for our 50th reunion in 1985. He and his brother, Ralph, came back to the reunion. That's where I got some of the stuff.

Q. Oh, he did come to that one?

[END]
Q. Any language.

CK. Just to tell you how much I admire being here and all that kind of stuff?

Q. Yes, that would work. Anything's good.

CK. You bet. Nice ladies always fascinate me.

Q. Always do. Yes; that's right. Oh, you're still a schmoozer. Let me close this door. Okay. We are recording any time you're ready to go.

Q. Clarence, what is your full name?

CK. Clarence H. Kerns.

Q. And is there a story about how you got that name? Is there a story behind it?
CK. I have no idea. They just probably couldn't think up any middle name for me so they gave me the middle name -- middle initial.

Q. I wonder, do you -- did you have any nicknames while you were growing up in El Dorado?

CK. I didn't understand your question.

Q. Did you have any nicknames while you were growing up in El Dorado?

CK. Not that I can remember.

Q. None at all. None at all. What we're really interested in is knowing what you remember about El Dorado growing up in the 20's and 30's, and I'm just going to open that up to you to share the first things that come to mind.

CK. Well, I think that's the most wonderful thing about the great changes that have happened through the years. And the -- when my father first came to El Dorado, in fact, you... he ran an oil patch in Oklahoma, and he found out about staple number one coming in. In 1915 they moved up here and worked. They lived right there north of the fire station, and then later he decided that town was going to move out North, surely, and he went out north of the flood plain on Riverside and bought a lot out there, and they had a tent. They were living in a tent with a wooden floor, and he was working 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and in any spare time, he started to build a house. They had one room of it built -- fairly well finished -- when I was
born in that room. Otherwise, I would have been born in a tent. And it took a long time to ever finish that up. But it was typical of what people lived in because no water on the premises. They carried water from a half a block away from half away across the block and the -- they lived in a tent, and I can remember about when my mother used to tell about laundry day came around. Had a kettle, an iron kettle, in the back yard and build a fire in it, and he carried water in it, and put in the tub. And they'd boil the water and wash and hang clothes up on the fence or whatever was handy. You know, wash day then was something. Now, we do the laundry while we're getting breakfast. But it's such a change that way. Another thing is that everything north of the present river bridge, the North Main Street bridge, they didn't have sewerage out there for years and years. They didn't get a sewer north of the river until 1953. That's the reason all the North part of town now has a sewer. But they didn't have a sewer out there. They had pit toilets everywhere. And, at the same time, Oil Hill was a town out here that belonged to Empire Refining Company. And all of those houses, they just had pit toilets everywhere out there. And young people just can't imagine that - the uh, so many different things that have changed so much like that. In fact, toilet paper -- common place thing now --
you know, there wasn't toilet paper then. Sears and Roebuck catalog was a very handy thing to have around.

And so many things have changed so much. And the town itself has changed because where the railroad, at one time, came right down through Gordy through the middle part of town, and now, it's on the bypass -- on the dike outside of town. And, at one time, they had an intersection -- not too long ago they had a derailment up just north of Fifth Street and there -- well, that's where the intersection used to be. And I thought -- amusing thing for many, many years, in the State of Kansas, there was a law on the State of Kansas laws, and they finally appealed them just a few years ago, and it said: “When they had railroad intersection and two railroad trains met at the intersection they shall both stop and neither shall proceed until the other has gone on.” (Laughs) I like that law, but they finally got rid of it. But the railroads have changed completely. The rivers in the town have changed completely. When I was a kid, the North Main Street bridge was at Sixth and Main.

Q. Mm-hm. Okay.

CK. At -- in 1934 and 5 they built the present bridge right out on the dry land. And there was a big loop in the river, came down and back up, so they just cut underneath the river and through
the years they filled that great big loop where all of the
grocery stores --

Q. Oh.

CK. -- and the filling stations, all that stuff that was a river
bed, so they cut that one loop out of there so that part’s all
changed. That bridge is now at Eighth and Main. Yeah.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. Then, out east of town on East Central is -- there used to be
two bridges on East Central from the Dairy Queen on out East
where the duck pond is now? Well, they changed the whole rivers
for -- of everything. It's one of the biggest changes El Dorado
ever made, where the West Branch of the river, at one time, came
down through behind the ball diamond, went under the railroad
flowing from west to east, and west -- I mean the other way
around, the East Branch came under the railroad flowing east to
west and joined the West Branch. And there used to be a
Sharpeville area between the two rivers. You could go up around
between the two rivers. They changed the channels to where now,
the West Branch comes in there and goes under the railroad and
joins the new channel they dug around. And it took all of the
river out down where the park is and where the museum is. There
used to be two rivers through there and they reclaimed all of
that. So that all is completely different.
But when they built the present railroad dike, I remember they moved all that dirt with horses. And for some reason they had three horses hitched side by side and little dump wagons there — these horses moved just like ants -- moving all that dirt? And as a kid I thought, "My! Those wagons are so big." Well, during the service, I was stationed at Las Vegas a while and down on Fremont Street, by the depot, they had twenty-mule team borax wagon; huge thing there. And also one of these wagons, they used the type that they used here, and it would hold just about what a pickup would haul.

Q. It didn't look big at all.

CK. But times have changed. But they were just like ants. And they had steam driven pile drivers that drove the piles for the railroad overpass where the bridge is that big old black. They had been in there, evidently, since they put that in there when I was just a kid. So they must have been pretty durable. They were creosoted dikes and they had a steam driven power driver that drove those into the ground. And, evidently, they had been there because they looked the same to me.

Q. Well, now, you know what I never thought about in El Dorado? So many things are identified West Branch EHU or something like that, and I hadn't ever really thought about why things were designated West Branch and back to that history.
CK. Well, now, one of the most unusual things that happened, I was about seven- or eight-years-old and something happened that -- when I was in the service, one time, we were telling about things that happened back home, and I told that story and they almost threw me in the shower with my clothes on. I told them about the time the West Branch of the El Dorado River here caught on fire. And it did one Sunday afternoon, about where Carlyle's business is on North Main. A man was burning trash in his back yard and had an old automobile tire, and he threw that on, and it started making a terrible smoke, and he was going to do something with it. So he took a pitch fork, and he threw the darn burning tire in the river.

Q. Oh.

CK. Well, the Old North Refinery put lots and lots of hydrocarbons in the river and it's a lot of, in there, and the whole river went. It burned the floor out of the bridge, the Ninth Street bridge, that they just recently made a new one there.

Q. Right.

CK. It was that old metal bridge. They burned the floor out, and they had a horrible time getting started. All of the trees started fire, but --

Q. Just from the tire?

CK. Well, the tire set that fire off with all of the different petroleum products in the river.
Q. Right. Right.
CK. And that was kind of an unusual thing to have happen.
Q. And how old were you about that time?
CK. About seven- or eight-years-old, I think.
Q. Oh, my goodness.
Q. (Second interviewer): Can I ask a question?
CK. Yes.
Q. Did you play -- did you and your friends play around the railroad tracks or around the rivers when you were growing up?
CK. Not if my mother had anything to say about it. That's the best answer I can give you.
But, uh -- and then another thing that I think is interesting here, that so many different things happen that are so much different. When the trains came through on the Santa Fe and crossed Central, they had to have some controls so they had a little house at the corner of the street, and a little man set in there all day long. And when a train came by, he ran out in the middle of the street with a little sign that said "Stop" and held it up -- until -- held the traffic up until the trains went by.
Q. How often do you -- were trains --
CK. Quite often then because this was a main line, and that's one reason they tried to build around town because it was bad. All that traffic going right down through the middle part of town.
Q. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

CK. But, of course, he, uh, he was not the only unusual person we had in that town because it was quite often that we had one weather prophet of some kind here in town. He had habit of coming into businesses and proclaiming what weather was going to be had for the day. And it might be just exactly what they had and it might not be anything like it at all. And they had another man that swept the streets all the time, and he was always in church on Sunday, but they teased him all the time because he was just susceptible to that kind of stuff, and they carried it too far; sometimes it was really terrible. They also had a little stand that had been built by the merchants at the southwest corner of Main and Central and a little fella is in there, they called him Shorty, he didn't have any legs at all, and he had that little stand to sell newspapers out of. And everybody knew Shorty in town.

Q. Wow.

CK. And then a real character they had in town too, at the time, a fella named Herb Curtis. He had a taxicab, and he must have been the poorest driver that ever drove in El Dorado because his car was just dented all over. But anyone that had enough courage to ride with him -- well, he was our only taxicab driver for many, many years.
But the way they built -- changed the rivers and the railroads are the biggest changes we've made. And, of course, a lot of things that -- right now they're talking about a better stadium -- to build a stadium. Well, that stadium was built in the very early 30's and it was interesting the way they got the money to build that. Cement then, if you can imagine, cost 60 cents a sack, and people contributed one or two sacks of cement. And that's the way we built the stadium.

Q. Oh, for heaven's sakes.

CK. So that's been quite an interesting thing there. But, then, of course, when 1927 -- as most of you know, why, they decided to have a junior college here which was more or less an extension of the high school, at the time. And their first classes, I believe, in 1929 and in 1935 I started into the junior college, so it was only 7 years old when I started. And then it was a wonderful day when, well, that one time it overgrew the facility down there and they put it out in the old Jefferson school --

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. -- and my oldest son went to school there. The boys, basketball players especially, had to get down on their knees to drink in the drinking fountain they were so small and things like that. And then finally, in fact, I think this would be a good time to say something about one interesting periodical they had. The little -- they were trying to get public opinion to go
countywide to build a junior college. And I thought it was rather interesting until my son came home and he and two or three other rather radical students in the school put out a little newspaper and he called it "The Eye Sore." And it told about this old Jefferson school building, how terrible it was and unsafe; the floors about to fall in and everything. And it looked like libel, just scared me to pieces, and he said, "That's all right, Dad. Don't worry about it. We know what we're doing and everything." Well, they put several copies of that out and I still think it had a lot to do with the election to go countywide. And I found -- later I found out that they had a lawyer downtown that was proof reading all the stuff for them. And Walburn, who happened to be the president of the junior college at the time, had fostered and perpetuated the whole thing. But it really had a lot to do with public sentiment.

Q. So that was Bainard. Bainard did that?

CK. That was Kenny.

Q. Kenny. Okay. And it was called "The Eye Sore"?

CK. "The Eye Sore."

Q. "The Eye Sore."

CK. And they put out, I don't know, quite a number of editions and scattered them everywhere around town. And I think it had a lot to do with the election. And I remember the day that they had
the ground breaking out here; real cold day. And I can't remember his name anymore, but the man down from at Latham somewhere had the main speech. I can't remember his name, but it was quite cold. We were out here when they had the ground breaking for it.

Q. Uh-huh.

CK. It was a wonderful day.

Q. Oh, my. Oh, my. You know, you brought up a really good point about all the changes but the conveniences you talked about what a job it was just to do laundry.

CK. That's right.

Q. And how did that change the entertainment that you remember your family enjoying then? Once, you know, bit by bit as conveniences even if it was indoor plumbing?

CK. Mm-hm.

Q. How did that change your entertainment in the time that you could spend together --?

CK. Well --

Q. -- as a family?

CK. The, of course, movies were expensive. The El Dorado theatre was rather ritzy; it cost a quarter. But they had two theatres on West Central, The Iris and--what in the world then -- I can't remember -- Palace! And they were a dime so if you had any money, you could go. But during the depression, that's another
part of life that was really part of growing up, and we right now are in such a turmoil with things, but -- and I think this thing is enough scary it -- that to me I can remember enough from 1929 -- and this looks a lot like '29 except that this has been much different because in 1929 if you had any money in the bank or anything, and so many banks just put a sign on the front door, and that was it. And you lost everything you had. Well, with the bank investment insurance -- why, unless you -- if you have your stuff invested half way intelligently, why, you're pretty well protected. And so it hasn't been quite so sudden. But it's really a real problem. I'm interested in seeing how it's going to --

Q. A little Deja vu for you?

CK. Beg your pardon?

Q. A little bit of Deja vu for you?

CK. Yeah.

Q. How do you think people in this community, especially here you are still a member of this community--

CK. Mm-hm.

Q. -- so how do you see the character of the people living here now holding up to --?

CK. Well, I think --

Q. -- these kind of challenges?
CK. -- I think the American people come through because uh, they have before.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. But it's going to take a long time. And it may be our grandchildren -- great grandchildren going to bear the brunt of it. But --

Q. When you were a child and you watched your parents, what would you say, as an adult, to people now; the best piece of advice you could give them for weathering times like this?

CK. Well, one thing about it -- we've lived in real luxury for so many years and our young people, now -- so it's true that they want to get married and have everything that their parents have had after years of preparation and work and things and that. During the depression, you had to learn to do without. You didn't buy new things, you repaired them or whatever happened. And it was astonishing some of the things that actually took part. In fact, there was a movie, "Grapes of Wrath," that people moving out of Oklahoma to California -- and I still remember them on the part that was so true to life. They had this old car the radiator had gone bad and you couldn't buy a radiator and you didn't have any money. So they took a barrel -- took a radiator off, put a barrel on the front of that automobile, then hooked up to the engine. And they had put that thing full of water about 25 -- 30 gallons of water. And they
could drive that car as long as that water was circulating to
cool the engine. And when it got too hot, you just had to set
and wait for it to cool off.

Q. HCK. Did you see innovations like that in El Dorado?
CK. Oh, yes. In many ways.
Q. What do you remember?
CK. Oh, but uh, well, you just didn't buy new. You repaired.
Q. You repaired.
CK. And if you didn't -- couldn't repair it, you usually did
without.
Q. You just did without it.
CK. But I know we never did miss any meals at our place, but we
postponed one once in a while a little. But my dad was lucky.
He had worked at Empire for years; Empire Oil Refining Company.
And this town of Oil Hill was an interesting study. The company
owned every home in town, and the employees got charged a small
amount, seven dollars a month or something, to live in the
houses. And the houses were three rooms -- well, the original
ones were what they called a “box car house.” And there is a
few of the residues still in town, one or two I helped build in
something else. But they were just a straight box car with a
flat roof and things, but they were, more or less, a wooden
tent.
And then they started building the regular three-room houses that they had dozens and dozens and dozens of them out there although I don't know how many people lived there. And they also had a real nice high school out there, and a swimming pool, nine-hole golf course, a fire station, barber shop, grocery store. It was a regular little city, but the company -- the only people that lived out there worked for the company, and we never did live out there. We lived in town, and Dad drove back and forth with the 1914 international truck that's in the museum now. Have you ever seen it?

Q. Oh, yes. Yes.

CK. Okay. That was my dad's truck --

Q. Oh, for heaven's sakes!

CK. -- and he drove that thing back and forth, and we didn't have a car. Otherwise, we walked to town or whatever. But that thing was so hard to start that finally he had a chance to get a Model T Ford when the 1921's came out, and '21 Fords -- you had to crank them by hand. They had more broken arms than you could shake a stick with in cold weather.

Q. Ha, ha. Yeah.

CK. But then the 19 -- after '21 had they had a starter on them so the old truck got more or less retired and put in a shed at home and stayed there for years and years. And after my dad died, why, we finally -- I wanted to restore it -- and that's not a
poor man's hobby -- it gets pretty expensive. So we gave it to the museum, and they have had it completely restored, and we've had it in parades several times. I've driven it in several parades; it's been fun. But right now it's -- they've moved it out of the main lobby down there out in -- they have another building. It's got the stagecoaches and trucks and things in it, and it's out in another building. But that is a residue of the oil boom. What they used that for to haul their tools and things when they went out to build the houses in Oil Hill, and it's got wagon wheels, you know, and everything.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. But that's a -- was in our family until we gave it to the museum.

Q. Was a huge part of El Dorado's history for sure. What kinds of local gatherings and events when you're thinking about the entertainment had your family --?

CK. Well, the biggest thing we had from, I don't know when it started probably 1914 or something -- some back in there, they started the Kaffir Corn Carnival, and it lasted -- and I think what stopped it really was when the 1929 -- when the depression hit money was so scarce. I think that was the end of it. I can't remember anything after that. But each year they had all of the exhibits and things. They had a big parade; the kids got out of school and all took parts in the parade. Had all kinds
of floats and all of the booths -- every school district and everything had booths and everything had to be decorated with kaffir corn, it's a type of maize that's headed -- heads of the corn. And they had some of the neatest booths that's just covered all over with kaffir corn. And there was one year they had a, a derrick setting right between the -- on Main and Central intersection they had big derrick there. I think it was the anniversary of Thomas Edison's birth or something and they had lights all over it. But those booths were up and down the street. They had all kinds of rides in town, you know for the kids and everything to ride in. And they had the parade and had a queen for the parade that made a lot of publicity. And then one of the parades, I still remember, I think it was the same parade my dad helped build a booth that had an oil well derrick on it.

Q. Oh, my.

CK. And one of the interesting things that happened in that thing, might bring another story up too, the Ku Klux Klan was so active here at the time.

Q. And that was what year?

CK. I think it must have been '28.

Q. Okay.

CK. About '28 they actually had a float in the parade with big, beautiful white horses pulling this float with all kinds of
signs on it, and three or four outriggers in their white uniforms and things were riding on each side of it, and they had the parade in there. And not only that, I was -- remember two other things that might be interesting they were thick enough apparently that at one time my dad came home from work one evening and said, "Hurry up. Let's eat a bite." Said, "There's going to be a Ku Klux Klan rally out south of town tonight and the public is invited." They were trying to recruit members. What in the world's going on? So we got in the old Model T and drove down south of town where you go up Eightman [phonetic] -- Weller Ewing's home was right near there.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. And just on the other side of that big old hill was an open place became an airport, at one time, too for a while. They had this rally going on. So we drove up there and there was an old boy in all of his paraphernalia out there in the street, and we drove up and my dad stopped and he said, "Hi, Frank." Said, "Go down here and go through that gate and go on down there and they'll tell you where to park." Somebody he knew. So --

Q. Did he recognize the voice?

CK. No. So he drove on and said, "Wonder who in the world that is?" Got down there and somebody else says, "Hi, Shorty" Said, "Go on down here and they'll park you." And they did.

Q. Oh.
CK. And --

Q. Wow.

CK. -- they had a big bonfire --

Q. Wow.

CK. And all kinds of things -- trying to recruit people.

Q. Oh, my.

CK. And I guess I don't remember much more about it. Probably found some other kids to play with because, you know, because I was nine-years-old or ten.

Q. Uh-huh.

CK. But shortly after that we were at a neighbor's house, and we were playing hide-and-go-seek. And I got the bright idea to really hide. I'd just go in the house and hide in the clothes closet. And I went in the house, into their bedroom, and got back in a clothes closet, started digging back under clothes and good night nurse there was a Ku Klux Klan uniform hanging there on the -- and did I get out of there in a hurry.

Q. Wow.

CK. It was quite a surprise cause you never knew who they were.

Q. Yeah.

CK. They were thick and everywhere.

Q. Yeah. Yeah.

CK. But fortunately it didn't last.

Q. Did it attract quite a few people?
CK. Oh, they were quite interested just it's a curiosity.

Q. Right, right.

CK. Uh-huh.

Q. Right.

CK. But they were pretty active at that time.

Q. And when you say active, do you remember violence? Do you remember any --?

CK. No, I don't remember --

Q. It was more that they were kind of showy --

CK. No.

Q. -- members?

CK. No. Mainly I think it was just -- I think just an oddity because the bad part, I think, has gone just to history.

Q. Okay.

CK. But --

Q. (Second Interviewer): How did your parents talk to you about race and the Ku Klux Klan; if you can remember?

CK. Well, they didn't have any part in it I know that. And, of course, I lived on Riverside, and one of my closest friends going to school was Vertie Tomlin; only died a few years ago. Vertie was a great guy. Now, when we were in school, if someone had come to me or any of the other kids and said, "Say, aren't you going to school with this Vertie Tomlin?"

"Yes."
"Is there anything different about him than the rest of you?"

"Yeah."

I would have probably said, "Yes, there's one thing different about him. He can run faster than anybody else in school," or something like that because Vertie was a wonderful guy.

Q. Yes, he was.

CK. And that, uh, we -- Riverside School, of course, is an interesting thing too.

Q. Now, where was that Riverside School?

CK. At one time, where Carlyle's business is on North Main.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. There was a two-room school there.

Q. Oh.

CK. And they called it Riverside School, and it had just a first and second grade. They did not have kindergarten at the beginning; first and second grade. And I lived just over on Orient, just two or three blocks away, so I went to first and second grade there and also my, my sister did too. And it was a very modern looking school, two-room school, and I didn't know about it at the time I went there because it did have a little boys' and little girls' toilet in each room. But when I got in junior college, things were mighty tight and I had a good luck to get a job as a janitor out there while I was in junior college. And well, I can't imagine our kids nowadays doing -- the requirement
if you got the job, you signed a little contract and went to the superintendent's school and drew your equipment and your keys and you went out there and to show your good intention, you prepared the school for the year's school; the building. You washed all the windows, you painted the steps outside; and one of the rooms had a painted floor, cleaned all the black boards. It took about two weeks and you did that on your own. That showed your good intention. And boy oh boy, when school started, all you had to do was go down in the morning and open up -- take care of the heat, the fire, the lights, put out the stop signs, put out the American flag, and go on to school; come in that evening and clean up in the evening and, boy, you got one dollar for every day. Five dollars a week and, boy, was it a life saver. And so I remember that, but the thing that surprised me so much when I got in there taking care of it, I was amazed to find out that one of the things you had to do, about twice a year, you had to have 'em, I don't know what you call the company, come in and pump out the pit toilets. They had toilets in there, but they were just pit toilets. See, no sewer on that site.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. And so they just had pit toilets in the schoolhouse.

Q. Oh.
CK. And I don't remember how long that school house stayed there, but I know I sure enjoyed being the janitor out there for two years.

Q. Oh, good. And was it cinder block or was it wood?

CK. No, it was wooden --

Q. It was wood?

CK. -- wooden building and it had a lot of windows. You had to wash all those windows.

Q. It's gone. It was totally gone?

CK. And one time -- it's Vertie Tomlin happened to be in our class, and they built a little box and put the most beautiful load of beautiful white sand in it. Oh, it was pretty sand. And we got out there -- spring time came on -- and we were having a barrel of fun out there playing. We prevailed upon Vertie Tomlin to lay down on his back with his hands behind him and we buried Vertie except for just his head sticking out. And about that time Verla Towna, the teacher, came out and rung her hand bell and we went in, at noontime, we went back into the class and she ran her little bell and she went looking around and, "Where is Vertie?" No one knew a thing about Vertie. So she went out on the porch -- the step -- and poor little Vertie was out there, "Teacher. Teacher. Come get me out of here."

Q. Come get me out.
CK. So she came back in and Mac Burnham, who used to be a painter here in town, he's a real close friend of mine. I went all the way through school with him. For some reason she picked on Mac and I; she thought we might have had a hand in it. So we had to go out and dig Vertie out.

Q. Dig him out.

CK. And I still remember that.

Q. I know his granddaughter, and I will have a lot of fun telling her that story, Harlan's daughter.

CK. Is she the one that just got married? No, she was the queen.

Q. High school queen.

CK. High school?

Q. Yes, homecoming queen.

CK. Well, I thought that was --

Q. Janelle.

CK. -- that was her Rudy's son's daughter.

Q. Yes, it is. And she will get such a kick out of hearing that story.

CK. Well, you tell her.

Q. How long do you think he was laying out there 'til the teacher --?

CK. Oh, probably 15 minutes. He couldn't get out cause he had his hands under him. Yeah, I saw her picture in the paper; real pretty girl.
Q. Beautiful.

CK. Mm-hm.

Q. Yes. Isn't that wonderful? That's a great question to kind of segue into race and how the community handled race. Did you, dis you find yourself being aware of segregation race in El Dorado during the 20's and 30's?

CK. Well, I felt that things weren't fair. The first real shock I ever got, I believe, I was probably about eight- or nine-years-old and my mother had someone in Oklahoma that became ill, and she took me with her and we went on the train down to, uh, west of Tulsa to where the -- and somewhere we had a layover at -- and it had a -- we were at the depot, and in the depot I needed to go to the bathroom, and I started down there and there was a bathroom. You could see in there, and I started in there and my mother yelled at me to come back, "You're not supposed to go in there." And I found out why. It was the colored sign, "colored bathrooms." And they weren't very well taken care of. And that actually happened just across the line into Oklahoma that the bathrooms even in the, in the depots were segregated. And that's the first time I ever run into that, and it startled me. And there was a lot of that. And in the service, even, during World War II there were a lot of the units that they did not treat some of the black soldiers like they should.
Q. What about El Dorado as far as, not as overt in signs of segregation, but the way the community was set up as far as residential areas and so forth?

CK. Well, we had such a small number of black people too that -- there were only most of them lived on Riverside and then there was a cluster back down near where Washington School used to be; there were several in there. But, I don’t -- my wife owned the Dairy Queen here for many years, and some of her best customers were black people that she'd call on every once in a while when things that she'd need, and they were always responding to do things that she -- you know, once in a while she that -- she had one black young man, a football player here, that cooked in her burgereteria when she had it going, and once in a while, some of the black boys would come in there and be a little boisterous and she'd see him and she'd say, "Can you do anything about that?" "Yes, ma'am." He'd go up and lean over the counter and he weighed about two-forty-four, or something like that. So he'd lean over the counter and talk to them a little and they'd (waving hands) -- but she always got along great with them.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

CK. In fact, one time, her maiden name was Hill -- had one basketball player that came in to visit with her a lot and one time, his name was Hill, and she'd kidding him about his name
and say, "My maiden name was Hill. Do you think we're related?"
And he'd say, "No, ma'am. I don't think so."

Q. I don't think so.

CK. And another time I remember too, that, she -- we belonged to both Eastern Star and White Shrine, it's a part of the Messianic thing where ladies belong and men, too, and they wore formals; and one night she went down to the Dairy Queen before she left and, all dressed up in a formal, and this young man came in, "My, Mrs. B" -- said, "Miss B, you sure do look nice tonight. Where all you going?" She said, "Well, I'm going to a White Shrine meeting." "Oh, my goodness. I didn't think you'd be a racist." So she had to explain to him that what that White Shrine was; the birth of Christ in Jerusalem, you know? But he said, "I didn't think you'd be a racist." But a lot of that could be comical.

Q. Uh-huh.

CK. But she's always got along with them.

Q. That's wonderful. I'm interested in a little bit more in your school days; your classmates and -- what do you remember about school? What are the things that stand out in your mind, from your, especially your high school days?

CK. In high school, especially, I wasn't too active. Too darn little to play basketball or football. I was real skinny then, but I did in grammatics and stuff we was all in that. And then
it followed through when I was in junior college. Lester Nixon, as you know, is a forefather of your library, [L. W. Nixon Library, Butler Community College] and I still am their family, according to the boys, because they were in a nursing home for about six years before they died at 102 and 104, I think it was. And all that time my wife, because the kids were out of state, you know, we kind -- took them to the doctor and all that kind of stuff and those kids have adopted us. And they're wonderful kids. And the -- that kind of a connection is nice. But I happen to be -- carry on into the junior college and ended up being in Pi Delta Theta and Delta Psi Omega both, and so was my first wife. And we had a lot of fun with the Nixons. In fact, I still remember the night that they had the initiation for Pi Delta Theta in the basement at the Nixon's house, and had a bunch of things going on; part of it was foolish and one thing or another. And I still remember -- if you know Dr. Overholster, used to live here. He was a year older than I was, and he gave me a big speech about the fact that if you were going to be a Thespian of any kind, you need to use your diaphragm to get -- to project your voice. They had a big old kettle full of cold ice water and they had you on your hands and knees, heads against a post in the basement, and you were supposed to spell "diaphragm." I'm the world's worst speller and every time I'd misspell it, they had a great big paddle, it
was two boards together, and Dr. -- it was going to be Dr. Overholster later, he'd swat me with that big ol' paddle. And they finally gave up. I never was going to spell it right. So then the next thing, they had the kid’s coaster wagon and they'd haul you around in a coaster wagon. Well, I was a little taller than the rest of them and there was a clothes line in there and it flipped me off the coaster wagon. And that was the roughest initiation I ever went through. The Nixons were wonderful people.

Q. Yes, they were.

CK. And of course, Doug Nixon, the oldest boy, I had him in boy scouts when he was a kid, and he is now still in boy scouts --

Q. Is he?

CK. -- out in Colorado Springs. And Keith, the middle boy, had been principal of a high school in Phoenix, Arizona; now retired. And the youngest boy, Wendell, he was always just like one of my own kids.

Q. Of course, they ended up being my neighbors --

CK. Wonderful --

Q. -- because we live on North Emporia. And we just lived around the corner from them, but --

CK. Yeah.

Q. Wonderful family, that's for sure.
CK. And Keith, we just the other day -- we got a great big box of oranges right out of the tree in their backyard at Phoenix and they're wonderful people. That's the kind of memories that are really wonderful.

Q. Mm-hm. Mm-hm. What were some of your favorite subjects in school? Because thinking of Mr. Nixon I can certainly picture --

CK. Well, I enjoy about everything. Of course, the -- I like all of the shop courses too. Woodwork; I've always been interested in woodwork and things, but history and geography, especially, and physics. I really enjoyed physics, and it's a good thing because I ended up in the laboratories out at Skelly for about almost 40 years but --

Q. I'm curious to know -- you shared so many memories, have such a fabulous memory about people's characters in El Dorado. What do you think your classmates would say to describe you? How would they remember you from those high school days?

CK. Well, I'm sure they'd say I was a pain, but I don't know a pain where. But there are not very many of us left that really were together quite a bit. But there are five or six that were pretty close, and one of them I know you've had connections with too, Ronald Milan from Bella Vista, Arkansas. He's been back for so many things here. And -- but all of them have health problems anymore. But Ronald Milan was head of a pipeline up in
Michigan somewhere, general superintendent of the pipeline, before he retired.

And then, of course, one of my favorites I went through grade school and everything with was David Shirk that -- we were all poor during the depression, but he and his family were dirt poor. They lived in a little shack down by the railroad track and I don't how they existed, but they did. But he happened to be a good enough football player that he went to KU on a scholarship; ended up becoming quite a football star. And when the war came on, why he went in as a physical trainer like most of them did and ended up a captain in the service, and he married a lady up there whose folks had had a big horse ranch out north and west of town; had a big barn and all that stuff in there. Well, they're long gone, but the barn is still there. And it's a party barn for the kids at KU, now. And I know when my one grandson was up there, well, I asked a question to him about KU, and he didn't know where the public library was or this, that, and the other, but, boy, he knew where the party barn was out at Shirks.

Q. And that's what they call it? The party barn?

CK. It's up on Shirk. Shirk's party barn.

Q. (Second Interviewer): I might have been to some parties in that barn.

Q. Did you spell it S--SHIRK?
CK. Uh-huh.

Q. Shirk.

CK. David Shirk and Margaret's his wife. She's a little go getter. And I keep in fits with them all the time.

And then we had two Harlan Smiths in the class. And one was in oil business somewhere; he's long gone. But the Harlan L. Smith was a minister. Another interesting thing, you couldn't find any other kind of work I guess in '35 or '6 when you got out of school, so many of them ended up being ministers. We had nine ministers out of 169 people.

Q. What does that say about your upbringing? Do you think that's a commentary on what it -- the values and --

CK. I think --

Q. -- religion played?

CK. Now, the one that was the closest to me was a Presbyterian boy, Kenneth Locke. They had a dairy up at Burns and he and I were close enough that my oldest son's name is Kenneth for some reason. And he had a milk route in town, and I lived in the north part of town and he'd bring in the milk in the milk truck and stop at my house and we'd deliver the milk around over town and then go to school. And that went on for years through high school and junior college. And he became a minister and died not long ago, but he -- in Missouri Presbyterian churches head of Synod -- quite active but and then the Harlem Smith is up at
Concordia somewhere, now. I hear from him once in a while, but he can't drive anymore, so many of them can't, but we try to keep --

Up until -- see we had the high school reunion, as you know, how they work here. And we had our regular reunions up until the 50th reunion, and we decided that was so much fun we were just going to have one from every year then on. And from the 50th to the 70th we had 'em every year; those that could came back to them. And my wife and I had--took care of the correspondence because the lady that was our secretary didn't have a computer so we helped her with that. And when she got where she couldn't do it, so -- but up until the 70th, we finally just decided to join the ever -- and then the last two times we just met with them. But we only have four or five people that can come back anymore.

Q. Now, Jeanette Locke was she --

CK. Jeanette Locke was a lifelong friend.

Q. And the same Locke as the other one?

CK. No. That's -- yeah, they were cousins.

Q. Okay.

CK. Her late husband and this Locke were cousins.

Q. Okay.

CK. But yeah, Jeanette and I have been about like brother and sister for many, many years. And she had been sick this weekend.

Q. Oh.
CK. But she's out at Vintage Place, now.

Q. I contacted her.

CK. Did you?

Q. Yes.

CK. Well, I talked to you about it.

Q. After you told me.

CK. Well, Jeanette's -- yeah when Myrrl Houck was the go-getter out at the school for so many years in the library, she had student librarians. And if you met certain criteria, well, instead of using study hall you could work in there as a librarian assistant. And heck, I'd learn more in helping kids look up stuff and things before you were just studying and reading a magazine. And she had a little social club along with it and we were with her all the time and it was probably -- couldn't know Myrrl Houck, but she was a wonderful person; she was a very thrifty person. But I must have been one of her favorites because when I got married a few years later, she sent me a five dollar bill for a wedding present and from Myrrl Houck --

Q. How lovely.

CK. -- that meant something.

Q. Yes.

CK. But she's the one that started all the reunions and stuff. So, but we had -- now, our class did not have a 20 year reunion because in 1945 most of us were scattered all over the world.
Q. Mm-hm.

CK. So in 1955, we had our first real reunion. And at that reunion, Stanley Dunham was living here in town, and he and Madelyn were there. That's the last time I saw Madelyn. And Ann, undoubtedly, she would have been 13-years-old so she must have been in the middle school here. They lived on Olive --

Q. That was what year again?

CK. That that would have been '55.

Q. Okay.

CK. So she would have been 13. And -- but the schools keep no records unless you graduate from high school. So they don't have any record of her being in school, but I wouldn't be too surprised that my oldest boy might have gone to school with her at middle school, but you know, you don't know all the kids in the school, because he was born in 1943. So the chances are they were close to the same age. But at any rate, they did live on Olive and lived here then. And then the only other time that Stanley ever came back was in -- for our 50th reunion in 1985. He and his brother, Ralph, came back to the reunion. That's where I got some of the stuff.

Q. Oh, he did he did come to that one?

CK. And then the last letter I got from him would have been in 1990 and he died.

Q. Could you share that?
CK. Would you like to --

Q. Yeah that’s the one with the tab. That would be lovely.

CK. All right.

This was to the 55-year reunion, May the 11th, 1990, and we received this letter from Stanley Dunham and Madelyn. It says, "My wife and I have one daughter, Ann. We have two grandchildren, Barack and Maya. After leaving Kansas, we lived in Seattle for five years. Then we moved to Hawaii where we have lived for over 30 years. I am retired after 20 years in the furniture business and 20 years in insurance. Madelyn retired as vice-president of the Bank of Hawaii. Sorry, I can't be there. It would be a long way to go for a golf game.

Signed Stanley Dunham".

Q. What do you think of when you read that from a classmate who mentions our current president?

CK. It's amazing.

Q. Quite awesome.

CK. My wife is deep in genealogy and she has just been amazed that it couldn't happen anywhere else in the world but here. And that's what Obama has acknowledged himself.

Q. Exactly.

CK. But it really couldn't. Sometimes I wish that he'd less stress so much that he is a black person, but he's 50 percent
white. I wish he'd stress that a little more. But he is an intelligent person. There's no question about that.

Q. How do you think -- one of the things that we were interested with in this project was, what were Barack Obama's influences because of his heritage: his grandfather and grandmother's roots here in Kansas. And he certainly mentions it quite a bit. He did just this morning when I was listening to him introduce Kathleen Sebelius --

CK. Mm-hm.

Q. -- as his new appointee. So how do you think that he might have been influenced? What are the things that you're seeing? You met him a little over a year ago, but in the time that you've seen him in the public eye, are there certain things that you could trace back to his heritage?

CK. Unfortunately, I didn't know Madelyn well enough to know, but she was an intelligent person. She was an intelligent person. In fact, I think she was more intelligent than Stanley, but she's real successful in the bank and everything. But I'm sure that Kansas influence on both of those kids is bound to show through, I'm sure. And I do know that there was times that she sacrificed for Obama.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. And he knows it.

Q. Mm-hm.
CK. But I think that the Kansas influence undoubtedly showed through.

Q. Mm-hm.

CK. But it's a fascinating thing to think, like you said, there's nowhere in the world that this could happen but here. And I think it's true.

Q. Well, you had mentioned the sacrifices during the depression and they were your peers Stanley you knew that he was your peer, and the sacrifices that were made. As you said, you either repaired it --

CK. Mm-hm.

Q. Renovation, or you did without. You didn't buy new. And so certainly those are things stories would you imagine that were shared with him as he was growing up as their grandson?

CK. Well, I think the experiences Stanley had especially made an impression on him the rest of his life. Finding his mother like he did, and that's such a sad thing. And then the family was split. They weren't -- he was living with their grandparents and things. But of course I was with Ralph a lot. We were in the same Boy Scout troop; same patrol together all the time. But Stanley never was in scouting. He wasn't interested in it. But, those boys were -- it wasn't normal living with two parents and everything because they were moved around. And while they
were living here, as far as I know, they were living with their grandparents when we went to school.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CK. But --

Q. Very interesting then he had, Stanley Dunham, had the experience of being raised by his grandparents and did quite the same with his grandson then.

CK. Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Q. And so I'm sure that that must have had quite an influence on him, as a grandfather, to know what he'd experienced as a child being raised by grandparents.

CK. Well, if Miss Scott ever gets her book finished, I'd love to see what she's going to write on the --. After we're done, if you want to, you can look at the clippings I did that newspaper. Cause it's quite interesting because she's going to write a book. She's taking time off from her job on a leave of absence to write the book. And she said she's going to call me back about some stuff --

Q. That's wonderful that she's going to contact --

CK. That I haven't got all the answers for yet.

Q. Well we're getting a little bit towards the end of the interview here and I --

CK. Mm-hm.
Q. You have been so delightful and forthcoming with wonderful, wonderful memories. I'm interested a little bit more about major historical events that you remember in the 20's and 30's that you think had an impact on your family.

CK. Well, the things of historical interest -- really not too many things happened in a little town like this. But I know one time I was downtown when I was a kid, it must've been -- it was after Hoover had gone out of office, and word went around that Herbert Hoover was going to give a little speech down in front of the post office. And the crowd gathered around there, and pretty soon the car drove up, and they helped him up on the back end of the truck and Herbert Hoover gave a little speech in front of the court -- the post office one time.

Q. Oh, for heaven's sakes.

CK. And one of the most interesting things, I was in high school; I don't remember, I think I was probably about a sophomore, and word came around through school that if anyone was interested in going over to the Methodist church, they had an interesting speaker who was going to talk to the young people over there in the afternoon. And I went over and Billy Sunday was there, and that's an experience I'll remember. He jumped up and down on the pulpit, beat the Bible around over everything, and it was fascinating to see; he was such a wonderful dynamic speaker. I
remember that. And, of course, one time I did see FDR when he was in Wichita.

Q. Oh, my. Wow.

CK. But -- and now, I've seen another president.

Q. Absolutely. Did more than see a president.

CK. Yeah.

Q. And what were some striking moments to you in the conversation that you had with Barack Obama, January 29th?

CK. Well, just over all that he had such a friendly feeling and he -- when I just brought up something that didn't mean anything like Stanley's brother, Ralph, immediately he came right through -- and I'm not sure about Ralph too. He now lives in Arlington, Virginia, so he may have had some kind of connection with the government or something and had wintered in Florida 'cause he mentioned he was in Florida. But he's living outside of Washington D.C. now, at Arlington. At least that's what Scott told me the other day. I hope she calls back 'cause I've enjoyed talking to her.

Q. That's wonderful.

Well, I can't tell you how delightful this has been to share this hour with you, Clarence, and how much we appreciate just initiating this project. You're one of the first pieces of this really important heritage project; The Butler County Barack Obama Heritage project. And we really want to thank you for
giving your time, sharing your memories and your mementos and thank you, very much.

CK. Well, I'm sorry I didn't have any more about -- connected with the family but it's been a long time ago.

Q. You did well.

CK. Thank you, very much.

Q. Thank you.

CK. I'm pulling my ear.

Q. Are there -- are there any questions or memories, once we stop the interview that you just really thought, "Well, I wish I'd been asked that."?

CK. Well, if my wife were here and heard what was going on she would've said, "As usual, you talk too much."

Q. Not at all. Not at all. We would have been disappointed with less.

CK. Mm-hm. No, I can't think of anything. Did you want to see anything that's in the magazine?

Q. Would you like to share? Would you like to just open your notebook and share, particularly, what you were given after the talk.

CK. Oh, you mean --

Q. Anything you'd like to share from that notebook?

CK. Oh, you mean on camera?

Q. Right.
CK. Well, if you wanted to.

Q. Or your yearbook; your high school yearbook.

CK. Well, this stuff, like I have told so many people, anything that I know about Obama and everything is common knowledge. Now, a lot of this stuff that you see and the museum and everything started out of our living room. To start out with -- we're not on camera now are we?

Q. (Camera man): Yes--

CK. Are we?

Q. Yes, as a matter of fact.

CK. But, at any rate, when the campaign first started, a friend -- he didn't want to be publicized -- called me up and said, "Clarence, have you found out that this new -- some guy named Obama is running for president and that he is related to Stanley Dunham that we went to school with?" And I started my research because I had all the historian -- through all the years. And we gathered all that. And we got Lisa Cooley up at the house and went from there, and she started getting interested in the thing, and then it wasn't very far into the thing until we had a call from a fellow named Harden, who was the American editor for the London Telegraph. And he came to the house and that started a bunch of stuff and he spread it all over the United Kingdom. And it's kind of funny it wasn't very long 'til young George Holbert, grew up here in town, he called Wendell Nixon out in
Colorado Springs said, "Hey what's this about Clarence and Rubella Kern?" Said, "We just got something from somewhere in the United Kingdom, I don't know where, and their picture's in a periodical over there."

And, and from after that -- and then we've had about a dozen in all people, but the one we got the biggest kick out of was about two months ago. A fellow came from Holland and came to see us, and he was with the newspaper in Holland, and the thing that was bothering him, it was so funny -- the man from the London Telegraph had asked me, "What kind of a person was Stanley Dunham?" And I said, "Well, he was just one of those regular old boys just kind of center of the road kind of a fella. Blah, blah." And he had misinterpreted what they had in the newspaper over there and he kept saying, "But what is this middle of the wheel thing?" Middle of the wheel, he kept coming back on it, middle of the wheel, and finally my wife said, "I think that it came from that, that you told him he was a middle of the wheel sort of -- a middle of the road sort of person and he couldn't -- middle of the wheel thing." But it's been kind of interesting. If you wanted to see any of those pictures, that what you're talking about?

Q. Yes. That would be delightful.

CK. Well, this everything here is what we gave him. You saw all of the periodicals and they even have his signature and everything
I'd saved through the years. And, of course, this memorial thing we've had -- but Stanley Dunham is just about half way down on Memorial List and this was in '92 so we've lost this many since '92. But, uh, the -- and this is the class reunion in 1955 and Stanley Dunham is right here in the picture. And then the other one -- now, I didn't have that in time to send it to, with him, but we did have the class -- whoops, going the other way. The 19 -- in 1985 when we had the 50th reunion.

Q. And he attended that?

CK. There's Stanley right there.

Q. And where was your reunion held?

CK. Well, (scratches head) I think I was master of ceremonies, but it's -- the write-up's here, but I don't remember.

Q. But he came -- he and Madelyn both came to that reunion?

CK. No. Madelyn, Madelyn wasn't here after 1955.

Q. Oh, okay. Okay.

CK. And -- where in the world?

Q. Well, Clarence, how did you happen to become the class historian? You mentioned that was one of your favorite subjects in school.

CK. Oh, I don't know. Just like Topsy, it just grew. Mm-hm. Yeah, here's a couple of pictures that --

Q. Just beautiful. Wonderful.

CK. And then here's the Governor.
Q. And January 29th, 2009 – at the college --.

CK. Mm-hm. Yeah. And then I've always gotten a kick -- but I don't know what was funny, but something must have been funny there. And then a while ago I said -- I used that phrase, "Who ate the cabbage?"

Q. Right.

CK. Well, that came from Helen Case not long ago. I helped her write part of the history of our church, and she was talking about somebody that finally had done something and said, "Finally, someone told 'em who ate the cabbage," did this, that, or the other. If you knew Helen Case --

Q. Oh, yes, I did. We had the same teacher, Joy Williams.

CK. Oh, yes. So did I.

Q. You did?

CK. Yeah, she was my third grade teacher. There's a --

Q. That's a wonderful picture. Just right, I think, as he's probably departing. That's the door there to the gym. But what a wonderful day.

CK. Mm-hm.

Q. Well, Clarence, I think now we're ready to conclude again, but thank you so much again for sharing.

CK. Well, I'm sure you have other things to do. If I get home, there will be things for me to do there.

Q. And I would love to see --
CK. If there's anything else you want to look at feel free --

Q. (Second Interviewer): We would use the rest of the afternoon --

Q. (First Interviewer): Exactly.

Q. (Second Interviewer): It's just that we have another appointment.

Q. (First Interviewer): And I don't know if Steve is -- I don't know if he's cut or not. He can cut it, I guess, later.

I would love -- is there any way for me to have copies of those pictures from the talk that he gave here when he was visiting with you? Is there a way for me to get copies of those pictures? Just Xerox copies, even?

CK. Mm-hm. We could.

Q. Are you comfortable with that if I some time, and not today, but sometime if I --

CK. Well, one thing about it, I know my wife said one thing about it as time goes on, those pictures are going to be more and more valuable.

Q. Oh, absolutely.

CK. And if you scatter them around all over the place but --

Q. Right. Right. Just a Xerox copy would be delightful from talking to you, you know, as he left. But we can talk about that more later. No, but I understand. I guess his autograph alone is quite pricey -- autographed some of his books.
CK. We're really happy. We have given some of them out but
the -- and, of course, Mary's involved too. You know she was in
here.
Q. Right. Right.
CK. But what would you use them for in this --
Q. Just for me. I'm just starting a notebook because I'm sure Lisa
already has things at the exhibit, doesn't she?
CK. Well, I think I've given her about everything I have.
Q. Yeah. Yeah. I just thought it would be wonderful just to have
one, you know, maybe one of those pictures of all four of you
together.
CK. Mm-hm.
Q. But we could talk about that sometime. I know Caroline -- now
we're headed to Caroline's house.
CK. You've got to go out there?
Q. Yeah. Yeah.
CK. Where does she live now?
Q. She lives in Harold and Linda Harmon's house on First Street
where they used to live. Do you remember that? And then I live
just around the corner; we're neighbors now. So --
CK. Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Okay.
Q. Thank you, so much.
CK. I think we can probably work out -

[END]
Q. Caroline, what is your full name?

CS. My full name is Laudy Caroline Ewing Short.

Q. And is there a story behind how you got your name?

CS. They're from my two grandmothers. One was Laudy Ewing and one was Caroline Aikman.

Q. Lovely, lovely.

CS. Carrie -- they called her Carrie.

Q. And Aikman -- Clarence had just mentioned that in the last interview and he had mentioned a house. So, the house that you just moved from, that was the Aikman? Was that from that side of the family?
CS. Well, my grandfather bought that farm and the one across the road, west, and -- a hundred years ago.

Q. Oh my goodness.

CS. And we sold the one on the west side of the road. And then when George and I moved out here, when he retired, why, we moved into the old stone house that had been re-fixed, fixed up, and had been what we called "the cabin" at the time. And it was very hot in the '30s and he had that fixed up into a place for us to go and live during the summer, and we went back and forth to the house in town. And then off and on through the winter, we would go out, and a lot of people would come with their sleds and slide down the hill.

Q. It's quite a hill, yea, it's quite a hill. It is such a park-like setting. It's just a beautiful -- can you kind of describe the house?

CS. Well the house is an -- they tell me, is -- was an old weigh station and was -- it usually held whoever happened to be farming a farm at the time. And it was just a two-bedroom -- was downstairs actually, and living room/bedroom type-thing, and Dad decided, the '30s, that it was too hot to be in town. And he had that fixed up into the home that it is now, except that it was only three rooms.

Q. And that stone probably stayed pretty cool.
CS. Yes, it does.

Q. Those thick stone walls --

CS. Uh-huh, very thick --

Q. Yes.

CS. Uh-huh, yeah.

Q. And there is an upstairs?

CS. There is an upstairs, but they -- we've never been able to use it since the fireplace was put in. They felt that it was not safe.

Q. What's the year? Do you remember the year that that was built?

CS. It was about 1934 or '35. '34 I believe.

Q. And it's just a charming, charming home.

CS. I remember when you and your mother came out to visit me one time.

Q. Mm-hmm. I was pretty young then.

CS. Yes.

Q. And then my boys loved coming out there. And it's just such a wonderful setting too, on the hill --

CS. Yes.

Q. -- there, and it just reminds me of, a little bit of, a French Château is what it reminds me of with that porch.

CS. (laughs)

Q. It seems to me, the front porch is more the side. But what do
you remember about El Dorado growing up in the '20s and '30s? What are some of the first things that come to mind?

CS. Well, one of the first things that I thought of was -- when we were, Susie and I were talking, was the terrible dust storms. And you would look out the window and it looked like -- in the morning, it looked like it was about five o'clock in the afternoon. And the street lights were going all the time, and we had one on our corner out there. And it just -- it was just terrible, really.

Q. How long do you remember that lasting for you? The time period? Your age?

CS. Well, I don't think I remember it. It was several years, but it just -- it just always looked like it was almost dark at night, you know? And it just looked like gray smoke in the -- as you looked out the window.

Q. Were you driving at the time?

CS. No, I was -- I was just a child. I was born in 1918.

Q. 1918.

CS. And --

Q. What did your family do for a living?

CS. What did --?

Q. What did your family do for a living? Your immediate family?

CS. My father --
Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. My father had an insurance agency. And then during the depression, he was Secretary-Treasurer of the Farm -- Now I can't think of it -- Farm -- Federal Farm Loan Association.

Q. Okay.

CS. And he got farm loans for people that needed them during that time when they had no money. And he often said if he hadn't of been so honest, and had so many feds around Potwin and Whitewater, he probably would have owned them. (Laughs)

Q. And Clarence mentioned the times now, and how that these feelings are coming back to him --

CS. Yes.

Q. -- sometimes. You have that same sense that our country is going through similar hard times?

CS. Yes, I think so.

Q. Mm-hmm. Do you think we're up for the challenge compared to what you remember as a child?

CS. Are they what?

Q. Do you think we're up for the challenge as a country?

CS. Oh, I think so. Everybody -- it was sort of like World War II where everybody pitched in and did something toward it, you know, gave up pots and pans and saved grease and all those things to turn in. And everybody wanted to do it. I don't know
that -- I don't know in this day and age if the young people would be as generous as --

Q. By understanding sacrifice and giving?

CS. Mm-hmm.

Q. What about community? What was the sense of community like for you during that time, especially during your high school years?

CS. Well, we went on as usual. I don't know of anything that --

Q. You were living outside of town, or were you living in town during your high school years?

CS. Oh, I always was in town.

Q. Always in town.

CS. We only went out there in the summer time, and occasionally in the winter, but the summer time -- but the rest of the time, the whole time I was growing up, why, in fact, until 1952, when Mother and Dad sold the house in town and added on to the house out there at the farm and lived out there, it -- they didn't live out there until '52.

Q. You're a city girl? You're a town girl?

CS. Oh, yes. I was a town girl, but I always wished I had been a farm girl.

Q. Oh, you wanted to be a farm girl. (Laughs)

CS. (Laughs)

Q. What was it that you appreciated about farm life at that time?
CS. Well of course, I always had a horse that I rode and I always thought it was fun to garden and do things like that. And all the kids that ever -- would come out to the house with - I would always think it was just really neat, which would make me think it was neater than I had thought. (Laughs)

Q. Sure, of course, of course. What would you remember about being a town girl then? Are there certain characters that you remember that just are unforgettable?

CS. Well, I think since I wasn't driving until I was 16, why, I just -- you could walk every place, and did in those days, you know.

Q. Who do you remember that, you know, we -- Clarence and I were talking about Speedy Lumpkin. Do you remember Speedy?

CS. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I do indeed.

Q. What do you remember about characters like Speedy?

CS. Well, when I was growing up we had John Fox, and John Fox walked by our house downtown, and I don't know what he did downtown because I was probably 10 or so years old maybe, and he had gunny sacks for shoes.

Q. Oh, he wore gunny sacks on his feet?

CS. He wore them on his feet, uh-huh. He didn't have shoes. He didn't wear shoes. And then he had a big, what they called a "staff" in those days, with a big, tall pole -- post that he walked along with, his post in his hands and --
Q. About how old of a man was he?
CS. Well, he must have been, maybe 50 I suppose.
Q. Do you think he was a war --?
CS. He wasn't a young looking man.
Q. Do you think he was a war veteran? Maybe from the first war or something?
CS. I don't know that.
Q. Or did he seem to just --
CS. He just appeared, and we would watch him as he walked along, and I thought that was really something. But the shoes that he had on his feet -- (laughs)
Q. Gunny sacks...that is for sure. And you remember Speedy. What do you remember about Speedy Lumpkin?
CS. Oh, Speedy Lumpkin. Well, one time at -- when we first -- George and I first came back out here to live on the farm after he retired, we -- I didn't -- there weren't any of my friends living here then, except Betty Prohurtie, and I went out and played bridge with a group one day, and that night Harriet Palmer, who had the fabric shop all those years, called me and said, "Would you consider coming to work for me?" And I said, "Well, I'll have to talk it over with George and see what he says about that." And the next morning, why, after we had talked about it, I said "It's a wonderful way for me to meet
people." And so he said, "Fine with me, if you like to do it." So, my having had a degree in home economics at K-State, I took the job and enjoyed it, and Harriet was a lovely person. But when we'd go into Kelley's drugstore and have lunch, you know, or take a coffee break, and Speedy Lumpkin came running in one day and he said -- of course, he always gave the weather report every place that he ever went -- and he said "There's just been a bad tornado in Winfield, Kansas!" And so (laughs) the women next to me had just gotten her food, and she says, "Oh, my goodness! My sister's there! I must go." So, she ran away out the back door to see about the tornado in Winfield, which of course, there hadn't been one.

Q. There hadn't been one?

CS. No, because he just went around giving everybody a different view of the weather, you know.

Q. Oh, my! That's one of the more dramatic stories we've heard about Speedy. (Laughs) But, I remember him from working downtown when I was a teenager. So, he definitely was a character. Now you -- you were a peer or a neighbor of Bill Bidwell's family? Or did you know Bill Bidwell and his family?

CS. Bill Bidwell was a cousin of mine.

Q. Oh, was a cousin? Okay.

CS. Aunt Myrtle, his aunt, as his grandmother was my aunt.
Q. Bill's grandmother was your aunt?

CS. Yes. She was married to Henry Sandifer. And my grandmother was Caroline Sandifer, before she was married, she was brother and sister.

Q. And you might tell -- submit -- Do you have some memories of Bill, because he definitely-- Bill was a much beloved character at the college for many years.

CS. Yeah, he was something else.

Q. Mm-hm. He was a very wonderful journalist.

CS. Oh, yes.

Q. He won many awards for the -- his students, for the college.

CS. When he was a little boy he was always dreaming of things that make your hair stand on end, almost. You were afraid he was going to hurt himself, but Aunt Myrtle took care of him a lot of the time -- and -- because Mary Lou was not really well, and she eventually died of cancer. And -- but Aunt Myrtle helped them out a lot, and then we took the children over after Mary Lou died because Buddy Bidwell, that she was married to, was in that awful fire out at the Skelly and he died not long after Mary Lou died, so Aunt Myrtle was the sole survivor of the family to take care of those girls.

Q. Right. And one of them was quite young, Becky was --

CS. Becky was quite small.
Q. She was, I think, 7. She was quite young.

CS. Mm-hmm.

Q. Is that what you remember a lot about the community? That people stayed close to one another, and then when you went through hard times, you went through it together?

CS. Right, absolutely. I think so.

Q. Do you think that's what -- I mean, do you see that in times now, to where that can help a community? Do you think El Dorado's changed?

CS. Well, of course they didn't have nursing homes in those days, so, it was a matter of family keeping each other --

Q. Right.

CS. -- taking care of each other, and I think that probably is a part of the reason. And then also, the women work now, and they're not home to take care of them.

Q. Right, right. That changes things for sure, too. What are some of the local gatherings and events that really stand out in your mind growing up in El Dorado?

CS. Well, I just think the Kafir Corn Carnival was the very biggest thing that we ever had (laughs) in those days. I really don't know of -- I was trying to think of what that would be --

Q. Parades and --

CS. -- this morning. But that -- but that - well, one year, I was
on the little queen's float --

Q. Oh, really?

CS. and there were a number of us that -- I think they're all -- they're all gone except the queen and me.

Q. And what did the "little queen" mean? Were you younger, or did that mean that you were the same age, but you were not the main queen?

CS. No, they had the big queen, the main float, and then we were only about, maybe 10 --

Q. Oh, how sweet.

CS. Years old. And that was -- and the queen was Ruth Dudley-Hill.

Q. Oh, okay.

CS. Delbert Hill, you know that.

Q. Well, that's my husband's aunt.

CS. Yes, and I have a picture -- colored picture. I wish I had that here.

Q. Well, I'll see that later.

CS. It's at home.

Q. I'd love to see that.

CS. And we were -- my outfit was blue. We each had a different color. And Dorothy Jean Graham was one of them, and Billy Wallace-Smith Dale was one, and Lucille Sluss was the maid of
honor, and Ruth Dudley-Hill, Delbert Hill, was the -- she was the queen.

Q. Dorothy Graham was my art teacher.

CS. Oh, really?

Q. Yes, and a wonderful golfer.

CS. Oh, yes.

Q. She definitely was.

CS. I'll say so.

Q. What did you enjoy doing? Golf or what did you --

CS. I was not a sports person at all. I couldn’t hit -- I was always the last one chosen in grade school when we played baseball because I couldn't bat the ball. (laughs) My big thing in grade school was jacks.

Q. Jacks --

CS. We played jacks constantly.

Q. I can relate to that. What activities were you involved in? What did they have for young people in school, especially girls?

CS. You know, there just wasn't very much for girls -- for young people at all. But in high school, I was on the newspaper. There were several of us that did that, for extracurricular -- and the pep club, and the various organizations. Girl Reserve -- and, you know --

Q. What was Girl Reserve?
CS. Well, that was an organization that -- I don't know. We just had fun there, but I'm sure that we did something. We must have done something good in the school, (laughs) but we went to Camp Wood --

Q. Oh, okay.

CS. -- and learned to do various things.

Q. Was it somewhat about teaching girls to be -- to survive on their own? To, to live in the outdoors?

CS. Well, we did go to Camp Wood and learn a lot of those things, but we did have meetings all the time, and I just really cannot remember at all. I was trying to remember what we did.

Q. Girl Reserve -- now I wonder if it was similar to adult -- to older girl scouts?

CS. Probably, probably.

Q. Okay, interesting. What was the name of the newspaper? Do you remember the high school newspaper? Was it --?

CS. No, I can't remember.

Q. The Crier is what it's still -- The Crier.

CS. No, that wasn't it. But I don't remember it.

Q. Who were some of your favorite teachers in high school?

CS. Oh, we had Jean Sheldon who taught home economics. And I had a teacher, Thelma Wood, that -- my very worst subject was math, (laughs) and she did such great things with me in math, that I -
- she was a favorite. And Miss Markham taught me algebra, and I -- she spent an afternoon one time teaching me algebra and I made an 'A' in it from then on.

Q. Wonderful.

CS. And I have thought, oh I have often thought if there'd just been more teachers like that, that cared to stay there and work with you, how wonderful that would be, because there's a lot of, lot of children now days that don't have that help. They can't wait to get home to their children or something, you know. It's a different teacher thing, used to be just unmarried women that didn't have to push to get home.

Q. I know that means a lot to my daughter that she has a math teacher, specifically, that's a difficult subject for a lot of people.

CS. It is.

Q. But he holds study groups in the evening and that's wonderful.

A. Yes.

Q. Those teachers are far and few between.

CS. Oh, my. Yes. That's right.

Q. It's true. Well, did the teacher that you had for home ec., was --

CS. Jean Sheldon.

Q. And did she inspire you to go on to K-State then and major?
CS. Might have. We had help at home all the time I was growing up, so I didn't get to do very much cooking at home. We had Aunt Cora, who was black, and out of respect for her, we didn't call her Cora. We didn't call older women by their first name when I was young; you called them "Aunt". And Francis Frazier's mother was a very dear friend of my grandmother's, and I always called her Aunt Clara. And the woman that worked for us was Aunt Cora --

Q. But you did call her Aunt Cora?

CS. Yes, to -- and she liked that, you know?

Q. Umm. And so was she a housekeeper, cook, --

CS. Cook.

Q. Cook, specifically.

CS. Yeah.

Q. Go ahead.

CS. We had in our dining room in that house where I grew up, we had a dining room that had golden oak walls and a built-in buffet. It was really a beautiful room, and I have been in the house since and someone tore all that off.

Q. Oh, was that the house on the corner of Emporia and Central?

CS. Yes. And whenever Mother and Daddy would have friends in for dinner -- have a dinner party, they had the doors that matched the oak, and that had glass panes in them, and they would close
the doors after they got through eating, and they had heavy, heavy dark blue velvet drapes, and those drapes were pulled. And then, Aunt Cora's husband, Uncle Jim - (laughs)

Q. Uncle Jim -- (laughs)

CS. -- he waited the tables, and they would pull those drapes together, and he would take the dishes off the table, and they would work in the kitchen and --

Q. Did they live with you?

CS. On, no. No, no, no. They had a car at one time and then when Uncle Jim died, why -- the car went too, you know, and daddy would go and pick her up and take her back home because they lived down in the south part of town. And I -- Every time I go along that South Pathway Road, past the nursing home, and along the south --

Q. Okay, the Traffic Way?

CS. Traffic Way, yes. Some place down in there they owned land, and a lot of the blacks lived down there.

Q. That's what I was going to ask you about.

CS. And I just, and I just cannot figure out -- because the refinery was still there, and I don't know what part of that was used by the blacks.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. But they were, kind of, not much in a way of housing.
Q. So, and that's what I was curious about was, what you remembered racially about El Dorado back in the '20s and '30s?

CS. Well, really I think that the black people in our town are really quite nice. They -- A lot of the men took care of the cleaning of the rooms and offices at night, you know, and Alfred Vanders was in my class at school, and his father took care of Daddy's office, I know, and several others around town. And then, and then, can't think of some of the names right now but -- but --

Q. Vertie Garland?

CS. Vertie, yes. Yes. And they really were -- they just really didn't get into trouble. The Garlands, and the Neely's, and they all were kids, and they did sports and things, and they just -- we just didn't have troubles with them. They were just kind of like -- everybody treated them nice because they were nice people.

Q. One of the things that, you know, obviously comes up -- Barack Obama is the focus of our heritage project, and it's what initiated our wanting to interview you, because of your being a classmate of his grandfather's. But at -- at -- during the time, do you remember what -- what kind of relationships did blacks and whites have beyond being classmates or teammates --

CS. Well, none.
Q. -- or coworkers? So, it stopped there?

CS. It stopped there.

Q. All right.

CS. Yeah, it pretty much stopped there.

Q. And the reason that interest, I think, it is of interest is because it was moving away from Kansas. Was -- it was after -- at that time that their daughter, Ann, met a Kenyan student while she was attending college, and then married -- was married for a short time. But I wondered how that would had been received had they been living in El Dorado?

CS. Uh-huh, yes, I don't know.

Q. So, there wasn't any -- you don't remember any interracial dating?

CS. No, no. That was definitely not "in" then, but the movie stars weren't doing that either, and I think a lot of -- a lot of this, I think, has been because the movie stars has been -- made this very common.

Q. Oh. Do you mean that you took your cues from high-profile people that were in the movies and so forth? And if they -- there wasn't interracial dating, it wasn't, but once it become more popular --

CS. Yes.

Q. -- more accepted through the high-profiles?
CS. Through the sports and the movies and the various things, I think it's really brought a lot of that on.

Q. What are some of the major historical events that you remember, especially during high school or your older youth? What are some of the things that had an impact on your life, your family's life?

CS. I really can't think of any. I was trying to think of that today. They did, if it was a president's birthday, we stood up and gave homage to that, you know, but I really can't think of --

Q. When you were talking about the depression, your memories are collecting things, saving things for people, and then to save and send, to who and where? Where were things, I think you mentioned collecting things and saving things?

CS. Well, it was during the war. World War II --

Q. During World War II --

CS. -- is where that, where I remember that. But they were sent to the factories to use in -- the metal, I suppose, making bombs or bullets or whatever they were making at the time. But everybody had a victory garden.

Q. Oh, victory gardens. And you loved to garden, your boys loved to garden. Tell me about the victory gardens.

CS. Yeah, but -- people had those all over town, trying to grow some
of their food and help others too.

Q. And were they community gardens, or did people have them individually in their backyards?

CS. They were just -- yes, little plots around. Everybody almost had a garden in those days.

Q. And so, did they then gather up their produce, and was there a farmer's market, or people just neighborly shared amongst themselves?

CS. I think they just, I think they just shared. I don't remember a farmer's market in that time, but there may have been.

Q. Yeah, that's certainly popular now. What do you remember about that tree down at the meat packing plant? Do you go to the farmer's market in the summer? That huge cottonwood tree that's --

CS. Oh, beautiful, beautiful. Oh, my goodness.

Q. It has quite a history.

CS. Goodness, I just wonder how long that will be there.

Q. So then your home was just south of that by --?

CS. My home was south, a mile and a half south of the middle of El Dorado. And it's now called -- it was Route 1 then, but now it's Southeast 20th Street, and it's the first place that you can turn left from the time you leave the underpass --

Q. Right.
CS. -- and then go up the hill there. And the, my grandfather, as I said, owned both of those places on each side of the road there. As you started to go up the hill, now it isn't a hill anymore going south, but used to be, up at the top of that, the dirt on each side, and they called it "Aikman Hill." And they -- whenever anybody had their cars repaired, they, before they gave it to the person -- that it was safe, they would drive it up Aikman Hill, and if it made it up Aikman Hill, it was all right.

Q. That's wonderful, that's wonderful. What memories do you have of Stanley and Ralph as far as in school? You shared a little bit on the phone with me.

CS. I really don't have very many. I don't remember much of them. I do remember Stanley, and I can see him now, dashing along in the hallways, speaking in a classroom or in a hallway, you know, maybe, but other than that, I really didn't know him that well.

Q. And you said he wore glasses?

CS. He did wear glasses when I saw him.

Q. And I noticed in his high school yearbook, their senior pictures is what I'm assuming, no glasses. So, vanity was still part of being a teenager --

CS. Probably --

Q. -- back in the mid '30s?

CS. -- didn't want anyone to know it.
Q. And then Ralph, his brother, did you know Ralph?

CS. Uh --

Q. Dunham?

CS. Ralph, uh --

Q. Dunham?

CS. No, I didn't know him.

Q. Yeah, he had a brother, too. What do you think when you think about -- you've listened to Barack Obama in the past years, since he visited here in January, and then the primaries, and then the --

CS. Oh, I listen every time he's on the air.

Q. What do you think when you're listening to him talk? Is there anything that brings to you, something that might be a part of his heritage, a part of the up-bringing, the values, that you remember from growing up?

CS. Well, the thing I think of when he's talking is what a wonderful speaker he is. I think he's really outstanding, and I hope he does well.

Q. Education is very obviously valued in the way he speaks. Educated -- he emphasizes education.

CS. Yes.

Q. Did you feel -- did this community put a high value on our school system in the -- when you were growing up? Did you sense
that it was very supported education -- was emphasized?

CS. Oh, I thought so, yes. I did think so. But they had, of course, they had parent-teachers associations, but there weren't very many parents that really turned out for those, but, but no matter what came up in the school, they were all for it, you know. They supported it in a good way.

Q. So maybe the assumption was there wasn't a need to go to the conference because you assumed your kids were doing what they were supposed to?

CS. Yeah, probably. (Laughs)

Q. But a lot of support for the school, because I think that that's one of the things we wanted to know in these interviews, was to put a background on what Stanley Dunham's up-bringing was like in the community, that you shared, and how that might have influenced how Barack Obama is today.

CS. Yes, it possibly could.

Q. The interesting thing you'd brought out is there weren't nursing homes, and people then cared for their own family members. And Stanley Dunham was raised by his grandfather --

CS. Mm-hmm.

Q. -- and grandparents at a young age, and then grew up to be a grandfather raising his own, pretty much.

CS. Yes.
Q. So that's, to me, that's a thread of what you're talking about.

CS. I think so. I really I think so. But I think he's really tremendous when he talks, and I think she is too.

Q. Very much so. And now they have her mother living with them, for the time being anyway.

CS. Yes.

Q. Did you have family members living with you at any time when you were growing up?

CS. Yes. After my father died in '64, Mother came back and lived with us, but we were in Arlington Heights, Illinois. And George's head of the Animal Research, Animal Department, of GE Health's Pharmaceutical Company, and we lived in Arlington Heights, as I say. And my mother was not the type that would -- was aggressive, and a business women, and -- she was strictly a mother, a home mother. She played bridge and she did things like that, but -- and they all, they went to church, Presbyterian Church, and they were active with their friends. They had -- every year their friends, were the friends of, of that -- their parents, the parents grew up together up there in town, and they all grew up together, and they would -- every year they had what they called a "tacky party", and everybody dressed up in silly old clothes. And I can see my dad now in the great big cowboy hat, and my grandfather Aikman's Prince
Albert suit. And – and, he had a great big diamond stick pin that he always put on his tie. He thought that he had to have that stick pin. He thought that was a --

Q. Only time he got to wear it, once a year.

CS. Don't know where he ever found it, probably at the dime store, but every year, he wore it. And mother would be dressed up in something too, something sort of old-fashioned outfit. Tacky, tacky. They really -- they just loved that.

Q. And they'd go to someone's home for the party?

CS. Yes, or ours, or somebody's home.

Q. Uh-huh. Yeah, oh, that's wonderful. I love that. So any particular time -- was it a Halloween-type party? That time of the year --

CS. No, it wasn't Halloween.

Q. Well, Caroline, I can't tell you how much I appreciate you taking time for this project. What questions have I not asked of you, or things that didn't tie in with any of my questions that you've thought about that you want to share about your life in the 20s or the 30s, during that time?

CS. Well, I made the National Honor Society, and my dad said, "You know, you haven't made all 'A's, how could you get into the National Honor Society?"

Q. He questioned you?
CS. Yes.

Q. How wonderful, though. That's wonderful.

CS. But, a lot of my good friends were in that, too, and we -- I guess since we were all friends together, they assumed we were all --

Q. Rubbed off on to one another?

CS. Yes, rubbed. (Laughs) But, we, we had a lot of fun being in that and, I mean, being chosen, it was a fun time in our lives.

Q. Absolutely, an honor. And then you were accepted to K-State.

CS. Yes.

Q. and went as a freshman --?

CS. No. I went as a sophomore. I went to a junior college for a year, and they -- I didn't really want to go to junior college, and I didn't work very hard at it.

Q. You wanted to go away?

CS. Yes. I couldn't wait. I just thought it was going to be the end of everything and it was just the beginning. (Laughs)

Q. It was the beginning for you.

CS. But, I did do that. Graduated in '40 and went to work with -- for the Oklahoma Natural Gas Company as a home service director, and taught people how to cook. I didn't know very well myself, but --

Q. Sometimes that's the best way to learn something, to teach.
CS. I certainly did.

Q. That's wonderful, that's wonderful. Well, what do you think the best piece of advice you can give for people in these times? You grew up -- you were 10 years old when the depression -- during the crash? Eleven?

CS. Probably, yeah.

Q. '29? Is that right?

CS. Yes.

Q. And those were hard times. Did you feel like you felt them yourself, or saw other people impacted more than your family?

CS. I really didn't know that there was a depression on, which is not very nice to say, but I was young enough that I really didn't feel that involved, you know, at the time. I was -- oh --

Q. Do you think there was a difference too, we interviewed a male classmate of yours, do you think because of gender; even at that time when you're young, do you think it was different?

CS. Yes, yes, because young boys were -- had paper routes and various things that they could do, but there wasn't really anything a girl could do, you know, and, and my folks didn't dwell on it. They did what they needed to do to keep the home fires burning, but, but I really didn't know that much about it at the time.
Q. There's a couple years difference between you and Clarence, and then I hadn't really thought about that until just now, but the gender could have made a difference.

CS. I think it made a lot of difference, uh-huh.

Q. You didn't have the role models of a woman leaving -- going outside of a home --

CS. No.

Q. -- to make money and there weren't opportunities --

CS. None of the mothers were out, they were home. And, I don't know, I just wasn't that aware of it. We had so much going on at our own house. I had a brother and a sister, and --.

Q. And you were the -- Where were you in birth order of your siblings?

CS. I was the oldest, then my sister, Dorothy, who is now gone and was six years younger, and then Bill was ten years younger. So there was such a space in between that we -- you know, I was probably taking care of them. I remember watching them and everything. And I think most the girls' activities in those days were built around the home. They just -- there wasn't anything for us to do really.

Q. Well, and as you said, sports. There weren't the opportunities for sports in an organized sponsored way, were there?

CS. No. Morris Moon turned out to be a lawyer in Augusta, and his
dad had The Eagle, yes, The Eagle and The Beacon. I guess, maybe at the same time, they probably -- he was probably throwing one here and one there, and but he -- I remember he always went along with his dad and he threw the papers, and then went to school, you know. And there were certainly no girls out at that time in the morning doing a job, but he did. And Archie Leeman and his brother, Teddy, was closer to my age, he was a little bit younger, but he also had a -- The Times, and he'd be walking along the street, folding the papers and throwing them into the houses after school. So, there just wasn't -- I don't think most of the girls that I knew well really were doing anything different than I was doing.

Q. And that would make -- I think that you would experience major national events in different ways in that regard.

CS. Mm-hmm.

Q. Well, Caroline, once again, thank you so much for sharing your time and --

CS. It's my pleasure.

Q. -- and it was a pleasure talking to you.

CS. Thank you.

Q.2 Did you go to Butler Community College? You said you went to junior college. Did you go to Butler?

CS. Uh-huh.
Q. It was called Butler, and first it was El Dorado -- wasn’t it called El Dorado Junior College?

CS. Junior College.

Q. And then --

CS. It became Butler, yeah. And when I was in high school, I finished it midyear my senior year and I finished out the year at junior college, and all I had to do was walk across the hall and go into Mr. Nixon's room, and start my rhetoric.

Q. 2 It was in the same building?

CS. Yes, yes, just across the hall.

Q. And, of course, Mr. Nixon is what our library's named after, L.W. Nixon. And Clarence had mentioned him, as well, and he lived just one block over here, across from the park.

CS. The park was Jefferson School, and that's where I went to school. Was there two blocks, I think, to get there?

Q. When did they tear that down?

CS. I don't know, but I was --

Q. Because we moved here in '64, and I don't know if it was here then.

CS. I just couldn't believe that it was gone, just broke my heart.

Q. I've seen pictures, but I don't think it was here in '64 when we moved here, but --

CS. My grandmother was a big DAR, and the Mayflower picture was a
big deal at that time, and she gave the, the picture of the Mayflower to the Jefferson School, and, and I don't know what they did with it, though, it's probably under a pile of papers, if it's still around.

Q. Maybe Lisa Cooley has it down at the historical building.

CS. Yeah, right!

Q. I'm sure she volunteers. Does Susie still volunteer at the historical --?

CS. No, no she doesn’t.

Q. But she did -- didn't she for a while? But you hope that they have things like that down there - could check the catalog down there --

CS. Yeah. (Laughs)

Q. -- taken care of somewhere.

CS. She wanted me to tell you, when I was in the sixth grade, my teacher was the principal there at Jefferson's and it was Mr. -- Harvey French was his name, and both main teachers, in those days, had a suit, one suit, and they wore that suit every day. I don't know when they ever got those things clean, because they didn’t -- it almost could stand alone. But Bill Kunkle -- did you know Bill Kunkle?

Q. Catherine? What --

CS. Genevieve was his wife. Did you know him?
Q. I just know the name.

CS. He was just handsome. Oh, he was so good-looking, and he -- they had torn down the McKinley School where he and Lola Mae Barnes and a lot of 'em went to that one, and put up the high school. And, so, he came and he was in our class, and the girls all just swooned over him, you know. He looked different than all the rest of them we had up there and --

Q. He was pretty to look at.

CS. -- and he was -- he and Jack Haberline was his name. And Haberline Store was named after -- it was his uncle's store. And Jack Haberline and Bill Kunkle and I were in a play, and we had to go into the auditorium and get up on the stage and practice. And in those days, girls wore garters to -- around their stockings, you know, to hold the stockings up. And we were going through all this play and learning our parts, and all at once, my garter flew across the stage. Well, those two boys laughed. They started laughing, and then they laid down on, on the stage and rolled over laughing and laughing, and I was so mortified. I could have died, and I still can feel that, almost in my bones, it dug, it dug so deep into my life. (Laughs)

Q. You provided entertainment for them. So, did they tease you about that in the years after that? They didn't forget?

CS. Yes, but then, when -- Bill came through for me, because in
1949, when I had polio, I went in to Bill, and he had a insurance -- company then, and I wanted to get insurance for my little girls, Marsha and Pam, at the time, and he said, "Well, let me put you down on it, too." And I said, "That's ridiculous." I said, "Certainly don't put me down on it." I said, "That's -- I don't need it. It's my girls I want it for." Well, he put my name down anyway. And really teach -- George went to teaching in the veterinarian school at the time and we moved to Stillwater, but -- and teachers were not paid anything in those days, nothing, not even in college. And -- but we just wouldn't have made it if he hadn't had put my name down, which I didn't want done, and then I was the one that got it.

Q. Can you tell Steve what your experience was with polio when you contracted it?

CS. Well, I was diagnosed with the flu, which most people are. Even to this day, a lot of times they are. But they -- I was six months pregnant, with this girl that just let you into the house. And they told me that I was -- I was -- I had the flu. And everybody that, it turned out, that were in that -- were there at St. Francis, were told that they had the flu before they got there, and had the, a spinal to find out if they had spinal meningitis or flu, or polio. And as it turned out, they all had polio. But it was Norman Overholser that was the doctor
at the time, and he had just gotten back from Denver, Colorado with a polio meeting that they were studying, and still, the doctors said flu. And my back just -- it just killed me. I could lie down for maybe 15 minutes, and then stand up for 15 minutes. I was in such pain, discomfort, and a terrible, terrible headache. And one morning, my two little girls that I had were six and four at the time, and they came in and said, "Mommy, we want breakfast." And I said, "Okay." And, and I said, "George, George, I, do you realize that I don't have the headache anymore? The headache's gone." And he said, "Well, good for you." But he says, "I know what you have wrong with you." And he said, I said, "What is it?" And he, he was, was a good diagnostician. That was his thing. He said, "Well, you have, you have polio." And I said, "I do?" Oh, that just about scared me to death. But the headache was gone, and I thought, "Oh, boy." I'm in my flannel, you know, I can get up now, and I started to get up and my legs were gone. And the, the -- I should have known, because the headache was gone.

Q. But you were hopeful.

CS. But I was -- yeah. But then I couldn't -- couldn't even get out of bed.

Q. And your treatment -- how did they proceed? What treatment did they --
CS. Well, I went to Wichita, and George called Norman and said, "Please come out and see your patient this morning before we leave." So, he came out, and he was really upset about it, but he wasn't the only doctor that had diagnosed people with flu. Everybody that was in the hospital at the time that I was there had been diagnosed with flu.

Q. And you were in an iron lung for a time; weren't you?

CS. I what?

Q. You were in an iron lung for a time; weren't you?

CS. No, I wasn't.

Q. Was that Wilma Don?

CS. No, I don't know about that. I wasn't. I fortunately didn't have to do that, but I was there for their birthdays, and Thanksgiving, and Halloween, and Christmas, and the whole thing.

Q. Did you -- did you recover your legs by the time Susie was born? Use of your legs?

CS. With, with crutches and, and leg braces. And when Norman Overholser retired from, from practice, he'd had a stroke, and he wasn't in too good of shape. But he, he -- they had a party for him at the hospital, and he was sitting out in the middle of the room in a chair, and people were going by, and at the time that I went, that I decided I'd go see him, because I hadn't seen him since I'd gotten to that stage when I got moved back...
here, and when I got out, got in there, the tears were running
down my eyes, and the tears were running down his eyes, and it
was a very emotional.

Q. I can imagine. I can imagine. You're a survivor, Caroline. I
don't know what time -- I have a group that I need to watch my
time. And I don't have -- What time do we have there?

CS. I think I have 20 after 5; is that right?

Q. Yeah, but I've got my book group down at the library and I'm the
leader, so I've got to go.

CS. Marsha is going to be coming back here and she's crazy about
llamas.

Q. Oh.

CS. And she wanted to learn more about llamas and get some yarn so
it's Christmas time. Susie went on the -- whatever it is you go
on to find out where people are, and I'm not part of that yet,
and we found this place that's called Teddy Bear Farms in
Colorado.


[END]
AM. My name is Anna Margaret McCurry, and I'm named after Barack Obama's great-great-grandma, Margaret McCurry. She passed away the same week I was born, but my dad went to her bedside and said, "We got another Margaret." And she smiled—she didn't say any words—but she took his hand and smiled, so she knew I was here. And then Barack's aunt, Madelyn [(Payne) Dunham]'s sister, was also named Margaret: Margaret Arlene [Payne], so we were both named after our grandmother.

Barack Obama's grandma is my first cousin and we spent many, many, many hours at their home in Augusta [Kansas], and they came to Wichita [Kansas]. And oh, we had all of our holidays and celebrated. You know, I think Madelyn was enough older; she
wanted to go out with teenagers or something and us little ones were kind of like children to her instead of cousins.
The main one was the Fourth of July with homemade ice cream. Where they lived in Augusta was a tiny little house that was owned by an oil company that furnished the home to Uncle [Rolla] Payne and Aunt Lee [Leona (McCurry) Payne]. And they stayed there 'til retirement and then moved to Winfield [Kansas], so they always lived in a little house. Next door was this big pipe yard and, oh goodness, we played and we made houses out of pipe—now, it's a telephone company right next to this house—but we had such a good time, and they were always afraid we were going to roll a pipe down from the big stack. But it was just a ball out there playing among all those pipes in the pipe yard.
That was so exciting. My brother and Dallas told me that Jack—that was one of Madelyn's brothers—said, “Well, Stanley Ann is married to a black and he's very well known in Chicago and a lawyer.” But, you know, I didn't think much about it. I mean, how would I ever see him anyway? And then after he made that famous speech with [Senator] John Kerry that we all just fell in love with him, he was on the Barnes and Nobles book review on television. We were sitting there listening, and they asked him what he was going to do now that all of this was over—it might have been even before he was a senator; I'm not sure where he
was at this point – and he said he was going to go to Honolulu to visit his little 82-year-old white grandma from Augusta, Kansas. I just started shivering. I said, “Jean, that kid has to have the same DNA I have. That has to be Stanley Ann's son.” So I quickly called his aunt Arlene, and she confirmed that it was Stanley Ann's son so we quickly wrote a letter. He was a senator then, cause we went to see him. We went on a bus tour with a group—only 12 in the group, it was really neat—to Washington DC, and we called him and he said we could come meet him. And so that was very exciting for me and Jean.

Q. Oh, I'm sure.

AM. He was so nice to both of us. He gave us his CDs and his book and autographed them. We were in the capital building after that with our group and there stood Barack right over there and I thought, “I can't believe I'm running into him twice.” I started to go right to him, but he came right up to us. Before he noticed me he shook everybody's hand in our group, and he said, “I understand you're all from Kansas,” and gave them all greetings. Then he gave me a hug and he said to them, “Now, you guys take care of my cousin.” So that was a really special time for me.

Q. Quite proud I'm sure.

AM. Mm-hm.
Q. Quite sure. He has such a --

AM. And, at that time, most of my family members did not know who he was, so I had some pretty excited brothers and sisters --

Q. Oh, mm-hm.

AM. --when I spread the news to them, they were just really, really happy.

Q. Oh, I can imagine.

AM. The more I look at him, he and my father look alike. I had a family picture of my family—I gave him all these pictures—and he took it in his hand. He kept saying, “Who, who, who, does he look like?” And I said, “Oh, Charles.” And he says, “No.” And it still didn't dawn on me till I got home.

Q. Oh.

AM. And then I could see my father.

Q. Uh-huh.

AM. And I think he did too because I don't know why he kept pointing--

Q. Oh.

AM. --at that picture and going, “Who, who does he look like?”

Q. Uh-huh.
AW. We really are closer related than Barack [Obama] realizes when I'm his grandma's first cousin.

Q. Sure. Your father was his -- Madelyn's mother's brother.

AW. Yeah. I think he came to Kansas once when he was about nine-years-old, but I don't know. I'm not aware if he even met his grandparents. I don't know how that situation was going on; I don't know.

Q. Oh, you remember playing with Stanley Ann?

AW. Oh, I played dolls with Stanley Ann.

Q. But you mean his grandparents, Stanley and Madelyn [Dunham], you don't quite remember?
AW. I remember them, but see I was three or four when they got married.

Q. Right. Right.

AW. And they kept moving other places.

Q. Uh-huh.

AW. And then they'd come back and they'd stay a while.

Q. Yeah.

AW. And I remember Stanley Ann more because we played together.

Q. Uh-huh.

AW. Okay. I have a list here of all of Madelyn's first cousins.

Q. Oh, my.

AW. And there's only three of them -- there's 14 of us and only three have passed on.

Q. Oh, my goodness. Good genes. [Laughs.]

AW. And that's why I said he's got hundreds of cousins out here.

Q. Can you tell us your full name, Margaret?

AW. My name is Anna Margaret McCurry, and I'm named after Barack's great-great-grandma, Margaret McCurry. She passed away the same week I was born, but my dad went to her bedside and said, “We got another Margaret.” And she smiled--she didn't say any words--but she took his hand and smiled, so she knew I was here. And then Barack's aunt, Madelyn's sister, was also named Margaret: Margaret Arlene [Payne], so we were both named after our grandmother.
Q. Quite a legacy there.

AW. Mm-hm.

Q. What's your relationship then, once again, to President Barack Obama?

AW. Barack Obama's grandma is my first cousin and we spent many, many, many hours at their home in Augusta [Kansas], and they came to Wichita [Kansas]. And oh, we had all of our holidays and celebrated. You know, I think Madelyn was enough older; she wanted to go out with teenagers or something and us little ones were kind of like children to her instead of cousins.

Q. Mm-hm. Tell me about the family celebrations. What holidays specifically?

AW. The main one was the Fourth of July with homemade ice cream. Where they lived in Augusta was a tiny little house that was owned by an oil company that furnished the home to Uncle [Rolla] Payne and Aunt Lee [Leona (McCurry) Payne]. And they stayed there ‘til retirement and then moved to Winfield [Kansas], so they always lived in a little house. Next door was this big pipe yard and, oh goodness, we played and we made houses out of pipe—now, it's a telephone company right next to this house—but we had such a good time, and they were always afraid we were going to roll a pipe down from the big stack. But
it was just a ball out there playing among all those pipes in the pipe yard.

Q. And a lot of cousins.

AW. Lots of cousins. Well, I have six brothers and sisters and there were a lot of cousins.

Q. And do you remember how many Madelyn -- how many siblings Madelyn had?

AW. Madelyn has one sister and two brothers, and they're all living.

Q. And they're all living. Tell us about the moment when you first realized the relationship between you and Barack Obama.

AW. That was so exciting. My brother and Dallas told me that Jack—that was one of Madelyn's brothers—said, “Well, Stanley Ann is married to a black and he's very well known in Chicago and a lawyer.” But, you know, I didn't think much about it. I mean, how would I ever see him anyway? And then after he made that famous speech with [Senator] John Kerry that we all just fell in love with him, he was on the Barnes and Nobles book review on television. We were sitting there listening, and they asked him what he was going to do now that all of this was over—it might have been even before he was a senator; I'm not sure where he was at this point — and he said he was going to go to Honolulu to visit his little 82-year-old white grandma from Augusta, Kansas. I just started shivering. I said, “Jean, that kid has
to have the same DNA I have. That has to be Stanley Ann's son.”
So I quickly called his aunt Arlene, and she confirmed that it
was Stanley Ann's son so we quickly wrote a letter. He was a
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with a group—only 12 in the group, it was really neat—to
Washington DC, and we called him and he said we could come meet
him. And so that was very exciting for me and Jean.
Q. Oh, I'm sure.
AW. He was so nice to both of us. He gave us his CDs and his book
and autographed them. We were in the capital building after
that with our group and there stood Barack right over there and
I thought, “I can't believe I'm running into him twice.” I
started to go right to him, but he came right up to us. Before
he noticed me he shook everybody's hand in our group, and he
said, “I understand you're all from Kansas,” and gave them all
greetings. Then he gave me a hug and he said to them, “Now, you
guys take care of my cousin.” So that was a really special time
for me.
Q. Quite proud I'm sure.
AW. Mm-hm.
Q. Quite sure. He has such a --
AW. And, at that time, most of my family members did not know who he
was, so I had some pretty excited brothers and sisters --
Q. Oh, mm-hm.

AW. -- when I spread the news to them, they were just really, really happy.

Q. Oh, I can imagine. What memories of Stanley Ann Dunham do you have?

AW. She was just a beaut -- she's probably four or five years younger than I am.

Q. Mm-hm.

AW. She was just beautiful; dark hair just like you just want to make a doll out of her she was so cute. When she'd come to my house or I was at her grandma's house, she always had to play dolls because I liked dolls. I don't know if she liked to play dolls or not, but if you played with me, you played dolls. I just remember that I just thought she was beautiful and special and I never could understand -- she's about the same age as her Uncle Jack, Madelyn's younger brother that is even younger than I am. And I just could not understand in my mind how Jackie could have a niece, how he could be an uncle, when he was only like four or five-years-old, and here he was an uncle. So anyway, we had to get that figured out. So they had older children except for this, Jack, that's my age and my two brothers' age. We were kind of the younger group in the family, the babies. So anyway, we had a lot of fun. My aunt Lee always
wanted us to come over and spend the night and spend time with her. She was just a lovely lady; really beautiful.

Q. And this was Madelyn's mother?

AW. Yes. Yes.

Q. And her name was Leona?

AW. Leona, but we called her Aunt Lee. She was very kind to everybody; just really high morals and you just couldn't ask for a better woman. She was super.

Q. And the matriarch of family holidays and get-togethers, were they most generally held there in Augusta at her --

AW. Augusta and at my folk's house. They kind of took turns; one year Wichita, one year Augusta. They just -- you know, Wichita and Augusta they seemed far apart then, but they are really close now.

Q. Right. Right.

AW. But we just took turns having them at one place or the other. But I loved Augusta because we could walk downtown, you couldn't do that in Wichita, from their house. We could just walk downtown. I thought that was so great to live in a town that you could do that with. Augusta has changed so much. It's not that little tiny town; it's just different than it was when I was a little girl.
Q. What are some of the family traits that you recognize in Barack Obama the more you get to know about him?

AW. The more I look at him, he and my father look alike. I had a family picture of my family—I gave him all these pictures—and he took it in his hand. He kept saying, “Who, who, who, does he look like?” And I said, “Oh, Charles.” And he says, “No.” It still didn't dawn on me till I got home.

Q. Oh.

AW. And then I could see my father.

Q. Uh-huh.

AW. And I think he did too because I don't know why he kept pointing--

Q. Oh.

AW. --at that picture and going, “Who, who does he look like?”

Q. Uh-huh.

AW. And they even -- they were kind of alike -- my dad was vice-president at Derby Oil Company, and he was a chemical engineer and a pharmacist. He was very good with hiring people and working with all their problems. I could see my father the way he never said anything unless he knew he was going to say it right. And sometimes it might sound like it's slow of speech, but it's really “I got to think this through before I say this.” And I see that in Barack.
Q. Yes.

AW. A lot. I see that a lot in Barack.

Q. He's quite articulate.

AW. Yes. Uh-huh.

Q. He has a marvelous poise.

AW. Well, his Aunt Ruth, my dad's other sister, was an English teacher in Goodland, Kansas and also taught in Peru, Kansas, and she was articulate, and her speech was just absolutely beautiful. I can see that -- I see that in Barack, and I see that in a couple of my children. That it just flows out so easily for them. I just --

Q. What do you attribute his -- he's been described as being worldly -- certainly growing up in Hawaii, spending most of his formative years in Hawaii. What do you remember about Stanley Ann that might connect with that openness to culture and --?

AW. Mostly what I remember about Stanley -- she was never there very long. They'd take off somewhere and then they'd move somewhere else, and you'd see them again for a little while. And you were never sure when they were going to be back or if you'd see them again. But his grandmother, I mean my Aunt Lee, they read all the great books to their children. They were very strong readers and their kids were just taught really early. In fact, my daughter went to visit Barack at his office. She home
schooled and she also like taught calculus in Claremore, Oklahoma. She said, “The girls were saying how hard, you know, their mother was so strict on all these.” And he said, “Well, if you think -- just listen to my story. If you think you had it hard, wait till you hear about me.” He said, “I went to school all day long, but when I got home my grandma and my mother followed me around with books till 8 o'clock at night. I was reading all these books.” So he said, “You didn't have it any harder than I had it.” So I think he was on top of all the reading and stuff from just a little tiny boy.

Q. Right. Right. I do remember that from his autobiography. He described his mother and how intense she was on making sure that he was educated.

AW. Uh-huh.

Q. And getting him up on 4:30 in the morning.

AW. Yes.

Q. And studying with him.

AW. Yeah. To make sure that he knew English.

Q. Right.

AW. When he was living --

Q. And when he complained, she said, “It's not a piece of cake for me either, Buster.”

AW. Yeah. Yeah.
Q. So she was quite intent on setting a sense of responsibility about education.

AW. Uh-huh.

Q. Are there any particular McCurry family stories that you recall your father sharing?

AW. Well, one thing that has really interested me lately, 'cause I have been trying to follow the family tree, and we all, my dad's side, all came from Scotland. They migrated into Kentucky, and Illinois is where my grandfather lived; Alten, Illinois. And he, at age three, shook President Lincoln's hand.

Q. Oh, my.

AW. I had -- can't find it, but I had an English paper that this aunt, that teaches English, had written in college about that. But he was on my grandfather's shoulders, and this is Thomas Creekmore McCurry, and Lincoln just came over and shook his hand way up there. And I thought well, isn't that strange?

Q. Oh, my.

AW. But then they migrated. I think people in those days got on their wagons and horses, and they migrated clear to Grandby, Missouri, which is really a story in itself. I just -- my grandfather, I think, worked in the mine for a while and drove a horse and wagon to Jefferson City with lead on it. They lived in like one of those little shotgun houses out in the country.
And some bush whackers came one time, and they killed my grandfather's -- shot my grandfather's brother. He was about ten-years-old and my great-grandma took my grandfather and hid him inside the feather mattress 'cause they were coming. They thought they were just going to leave this Tom McCurry alone cause he was little enough, but then they thought he might be able to tell more than what we think. And so they went to the home, he was hidden in the mattress and they wanted to know where he was, and my great-grandma pointed to the door and they left. But they did return, and they put hot coals in Mary's eyes, which would have been my grandfather's sister as a little baby sitting on the floor. She went blind from it. And they burned the house down.

So then when I went to Grandby to visit, cause I knew they were from there. I just wanted to see what the town was like. I really was pleased with the little town the first time I went; just a cute little town. Then the next time I could see -- well, my grandparents weren't happy here. They ran from this place because of this happening to them. So they migrated on a wagon clear to Kansas. I think it was Longton, Kansas. It was kind of a circle: Grandby, Longton, and over here was Peru [Kansas] where my father was raised. But just straight across was kind of Longton, so they never really got too far away from
this original Grandby. But my grandfather and grandmother raised eight children in Peru, Kansas, which is a town probably less than a hundred now. And they were all -- and the little Methodist church is still open that they went to. Because we went down there, and the preacher comes in from another town, and my son met me there and it was just a real warm feeling to -- that's where my grandfather's funeral was and my grandmother's funeral. And it was just touching to be in these spots. But when he lived there it was a town of one to five thousand; large high school. And it's just worn out now.

Q. Quite a history. Quite a family history.

AW. And so we went over to the cemetery and this always warms my heart because my brother that's a year younger than I am, his name is Tom, and I'm Margaret after our grandparents. And on this tombstone, -- all these people were gone before I was born because I was much younger in the family than the rest of them. And when I see that name of my brother and I on that tombstone, it just kind of took my breath away.

Q. Mm-hm.

AW. But there we were “Margaret McCurry and Thomas McCurry.” And it was just real touching to see that and to know they had stayed in that town all this time. The town, little town, was so friendly. There's kind of like a -- they don't sell gasoline,
but a little truck stop, and we went in and some of those people in there, some of them had no teeth. And they ran over to this -- I guess they still keep records in that building that looks like it's going to fall down. And they went over and brought this great big long picture of my Aunt Ruth and she taught there till her parents died, she never married, and she lived with her parents until they passed on. Then she went to Goodland, Kansas. In this picture was like oh, I bet 40 or 50 women at this society meeting. And it said number 40 is Margaret Bell Wright, and number 14 is Ruth McCurry. She was walking home from school and saw all these ladies sitting in the yard so she joined for the picture. And every lady in there was numbered. So if you look at number 12 you can count up and see which one it was.

Q. And we need to get this straight again. The little boy who shook Abraham Lincoln's hand was your great-grandfather?

AW. Was my grandfather.

Q. Was your grandfather.

AW. But Barack's great-grandfather.

Q. And this was Thomas Creekmore?

AW. McCurry.

Q. McCurry.
AW. Yes. Uh-huh. When he was -- and that's the one that was with his brother that got shot by the bushwhackers. That's the one that they hid in the mattress.

Q. And I thought it was. How ironic that he has been compared, Barack Obama, has been compared to Abraham Lincoln.

AW. Uh-huh.

Q. An Illinois senator, his political roots in Illinois. And then to have this image of this little boy shaking Abraham Lincoln's hand.

AW. Yes.

Q. And to think of the heritage.

AW. And I don't know how long they lived in this town, but they left it and came on to Grandby, Missouri. And that was a long ride when you look at -- when I was studying the map and you go by horse and wagon all the way there and take your family. That was a long way -- journey for them to take.

Q. Right. Right.

AW. And --

Q. Incredible. Strong family. Did your -- you talked about your family visiting Augusta, but what about El Dorado? Do you have any memories --?

AW. I do not know that family at all. And if I had been older, my sister's only three years younger than Madelyn. I knew Stanley
was from El Dorado, but I don't remember ever meeting his parents. I guess he was from Wichita too, and I didn't know that till Suzan Peters put on the news --

Q. Right. Right.

AW. -- that he was from there. So I just wasn't aware where all Stanley was from.

Q. What community traditions do you remember growing up as a child?

AW. Well, basically the homemade ice cream and it was just the more the -- well, you know Aunt Lee and Uncle Payton had a small house. Ours was quite a bit larger. But the grownups were usually inside and we were all over that pipe yard having just a ball. And that's the most -- I don't know if I --

Q. But you say they did come to Wichita as well?

AW. Oh, yes.

Q. Well what were some of the festivities in Wichita that would draw --?

AW. Well, they were at my high school graduation. And I think --

Q. And you graduated from where?

AW. Wichita High School East.

Q. Wichita East?

AW. And there were six of us so there were lots of things going on that they came in for. Then my Aunt Ruth from Goodland, she was just -- oh, Barack would have loved her. She was a school
teacher and all of her summer she took turns coming to see all of her brothers and sisters and we'd all get together when she'd come. She'd come in the summer, she'd stay a few weeks at Aunt Lee's, and few weeks at ours and uncle John and Joe's. During this time, we all kind of got together to see each other all again. And she never drove till she was 65.

Q. Oh, my goodness.

AW. When she retired she had a little red convertible. And they said, "Watch out for that little Ruth McCurry when she gets behind that" --

Q. And she taught?

AW. She taught English and grammatics in Goodland, Kansas. And I always say for like 150 years because she was there it seemed like forever.

Q. Uh-huh.

AW. I hardly remember her being in Peru, but she stayed there right out of college till both of her parents had passed on.

Q. Mm-hm.

AW. Just to be with them and help them.

Q. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AW. And I don't know how she chose Goodland, but that's where she ended up after they passed on.
Q. What are the historical events worth noting in your own childhood and adolescence that -- as you think back on your own life that this has been quite a historical year?

AW. Well, one time, I don't know how historical this is, but I got really excited at a Kansas City ball game 'cause President Truman was there. I don't remember how old I was, but I was determined I was going to go to where he was. And my folks had a hard time keeping me in my seat 'cause I knew he was there. I think he had thrown the ball, and I just didn't see any reason why I shouldn't be able to go hunt him up.

Q. Mm-hm.

AW. But I didn't get that far.

Q. What do you remember, you were quite young, but what do you remember about the war years?

AW. Oh, boy. In Wichita we had air raids. I don't know if you had them here in your town here, but it was pretty scary because Boeing -- we lived in East Wichita, College Hill area, and Boeing was not all that far from us. But when the air raid whistles sound -- usually at night when it was dark, every light in your house had to get off or you were fined. Every light was turned off and you had to go to your basement and not come out. And there was one block follower for each block that would walk
up and down the block to make sure all this had been done. And that was always really scary and I --

Q. Oh, my.

AW. -- I'll swear, one time I thought one of those little Army planes or Air Force planes, I thought they went through the side of our house like this.

Q. Oh, no.

AW. You could hear the airplanes because Boeing was maybe five miles away or so, so airplanes did get in that path.

Q. Right. Now, that's very interesting and I would, I'll have to follow that up with people from El Dorado --

AW. Yeah.

Q. -- further east. Because of Wichita being the air capital of the world, it makes me think that that was unique to Wichita. I'm not sure that El Dorado did have air raids.

AW. Maybe you were further away from Boeing than we were.

Q. Yes. Yes. That's quite interesting.

AW. But then another thing that I always remember as -- they had rationed these stamps out and you could only have so much of every item. Like, sugar was rationed and rubber and maybe shoes. But you could only -- when you used up your stamps, you couldn't get any more of these things. I guess you were lucky if you had six children in the family, 'cause you had a lot of
different food stamps that went a little further than some other families.
I also remember that, since my dad was vice-president of Derby and had an office downtown and at the refinery, that we always got our gasoline free during that Second World War time, I can remember. And we always had a company car. We just never bought our own car 'cause the company furnished it. And I always thought that was kind of nice that they gave him that kind of benefit. Then we had the newspaper drive. I don't know if you had them here, but we'd take all our old newspapers to school and they'd take them in. And that was all the money that went to help the Second World War. Then we had saving bonds and once a week or maybe, I think it was just once a week, you took your money to school and you could buy as many stamps as you wanted. And you'd fill up your little book where you bought these little saving stamps at school in a little stamp book like the size, a little bigger than a check book, and then you'd fill each page. And then when you had it all filled up, it was worth something. But we always kept those going during that time.

Q. Mm-hm.

AW. So that was something that we used to do. And my sister, that's kind of Madelyn's age, was the age where she had a lot of friends, you know, going away in the Second World War so she

20
knew a lot of people. We didn't have -- I had three older
sisters so I didn't have any brothers in the war.

Q. Experienced it different --

AW. Uh-huh.

Q. -- than she did.

AW. So I was glad. But my sister was a school teacher. But when
the war went on, she quit teaching and went out to Boeing and
worked like Rosie the Riveter.

Q. Rosie the Riveter.

AW. Madelyn was working there too.

Q. Right.

AW. I don't know if they knew each other when they were doing that,
but somehow I guess she wanted to do that more than teach, at
that point.

Q. Mm-hm. There was quite a call for that.

AW. Mm-hm. Oh, yeah, there was a shortage. There were a lot of
jobs there for people, but she gave up teaching to do that for a
while.

Q. Well, Margaret, thank you so much, Margaret McCurry Wolf, for
sharing your memories and adding to our heritage project for
President Barack Obama. Strong family with some wonderful
memories and thank you for sharing that.

AW. I have one more thing that's really kind of neat.
Q. Yes. Please do. Please do.

AW. Wild Bill Hickok is my fifth cousin. I don't know if Barack's ever mentioned that.

Q. How fascinating.

AW. But his mother was one of my great-great-grandfathers, or something, sister and her name was Christina.

Q. On the McCurry side?

AW. Uh-huh. Christina Wilson so --

Q. And this was Wild Bill Hickok's mother was Christina Wilson?

AW. I believe that's it, if I have it right.

Q. Oh, wow. Fascinating.

AW. And like when they lived in Granby one of the other cousins that lived there are the Browns that were related to us said, "Well, I always saw this Hickok guy come and visit your grandparents all the time, but I had no idea it was Wild Bill Hickok." He just always came and visited them.

Q. Oh, for heaven's sakes. That's fascinating.

AW. So, and my dad always said, "Never tell anybody that you're related to Wild Bill." I guess they thought, at that point, I guess everybody thought he was Wild Bill.

Q. Wild.

AW. And my kids say, "Well, Mom, if you read up on him, he's really an interesting guy."
Q. Uh-huh. Fascinating.

AW. Mm-hm.

Q. Well, I think that's what makes this project even more wonderful.

AW. Mm-hm.

Q. Is that the stories come out and inspire people to do more of their own family research. Thank you, so much.

AW. Well, you're most welcome. We are proud of Barack.

Q. Well, he will go ahead and edit this part right here so I'll tell him.

[END]
CS. -- Stone. My -- my mother's family name was Clifford --

Q. Is that right?

CS. -- and my father's father was William Stone, and I just -- I became Clifford William Stone.

Q. Do you, did, did you always go by Cliff?

CS. Mm-hmm, Stoney. [Laughs.]

Q. Oh, Stoney.

CS. In the war, in the war I was Stoney.

Q. Oh, is that right? Okay.

CS. In World War II.

Q. Never William?

CS. No, never -- not -- never occurred to anybody.
Q. Okay. [Laughs.] Nobody knew, so that was okay.

CS. But as I say, Clifford was my mother's family name.

Q. I see.

CS. So --

Q. Huh. So you got to carry it on?

CS. That far. She didn't have any brothers. I was the end of the line. Clifford Township, although, up in the northwest part of the county, was named for my great-great-grandfather.

Q. Oh. Wow. So tell me a little bit about your background -- early days. You lived on a farm, I understand?

CS. Well, no. I never -- that was after school. No, I just went to school at Washington Elementary School, and at that time -- when I was born, my mother and father lived farther west, up before you get to High Street. I forget the name of the street. Anyway, as things went along, why -- I grew up -- the years that I was growing up, I was at 311 South Washington, which was -- is a, to a -- well, a block and a half catty-corner to where I live now, which is 119 South Taylor, which my grandfather, Clifford, was a farmer, but he got elected County Treasurer up in Clifford Township, and that's where you -- it was just horse-and-buggy days, so they had to come to El Dorado and find a place to live. You couldn't go back and forth to Clifford Township and be County Treasurer, so they were looking for a place to live, and 119 South Taylor is where they found.
And at that time, everything west of my driveway was orchard, so the whole half-block, and it -- it -- it -- the owner was the Presbyterian minister, and his wife died, and there was my grandfather, and my grandmother, and my mother, and she was 12 or 13 years of age, but the house was large enough that they were looking for a place to live, and they just rented rooms -- some of the rooms, because he didn't need that much room by himself, but the good -- good Presbyterian ladies did not think it was 'meet for man to live' alone, and "I want you to come have dinner now," "this; there now," and he got tired of that. He said -- came to my grandfather one day and said, "I've had all this I'm going to take. If they think they're going to run my life for me, they are mistaken. I'm leaving town. Do you want to buy the house?"

Q. They did?

CS. $320.

Q. Wow. Oh my Goodness. Was that a lot of money back then?

CS. Well, obviously.

Q. Yeah, must have been.

CS. Well, I mean --

Q. Yeah.

CS. -- that was a long time ago.

Q. Sure, sure.

CS. I don't know whatever happened to him. I don't know that much about the story, but it's been a -- it's been a very pleasant
place for us -- because I'll have to go to someplace else, because neither of my children -- my daughter lives in Kansas City, and my son lives in Tulsa, so one of these days the ownership will change.

Q. Mm-hmm. So you had a pretty normal childhood as far as that goes?

CS. Oh, I guess. I don't know. It was --

Q. Anything stand out that was extraordinary?

CS. I don't think there was anything extraordinary about it. I walked back and forth to Washington Elementary, which is where the library -- Bradford Library is now. And then, when it was time to go to junior college, the junior college -- or junior high school was where the -- well, it was where the parking lot of the Allen Hospital -- well, that's not quite right. It was east of there on the corner.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. Right -- in the middle of the block on the west side of West Central -- I mean, the north side of West Central was the McKinley Grade School.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. It was a buff brick with a red-brick trim, and had classrooms in the basement, and then two floors above. So -- by the time that I was there, it was -- it was part of the junior college.

Q. Mm-hmm.
CS. The junior college was north -- I mean, to the west, on the top floor of the old Junior High School.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. And so anyway, I was always able to walk back and forth to school, because Washington School wasn't very far, and Junior High wasn't very far.


CS. I -- they experimented with -- there were about eight of us, and we didn't -- we didn't go to -- we didn't go to 7th grade. We went from the 6th to the 8th. They tried it with -- there must have been eight or ten of us, and I've always thought it was a mistake, and they never did it again, I noticed. I didn't think --

Q. How did you get chosen? Were you just really bright, or how'd you get --

CS. Well, the others were at least. The others were bright -- very bright. There were about, maybe, ten of us.

Q. Hmm.

CS. I don't know.

Q. Was that hard for you?

CS. Huh?

Q. Was that hard to skip a grade like that?

CS. I don't think -- it wasn't hard to do, but I don't think it was good for us, and they never did it again. They'd never done it before, and they never did it again.
Q. Huh.

CS. And I don't think it was -- I don't think it was -- I don't -- one of the people, just the other day, her name was Betty Prohodsky -- Betty Bond Prohodsky [Died Oct. 3, 2008], and I think she -- I think -- I think I'm the last one. She was next to the last.

Q. Mm-hmm. Hmm.

CS. There were about ten of us.

Q. Mm-hmm. So --

CS. But it was a -- it was experimental and --

Q. Yeah.

CS. When I was in the 5th grade, they came in one day -- the principal came in one day and asked -- she was a black girl, very bright, 5th grade -- and took her up to the -- Just so you’d -- you know, the explanation was, that we heard anyway, that she didn’t spend her time in the 5th grade, she's too smart, so they put her in the 6th grade. Well, then there were about ten of us that, that skipped the 7th grade and went from the 6th to the 8th. They had never done it before, and they never did it again, and I suppose that they thought it was worth trying, but they never did it again that I ever heard about.

Q. Did you have any -- you said you had a brother?

CS. No, I didn't. No brothers or sisters.

Q. No brothers or sisters. You're the only child?

CS. Mm-hmm.
Q. Wow.

CS. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Were you -- was your family pretty much middle class, do you think, or --

CS. Oh, yes, I think so, although -- well, I'd say middle class.

Q. Sure. So you were probably 10 to teenager when you -- when the Depression was going on?

CS. Oh, yes. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Q. Okay. What was that like?

CS. It was -- it was tough, but it wasn't -- people got along. I know my parents and grandparents were forever taking food and things to people that didn't -- particularly black people, that -- because you could get 25 hamburgers for a dollar. They were about that big [indicating], 25 for a dollar.

Q. And a house for $320. [Laughs.]

CS. Yeah, yeah. And -- but people got along. There wasn't the -- there wasn't complaining. There wasn't unpleasantness about it. People just -- I know we were forever delivering food and things to, to families that didn't have -- have it.

Q. Hmm.

CS. There was no unrest. There wasn't anything like that, but when you get to thinking about it, you know, two or three dollars a day was farmhand wages.

Q. Yeah. Yep.

CS. And it was -- it was -- it was -- it was tough. It was tough.
Q. So now, looking back, were there any lessons that you took from that era, any -- any -- like, the way you conducted your life after going through that that is different because of that experience?

CS. Well, I would -- I would have hoped that a certain amount of conservatism seeped through, one thick brain, but we were -- I, personally, and most of my friends were not affected. We were not poverty stricken. It just happened to be in a small community like this that there were some people better off than others, but there wasn't any unrest or things like that. People just got along.

Q. Sure. I'm sure times were tougher -- times were probably tougher in other places, bigger cities.

CS. Well, of course, the Discovery Well out west was 1920. Now, before that, of course, there wasn't any -- there wasn't any oil, there weren't any refineries, there weren't any pipelines, or anything like that. It was just all farming area. Now, that -- the Discovery Well, 1920, 20,000 barrels a day, that, that changed everything.

Q. Did it?

CS. And people who had land were -- the big production was the -- they immediately moved to Wichita and built a great big house.

Q. Send me the check.
CS. Yeah, yeah. Send me the check. Oh, there were wonderful stories.

Q. Yeah.

CS. There were wonderful stories of people that -- well, the Clifford farm was right in the area -- in the -- where -- where the other families adjoined. The Lathrops were on the -- were south of the Clifford farm, but they had four boys and one girl, and the Cliffords just had one girl, and so they had their own harvest crew and things like that, but then everything was -- the uh -- the -- that oil pool up there was one of the most prolific little pools in the United States. It made them all very well-to-do.

Q. Sure.

CS. One of them was a big owner in -- in TWA, Trans World Airlines.

Q. Wow.

CS. Another one had a bond -- bond house, and securities/exchange thing. One of them had a big purebred Hereford herd, big -- great big huge native stone barn, and so forth. He wasn't married --

Q. Hmm.

CS. -- but it made -- made the Lathrops all rich.

Q. Hmm.

CS. Quite rich, as a matter of fact. And one was an interesting story. My mother -- somebody in the family lived out in California, so my mother and grandmother
took me, and they went out to visit them and so forth, and one of the families -- and this was a palatial brick house, and here was this great huge yard, probably acres, and this big driveway that came in up to the big house and around, and so this was a family that had land there in this Lathrop pool, and it made them quite well-to-do.

And so we -- my mother and grandmother took me along, and I sat on the floor and looked at a book or something while they visited, but in conversations afterwards -- I wasn't even listening to what they were saying, but my mother told me about it afterwards, how -- she said -- and they'd used, they used this house in many movies, because it was such a palatial -- well, almost a southern-mansion type of location and setting with palm trees, and a big circular drive, and -- or U-shaped drive, sort of, but my mother told me one time afterwards that part of the conversation was, "All that money has really never brought us anything but unhappiness," and that was -- that was true of her children. They just had so damn much money that values weren't the same, you know?

Q. Sure. I've heard that.

CS. They spent it, and enjoyed it, and all of the stuff that goes along with it, and she said, "It never brought us anything but unhappiness," and that's true in a lot of cases. There's a lot of cases it isn't true, but it's -- it's easy to slip into that mode if you -- if you're not careful.
Q. Yeah. And people that win the lottery --

CS. Yeah, sure.

Q. -- similar situation. I've heard stories.

CS. Yeah, same -- same thing.

Q. Yeah, nothing brought them happiness --

CS. There you are.

Q. -- and they would probably wish they hadn't won it as it turned out.

CS. Uh-huh. Yeah. Well, that's -- it works both ways.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. And some people take that money and do glorious things with it, helpful things and profitable things, and then some of them take it and don't do good things. So anyway --

Q. So what'd your father do for a living?

CS. My father? Well, he was in the banking business for a long time, and then, he was an alcoholic, became one, and -- but -- and that was not a pleasant situation, but anyway, we got along, but then he -- my grandfather had acquired pasture lands and so forth, so he got in the cattle business. I was really raised in the cattle business. We lived in town, but my summers were spent riding fence, fixing -- keeping the windmills going, and things like that, so I was horseback. And the ponds in those days were built with teams and slips, a little digging device, and so they weren't very deep, and -- and when it would stop raining, then the water wasn't deep like when you
came along later on with the bulldozers and go down real deep. Well, that water doesn't evaporate like it does when it's very shallow, and so we had to haul a lot of water when it would get to be – uh – [Laughs.]

My -- my grandfather gave his daughter a section of land, and the house was right in the middle of this section of land, and the little school was just a half a mile -- the house was right in the middle of the section, but the little country school was down at the south border, and this fellow's name was Wilber Countryman, was named for my father by his sister, and well, we're countrymen.

The Countryman Rodeo was an annual event around the Fourth of July, and it was -- took place right there on this section of land that I was telling you about. [Laughs.]

The language around the house was -- was a little rough, but anyway, my cousin, when he was -- time to go to school, his -- his mother packed him a lunch, because the other children would have lunches, and she wanted him to be like them, so his first day of school she just sent him off walking a half of a mile down to the little school. Didn't take him, just he knew where it was. At noon, he was back at the house. He'd eaten his lunch that she packed for him at recess. [Laughs.] "Well, why? Well, why did you -- why didn't you stay?" "It just lasted too goddamn long for me." [Laughs.]
That's what -- he was that way all his life, but he had the Countryman Rodeo. His name was Countryman, and he had the Countryman Rodeo. That was a big institution for us around the Fourth of July, was everybody went to the Countryman Rodeo. "It just lasted too goddamn long for me." [Laughs.] That's the way his father talked, and that's the way he talked.

Q. I bet the next day he stayed a little longer.

CS. He probably -- he'd eaten his lunch at -- at -- at break.

Q. Yeah. So you went to high school, and then -- then you went to college?

CS. Well, I was going to go to KU, because that's where all my friends were going, and I thought, you know, because I'd worked -- I'd worked for my grandfather out on the farm in the summertimes, and I got -- so I rode fence for my father, and drove the water truck, and did all these things, and -- but all my friends were going to KU, and I was going to go to KU, and I just got to reasoning about it and thinking, "Why the hell would I go to KU if I'm going to be a farmer or a rancher? Why don't I go over --?" They teach that kind of stuff, so I was just kind of a -- I just decided to go to Kansas State. Well, then, it didn't work out that way, because I could have -- I could have stayed on the farm. I didn't. After I got out of school, my grandfather had a farm out at Garden City, and so my grandfather and my father said, "Well, we'll just -- whoever's been to college and supposedly learned about farming, so --"
My grandfather had died by that time, my Grandfather Stone, but my father said, "Well, why don't you go out there and take that operation over?" Well, it was 1,300 acres, and the Arkansas River was the north border, and up north of the Arkansas River was this nice loamy soil, and what I had was pretty sandy. Well, I had 1,300 acres there, and I had two -- two sets of irrigation pumps, thirteen-hundred gallon -- thirteen - fifteen-hundred gallons a minute.

I was -- hadn't been there very long, and I was in the McCormick-Deering farm machine place getting a -- getting some parts or something, and hadn't been there very long, and I was getting ready to leave, and this kind of portly fellow, bib overalls and so forth, was walking down -- gray-haired -- walking down, and I started to leave, and this fellow that ran the place said, "Oh, just a minute, Mr. Stone. I want you to meet your -- your neighbor." And so, "He lives -- his land is across the Arkansas River from you," so he came up and introduced me. This fellow said, "Now, where is it your place is?", and so I told him. "Oh. Want to know what your place needs over there?" "I'm sure I do, sir." "Well, it needs to rain every other day and a shower of shit in between." [Laughs.] That's exactly what it needed.

Q. He's right.

CS. But anyway, then, my father died, and so we rented that place out, and I came back here, which everything -- we had -- you
know, we had tenants, and I didn't want to stay out there and farm, frankly, and so I came back here, but then, I wasn't -- I wasn't on one of the places. I wasn't using one of the places. I was -- they were leased, and I would have -- I'd have to terminate a lease, or buy it out, or something, and then take over. And I'd learned to fly. I got my pilot's license out there at Garden City, and that was interesting -- a little Taylorcraft.

Q. Hmm.

CS. And the lessons were $5 an hour.

Q. Hmm.

CS. And my father thought I'd lost my mind. My mother thought, "Well, if he wants to do it, he's -- let him do it." My little grandmother would send -- every now and then send me $5 for another lesson.

Q. [Laughs.] She wanted you to do it. So why'd you decide to do that? Why'd you decide to take flying lessons?

CS. Well, I don't know. I just thought it'd be fun, and I got my pilot's license, but it was just something I wanted to do. So anyway, then I came back here, and see, I'm not farming. I'm not ranching, because the land had all been leased out, so I'm ready -- I'm A1 for the draft. I wasn't going to go out there and terminate somebody's lease and hide from the military service. Hell, I wanted to -- I'd learned to fly, had a pilot's
license. I thought I qualified. Well, I didn't. I didn't pass the physical. It was interesting.

So anyway, I got in the what was called a civilian pilot's training thing they had set up, and that was -- they couldn't -- you know, the Air Force had their own, but they didn't have anywhere near enough instructors, or planes, or anything else, so they farmed out a lot of their learning, and a lot of their teaching, and maintaining the -- oh, is --

And a fellow here in El Dorado named Herman White [phonetic spelling] -- at that time, the El Dorado City Airport was where you go down south, and you turn on a blacktop road going east to the airport. The airport was on the west side of the highway, and that's where it was.

And anyway -- anyway, I got involved in that and learned to -- learned to fly all over again -- I mean, got in what was called a Civilian Pilot Training corps, which -- so I just went through the whole learning process again, which was all right, but -- because I didn't -- but it came time, then, where you had to -- you had to either keep on as an aviator, or you had to go into infantry, or -- or something --

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. -- so we were up at Fort Riley. We had to go up there for our physical examinations, and I was 12 pounds overweight, so I wasn't going to get to go to flight school.

Q. Mm-hmm.
CS. I was going to have to go to the infantry or something like that, and I was sitting around there kind of regretting what was going to happen to me, and this warrant officer came through the -- walking through this area where I was, and he was somebody I knew. He was older than I am, but I knew him from El Dorado, so I got ahold of him, and I said, "Look, look. I -- I can take that off. I don't -- You know, I learned to fly. I would like to stay in it" [indicating]. "I'll take care of it," so he took care of it, got me out of going to the infantry, and got to stay to go on with flight instruction.

Q. Sure.

CS. One of the people that was in the same class that I was didn't pass the mental examination.

Q. Hmm.

CS. He went off to one of the airlines.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. They taught him to fly, and I went off to the military for $125 a month, and he went off to the school to teach the transport pilots for $600 a month.

Q. Got to be a little crazy.

CS. But he died — many, many years ago, he was flying for TW -- flying four round-trips to Chicago to Honolulu and making $100,000 a year, which is nice, except he's been dead for 40 years.

Q. Yeah.
CS. Oh, it’s funny, the little twists and turns that life throws your way. But that was so funny, he didn't pass the mental examination, but he went off with Delta -- it was one of the airlines at $600 a month, while I went off to the Army Air Corps at $175 a month.

Q. Yeah.

CS. But I'm still here.

Q. Yeah.

CS. That was interesting.

I was on my last mission. A mission may -- a mission sounds -- well, you'd go out and come back. That's a mission, except some of them were so hazardous that you got two credits.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. So I was flying -- I was -- I made a big mistake. I was so -- so apprehensive. I was a pilot, of course, but I was a copilot for the first part of my overseas part, and -- but we had a -- such a good crew that usually the -- one of the big shots would go with us, because we were in the -- we were in the little tiny group that formed our -- our -- our wing or whatever you call it, but we had such a good crew that -- if you flew 50 missions -- and some of your missions were double credit. It was long and hazardous, why that qualified for two credits. The short ones were just one credit.

But anyway, I was -- always figured that -- and I was a copilot for the first part of that, and then our pilot was moved up to
headquarters -- squadron headquarters, and I took over the crew then.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. But I got off of track of what I was going to tell you, but --

Q. Was there a bombing?

CS. Yeah. If you flew -- some of your -- some of your missions were double credit, but you had to have 50 credits, and then you could - you came home, and then went on. If there was a place where they could use you, then you went on.

Well, I was on -- I was on my -- what would have been my 51st credit, and it was supposed to be a short flight, heavily-loaded. I was leading an eight-plane -- two -- two diamonds of four, and it was going to be my last mission, except I didn't get back.

I was leading eight planes, and it was -- the airplane was loaded for a much shorter flight, so I had to get out of formation, and go out, and drop two 500-pound bombs, and then get back into formation, and I had a radar -- a radar bombardier, and it was a close-cover target, and it was Munich, and it was -- had been a very short -- so I had to get rid of some bombs, but I still -- Munich was supposed to be cloud-covered, so I had to get back in, and the trouble was that this bombardier -- I had two bombardiers, but one was a regular bombardier, and the other one was a radar bombardier, because it was cloud-covered.
So anyway, got that done, but in all that maneuvering, I lost an engine.

Q. Hmm.

CS. Now, if I'd been back in the formation just following somebody, I'd have turned around and gone back, but everybody was drop -- supposedly dropping on our plane, because we had this radar bombardier, so I had to keep going, but then I lost an engine.

Then, Munich was the target, and got to go on -- and lost another engine from flak, but I still had to keep going, because everybody was dropping on our plane.

So now, I am headed for home, and I lost another engine, and you're just not going to keep a B-24 flying a long time with just one engine. We threw everything. Everybody had gone off and left us of course, because even with two engines, I couldn't keep up with the rest of them, so we started throwing everything overboard, and I had two choices. I had to either go to try to get to Switzerland -- if you got to Switzerland, why, you were there for the rest of the war -- or you could get down to Yugoslavia, and they'd get you back to Italy in a couple of weeks. So I wanted to get home for Christmas, because this was my last mission, and I'd get to go home, so --

But I got down there, lost another engine, and we were down -- got down to -- I started getting them out of the plane -- everybody out of the plane, and I -- it was down to 1,500 feet when I got
out. I didn't break my ankle when I landed, but I sure as hell hurt it, and so I was kind of crippled up for awhile with that, but it fortunately, it wasn't broken. It just bruised pretty bad. It was -- it was chipped, anyway.

Q. Huh.

CS. But anyway - but anyway -- then anyway, so I spent six months as a prisoner of war -- kind of interesting -- 70 miles from Sweden. Stammlager Luftlager Eins (German: translates to Prisoner-of-war Camp, Air Forces Personnel, One).

It was really -- it was one of the most productive five months of my life, because I'm an Episcopalian, and the chaplain at this Stalag One, who moved amongst the compounds being a chaplain --

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. He and I got acquainted, and he -- it came out that -- anyway, he -- it got so crowded that he had to have two people move in with him, and the room was about a fourth the size of my office in there [indicating], and there were three of us in there; the chaplain -- and then, he said -- he was British, of course, and he said, "Find someone who can cook, Stoney, and bring him along," and so one of the other guys in my room -- because we had to cook our own meals. He -- he -- he had a flair for that, so I talked him into moving in with me.

Now, he could circulate amongst the compounds being a chaplain, and so the library, for this part of the camp, was through the fence, and he said, "Now, I can bring you books. You
can't -- you can't go with me, but I can bring you books. What have, what have you been reading?" Well, I told him what I had been reading. He said, "Well -- hmmm," he said, "that will never do. Hereafter, I shall select your reading for you." So for the next five months, I had a short course in really fine British novels. That was one of the most interesting things.

Q. Wow.

CS. He's still alive. I keep in touch with him. He doesn't know that -- he's not aware enough -- awake enough during the day that -- he probably realizes that I've sent a letter to his wife, and she's -- he probably understands. I don't know, but he's -- he's -- he was older than I am, so he's probably 100.

Q. Hmm.

CS. But that was a -- that was - cause I read books that I wouldn't have read normally, because he just brought them to me and shoved them down my throat.

Q. You have -- I know you have a passion for reading --

CS. Yeah.

Q. -- and -- and you've shared that with many. Steve Thunk [phonetic spelling] --

CS. Yes.

Q. -- has mentioned that at another time. Do you think that's where that came from, was that experience?

CS. No, no, no, no.

Q. Was it before that?
CS. Oh, yes. Oh, yeah.

Q. Tell me about that. How did you develop that?

CS. I don't know, just that my mother and father were real readers. They just always had books going, and so I just -- it came by naturally, I guess. I was surrounded by it. They both always had books going.

My mother was -- she was on the library board for a few years, and she was on the school board. But anyway --

Q. What do, what do you find in books that fascinate you even today?

CS. I don't read like I did. I don't. I just -- my eyes just don't --

Q. Sure.

CS. -- don't hold up. I don't know. I just -- I read rapidly, and just anything that interests me, I read it. I don't retain a lot. I just enjoy -- enjoy it.

Q. I don't want to skip over your time at Butler. After high school, you -- did you go there for a couple years?

CS. No, no. I took classes as a senior. Most of my classes were in McKinley Grade School, which was junior college. No, most of my senior year was -- was college courses.

Q. Okay. And those were through Butler?

CS. Well, it was El Dorado Junior College in those days.

Q. Oh, okay.
CS. Uh-huh. It was in the McKinley -- their headquarters was in the McKinley Grade School. They tore down the high school. The class of '35 was the last class in the old high school. It was a -- oh, there are pictures of it. It was kind of a classic beautiful building in its time. When it was first built, it was the pride of El Dorado, but of course, all that faded, as the new building techniques came along and so forth.

Q. So the junior high that's there now, was that, that the high school at first?

CS. Well, the junior high would have been in -- well -- well, the high school -- yes. The high school was behind -- take the front part of what is now the junior high and visualize that north of that was the old high school. And so, I was in the last class of that, then they tore it down and built what you see now, which, of course, is the junior high as opposed to being the high school. But then, the -- the -- the corner -- the corner there between the high school and the -- just before you get to, to Denver Street, was a little filling station, which was a City Service station, but when I was in school, it was, it was a hangout for hamburgers and things like that. It was, it was a filling station which they had abandoned to get a larger area, and a fellow took it over, and made a hamburger stand out of it, a very popular place -- had to drive in. You could drive up, and had the girls that come out and wait on your car.
Anyway --

Q. Your support of Butler has not ceased since -- well, gosh -- for a long time I would imagine.

CS. Well, my mother was on the school board when the -- when the community college was -- when the El Dorado Junior College was in its formative stages, and some peculiar set of circumstances, I guess, I just have kind of kept up that interest and tried to help.

Q. What is it about Butler now -- what is it that continues to -- that you continue to want to support it? What, what --?

CS. Jackie Vietti, very simple. I would have supported it anyway, but she has brought such vigor, and such life, and such expansion to that whole thing. That's probably the -- that's probably one of the best junior colleges in the United States, and all because of her.

Q. I agree.

CS. She's been here 16-18 years, and it's just absolutely mushroomed, not only mushroomed as far as attendance and students is concerned, but as far as the quality. She's -- she's a remarkable person, and she's led that thing -- well, they have 80 courses out there. They prepare you for 80 full-time useful wonderful occupations in two years. And the nursing program out there is probably one of the best in the United States of America for -- for -- probably, and that's just because one physician here just made it a point to make sure that -- they
had -- the Allen Memorial Hospital had a training course, which they were having troubles supporting it financially, and so this doctor took over and just crammed it down our throats and into the community college, and so now, turn out 80 a year registered nurses, two classes of 40. Wonderful, just wonderful.

But Jackie Vietti has -- has been the spark that ignited all the rest of this expansion. You've been down to Andover. That's sensational down there.

Q. Yeah.

CS. And it, but -- it's all such common sense. There's no hooray about it. It's a good solid place.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. I just think it's wonderful. But she's -- she's been the spark.

Q. Sure. Sure. What has the college -- what's the college give back to the community besides employment, you know, a lot of people that work there?

CS. Oh, spirit. Spirit. It's -- it's -- it's a mini-version of Wichita State and Wichita. Something to -- well, look at their theatre group. Look at that, that section. The -- the Ag school is finally getting to get a larger share of attention and so forth. That's been kind of neglected. I don't -- just -- it just wasn't in Jackie's --

Q. Yeah, vision.

CS. -- but she was interested in it. It's, it's been awfully good, but -- but it's beginning to get the attention that it deserves
now, I think. But of course, they have always had a -- they've had good sports. They have done a good job with their athletic men. They haven't gone ape over it. They didn't. It's -- it's just a really good -- good department. I mean, they keep it that way.

Q. Well, you're being honored in a few weeks.

CS. Yeah, I don't understand exactly what all this is, but --

Q. Well, as an entrepreneur.

CS. Well, I don't really think I belong in that classification at all, but --

Q. How would you -- how would you define that? How do you define an entrepreneur? What is an entrepreneur to you?

CS. Well, an entrepreneur is somebody like Henry Ford who goes out and starts building automobiles or somebody --. Well, you've got entrepreneurs in Wichita, because you have the aircraft industry, because of one guy who was in the oil business, and he was a nut about aviation, and he kept pushing, and pushing, and pushing, and there were these three guys in Wichita all working together in the airplane business; Cessna, and Beech, and I never can call that other guy's name. It started with a G, I think. But then, of course, they -- because he kept after them, he kept pushing and pushing, and he was just a nut about flying, and he really was responsible for them staying there together even though they each went their -- their different ways.
They were all in the same -- in the same company at the, in the beginning, and then they split up, but they didn't leave, because there was -- hell, there weren't places in the United States that built airplanes. Where were they going to go? They just borrowed some of the guys from the other guy, and then people just grew like Topsy.

I can't think of that guy's name. I've reached the point in my life where names just simply don't surface with me when I want them to, but I wish I could think of his name, because he kept them -- he kept them together and kept pushing on them. And I could look that up. I think I could find it maybe in my files in there, but he was the reason that it stayed and grew, just because he kept pushing.

He was a pretty severe alcoholic, I think, toward the end, but they didn't leave, because where are you going to go? Just rob a few -- talk a few employees into coming to work for you, and you have a workforce.

Q. Yeah.

CS. It's remarkable. It's a remarkable thing, but it was all due to that one guy who was a nut. He was in the oil business, but he was a nut about flying.

Q. Hmm. Did you ever get a chance to meet any of those guys? Have you ever met Clyde Cessna or Walter Beech?

CS. Well, I met them. They wouldn't -- just because I happen to be in a group, they wouldn't have known -- wouldn't have remembered
my name. I've known some of the -- I've had some friends that were in various stages of the management, and so forth. One of my particular friends wrote all of the president's speeches for him. [Laughs.] Boy, it was just a blessing -- it was just a blessing that that fellow in the oil business --

Q. Sure.

CS. --Was -- was -- loved flying so much that it got started. They wouldn't have -- if it hadn't been for him, it couldn't -- it couldn't have coalesced as it did, I think. I don't know that much about it. I wasn't in on it, but I just watched it all these years, and it was very -- well, it was just very interesting that because of these little particular circumstances that they all stayed instead of drifting off to the west coast or someplace like that. And we have good flying conditions here most of the time. Plenty -- no mountains to run into and things like that.

Q. Yeah.

CS. And it's just -- it's very, very fortunate that this fellow in the oil business was -- was -- was able to coalesce enough of them that once -- once you're -- once you have people that can -- know how to build an airplane or see how it's done and are looking for a better job, well, here's a guy that wants somebody that knows, that can help my company get started, and it kind of builds on itself.

Q. Yeah. So you've been in the banking business for a long time.
CS. Yeah. Do you want to know how I got in the banking --?

Q. Yeah. How'd you get started in that?

CS. I'll tell you.

Here I am, I get out of the -- I get out of the United States Army Air Corps and looking for something to do, and a fellow that lived just two houses north of me, where I grew up, was running the Citizens State Bank over there, which is now INTRUST. And here I am, I'm home, and my father-in-law banked at the Citizens State Bank. My family banked at the El Dorado National.

Now, I could have gone into the farming business, but I would had to have canceled somebody's lease in order to take over, and I -- I didn't -- frankly, I wasn't that excited about farming. My -- if I'd done anything, I could have gotten into the cattle business, but I watched my father, and sometimes he made a lot of money, because he operated on a large scale, but then, the next day, it was damn near getting wiped out. I didn't -- there are ways to protect yourself, but that wasn't the way he played, and I just -- I didn't -- that's not in my, my -- gambling instincts are not part of my nature.

Well, anyway, I had all this training in agriculture and was looking for something to do, and my father-in-law banked at the Citizens State Bank, and this fellow that was running the bank, I grew up just two houses down the street from him, and he asked my
father-in-law what I was doing. He said, "I don't know."
"Well," he said, "why don't you ask him to come in and see me?"
Now, let's go back before the war. You had three banks in El Dorado, and one of them was pretty small, the Walnut Valley. It was one-third the size of the Citizens State and one-fourth the size of the El Dorado National. But the people that owned those banks, the two big ones, their money — their, the basis for their money was the oil business, and I had -- I had gone to them.
We had stock in one of the banks, and after my father died, I'd gone to one of the shareholder's meetings, because I was -- I was trying to help with the, with the people that -- the tenants that we had on our land that were in the farming business -- in the livestock business, and I just -- I went to the board meeting, and they let me in, didn't kick me out. Well, they couldn't kick me out, but they weren't much interested in anything other than just being nominally polite.
Q. Mm-hmm.
CS. And mentioned that I thought it -- that there was -- there was a lot of business that could be helped by taking, taking more interest in the, in the cattle business. This is too damn long a story. But anyway, after I got back from the war, this almost-neighbor had said to my father-in-law, who banked with him, "What's he going to do?" He said, "I don't know." "Well, ask him to come see me."
Well, I had in my mind put together a program that I was going to try
to get the El Dorado National Bank, where my father had stock
and so forth, to do more in the cattle business and so forth.
Well, hell, they -- they didn't even listen to me. They just
asked me to -- they were polite enough to let me come to the
meeting, but they weren't going to spend any time with me.
But anyway, this fellow who's grown up with -- I mean,
neighbors, almost, two houses, had me ask -- ask -- told my
father-in-law, "Why don't you have Clifford stop in and visit
with me sometime," so I went over to visit with him, and he
wanted to start doing more in the agricultural lending business
and offered me a job. And so, I get it, and so now I'm out
soliciting business, and counting cattle where we had loans, and
trying to find more of that, and so forth, and -- and he left,
and went to Wichita to be a president of one of the banks over
there, and wanted me to go with him.
Well, I didn't want to go to Wichita, and my mother and my
grandmother were here, and my wife was from El Dorado. Things
that -- I just didn't want to go over there, and so I stayed.
Well, all of a sudden, I wasn't -- I wasn't out -- I wasn't out
soliciting business, counting cattle, and trying to get farm
business, I was -- had to work as one of the tellers and just,
you know, sweep out, because I was the junior member, and clean
off the sidewalk when it got icy, and things like that.
And then -- and then, they let me buy some stock and so forth, and then they made me junior officer and so forth, but -- and then, that guy left, and all of a sudden, I wasn't out soliciting business, I was being a teller and a bookkeeper and so forth, because this fellow who took over as the managing officer didn't have any use for somebody that wasn't just a teller, a bookkeeper.

Q. Right. Yeah.

CS. So anyway -- anyway -- anyway, I -- they made me a director and an officer, junior officer, and so forth, but it's too long of a story to go into it.

I had two brothers-in-law, and we formed a little finance company. One of them's father had one up in Kansas City, and my other brother-in-law was an attorney, and so we just formed a little -- because they didn't -- they didn't think over there that you had to borrow money to have a normal meal. You didn't have any business having a normal meal. I mean, that just wasn't there. And we formed a little finance company, the three of us. Well, there were four of us and --

[Video cuts out online from 1:02:42 to 1:02:44. Part 2 of DVD begins]

CS. -- the guys ran it. My brother-in-law in Kansas City had a -- his father -- he and his father had a finance company,
automobile finance, so he knew all about how to do it and so forth, and the other brother-in-law was an attorney, so he could do all the legal part, and this other fellow didn't have a job, but -- or if he had one, he didn't like it as well, and he was very capable and so forth.

Anyway, the four of us formed this little -- Prairie Finance was the name of it, because these two big banks -- the little bank, the Walnut Valley, the one I ended up with -- but the El Dorado National and the Citizen State, hell, they didn't care anything about financing tin lizzies and things like that. They wanted to finance people in the oil business, in the cattle business, and stuff like that, big deals, big deals.

Well, that was just -- just the right spot for a little finance company, so we formed -- had a good manager, and bookkeeper, and things like that, and, and we had a lot of fun with that. That was good, because it gave us a chance to go to the finance company annual conventions, and that was a good way to go and charge off some of the expenses, [laughs] and learn more about the business, and so forth, and we just did that as relatives, but business associates, and we did a good job. We finally sold it. Anyway, I don't know where I was going with that.

Q. Well, how did you go from there to getting into the banking business per se?

CS. Oh, okay. So -- so I was -- I'd left the Citizen State, and I -- we had this insurance company that was part of our finance
company, and so I was selling insurance and trying to sell investments and so forth, and I was a director of the bank, and this guy from Wichita who sold bonds to the banks and so forth brought up the subject that I really could not be a director of the bank and be doing this. That was verboten [forbidden], and nobody had said that was before. I guess we didn't think about it, but anyway, so I quit.

A fellow came to town and bought the control of the Walnut Valley State Bank, which was a little bank. It burned. The building burned. It was over next to that photographer studio over there on Main Street, South Main. The next building was where the Walnut Valley State Bank was.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. He came to town and bought the control of it, and he had a good theory. He had a bank up in Kan. -- in the outside of the metropolitan Kansas City area, but close enough that it was a good market, and he had a 35-year-old son who was in the bank with him. He owned it. He was really a horse trader, but he got into this bank, and they made a success of it, and his son, 35-years-old, and -- and nobody knew -- neither one of the other banks knew that the Walnut Valley State Bank was for sale -- the control of it -- just the control, but he was -- he was -- sold -- he was a horse trader and auctioneer --

Q. Mm-hmm.
CS. -- and he had this bank, but he found out about it, came in, and bought -- bought the control of it, and he had a theory. Either he and his wife would move to El Dorado and run the bank and his son and his wife would take over the bank up in the Kansas City area, or the reverse would do. Overlooked one little tiny detail. Neither one of those wives was about to move to El Dorado, Kansas. So the father would come down. He'd get -- he'd get to El Dorado about noon on Monday, and worked, and had a -- they had a suite over at the El Dorado Hotel, and then he'd go back to Kansas City, and his son would come down the next week and do the same thing, and so they had this worked out, but theory was that one of their wives would -- they'd come to El Dorado. Well, neither one of those women was about to move to El Dorado, Kansas, so he came down to see me. I was selling insurance at this finance company that we had, and trying to sell some investments, and so forth, and not really doing much good, but I -- anyway, I was there. He came down to see me and wanted me to go to work for him, and I said, "I'm not ever going back in the banking business if I don't have control." "Well, sorry to hear that. Sorry to hear that. That's too bad." And it wasn't two weeks until he came down and says, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll sell you my deal." Well, I'd gotten really acquainted with one of the fellows that called on the Citizen State Bank where I had worked who was a fieldman for Commerce Bank up in Kansas City. That was their
headquarters in those days. It's moved to St. Louis now, but I'd gotten really acquainted with him, and so I was able to arrange the financing with my mother's help, her signature too, but anyway, I bought him out.

Q. Hmm.

CS. So then -- it's long -- too long of a story, but I had a chance then to buy the minority interest out, so I ended up with 95 percent of it.

Q. So what do you think it was about you that impressed him that he should sell the bank to you? What was it?

CS. Well, he wanted to sell it to somebody, and --

Q. Yeah, but there was something about you --

CS. No --

Q. -- that he thought must have been attractive.

CS. No, I don't have any idea, he just, just that he knew I'd worked in the bank, and, and he knew that much, and he wanted me to come work for him, and, and he didn't have any idea whether I could raise the money or not, but at least he gave me a chance, and my mother and I -- my mother signed the note with me with Commerce Bank, because I had dealt with the field people when I worked in the bank at the Citizen State, so they were the only ones that I -- knew where I maybe could borrow the money to buy a controlling interest.

Q. Huh.

CS. Ended up -- ended up getting about 98 percent of it, so --
Q. So what -- what personal skills do you think you bring to work every day, to the people around you? What sort of -- what sort of skills -- what sort of characteristics do you think you possess?

CS. The ability to understand that I didn't know it all, that I needed the proper kind of help, and had gotten acquainted with a -- a fellow in Wichita who had as a -- had worked for a big utility company and had duty -- had responsibility for staff -- staffing and selecting staff, employees, and who had gotten into the -- into a fringe business of counseling people how to hire people, what to look for, and had developed a series of -- let's call them aptitude tests, cause you have somebody who is very intelligent, and so forth, and likes to deal with people, and so forth, well, put them at a teller's window.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. You find somebody who dreads that daily contact with -- with all these different personalities, and -- but loves to do all the finger-work and it takes to balance the books and do all that stuff, see, and so he developed a whole aptitude testing, so you don't -- a person wants a job. Well, they're going to try to make sure that their interests fit what you want. Well, they may, they may not, so he developed this -- this whole procedure for how you find out. You give them these tests, and you find out where their interests are and where their ability -- where they are comfortable, and they can enjoy it, and so that's -- I
had gotten acquainted with these people, and so when -- then when I had a chance to buy the control of the little Walnut Valley, then I immediately started using them to help me when I wanted to hire staff to make sure that the person is doing what they enjoy.

Q. Mm-hmm. So you think your ability to kind of read people and figure out --

CS. Well, no. I won't say -- I won't say I read them, but I -- I had them tested --

Q. Uh-huh.

CS. -- for the aptitude in the area that I wanted, because that's what this fellow had done was generate these tests -- which --

Q. Sure.

CS. -- showed you. And I think we had -- I think we had one failure, but most of the time we could get the person and the job matched up with their -- with their likes and dislikes.

Q. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

CS. So you're not -- you just dread to have to deal with people, well, you don't want them at a teller's window for God's sake.

Q. Sure.

CS. But in a -- in a -- some other part -- oh, and it worked so well. I think out of all the people that -- that I hired through the years, all knew that they had to take this test. And we had one failure maybe, maybe two, but it certainly -- it
gave us the feeling that we weren't putting somebody at a teller window who really just doesn't like to deal with the people.

Q. Right. What do you owe -- you've had some success. You've had a lot of success in business over the years. What do you owe to that? What do you think caused that, you know? You mentioned --

CS. Luck.

Q. Luck.

CS. Luck. No, mainly, it was the ability to generate teamwork -- to have --and to have people doing what they really enjoy. Now, if you have somebody who's a wiz at books, and figures, and things like that, but just doesn't like to deal with people, well, you don't want to make a loan officer out of them, [laughs] but you find somebody that has the right personality, and you use these. These aptitude tests worked like a charm for me. I never hired anybody without one, and I probably had one or two failures out of --

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. -- several hundred things, but -- but I want -- I want the person to be doing something that they enjoy doing.

Q. Hmm. Makes sense. Do you have -- do you have heroes in your life?

CS. Hmm?
Q. Have there been people that have been heroes to you over your life?

CS. Yes, yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah, yeah.

Q. Does somebody stand out?

CS. Well, my -- one of my brothers-in-law, he's just absolutely marvelous. We were in business together and does -- and -- but he was so -- so penetratingly intelligent, and matter of fact, and yet had a wonderful marvelous sense of humor. That's one, particularly.

And the other brother-in-law had all the smarts you can imagine, and was great to work with, and our little finance company that we put together was a success.

[Video skips from 1:16:14 to 1:16:16]

-- Until we just stumbled into this relationship with this fellow who had put this hiring methodology to good use.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. And it really worked very well. I suppose we had one or two failures, but most the time, we had people in -- in regimens that they were comfortable -- that they enjoyed --

Q. Yeah, yeah. Hmm.

CS. -- and we didn't have them doing something that they were uneasy about.
Q. Sure, sure. Have there been any -- oh, people that you might consider to be entrepreneurial that might be heroes to you? You know, people that have been in the industry, maybe you've never met, that you might think --

CS. Well, of course that's -- the winner right there is -- is -- what's his name? John -- president of Ford Motor Company.

Q. Oh.

CS. Married to my wife's niece.

Q. Mulally?

CS. Mulally, John. He's -- he's -- he's -- he's -- he's the classic. He is the classic. He is so smooth, and so capable, and so well-organized --

Q. And --

CS. -- and so damn nice.

Q. And when he was here, he mentioned you.

CS. Oh, well --

Q. Yeah. You hosted his --

CS. Well, see -- see, here -- here he's marrying this girl whose father is an attorney.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. Her brother is an attorney. Her other brother is an attorney. Her other brother has a law degree but doesn't practice. Marrying an aircraft worker, $1,200 a month. So. [Laughs]

Q. Yeah.
CS. So -- so this is all going on. I don't want you to record this. This is all going on, and nothing is happening at headquarters. Oh, Sally says, "Well, this is ridiculous. If they aren't going to -- if they aren't going to welcome me -- welcome him into the family, we will," so we had a bachelor party for him. The rest of the family, "He wasn't an attorney. What the hell is he doing in the family? An aircraft worker, for God's sake. [Laughs.] Look at him."

Q. Exactly. That's funny.

CS. He's never forgotten that. He's never forgotten that either.

Q. Talk about years ago.

CS. He's just one of the nicest guys that ever walked the face of the Earth. He's just, he's just wonderful.

Q. Yeah. So how would you like to be remembered, in you know, 20 years from now, 30 years from now? How do you think you'd be remembered?

CS. Well, no. No, there won't be anybody around. There won't be anybody around.

Q. Oh, but your college will be.

CS. No, no.

Q. The things you've done at school -- at the college will --

CS. No, no, no, no, no, no. Hmm-mm. Nope. Everything -- everything's wiped clean. Isn't anybody left to even think about it. I can already see that. Been out of circulation for so long now already. Hmm-mm.
Q. I wouldn't be too quick to judge that. I think you'll be remembered.

CS. Well, no, no, no. Hmm-mm. No.

Q. Well, you've done a lot for the school.

CS. Well, I hope I've helped a little bit.

Q. Yeah, you have. What are some passions -- besides reading, and books, and that kind of thing, what are some other -- what are some other passions of yours?

CS. Well, travel when I could -- when I could, when we could take time --

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. -- but books, and my family, and traveling is about all. I don't have anything else. I -- I have a passion for books. I can't read like I used too, because my eyes just don't hold up --

Q. Right.

CS. -- but -- and the theatre. I had, I had a chance to go to Hollywood for a screen test.

Q. Huh.

CS. I was at Kansas State, and the guy who, who came to Kansas State from Wisconsin was the fellow who discovered Don Ameche. He was -- he had it all arranged for me to go to a screen test out in Hollywood. What in the hell? Am I? You know, I'm going to be in the cattle business and a farmer. I'm sure it would be
interesting, but why? So I turned it down. I wouldn't have been any good at it.

Q. Well, likewise, I'm sure over the years you've had a chance to go -- as a successful banker here, you could have gone other places. I'm sure there were opportunities to do that. What was it about El Dorado?

CS. Well, it was home. It was home. It was just home. I could have gone to Wichita with -- when the CEO that hired me over at Commerce – he wanted me -- over at Citizen State, he wanted me to go with him, but my mother and grandmother were here, and I knew I wasn't -- they were both widows, and anyway, I just was too chicken. I just wanted to be under -- I just didn't -- I just didn't want to be a fish out of water. I'm comfortable with what I'm doing.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. I would not be comfortable playing the politics you have to play in the big yard. I just -- I don't operate that way. It's just not my nature --

Q. Yeah.

CS. -- and I don't want to have to be in that. I'd be a fish out of water, and I just -- I'm just not interested. I can't play that game.

Q. Sure.

CS. I never have, and I never will. I just -- you try to be everything to everybody, and you get your hands full.
Q. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, but there has to be -- I know there's something besides family being here -- and home is important, but I know there's things about El Dorado that you really love and has kept you here all these years -- 90 years or so.

CS. Well, it's a -- that's kind of a one-way street, I think. I'm more interested in trying to get some of these things done than they are interested in getting them done.

Q. Where do you see -- you know, you have a certain love for the community college. Where do you see that college 20 years from now in your crystal ball? How do you --? What vision do you have?

CS. Well, if they are -- they better be looking for a crystal ball that comes up with somebody like Jackie Vietti. Ain't many of them around. Judas priest. What -- what charm, what personality, what desire. Boy --

Q. Yeah, she embodies --

CS. Oh, she's just a master.

Q. Yeah.

CS. And it's all -- isn't any of it put on. It's all genuine, and that's what makes it so effective.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. She's -- she's just a marvel. That's just all there is to it.

Q. Do you see in that crystal ball 20 years from now the college still being in the forefront of education at least in this region?
CS. That's in the lap of the gods. There isn't anybody that preceded her that had her set of skills, and interests, aptitude, whatever you want to call them. There wasn't anybody that brought it all together; vision, intelligence, balance, all those -- all those little intangibles that make it real. We had effective people before, but nobody with her vision, her ability to coalesce, and -- and put it together. It's just such an amazing little school. It really is probably one of the best. It's -- it has to be in the top one percent of community colleges in the United States, and it's all because of her. Believe me.

Q. I may be wrong, but when you talk about your finance company and your -- your time here at the bank, you've got to be a little bit of an entrepreneur to --

CS. Well --

Q. Especially the finance company. There's four guys. You're kind of going up against the big boys.

CS. Oh, yeah, we were.

Q. So -- so kind of tell me a little bit about that -- you know, that culture -- that atmosphere that you guys developed, kind of, entrepreneurial.

CS. Hunger. Hunger. Just wanted to make some money. [Laughs.]

Q. Oh, but more than that.

CS. Well, well. It was -- it was fun. It was fun. It was filling a niche, and it was just fun to -- to see that if you're
interested in people, and you like to help them -- you know, I saw this attitude, "You want to borrow money for a car? Hmm. Really?"

Q. Yeah. The way you describe Dr. Vietti, desire, aptitude, those kinds of things, I would guess you guys had that very same thing, especially in the finance company days.

CS. Well, they had it, I didn't. I was just along for the ride.

No, I'm not -- I'm not a finished artist, you know. I can tell you what I like, but I can't tell you -- I can't tell you how to paint it, or carve it, or things like that. I don't know. I'm just lucky.

Q. Speaking of art, you did mention you have given that -- a lot of those to the college, The Reader.

CS. Yeah, that's nice.

Q. That was a gift of yours.

CS. Yeah. Well, I haven't done anything. I've helped with some of those things. All right. I'll admit that, but The Reader, to me, was something that the college should have.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. Here's a school teacher who has this hobby, and if you were to go down and go into his pretty good-sized barn, it's filled with the things that he made.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. Terrific artistry, terrific. And just a hobby, but he's so good. He's so good. I don't -- I haven't seen him lately, but
that sunflower in there [motions] is a perfect illustration of what he could do. Oh, God. Some of his stuff is just marvelous. He doesn't -- he doesn't like to sell it. He wants for his children to sell them, and they all sell. Everything he has is good.

Q. Have you supported the arts in town? I mean, I notice there's a lot of streetscapes, and statues, and stuff. Is that something you've also supported?

CS. Oh, if they ask me, I suppose, yes. I haven't led the charge on any of it. I -- I'm not -- I'm not good at things like that. You have to -- like the historical society --

Q. Oh, that building?

CS. Well, the whole thing, getting it there. See, if you look to the east and look to the west, you'll see what the terrain was like.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. They had to all get that filled, and that was all volunteer. I furnished the dirt. Mark Myers [phonetic spelling] marshalled the trucks. The fellow that was building the Bluestem Dam put his loader down there to load the trucks. It was all volunteer, the whole damn thing. It'd still be down there. You can see where the terrain -- that's all filled. That whole damn thing's filled.

Q. Hmm. Have there been other civic things that you've contributed to over the years that you recall?
CS. Oh, I don't know. Not particularly, I guess.

Q. I hear your name all the time, you know. Saw your picture in the paper not long ago at some -- well, Wichita -- some civic thing. I think Dr. Vietti was there.

CS. Well, I've -- I've -- it's -- it's -- I'll just be very candid about it. It has been very much easier for me to support things in Wichita than it has to put things together in El Dorado.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. I've helped a lot. I've helped Wichita Symphony, the Wichita Art Museum, the Wichita Center for the Arts, the Exploration Place. I've done a lot for them, because I'm just -- I'm just one of the -- I'm just one of the crowd.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. Here, there's a certain amount of resentment anytime you start taking too much -- doing too much.

Q. Wow. That's hard to believe. [laughs.]

CS. Well, no. No, it's true.

Q. I'm sure it's true, but --

CS. Yeah, it's true. It's true. I have to be careful about that.

Q. Hmm. I figured anytime anybody was giving people help, they'd gladly accept it.

CS. Help, yes.

Q. Well, in monetary ways.

CS. Help, yes, but don't get too pushy.

Q. Hmm.
CS. We have been so fortunate with that hospital to have somebody like him head of it for 23 years. God, what a gorgeous job he's done. Oh.

Q. Oh, yeah. The remodeling is --

CS. Well, it's just the whole thing is so --

Q. Yeah.

CS. -- so well done and so -- well -- but he's -- he's -- he's done it just right. He's always in the background.

Q. Mm-hmm.

CS. Yeah. No, in a small town, you have to be awfully careful about that.

Q. Is that the way you like to be, kind of in the background?


Q. Helping, but not necessarily visible.

CS. That's right, yeah. Yeah, that's been important. We have had some -- we have had in the past some very visible people who didn't mean it.

Q. Hmm. Do you think that's what people think with the things that you do? Do you think that's -- do you think they think that or not? I can't believe they would, but --

CS. Well, I don't know. I don't -- I don't -- I don't -- I don't have, I don't even think about that. I just think that I don't want to be -- I don't want to be pushing.

Q. Right.
CS. I'll be glad to help, but I don't want to be -- I just don't want to be there.

Q. Making a name for yourself or any of that.

CS. Huh-uh. No. I'll be glad to help, but I don't want to --

Q. Sure. You don't want your name on a building.

CS. Well, I just don't -- you have to be too many people to too many people.

Q. Right.

CS. I don't have time for that, you know. If I can help you, okay. If you don't want me to, okay. I got things to do.

Q. Yeah. You don't want your name on a building somewhere; right?

CS. Huh-uh. No, no.

Q. Not going to see your name on a building at Butler?

CS. No, no, no. I got to be careful about that. But Jackie -- you can charge it up to Jackie. Judas priest. What a -- what a gal.

Q. I would think she's somewhat of an entrepreneur.

CS. Yeah, she is. Mm-hmm, she is. She's just wonderful. Well --

Q. Very good.

CS. -- you have things to do, and I do too.

Q. Yes. I thank you very much.
FR. I really don't know when they came to Winfield. They were here when I got here in '64 to serve this church, and they both were sickly, but wonderful people, and I went out and visited them in their home. She deteriorated in '68, and it was, I think, lung cancer as I recall, but she finally died in March, but I couldn't have the funeral, because I was conducting a seminar at Southwestern that day, so my associate Dr. -- Dr. Leslie Templin [phonetic spelling] had her funeral.

Two weeks later, I went out to see him in his home, and he -- I could tell he was acting rather strange, and I says, "What's the trouble?" He says, "Oh, I've got a lot of pain in my left
shoulder," and I said, "Have you talked to the doctor about it?"

And he says, "No," and about that time, a member of the family came in. I think it was Obama's grandmother. I'm not sure, but she came in the room, and I told her -- came in from the outside, and I told her, I says "He's told me about a terrible pain he's got in his shoulder. I think he needs to see a doctor." She called me back the next day. Cancer of the left lung, and he lived until October.

Well, in the meantime, I moved to First Methodist in Wichita as senior pastor, so I didn't get to have his funeral either, but it was a shock to me -- the newspapers I showed you -- that those people were the great-grandparents of our president, and I immediately went out and found the grave, and that was the second article in the paper about it.

All I can say, I remember where they sat, back in that left-hand corner, and they just always smiled very gentle. Very sensitive and warm people. You know, I can't remember their ages, but I think they were close to 80 at that time. We can see it when we go to the -

Q. I looked at their birth and death years in the photograph from their tombstones, and I'm guessing that would be about right.

FR. Yeah. Can you read the tombstone -- the dates on the tombstone?  
Q. Year -- the year. It was 1870-something, both of them, were their birth years, so they -
FR. So really, my experience with them was not all that extensive other than the shock I had when that newspaper came out and said that they were buried here, and I thought, "My heavens. That was the Paynes," you know.

[END]
Q1. We'll probably start, just to make sure that we have the basic information, your full name.
FR. Forrest J. Robinson.
Q1. And what -- Forrest with two Rs; correct?
FR. Two Rs, that's right.
Q1. What does the J stand for?
FR. James.
Q1. James.
FR. A family name.
Q1. Is there a story behind how you got -- how your family chose your name, how your parents named you?
FR. There's a story behind my first name. I was supposed to have been a girl. And the family was convinced I was going to be a girl. Well, when I turned out a little bit different. My dad was standing in the window of an old, abandoned, long-gone hospital, and he saw Dr. Forrest Kelly walk out. He was a good friend of Kelly's. And he said, "That's it, Forrest." So it's not a family name; it's just -- it is now. We named my son Forrest J. Robinson. He named his son Forrest J. Robinson. So I'm the first and we got the II and the III.

Q1. All right. And the James, is James a family name prior to you?
FR. Yes, yes.
Q1. Okay.
FR. Yeah, from my grandfather, Grandfather Robinson.
Q1. Okay. So when and where were you born?
FR. Here.
Q1. In Winfield?
FR. I was born here, right down the street here. Where you turned at College and Ninth, there was St. Mary's Hospital there.
Q1. Uh-huh.
FR. And I was born there.
Q1. Okay. So you grew up in Winfield?
FR. I grew up, graduated from high school, and got two years of college when they needed more cannon fodder over in Europe, so I was -- I had enlisted but I was in the Army Specialized Training Program, which let us stay in college for a while.
Q1.  Oh.
FR.  But the middle of March of '43, why I was called up.
Q1.  Okay.  Uh, what -- what year did you graduate high school?
FR.  1940.
Q1.  1940.  And do you mind, what year you were born?
FR.  What year?
Q1.  What year were you born?
FR.  1922.
Q1.  1922.  Year after my mother was born.
FR.  That's before the earth was cooling.
Q1.  (Laughs.)  So what was it like growing up in Winfield --
FR.  Uh-huh.
Q1.  -- in the '20s and '30s, I guess?
FR.  I started in the first grade with my wife.
Q1.  Oh.
FR.  And so we've known each other for a while.  We'll have our 65th anniversary, if she survives, on December the 29th.
Q1.  December 29th.
FR.  Sixty-five.
Q1.  So.  And you mentioned this before the camera started, that she lives nearby but is suffering from Alzheimer's?
FR.  Yes, she --
Q1.  Okay.
FR.  There's no telling how long she's going to live.  She -- she's just in bad condition.
Q1. I notice that you had a book on your piano from a family vacation. Did grandchildren do that book for her --

FR. Yeah.

Q1. -- Colorado vacation?

FR. When she was starting down, our daughter, who lives in Evergreen, Colorado, insisted that she come out. And I was apprehensive about it. I put her on the tram -- on the plane, and she got there all right and had a great time. Her -- their son, my daughter's son, is a natural artist, and anything he touches -- and he's in art school now in Denver. But he wrote that book while she was there, and it's a story of her experience in the four days that she was there in Evergreen.

Q1. When she came home, did she -- did it -- did she read it a lot and did it help her memory?

FR. Yeah, but I can just even see a difference then.

Q1. Uh-huh.

FR. She was having trouble remembering, which is, of course, one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's.

Q1. Exactly. Well, go back to your roots. Where was your mom's family from?

FR. Pardon?

Q1. Your mom's family, where were they from?

FR. Oh, they -- mother was from Fort Scott, Kansas.

Q1. Uh-huh.
FR. And my dad was raised in Iowa. And he came down here to Southwestern College, played football in 1902, '3 and '4, and then went into teaching and met my mother down at Copan, Oklahoma, where she was teaching then, and they hooked up.

Q1. And how many children did they have and where do you fit into that?

FR. There were five of us altogether. I was the last.

Q1. And how many siblings do you have who are still living?

FR. How many?

Q1. Siblings do you still have? Are you the last one?

FR. I'm the end of the family.

Q1. You're the only one, okay.

FR. End of the line.

Q1. Well, not exactly because you have your daughter and any other children? Do you have other children?

FR. Yeah, we have a daughter and a son. The son is an attorney in Wichita and the daughter is there in Evergreen, Colorado.

Q1. Okay. Okay. So looking back, who would you say has maybe been the most important person in your life or who has been the greatest influence in your life?

FR. Well, I would always say my wife. She's not only been the most important person, but she's my best friend. And we've had a wonderful marriage, a very varied marriage, because I've gone from one thing to another and ended up in the ministry. But I think we've lived in 22 different places.
Q1. You grew up in Winfield but you moved around after that?
FR. Grew up in Winfield, yeah.
Q1. So when and how did you and your wife meet?
FR. Pardon?
Q1. How did you meet your wife?
FR. How --
Q1. When and how did you meet, you and your wife?
FR. Oh, first grade.
Q1. Okay. And then when did you know that she was special?
FR. About in the eighth grade. She's a fine musician. I tell people that she's a musician and I play trumpet. (Laughs.) But we both were involved musically there at Winfield High School. And we just were close friends clear up until our senior year, and then we had our senior dates. And the girl I was dating then said that she was glad that I was having my senior dates with Betty Jean because she could trust her. But she went on to Southwestern and so did I. And she graduated in 1944. I was still in Europe at that time.
Q1. Okay.
FR. And I came home and I was surprised that she was still available. And we were engaged in two weeks.
Q1. Did you write at all when you were overseas to her?
FR. She didn't write as much as she should have. I wrote her more than she wrote me. But they were great letters. I've still got them in a file in there.
Q1. Oh. Good for you for keeping them. What did you say her name was, Betty Jean, your wife?


Q1. Okay. Wonderful. So what did you say you've learned from your wife?

FR. What?

Q1. What have you learned from your wife, from the kind of person that she is, has been?

FR. She was a charmer. She won every queen award that Southwestern had, including the high one, which is May Queen, and she was queen of May. I've got a picture I can show you if you'd like to see it.

Q1. Yes, later.

FR. Okay, later.

Q1. Uh-huh. That's wonderful. Um, looking back over your whole life, what are you proudest of?

FR. What?

Q1. What are you proudest of in your life?

FR. Travel?

Q1. Travel. No, what are you proud of? What would you say are your -- is your greatest accomplishment in life?

FR. I think probably I'm in my apex at this point. I -- when we got married we -- I was just finishing school at Stillwater, at Oklahoma State, and we opened a gift and jewelry store. After almost eight years, the doctor said I couldn't stand on this
injured leg anymore on that concrete, so we sold, came up here to Winfield, and stayed with her parents awhile, and then moved to Wichita and got jobs at Boeing, both of us.

And it was about that time that I was beginning to feel that I was called to the ministry. And we set a date of when we would make our mind, either I'd go to the ministry or try to get a job elsewhere, and on Christmas Eve day we discovered that she was pregnant, and her -- her objection to going to the ministry was that we would -- you know, that would be so late because we were 34 then and we'd go to seminary and it would be close to 40 and come back and try to adopt, because the doctor said she couldn't get -- couldn't have children, and out of the blue she became pregnant and we had the two children.

Q1. And so the reason for waiting or the reason for not going into the seminary was taken away?

FR. Yeah. I would say the accomplishments I -- I graduated from seminary in 1959, and I went to First United Methodist in Wichita as a staff, and I realized very soon that I wasn't called to that at all; I was called to the full ministry. So the next year we went down to Derby at that church, which had just been established four years before. And then this church here at Winfield opened up and we came down, we built the present sanctuary that is here now. And four years later the senior minister at First Methodist in Wichita was killed in a plane crash and I was called to come up there. And I was there
for five years, right in the middle of Watergate, and I was consumed by the feeling that we needed some new blood in the political sphere, so out of the blue I resigned from my pulpit and ran for governor in '74.

Q1. Oh.

FR. I lost by three votes per precinct. But -- thank God. (Laughs.) I don't know what I'd have done with it. But I think probably my ascension in the ministry was quite important in the development of my life. I came down here as interim president of the college.

Q1. Was that right after you ran for the governor?

FR. Yeah, that was after that. And stayed on as vice president for development. And then -- well, it's a long story, but we -- we resigned -- I was -- well, I was on the governor's cabinet as secretary of the department on aging, and the governor and I didn't quite see eye to eye at all.

Q1. Which governor was this?

FR. Bennett, Governor Bennett. We just didn't see eye to eye and I resigned. And I had built a camping trailer, so we went out to a ranch in Colorado we knew and established a camp that we went back to for 30 years. I was out there -- oh, we were out there until 1980, 1980, and I decided I wanted to go back and take a church again.

So it was very late in the appointment cycle in the Methodist Church, and I talked to the bishop and he said, "The only church I've
got open is out at Johnson," little, tiny church out there on the Colorado border. We had gone past there on the way to the ranch the year before, and I said to Betty Jean, "Can you imagine anybody serving a church clear out here?" And guess who ended up serving in it? But we had two years there. Then the bishop called me back to Wichita to be the head of the United Methodist Foundation for the state, and I stayed with that until we retired and came down here.

When we left on our honeymoon, as we drove south out of town to Oklahoma City, I said to Betty Jean, "I've got a feeling we're going to come back here to retire," and we did.

Q1. So -- and in retirement, since you've lived back in Winfield, any -- any special memories or --

FR. Memories of here?

Q1. Yeah, of what you've done since -- what you've been involved in since retirement here.

FR. Oh, there are just -- there are just so many memories. Probably the most penetrating memory was the 30 years that we camped out there at that ranch in Colorado. We went out every summer and stayed a month.

Q1. Uh-huh.

FR. And it was just great.

Q1. Were you doing that when your children were growing up, too, or was it after they were grown that you started going out there?

FR. I missed that.
Q1. That's okay. Did -- were -- when you went -- during that 30 years, was part of that time when your children were growing up? Were they -- was that part of their memories or vacations?
FR. Our children said their growing-up memories are at the ranch.
FR. 'Cause we did everything, hiking, fishing, camping, the works.
Q1. Wonderful.
FR. A very -- a very colorful woman owned that ranch, and we would gather every night down at the big lodge in front of a big fireplace, and she would churn butter and tell stories about the ranch, which were unbelievable. And Betty Jean urged her to write a book, which she finally did, and the name of the book is *Just Don't Panic*. Yeah, those were just wonderful experiences.
Q1. Is there a story she told about the ranch that stands out particularly in your mind? Did you have a favorite story from her stories about the ranch?
FR. Oh, there are just so many, I don't know how I would -- how I would select. Probably our daughter was a child of the hippie movement, and we had problems, and we took her out there. And the owner of the ranch, Margaret, urged us to leave Robin there at the ranch, and she stayed almost a year. And it utterly changed her life, just turned her around, and that was a great experience.
Q1. I'll bet. In what ways has your life been different than what you imagined?
FR. In what --

Q1. How has your life been different than what you imagined it would be?

FR. Oh, I had no idea it'd be so varied. I've got industrial parks all over around the state that I helped establish when I was in the governor's cabinet, and I never thought I'd be doing that. I never -- never dreamed that I would head a foundation or head a college. So it's been -- it's just been very varied and very intriguing and interesting and fun.

Q1. Can you remember when you were a boy, was there something special you wanted to be when you grew up?

FR. It's awfully hard to go back to that, but I was always of the inventive kind, and I so-called invented a lot of things and built furniture. That table and that table and that table (indicating throughout) and others that we've since gotten rid of. But it was very hard to know but I so thoroughly enjoyed -- if you'd look in our garage you'll see I've got a full garage -- a full shop out there, and clearly enjoyed, even as early as the first grade, working in the workshop at home. But I never thought that would all shape itself to where I would have the varied -- I think it's our calling to seek out what talents we have. I've done a lot of writing. I've written a lot of poetry. I've written some music. Just never satisfied. I'm always looking for something new. (Laughs.)
Q1. That's wonderful. Well, I noticed in your hallway you have --
it looks like a nativity set only it must be Jesus and Joseph in
the carpenter shop. Where did you get that? It seems like a
perfect thing for you.
FR. That was -- yeah, that was about 20 years ago. There was a man
who bought out a lot of antiques in Europe and he went bankrupt.
He couldn't even afford to have his ship unloaded. And a friend
of ours bought up a lot of those antiques, and we got this and,
well, other pieces of furniture through him. And that itself
was a great experience.
Q1. Uh-huh. So that little piece in the carpenter shop -- that was
one of that collection?
FR. Uh-huh.
Q1. Okay.
FR. And some others, this clock. Oh, I don't know what all.
Q1. Wonderful.
FR. I believe that boredom is a sin. I really -- I think life is
too short, and I believe we're called upon to try to exploit
every moment.
Q1. So is that a message you've tried to pass along to your own
grandchildren?
FR. Our son is a fine carpenter.
Q1. Ahh.
FR. He builds beautiful furniture. And a very successful attorney.
Q1. Uh-huh.
FR. And very active in the church. The daughter, she just had the problems of the '60s, and she never finished school. She got a -- her GED but she didn't finish school, and she spent -- she worked at a number of places. But she is an artist, too, as is her son, and anything she touches turns to art. She builds and designs very unique costumes and for formal attire. It appeals to the younger generation. It doesn't appeal so much to us. But -- and I've got some stuff hanging in there that you can see that are very interesting.

Q1. Well, and any mother who would inspire her children to do what your grandchildren did for your wife --

FR. That's right.

Q1. -- must be a good mother.

FR. Yeah, she was, she was a great gal. And my mother was a great inspiration to her because she was a natural artist, and just anything she did turned to a work of art, whether it was writing or ceramics or metalwork. A very interesting woman.

The family, my mother is a Calvert, and the Calverts were the George and Cecil Calverts that founded the state of Maryland under Queen Anne. Then on her father's side, there were four ancestors on the Mayflower, and the man who fell overboard in Plymouth harbor was a grandfather back down the road. So my dad used to say that mother's blood whistled the Star Spangled Banner.
Q1. So I -- someone fell overboard on the Mayflower? I don't remember learning about that in history.

FR. I missed that.

Q1. You mentioned someone fell overboard on the Mayflower?

FR. Yeah.

Q1. I don't remember. Can you tell that story, what you remember about it?

FR. Oh, I don't know if I can remember their names. Richard Rogers, Francis Cooke, John Tilly and John Howland, that's it. Those four. John Howland was the one who fell overboard. I like to say that he jumped overboard because he wanted to found this great adventure called America, but actually he fell overboard and had to be rescued with a grappling hook.

Q1. That makes a great story. Let's see, we might talk a little bit about places. So you've spent most of your life in this area.

FR. Around this area.

Q1. And I'm -- and, obviously, you consider Winfield home.

FR. Absolutely.

Q1. So how --

FR. In fact, I used to think as a child that God was a United Methodist Republican that lived in Winfield. (Laughs.)

Q1. What made you think that?

FR. I don't know. My dad was an extreme patriot, and he just hammered into me the patriotic side.
Q1. Uh-huh. Well, do you remember what Winfield was like when you were young and what it's like now, how has it changed?
FR. I don't think it's hardly changed a bit. It had about 10,000 population in those days, and I think it's around 11,000 now. And we did have two colleges here, but the one college went out of business. But we've got quite a bit of industry that's been added across the years. I helped to build -- to establish the industrial park east of town when I was in the governor's cabinet. And that's the biggest one we have. But, no, I think the city hasn't really -- a very music-oriented, very much so. In fact, I was reading an article yesterday that I had in my files called Mad About Music by William McDermott, who used to write for the Reader's Digest. He's gone now. But, yeah, just great things in music for a small town.

Q1. So, so many small towns in Kansas and other areas have become almost ghost towns.
FR. Yes.

Q1. Why do you think that hasn't happened to Winfield?
FR. Well, it had great lay leadership, for one thing. And we were at the crossroads of a wagon train and Pony Express, so we were established as a federal institution in that sense. But I think it was just the, the leadership. We had wonderful leadership. I've written two papers. We have an annual event in which five people present papers about Winfield, and I've written two and
presented them, about the events of my early life and what made -- what I feel made Winfield, Winfield.

Q1. Do you still have copies of those articles?
FR. Yeah, yeah.

Q1. Oh, I'd love to see that, too, when we're finished.
FR. Yeah. Now, they've been printed.

Q1. Uh-huh, uh-huh. So, oh, that's interesting. So what would you say are your favorite landmarks or favorite places in this area?
FR. Island Park. You came past it down here. It is actually a park on an island, and it's been a public center for over a century, well over a century, probably 120 years. A beautiful place. When you go out you might look at it. As you're leaving town, it's on the right.

Q1. Okay, will do.
FR. That and Southwestern College has been a strong element in the development of Winfield.

Q1. You mentioned a lot of strong leaders -- a lot of strong leaders and leadership in keeping this town strong.
FR. Yes.

Q1. What -- who are some of those most interesting characters who were influential in --
FR. Yeah, boy, you're really pressing me. I think Mark Jarvis, who was the CEO of First National Bank, was the most impressive person to me, but -- and we were very fortunate to have some --
just some outstanding teachers, particularly in the crafts and in music.

I built that table in the corner over there in eighth grade under Harvey Douglas, and he was a great character molder. But the man that had the most influence on me, you can see in that lower picture, Paul Painter -- built us into -- musically into a city with a national reputation. We won the national music contest in our -- my junior and senior years. I played first trumpet, or tried to, and Betty Jean played first flute. He was a great character molder.

And then a man name of Curly Vaughan, who probably is as responsible for anybody of having tennis teams in high school across the country, a tremendous person with -- and he developed some very, very outstanding tennis players.

Q1. Now, was this at the high school or at Southwestern?

FR. That was at the high school.

Q1. At the high school. Well, you did say in high schools. I'm sorry.

FR. Uh-huh.

Q1. Well, I noticed that you're sitting in front of a beautiful grand piano. And you mentioned the musical heritage that both you and your wife and the town has here. Where did you get the piano? Who played it?

FR. Her -- her parents bought that for her in 1928. She was six years old. And the woman who was her teacher, the picture there
on the piano, Marie Burdette, and she really shaped her into a fine pianist. And we've carried the piano ever since. When her mother gave up housekeeping, she gave the piano back to Betty Jean. Now I'm trying to sell it and I don't want to, but I can't take it to a small apartment.

Q1. It's a beautiful piece.
FR. Yes, it is. It's 108 years old. A real antique.
Q1. And did Betty Jean play that piano through much -- after you got it back, did she still continue to play it?
FR. Oh, yes, yes.
Q1. I bet.
FR. She did up until about four years ago, five years ago, and she would try but just couldn't do it. In more recent months our son has tried to get her to play. We'd bring her over here, and she couldn't play a note or play a note on her flute. Uh, just couldn't do it.
Q1. Must have been frustrating for her.
FR. She's lost it completely. It's terribly frustrating, yeah.
Q1. Oh, gosh. I have one more question about place. Are there any stories or legends about the area or any church you've been a part of? You may not have an answer to that question.
FR. Well, now, what is --
Q1. Are there any -- any of the churches that you've been, that you served, or any of the places that you've lived, are there any
interesting stories or legends about any of those places that you can remember?

FR. Yeah. I think they all kind of mesh into one because I've built every place I've been. The last was the most exciting, out at Johnson. And when I went there, my predecessor had talked the people into building a Quonset hut for education on the back of a beautifully Elizabethan architecture church. And I had to buck that. And we ended up with -- well, a friend of mine, an architect in Wichita, was given the contract, and he went out and just designed a wonderful facility, so it's now a kind of a “cathedral of the west” in that little tiny town of a thousand people of Johnson. But it's great.

Q1. That's a great legacy --

FR. Yeah.

Q1. -- to leave. Well, you mentioned, before we started the interview, what you've been doing in -- most recently, in your lecturing. Can you tell us a little about that?

FR. Yeah. In World War II I was in 104th Infantry division, and we were involved in the Battle of the Bulge. And when the bulge finally gave, the Germans just backed up. We went south and across the Remagen Bridge and headed toward Berlin. It was like Remagen was down here and Berlin was up here (indicating). And the Germans were surrendering by great numbers. They wanted out, too. So there wasn't much fighting going on. It was just more occupation.
We were walking down the road one day, my platoon of about 15 men walking down the road, and somebody came up in a jeep and said there's a concentration camp down the road. And we thought we were smelling something. And the closer we got to that concentration camp, the worse the smell became. And I shall never forget, and one of the most shaping experiences of my life, was walking in the gates and seeing 1200 rotting, stinking, mutilated, starved-to-death human bodies in great rows. And I thought, "Why, this just can't be. Mankind can't do that to his fellow man or fellow woman." But -- well, it's indescribable. It really is.

In fact, my commanding officer took me into a hospital ward, supposedly a hospital ward, and it was like a big barracks, and along the left side were beds jammed side by side, and the dead and the dying on those beds, some of the dead had probably been dead for three or four weeks, and the smell was utterly atrocious. I stood there awhile, and I don't know what my CO did, but suddenly I couldn't take it and I ran back out into the concourse and grabbed onto the side of his jeep.

But a kind of a strange thing was happening. One of our men had managed to smuggle a portable radio. Now, a portable radio now is something you stick in your ear, but a portable radio in those days was about this long and about this wide and about this high (indicating), took ten D-size batteries. And Glen Miller's orchestra was playing from England, and of all numbers,
he was playing *Moonlight Serenade* (humming song). And, you know, that just floated like a haunting mockery over the whole scene. It just made fun of that whole scene, and I was torn all the more.

Suddenly the music went off, and I can't think of the commentator's name right now, but anyway, the commentator came on and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we've just had word from Warm Springs, Georgia, that Franklin Delano Roosevelt is dead." Now, you've got to understand that he was my commanding officer, of all of us in the services, and somehow with my commander gone, it just seemed like the bottom dropped out of everything. And I remembered at that time that it was my favorite sister's birthday.

Suddenly I grabbed ahold of the side of that jeep and I lifted my head to heavens and I cursed God in vile terms, "There cannot be a God who could allow a thing like this." But, you know, the good Lord took, took me under wing, because I have no memory at all of what happened at that time for the next two weeks. I know what I did, because a book has been written about it, about our unit. We went in town and rounded up all of the available adults who were capable to come out with shovels and blankets and anything that would do for a stretcher, and we made them help us bury those 1200 people.

But that is not the story in itself. We would have to reach down and pick up those pieces of body, and the skin often would slide off
as we got ahold of them. We had no gloves. We had no soap. And for two weeks we picked up that ghastly pile of human beings, stacked in piles in various places. And it was just about four years ago my wife suddenly said to me, "I never knew of anybody who washed his hands so much." And a good psychologist said to me, "You were remembering the Holocaust and you're trying to get that off of your hands." So that was my Holocaust picture.

And I'm going around the country. There is a devastating anti-Semitic movement throughout Europe and throughout the world and in America. In fact, just recently, at a high school in Pennsylvania, there was a movement of 200 high school seniors called Kick a Jew Day. That just made me sick at my stomach.

But anyway, it was a life-shaping experience. I have -- I since have become very impatient and anxious to do the good thing and to get the world to moving. I don't know how much time you've got, but I could tell you one story. Are you doing all right?

Q2. We're fine.

Q1. Yes.

FR. Don't you want to sit down?

Q2. No, I'm fine. Thanks.

FR. I was in Raleigh, North Carolina, speaking to a group of 600 laymen. And I made my presentation, and then I always open it up to questions after that. In the middle of that question
period, suddenly an Oriental woman stood up in the middle of this 600-seat auditorium, and she started talking but broke into tears. And she cried and sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. The crowd just hushed 'cause no one knew what to do. Finally, she got ahold of herself, and she said to me, "Could you possibly forgive me for Pearl Harbor?" And I thought, "Lord, I don't know what to do with this one." I never had that question before.

But then a thought occurred to me. I said to her, "Would you mind coming down to where I am?" And she looked at me apprehensively, and after a time she moved down the row and down that aisle and came down. When she reached me, I threw my arms around her and gave her a big bear hug and a kiss on the cheek. And then I said to her, "Can you possibly forgive me for the atomic bomb?" And the crowd just erupted, jumped to their feet and applauded and applauded and applauded. That's one of the most life-shaping experiences I've had.

But here just about four months ago I woke up in the middle of the night, like maybe 3:00 o'clock, and that story came to my mind and I couldn't get it out, and suddenly a thought occurred to me: Is it just possible that the United States of America could take the leadership and approach the empire of Japan, that the two enter into a treaty of forgiveness? (Clock chimes.)

Now, I've had no luck with that idea. I've written to both of our United States senators and I got a form letter back. I've
written to David Broder, the syndicated columnist. I haven't heard from him. I wrote to David Axelrod, who's the President's aide-de-camp. Haven't heard a word from him. But I'm going to keep on and pursuing that.

Recently I was in -- my son and I were at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, and I met the director of the museum that I hadn't been able to get through to either, and I think maybe I've got just a little crack in the door.

I've written to Bob Dole. Now, I don't mean to be a name-dropper, but when I ran for governor in '74 he was running for his second term in the Senate, and we campaigned together, so we've been good friends for years. I haven't had time to hear from him yet. That was only about three or four days ago.

But, you know, I feel that if such a thing could possibly, such a naive thing -- 'cause it would be naive 'cause it would be totally contrary to world direction in human history. The solution to human problems is bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. And I say, no, there's a greater -- there's a greater solution, with the idea that forgiveness is the ultimate form of love. And I don't know if I'll ever come up with anything from that but I'm going to keep trying to see if I can get some support.

I'll never forget that woman, as I said that to her, a big smile came on her face and tears down her cheek, and I can see her working her way back up that row. So --
Q1. I can't that think of anything appropriate to say. (Laughs.) I do -- one thing I would love to ask you, and you don't -- you may not -- you may not even be able to answer this question but after that back at the concentration camp, after that two-week time period that you don't remember, do you remember how you began to heal and how much time that it took? And I'm assuming that this may have also played a role in your decision to enter the ministry, your call to serve God.

FR. Well, the main thing is I couldn't talk about the Holocaust. I become too emotional. So I put it in the closet. I shoved it back. And it was 60 years after the experience that I finally decided to go back to the Holocaust Memorial Museum and get myself equipped, and I started lecturing on the road. And just by word of mouth, the story has gotten out. I've been to, again, the east coast and to Los Angeles and to San Antonio and to Denver, Kansas City, Des Moines, and many places in between. And I've had a great experience. It's a second calling.

Q1. And has it been a healing process for you, too, even all these many years later, to be able to do that?

FR. Yeah, yeah. I thank God that I've got a good memory and I can call up all of those details.

I can tell you one more story real quick about that. After we left the concentration camp -- and I say, say, for that period I have no memory. I remember ending up in the town of Frankenberg, Germany, and I was walking to our mess tent to get lunch. And
12 German soldiers came out of the woods with their arms up. And I took them prisoner and took them down to a concave -- a conclave where we were keeping prisoners. When we got down there, my commanding officer was there and he said, "I don't care what you're doing, you've got to help us process these prisoners." "Yes, sir," you know. So I did.

And the second day, suddenly there stood before me a handsome, exceedingly well-dressed man of about 27, I would guess. There's one strange thing about his uniform, though; he had on riding jodhpurs, you know, what you wear when you play polo. And I thought, "What is a man doing in combat wearing riding jodhpurs?" I finally looked at him and I said, "Drop your pants." And he did and on the inside of his left leg was a holster.

He had told me that he was raised in England and educated at Oxford, and he spoke fluent English. And I reached in and took that gun out of his holster, and he said, "Look at that gun." And I did, and it said Smith & Wesson, U.S. Government Property. I said, "There must be a story behind this gun." He said, "There is." He said, "My father took that gun off of an American soldier in World War I, and here you are taking it off of that soldier's son in World War II." And then he laughed a cynical laugh that I'll never forget. He said, "You know, we don't solve international problems with war; we just end up trading weapons." And that has haunted me ever since.
And, and as I thought it through, I can remember, oh, so well just 20 years ago when Saddam Hussein in Iraq were at war with Iran. Do you know who the number one arms provider was for Saddam Hussein? The United States of America. Weapons that were left over and were shooting our helicopters out of the sky. You don't solve international problems with war; you just end up trading weapons.

Oh, but a worse one. I remember so well, as a child, we spent a lot of time down on the river down here fishing and all, and every half hour a freight train would go through loaded with scrap steel. You know, where they were going? Kansas City. Why? To be put on barges and floated down the Missouri and the Mississippi to New Orleans and loaded onto freighters. To be sent where? Japan. Steel that came back at us in the form of battleships and cruisers and destroyers and bullets and mortars and bombs and shells, all the paraphernalia of war at Pearl Harbor.

So we don't solve international problems with war; we just end up trading weapons. I feel that there is a magnificent futility in war, or a magnificent futility in violence of any kind. And I hope I'm helping get that mind across.

Q1. You were caught up in that.

FR. Yeah, I really --

Q1. As a soldier taught to follow orders, what would you say to today's service members who are fighting these wars --
FR. That's right.

Q1. -- if you could talk to one of them? Because once they sign up, they don't have any choice. What would you say to them about what they're doing because you were in that same position?

FR. I guess I'm not getting that.

Q1. Well, you understand what I'm trying to say, Steve?

Q2. Well, you mean like trying to talk about it?

Q1. No, I don't know. It's just how did it feel to know that and be caught as, you know, you were still serving your country and, you know, and then all the healing that you had to do after and now we have damaged soldiers coming home who need help recovering from those sights and trauma that they've been through, is there anything, either as a former soldier yourself or as a minister, that you could say that would help them?

FR. Well, I try.

Q1. That's a hard question.

FR. It's a hard question. But I feel so passionately about love and as the alternative to anything else we tried in world history. Somebody asked me in one of my things, "Did you forgive Adolph?"

(Break in video.)

Q1. So, so let's talk a little bit about the Paynes, about President Obama's great-grandparents and how you came to know them. When did your life intersect with that family?

FR. I really don't know when they came to Winfield. They were here when I got here in '64 to serve this church. And they both were
sickly. But wonderful people. And I went out and visited them in their home. She deteriorated in '68. And it was lung cancer, I think, as I recall, but she finally died in March. But I couldn't have the funeral because I was conducting a seminar at Southwestern that day, so my associate, Dr. Leslie Templin, had her funeral.

Two weeks later I went out to see him in his home, and he -- I can tell you he was acting rather strange, and I said, "What's the trouble?" He said, "Oh, I've got a lot of pain in my left shoulder." And I said, "Have you talked to the doctor about it?" And he said, "No." And about that time a member of the family came in, I think it was Obama's grandmother, I'm not sure, but she came in the room and I told her about that pain -- came in from outside, and I told her, I says, "He's told me about a terrible pain he's got in his shoulder. I think he needs to see a doctor." She called me back the next day. Cancer of the left lung. And he lived until October.

Well, in the meantime, I moved to First Methodist in Wichita as senior pastor, so I didn't get to have his funeral either. But it was a shock to me, the newspapers I showed you, that those people were the great-grandparents of our president. And I immediately went out and found the grave, and that was the second article in the paper about it.
All I can say, I remember where they sat, back in that left-hand corner, and they just always smiled, very genteel, very sensitive and warm people.

Q1. And they had, surely, previously lived in Augusta, so they moved to Winfield from Augusta?
FR. That happened what?
Q1. Didn't they move to Winfield from Augusta?
FR. Yeah, I think so.
Q1. Because that's where Madelyn was raised?
FR. I think that's what it was, from Augusta to Winfield, and that happened afterward. That was all in -- my experience with them was '68 when I moved to First Church Wichita.
Q1. Uh-huh. So did you -- when they were members of your congregation, you saw them and you visited him, did you have any other contacts with them or opportunity to get to know them?
FR. Just when I would go out and make pastoral calls. They weren't involved in the church. You know, I can't remember their ages, but I think they were close to 80 at that time. We can see it when we go to the --
Q1. I looked at their birth and death years on -- in the photograph from the -- from the, from other's tombstones, and I'm guessing that that would be about right.
FR. Yeah. Can you read the tombstone, the dates on the tombstone?
Q1. The year, the year -- it was 1870 something, both of them, were their birth years.
FR. Uh-huh.

Q1. So they would have been --

FR. So really my experience with them was not all that extensive other than the shock I had when that newspaper came out and said that they were buried here, and I thought, "My heavens, that was the Paynes," you know.

Q1. So, and, you did not realize that until that newspaper article --

FR. Yeah.

Q1. -- the first newspaper article? You shared that with me --

FR. Yeah, that was my first knowledge of that.

Q1. I'll be darned.

FR. And I think I told you before that I've done everything I could to get ahold of the president because I'm wondering if he knows that. But he gets 2,000 emails a day.

Q1. Uh-huh.

FR. And I have written to everybody that I can think of. And maybe I told you that. I don't know. But I've gotten nobody to respond.

Q1. Uh-huh. What would you like the president to know about?

FR. Just the fact that they were buried here and I was their pastor.


FR. And a lot of people make pilgrimages now out to the cemetery since that news came out.
Q1. So I suppose they were retired at the time? If they were 80, they would have been retired?
FR. Yeah, uh-huh.
Q1. Umm --
FR. Of course, most of the people who were in the church at that time are gone.
Q1. Sure.
FR. Now.
Q1. You say you visited them. Do you remember where they lived?
FR. Oh, yeah, I could show you the house if you'd like to.
Q1. Leave that up to Steve.
Q2. That would be great.
Q1. (Laughs.) Well, that's a -- yeah, you just never know.
FR. (Looks at wristwatch.) How are we doing?
Q1. I think we're doing okay.
Q2. We're doing okay.
Q1. And, gosh, I, you know, one of the things that I should ask -- one of the things I should ask you is, is there anything that you wanted to tell us that we haven't asked you about yet?
FR. Boy, you've covered the ground pretty well. (Laughs.)
Q1. Well, you've told us some really important things, I think, important not in the sense of worldly important but - uh, you know.
FR. I could tell you one more story about the war.
Q1. Why, sure.
FR. On May the 8th we moved into the town of Delitzsch, Germany, and there were just two of us together. Don't know where the others were because we were -- the infantry had already been through and we were just kind of mopping up and organizing this community. And we saw a Lutheran church down the street. And suddenly we heard an organ, and it was coming from that church and it was beautiful music, and we gave each other that "Why not?" look. So we went in, and the organist was probably, I'd say, 87 years old, and he looked up and he said, "Oh, Americans, you've come to save us!" And we had a good visit with him. Well, the next day was May the 9th, and I was charge of quarters at our forward command post. That is kind of running the office and assigning men to their positions. And the noises of war were going on, the bombing and the shelling and the strafing and the dat, dat, dat, dat, dat (using onomatopoeia). But after 9:00 the sound started waning, and by 9:30 it was the most devastating silence I ever heard. There was nothing. Well, when you're in the service and you're given an assignment, you stay on that assignment subject to court martial if you leave. But, in the meantime, the carillon in that Lutheran church started playing wildly. I think he wasn't trying to put anything together; he was just hammering (indicating). It was just bells everywhere. And he kept playing and kept playing. Finally, I took leave of my senses and I picked up my carbine, made sure I had a carbine -- an ammunition clip in it. I went
to the door and I opened it and I didn't see anything, so I walked out to the street. And as I reached the street, a door opened in a house across the street and a German soldier, with his rifle in place, came out (indicating). Now, to catch the drama of it here, here's an American soldier and a German soldier standing 20 feet apart with their weapons pointed at the other. Oh, I -- it suddenly swept over me, I would loved to have blasted his eyes out in revenge for the Holocaust. And I know my trigger finger was nervous. But there was something about the higher call of those bells. And we stood and looked at each other.

Finally, I decided I'm going to do something, so I took a step toward him, he took a step toward me, and we ended up with that awkward dance in the middle of the street. As we reached each other, I put my arm out and he locked his left arm in mine, and here was the crazy sight of an armed American soldier and an armed German soldier walking down the middle of the street to church. And we got to the crest of the hill, and the church was down in the valley, and in -- if you've been to Europe, many towns are built like a wagon wheel, the church is at the hub and the streets all emanate from it. Well, every street was full of pilgrims, I think from every nation on earth, heading for the church. That of itself was disturbing enough. But as we got down there -- oh, the church was full, the yard was filled with people, and suddenly as we stood there, the bells stopped, and the organist
broke into the greatest of all of the hymns, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. And I -- something just came over me. I don't know what it was. But I heard in my heart from the 46th Psalm, "Be still and know that I am God." And I'll tell you, this GI who had cursed God violently a month before suddenly felt forgiven. And there's where the forgiveness comes.

The war was over. We came home. The first -- we were the first two ships that came home because we had such a good record of killing people and they wanted to train us for the invasion of Japan. So we had a month furlough. My parents just went ape when I ran up on the front porch and cried out, "Is anybody home?" It was 10:00 o'clock at night. But the next morning, the very first call I made was to Betty Jean. Two weeks later we were engaged and then married -- well, of course, almost on that same day the Japanese surrendered.

I have strong feelings about the atomic bomb, and I respect Harry Truman. He had to make that decision. But I never have understood why that bomb had to be dropped on populated areas. Why didn't they drop it in Tokyo harbor? But they did. And had they not used the atomic bomb, I probably wouldn't be sitting here because the prediction was an 85 percent mortality rate of those who would go in on in an invasion of Japan. So I've got strong feelings about it, yet I know that my life has been preserved because we did drop it. Well --
Q1. Well, that certainly informs your story about the Japanese woman in the audience, too.

FR. Yes.

Q1. You needed to tell us that story. That's the -- that's an important piece.

FR. Yeah, yeah. So you got anything else?

Q1. Uh, gosh.

FR. You came for a little bit and you got a whole bushel.

Q1. This has been wonderful. But I do think we might want -- is there anything else you can think of?

Q2. No, I was wondering about how --

FR. I can't hear you from over there.

Q2. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. How do you want to be remembered by your children, by people of the community? How do you think you're going to be remembered years from now?

FR. I -- I've never thought of that. They know my history. They know what I did. Our son is my total companion in all this. He went to Washington with me. And they all are very proud of my involvement. But that's about it. I just haven't thought of what heritage I would leave.

Q2. Your family, how do you think they'll remember you? Your children, for instance, how do you think they're going to remember you?

FR. I'm not getting that.
Q2. Your children especially, how do you think your children are going to remember you, you know, as a father, and not so much as World War II veteran or any of that, but as a father? How do you think -- how do you want to be remembered by them?

FR. You know, Larry Hatteberg asked me that same question (laughs) and I don't remember how I answered. That's just difficult for me to respond to that. You don't do it to be heroic. You do it to be of service. I pray every day for our American citizens who have put their lives on the line, are facing a gun right now, could have their head blasted off in the service of their country and of me, and I don't feel worthy of it. Now that sounds kind of schmaltzy, but --

Q1. If you could imagine that eventually you succeed, if you could sit down in a room with President Obama, just the two of you, what would you say to him? Would you give him any advice?

FR. I would tell him first about his grand -- great-grandparents.

Q1. What about them especially, just --

FR. Just that I was their pastor and all of that. But I think I would -- I would probably tell him the two stories, the story -- yeah, of course the story of the woman who interrupted me with her question, and then I would tell him the story about the German soldier. And I'm sure he would bomb me with questions. I've not met him. I don't know him. I'm a little disappointed in him at a number of points.

Q1. I think those are good things to tell him, those two stories.
FR. Yeah. I used those just last week at a men's breakfast. And that's all I did, I just told them those two stories, because they do intertwine. But I don't think there's anything else that I've got that --. I got some of those papers you wanted to see. But other than that --

Q2. Were you the subject of a Hatteberg's People? Were you the subject of a Hatteberg's People awhile back? Did Larry come and talk to you?

FR. Did Larry what now?

Q2. Did Larry Hatteberg do a story about you for Hatteberg's People?

Q1. You mentioned Larry Hatteberg?

Q2. Yeah, did Larry Hatteberg come and do a story about you?

FR. I understand her better than I do you.

Q2. Okay.

Q1. I bet it's --

FR. Usually it's worse.

Q1. You mentioned Larry Hatteberg.

FR. Oh, yeah.

Q1. Did he come and visit and do a story on you for Hatteberg's People?

FR. Yeah, I -- he was down here and interviewed me about two years ago. I married them.

Q1. Ahh.

FR. So they've been friends for all those years. Did that answer your question?
Q2. Yes, it did. (All laugh.) It did, absolutely.

Q1. Well, what do you want --

Q2. Well, if you can sit there for a second, I'll get some shots. I want a shoot of you two.

(Break in video.)

FR. Possum, squirrels, lots of redbirds and lots of other birds. I just thoroughly, oh, roadrunners, which is kind of rare.

Q1. Yeah.

FR. And occasionally one will come tearing through the yard.

Q1. Well, that's fun.

FR. Yeah.

Q1. So tell me, now, when you moved -- you're moving to an apartment across the way, so it'll -- it's in the same area but it'll just be a smaller place?

FR. Yes. It'll be smaller and I'll have to get rid of a lot of furniture. As I say, I don't want to. I love it here.

Q1. Uh-huh.

FR. But I've fallen lately. I've fallen five times this year.

Q1. Ahh.

FR. My legs give out.

Q1. Uh-huh.

FR. And so it's probably the best.

Q2. (Inaudible.)

Q1. Okay. Does it matter what I say?

Q2. Not at all.
Q1. Okay. Then I can just jibber jabber. Well, yeah, I do -- it surprises me that one of your children doesn't want this piano. Do either of them play? Are they musical at all? Oh, I’m sorry --

FR. I play trumpet. I played trumpet.

[END]

NOTE: Images of side view of Mr. Robinson, of piano, and of interviewer Q1.1. Some chatting about family and this project.
FR. I had no idea it'd be so, so varied.

N. That simple statement sums up the life of Forrest J. Robinson. His 80-plus years of Kansas living is as varied as the state he calls home.

FR. I've got industrial parks all around the state that I helped establish when I was in the Governor's Cabinet, and I never
thought I'd be doing that. I never, never dreamed that I would
head a foundation, or head a college. So it's - it's just been
very varied, and very intriguing, and interesting, and fun.

N. And that just scratches the surface of the life and experiences
of Forrest Robinson. He served in World War II, and had a
galvanizing experience liberating a Nazi concentration camp.

FR. We were walking down the road one day in my platoon of about 15
men, and somebody came up in a jeep and said, "There's a
concentration camp down the road." And we thought we were
smelling something, and the closer we got to that concentration
camp, the worse the smell became. And I shall never forget, and
one of the most shaping experiences of my life: was walking in
the gates and seeing 1,200 rotting, stinking, mutilated,
starved-to-death human bodies in great rows. And I thought,
"This just can't be. Mankind can't do that to his fellow man or
fellow woman." Well, it's indescribable, it really is.

N. Forrest has been a popular speaker around the country, speaking
about his war experiences and especially about, as he described
it, the folly of war.

FR. I was in Raleigh, North Carolina, speaking to a group of 600
laymen, and I made my presentation, and then I always open it up
to questions after that. In the middle of that question period,
Suddenly an Oriental woman stood up, in the middle of this
600-seat auditorium, and she started talking, but broke into
tears, and she cried, and sobbed, and sobbed, and sobbed. And the crowd just hushed, because no one knew what to do. Finally, she got ahold of herself, and she said to me, "Could you possibly forgive me for Pearl Harbor?" And I thought, "Lord, I don't know what to do with this one. I never had that question before." But then a thought occurred to me. I said to her, "Would you mind coming down to where I am?" And she looked at me apprehensively, and after a time, she moved down the row and down that aisle and came down. When she reached me, I threw my arms around her, and gave her a big bear hug and a kiss on the cheek, and then I said to her, "Can you possibly forgive me for the atomic bomb?" And the crowd just erupted, jumped to their feet, and applauded, and applauded, and applauded. That's one of the most life-shaping experiences I've had.

N. The love of his life is his wife, Betty Jean. They have been married for almost 65 years, but their romance started when they were barely teenagers.

FR. About in the 8th grade. She's a fine musician. I tell people that she's a musician and I play trumpet, [laughs] but we both were involved musically there at Winfield High School. And we just were, were close friends clear up until our senior year, and then we had our senior dates, and the girl I was dating then said that she was glad that I was having my senior dates with Betty Jean, because she could trust her. [Laughs]
But, uh, she went on to Southwestern, and so did I; and she graduated in 1944. I was still in Europe at that time, and then I came home, and I was surprised that she was still available, and we were engaged in two weeks. She's not only been the most important person, but she’s my best friend. She was a charmer. She won every queen award that Southwestern had, including the high one, which is May Queen, and she was Queen of May.

N. His career as a minister influenced his life decisions and his worldview.

FR. I, I graduated from seminary in 1959, and I went to First United Methodist in Wichita as a staff, and uh, I realized very soon that I wasn't called to that at all; I was called to the full ministry. So the next year, we went down to Derby. I had that church, which had just been established four years before, and then this church here at Winfield opened up, and uh, we came down. We built the present sanctuary that is here now.

And four years later, the Senior Minister at First Methodist in Wichita was killed on a plane crash, and I was called to come up there and I was there for five years, right in the middle of Watergate. And I was consumed by the feeling that we needed some new blood in the political sphere, so out of the blue, I resigned from my pulpit, and ran for Governor in '74.

I was always of the inventive kind and I so-called "invented" a lot of things, and built furniture. I thoroughly enjoy, even as
early as the first grade, working in the workshop at home; but I never thought that would all shape itself (clock ticking).

I think it's our calling to seek out what talents we have. I've done a lot of writing. I've written a lot of poetry. I've written some music. Uh, I'm just never satisfied. I'm always looking for something new. (Laughs.) I believe that boredom is a sin. I really -- I think life is too short, and I, I believe we're called upon to try to exploit every moment.

N. Ever the storyteller, Forrest Robinson is a walking library of memories. Some of his most human accounts from his life involve the times he faced another human in war.

FR. After we left the concentration camp, and I say, say, for that period, I have no memory. I remember ending up in the town of Frankenberg, Germany, and I was walking to our mess tent to get lunch, and 12 German soldiers came out of the woods with their arms up, and I took them prisoner.

And the second day, suddenly, there stood before me a handsome, exceedingly well-dressed man of about 27, I would guess. There was one strange thing about his uniform, though. He had on riding jodhpurs, you know, what you wear when you play polo. And I thought, "What is a man doing in combat wearing riding jodhpurs?" I finally looked at him and I said, "Drop your pants!" And he did, and on the inside of his left leg was a holster. He had told me that he was raised in England, and, and
educated at Oxford, and he spoke fluent English. And I reached in and took that gun out of his holster, and he said, "Look at that gun." And I did, and it said 'Smith & Wesson. U.S. Government Property.' And I said, "There must be a story behind this gun." And he said, "There is." He said, "My father took that gun off of an American soldier in World War I, and here you are taking it off of that soldier's son in World War II." And then he laughed a cynical laugh that I'll never forget. He said, "You know, we don't solve international problems with war. We just end up trading weapons."

N. Forrest recounts the last day of the war in Europe in this personal narrative from the streets of war-torn Germany.

FR. Well, the next day was May the 9th, and I was Charge of Quarters at our former command post. That is, kind of running the office and assigning men to their positions and the noises of war were going on, the bombing, and the shelling, and the strafing, and the ba-da-da-da-da-da-da, and all of that, but after 9:00, the sounds started waning, and by 9:30, it was the most devastating silence I ever heard. There was nothing.

Well, when you're in the service and you're given an assignment, you stay on that assignment, subject to court-martial if you leave, but in the meantime, the carillon in that Lutheran church started playing wildly. I think he wasn't trying to put anything together, he was just hammering. It was just bells
everywhere, and he kept playing, kept playing. Finally, I took leave of my senses. I picked up my carbine, made sure I had a carbine, uh, an ammunition clip in it. I went to the door, and I opened it, and I didn't see anything, so I walked out to the street. And as I reached the street, a door opened in a house across the street, and a German soldier with his rifle in place came out.

Now, catch the drama of it. Here's an American soldier and a German soldier, standing 20 feet apart with their weapons pointed at the other. Oh, I, it suddenly swept over me: I would love to have blasted his eyes out in revenge for the Holocaust. And I know my trigger finger was nervous, but there was something about the higher call of those bells, and we stood and looked at each other.

Finally, I decided, I'm going to do something, so I took a step toward him, he took a step toward me, and we ended up with that awkward dance in the middle of the street. As we reached each other, I put my arm out, and he locked his left arm in mine, and here was the crazy sight of an armed American soldier and an armed German soldier walking down the middle of the street to church.

And we got to the crest of the hill, and the church was down in the valley, and in -- if you've been to Europe, many towns are built like a wagon wheel. The church is at the hub, and the streets
all emanate from it. Well, every street was full of pilgrims, I think from every nation on earth, heading for the church. That of itself was disturbing enough, but as we got down there, oh, the church was full, the yard was filled with people, and suddenly, as we stood there, the bells stopped and the organist broke into the greatest of all of the hymns: ‘A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.’ And something just came over me. I don't know what it was, but I heard in my heart from the 46th psalm: "Be still, and know that I am God." And I'll tell you, this G.I., who had cursed God violently a month before, suddenly felt forgiven.

And there's where the forgiveness comes. [Sigh] The war was over. We came home.

[END]

Caption on Screen:

Forrest J. Robinson

N: Forrest Robinson: Businessman, government leader, minister, husband, father, educator, war hero, patriot, and Kansas native. A part of the heritage of Kansas.
MD. Well, I started high school in El Dorado in 1932, and I graduated in 1936, and we drove back and forth. We had a little Model-A coupe that we drove. There was three of us; my brother, sister, and I. They were older, of course. I was youngest in the family. And when school was over, why, we'd go home, and we'd get the cows up, and we'd milk cows, and gather the eggs, and bring in the wood, and help with the chores of the farm.

Q. And you stayed in town sometimes during the winter?

MD. In the wintertime, there was a -- down on Vine Street, there was a widowed lady named Martha Bartlett and she -- she had rooms to rent, so we stayed with her, and we'd take her chickens and
things like that. She'd dress them. And I remember she'd cook the heads, and take the meat out of the head of the chicken, and cook the feets even. And she was from Missouri, and she never wasted a thing. (Laughs.)

Q. Well, I know that you went to school with President Obama's grandfather, Stanley Dunham. Do you remember when you first became schoolmates or anything like that?

MD. I don't remember anything about him except his name, really.

Q. Uh-huh. And you were one class ahead of him, but then he --

MD. Yes, uh-huh.

Q. Okay. Well, in what -- you told us what years you attended high school. Graduated in '36?

MD. Uh-huh.

Q. And we talked once about your -- walking to school in bad weather of all kinds.

MD. Oh --

Q. Can you tell us more about that?

MD. Well, I was telling you about the dust storms during the Dirty 30s when it just didn't rain, and you couldn't plant -- raise crops or anything. And the terrible wind would blow in from
western Kansas sometimes, and from Oklahoma would be red dust, and it would just fill up the whole western sky, and roll in, and -- just like a cloud. And I remember when I was staying in town with a family, I was walking -- went home for lunch, and I came back, and was walking up West Central going to the high school, and when I got in the high school, my face was just covered with dust. My lashes were dusty, and my eyebrows were full of dust, and I went down to the restroom to wash my face -- just to get the dust off of me. And it would get so dark, the chickens would go to roost, and the street lights would come on. The dust was just fine powder that just sifted into houses and windows, and it was terrible. It was a terrible time for everybody.
Q1. The main reason the Presidential Heritage Committee is collecting these oral histories is to preserve an important time in our local history, and understand how local traditions in the Midwestern values shaped President Obama's Kansas family, especially his grandparents and mother. I'm going to ask you a number of questions about memories you have that include President Obama's grandfather, Stanley Dunham, because of your school connection to him. But your memories are important, too, and we want to learn what it was like living in El Dorado and the surrounding area during your childhood,
and to understand the influences that shaped people as they grew up here. I'm going to start with a couple of identifying questions to document time and place. Can you tell me your name, age, and the date -- today's date, and where we are?

MD. My name is Margaret Doornbos, and I'm -- today's date is May the 23rd, 2011, and we're at -- in El Dorado, Kansas.

Q1. Okay. Are you going to part with your age?

MD. Pardon?

Q1. Are you going to part with your age?

MD. (Laughs.) Oh, okay.

Q1. You don't have to.

MD. Well, I was born in 1918, so I'm 92 years old.

Q1. All right. And where were you born? And where did you grow up?

MD. I was born on a farm near Pontiac, Kansas, and my father had to walk through snow up to Pontiac to get Dr. Shimwaffle -- Showaffle -- I've forgotten his name, really. And then they came back together to our home, and I was born, I think before they got there.

Q1. Okay. You answered the next -- your family were farmers?

MD. Yes. My dad was a farmer, and everybody farmed just 160 acres back then, and everybody on the farm helped out to make a living.
Q1. What's your earliest memory of that?

MD. Oh, I was the youngest of six, and we all had our certain chores to do. And when I was old enough, I'd help take the feed down to the chicken house, and gather the eggs, and I was always scared to death of the old settin' hens. They'd peck you.

Q1. Well, uh, who do you feel was the most important person in your life when you were growing up?

MD. Well, my parents, of course.

Q1. Can you tell us about them?

MD. Well, they were just very ordinary people, and moved to Butler County from Nemaha County, where they both grew up. My father's father was a fire and brimstone minister, and -- from Ohio, and they moved to Nemaha County and knew each other in the Epworth League – of the church back then. That's the way they got acquainted.

Q1. Well, what schools did you go to growing up?

MD. I went to Enterprise, District 170, which is east of El Dorado. And it was a one-room school, and we had one teacher who taught all eight grades. And we had a big potbelly stove in the back that -- with a big metal jacket around it to heat, and they'd bank the stove with coal in the evening, and so there'd be enough glowing in there to start up the, the fire in the morning. And then the -- we kids were
all appointed by the teacher to have our little chores of dusting the erasers and, and clean up, things like that.

Q1. Okay. And then high school?

MD. Well, I started high school in El Dorado in 1932, and I graduated in 1936, and we drove back and forth. We had a little Model-A coupe that we drove. There was three of us; my brother, sister, and I. They were older, of course. I was youngest in the family. And when school was over, why, we'd go home, and we'd get the cows up, and we'd milk cows, and gather the eggs, and bring in the wood, and help with the chores of the farm.

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come on. The dust was just fine powder that just sifted into houses and windows, and it was terrible. It was a terrible time for everybody.

Q1. Yeah. And snowstorms? Did you have those?

MD. Oh, yeah. We had (laughs) -- in Kansas, you have everything. (Laughs.)

Q1. Well, what school activities do you feel that you remember -- the most popular ones?

MD. Well, I didn't have time for school activities like the Pep Club. That was a -- voted in. You had to be pretty popular to be in the Pep Club, and I probably couldn't afford the sweater -- then the outfit that they wore, so when school was over, we had to go home and do chores.

Q1. Did you attend any dances or --?

MD. No, not at school, I didn't.

Q1. That's a --

MD. I don't think they had them, but maybe in the end of school term or something, they'd have a dance down in the gym, and --

Q1. Can you remember anything else about the -- what high school was like during that time? Classes and teachers?
MD. Oh, I've forgotten what -- I liked my shorthand teacher. She was a business teacher. Her name was Lottie. I don't think I remember her last name. And she drove a little black Ford Coupe, and we went -- another student and I went with her out -- she lived at Pratt, and we went home with her over the weekend one time. And she drove that little old black Ford -- just dustin' along. (Laughs.)

Q1. So anymore tidbit memories about Stanley Dunham? You just --

MD. I really don't know. Like I say, all I remember is his name, and, of course, that -- I've kind of looked up things recently that --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

MD. -- but I just don't remember what he looked like or anything. And I had one friend who sat by him in, in assembly, and she didn't seem to remember anything about him either, so --

Q1. Must have been quiet.

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Well --

MD. And we went to school just half-a-days part of the time when, uh, when I was in the late senior year, and stuff, when they were building the new junior high -- now that it is down there on Central.

Q1. Oh.
MD. We went over to the old junior high, which was across the street west, if you remember.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

MD. And we had half-day schools part of the time.

Q1. How'd you feel about that?

MD. Well, I don't know. That was just the way it was planned to be.

Q1. Well, describe El Dorado during that time. The whole community downtown -- did you spend a lot of time when you were in town shopping? What was the atmosphere like?

MD. Well, I remember there was a Levinson’s store in town with clothing, and they had a bargain basement in the -- in -- down in the basement in the stores, right there on -- where Tromba’s has been for many years now. And we'd go down there and buy the seconds in their nylon hosiery for 25 cents apiece, and they'd have a little snag or something in them, but (laughs) --

Q1. Oh --

MD. Everybody was looking for a bargain.

Q1. Yeah. Soda shops?

MD. Well, didn't spend much time at soda shop. We had Graves Drug Store, and we had two of those in town at that time, I think.
Q1. Cars? Transportation? What was that -- what were the streets like? Busy?

MD. Oh, on Saturdays. Saturday was always a busy shopping day.

Q1. No -- I'm sure no horses during that time --

MD. No.

Q1. -- but just mainly cars?

MD. No.

Q1. What do you remember about --?

MD. Well, we had a little -- for our family car, we had a little Model-T four-door, or -- Model-A, I mean, four-door car that we -- for our family car.

Q1. What about community entertainment, you know?

MD. Well, in grade school, why, every month the grade schools around would have a program, and there'd be a committee appointed, and they'd get some people to -- that sing a little, or do something like that, perform a little bit for our entertainment. And then they'd have the box suppers. That was always a big thing where you'd take a shoe box or something, and decorate it, and maybe put a kewpie doll on top, and crepe paper to decorate them up, and then you'd put your lunch in there with sandwiches, and cake, and things like that. And
there was a -- two or three people around that were auctioneers and they'd auction off those, and so that was always a lot of fun -- something we looked forward to, because that was about the only outside entertainment we had during that time.

Q1. And festivals? Kaffir Corn?

MD. Well, yeah, I remember the Kaffir Corn festivals, yeah. That was always a big celebration.

Q1. Did you have any involvement in that in schools?

MD. No. I remember there'd be carnivals come, and we'd ride the Ferris wheel on that, and the streets were all decorated with Kaffir Corn booths, and farmers that kept their crops of kaffir corn at that time -- and make, uh, big shocks of kaffir corn, and of course, that gave way to what we call milo now, which is -- they don't have that big stalk, but just the shorter head on it.

Q1. Interesting. And historically, political -- a lot was going on during that time. Did you belong to any organizations, or --?

MD. No, I didn't.

Q1. Were you following the news?

MD. My folks always voted. They were always very faithful to be voters, but as far as any activity, they never did, so --
Q1. In school, the major historical things you studied, do you recall anything like that?

MD. No, I really don't.

Q1. Yeah.

MD. One of my -- history, and geography, and things like that were always my favorite subjects.

Q1. Uh-huh.

MD. Really?

Q1. Yeah.

MD. I never liked arithmetic. (Laughs.)

Q1. Well, you know, with all of that, how -- how do you think your attitudes, and the perspective you have on life, and your values were influenced by the community of El Dorado? How would you say --

MD. Oh, I don't know. I remember so clearly one time, we had an old cellar on the farm, and it was a beautiful moonlight night. We were just laying out there cooling off after the cows were milked and stuff, and talking world news. And I remember, in all my wisdom, I was probably 10 or 12, that I said I didn't think there'd ever be any more wars because the countries were all friendly, and they were trading with each other, and I just didn't think there would ever
be any more wars. And boy, was I wrong. (Laughs.)

Q1. Interesting. And your values -- who and what do you think shaped your values?

MD. Well, we always went to church. We went to the Methodist Church in Rosalia, and there was a Reverend Coons up there that was real -- everybody liked him real well, and -- and church was always a big influence.

Q1. If you would have grown up somewhere else, how do you think your life would have been different?

MD. (Laughs.) That's a -- that's a big question mark. I, I can't even answer that. I don't -- because I didn't grow up anywhere else. This was it. Took roots and -- we've been gone, and we always come back. When your roots are deep, and you have family here, why, that's what draws you back.

Q1. And would you tell how many children and you have, and grandchildren, and --

MD. We had three children, two boys and one girl, and each one of our children -- well, our two boys had -- let's see, how that was now? Gary had three children, and his children had three children, and so I think I have nine grandchildren, and I've got maybe four great-grandchildren now. I'd really have to count them up to be accurate. That's a guess.
Q1. What makes you -- I know you're proud to be from here? What do you feel makes you proud?

MD. Oh, I think the solid decent foundations of people that, that just become part of you.

Q1. Great, great. Is there any memory or story that we haven't covered that you were thinking about that you'd like to share?

MD. Oh, I can't think -- we always had the Doornbos reunions, you know, and it gets fewer and fewer of them every year. Of course, all the original ones were passed on, but we've always made it to those, I think, and --

Q1. Lots of family reunions?

MD. Uh-huh.

Q1. That's important.

MD. Used to be out at the El Dorado Lake, and now we're meeting other places because most of them are older ones. Of course, the older ones have all passed on, and now I'm in that group, so -- (Laughs.)

Q1. Well, the swinging bridge was still there when you were there?

MD. Yes, uh-huh. Used, that used to be a lot of fun for the kids.

Q1. Uh-huh. Well, thank you very much Margaret. Can you think of any more questions?
Q1.2 I was wondering, do you recall when you were growing up what important news stories of the day were there that your parents talked about? Do you remember anything in particular that they --

MD. I remember my dad was on the jury for this Oberst murder that -- by Burns -- where this young man -- what was his name? He murdered his whole family. I think there was seven of them, and then set the house on fire, and, uh, my dad was on that jury, and, uh, I remember he would come home so upset because he says that he's going to get away with that, uh, and he did. They found him not guilty.

Q1. I'm sure your dad just --

MD. Oh, he --

Q1. -- talked about it a lot too at that time.

MD. Oh, yes. He was just very upset about it because this boy definitely was guilty. He just did it because he couldn't have the car that night or something.

Q1. Oh, wow. Well, and did your dad talk a lot about the weather? I mean, during the dust bowl?

MD. Oh, well, yeah.

Q1. Cause I’m sure that --

MD. Everybody talked about the weather, but then, what do you do about
it, you know? It's just -

Q1. -- was life a little tight there, financially?

MD. -- you take it as it comes, yeah. Well, my folks lost the farm out there on -- because of the drought and stuff of the 30s, yeah.

Q1. Yeah, yeah.

Q1.2 During the time you grew up was -- especially the early age, was pretty good economic times. Before the depression -- after the war, but before the depression, that was really a -- did you feel that here? Was there, like, a good feeling among people economically?

MD. Oh, everybody was poor.

Q1.2 What's that?

MD. I mean, you just scrubbed out a living.

Q1.2 That's what I'm saying.

MD. Really, I mean, we didn't know we were poor. There wasn't any government to come along and hand you a payment for this, that, and the other. We -- everybody was poor, and most people just had 160 acres to farm, and, of course, there was some that lived in town, and -- but it was -- it was hard times. It absolutely was, and I guess that's what makes you gritty. (Laughs.)

Q1.2 Do you have any recollection of the oil business in El
Dorado then?

MD. Yes. I remember there was oil out by our farm, out here by -- between here and Rosalia, and there was several people got oil on their land, and my dad was real excited. He thought that they'd come across and maybe get some oil on our old place, too, but it never happened -- never has happened, so --

Q1.2 Did you know people that had oil property and --

MD. Oh, yeah.

Q1.2 -- how that changed their lives?

MD. Yeah, they were pretty well to-do. They were doing pretty good, you know. Mm-hmm.

Q1.2 Did you know any of the workers -- people that were in the oil business?

MD. No. I really can't say that I did. Most of the oil was on the west side of Wich -- of El Dorado, really, but there was some out east of town.

Q1.2 Did you get a sense of how it impacted El Dorado? How it made El Dorado different?

MD. Oh, yes. A lot of people moved into El Dorado just because of the oil boom, you know. And Oil Hill, that's when it grew and became
a town all by itself. There was a lot of money around El Dorado at that time, yeah. As far as the farming community, why, they didn't prosper because of the drought, because there was just no rain for years.

Q1.3 After your parents did lose the farm because of the drought -- The Dust Bowl, and the drought, and the -- probably The Depression, too -- where did they move after that? Where did you live?

MD. Oh, most of our kids were pretty well grown up by then -- most of us kids. And my folks moved into a little house -- rented a little house closer to El Dorado for a while.

Q1.3 But still outside of town?

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1.3 And what did they -- what did they do? How did they make a living?

MD. Oh, my dad worked for the El Dorado Lake for a while as caretaker, and they lived in a caretaker's house over there for -- for several years.

Q1. And Margaret, I know that you and your husband were farmers.

MD. Mm-hmm, yes.
Q1. When did you move out on -- I know you lived west. Can you tell us something about when you moved out there, and what --

MD. Well, we lived just out here, just about three miles out of town on the old Highway 77, and we moved when they put in the Lake El Dorado.

Q1. How many years were you there?

MD. About 20. I think that was 1974 when we left, mm-hmm.

Q1.2 How has El Dorado changed in the last --

MD. Well, I don't know. They used -- it's changed, of course, and grown some, but I'm really not connected too much with the business of the -- El Dorado -- politics in El Dorado or anything.

Q1.2 Mm-hmm. How's it stayed the same? How's El Dorado the same now as it was, say, in the 40s and 50s?

MD. Well, the same downtown, only there's lots of empty buildings, you know, that -- maybe a fire, and we've got places downtown that used to be stores. Used to do all your shopping in El Dorado.

Q1.3 What was The Depression like during those years? What was your recollection of that time?

MD. I didn't understand you?

Q1.3 The Depression, what was that like for your family, and --

MD. Well, I don't know. Mother used to -- she had a route in town. She
delivered butter. She churned -- we had Guernsey cows. She churned cream into butter, and we delivered butter, and eggs, and frying chickens, and, and -- to people around town -- to their private homes. And she paid off the second mortgage on the farm out there with that, with her delivery route. And Thanksgiving time, we'd dress turkeys. The whole family would jump in, and dress turkeys, and deliver them to people. And she had just a big business of her own, really.

Q1. Did you enjoy -- most of your life has been spent on farms?

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Did you enjoy that?

MD. Oh, yeah. I used to like to ride horses, and we always had cattle, and baby pigs, and -- just the general work of the farm that's just disappeared anymore.

Q1. Anything else you feel that would be --

MD. I can't think of anything.

Q1.3 And you mentioned earlier the connection with -- when you were nine or ten -- I love that story about how you said there weren't going to be any more wars.

MD. Oh, yeah.

Q1.3 But you would have been a young woman, maybe married, maybe
not, when World War II started out.

MD. Yes, uh-huh.

Q1.3 What was that like for you at that time period?

MD. Well, I was going to Hutchinson Business College. My husband -- I was teaching school, too. My husband and I had married, and he worked over at one of the airplane plants, and we had an apartment in Newton, and drove back and forth from Newton to Wichita. And I worked at the Swallow Airplane Company over there, and -- and a lot of the boys were applying to go to school there because that kept them out of the draft. And we'd send letters to their draft board and get them deferred.

Q1. Interesting.

Q1.2 Didn’t you sense a lot of patriotism among -- especially World War II -- among people you were around? I mean, was there a --

MD. Oh, yeah, oh, absolutely. Everybody jumped into the war effort. We saved bacon grease, and turned it in, and tires were rationed, and gasoline was rationed, and sugar. And we had our first baby boy. He had a ration card for sugar, and he was -- so we had more sugar for canning and things like that because of him. I do remember that. You had to go in and apply to get tires for your tractor, or cars, and things. Some people kept their old ration books, but I didn't. I guess I was glad to get rid of them. They're collector's items
Q1. I'm sure you always had a big garden.

MD. Oh, yeah.

Q1. Lot of canning?

MD. Oh, yeah. Froze a lot of corn. We had stuff to put in the freezer, and beef.

Q1.2 My mom's best friend's dad was a butcher back then, so they always -- he'd always give them a little extra meat, or whatever, so that -- they --

MD. Sure, yeah. Really, people just did everything the way they could. They didn't turn to the Government. They were self-reliant and did it on their own.

Q1.2 I think people that lived then view things differently now, you know, as adults.

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1.2 You can always tell people that lived during the depression because possessions, and they don't waste anything, like you said, with the chicken.

MD. Yeah. I always say I'm a child of The Depression. You don't throw anything away. (Laughs.)
Q1.2 It's very true. That carries on today I bet.

MD. Yeah, sure. Save everything. Mother used to -- we'd wear your clothes out, she'd make them into strips, and braid rugs out of them, and rags, and that's just the way everybody did.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Or quilts?

MD. Yeah, mm-hmm.

Q1. Did you spend much time with your grandparents?

MD. I didn't hear you.

Q1. Did you spend much time growing up with your grandparents?

MD. No. They were both dead before I was born.

Q1. So you didn't have --

MD. They lived up in Nemaha County.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Very interesting.

MD. (Laughs.) Well, I wish I could think of something real exciting or --

Q1.2 Do you miss that time, say, 30s, 40s? Do you miss that? Looking back now, is there some nostalgia, or was it just so hard that boy, you're glad you're through with that?

MD. Well --

Q1.2 Do you have fond memories of that?
MD. Well, we had -- my husband and I were married in 1941, and we always had a good life. Robert was a hard worker, and he farmed a lot of land. In fact, he wasn't drafted in World War II because he was one of the biggest farmers in Butler County and they thought he was more valuable providing farm products than being in the military, so -- and I know a lot of people, uh, said something to Robert's dad about -- their sons had been drafted into the army, how’s come yours is still at home? Robert went in and volunteered after that one time, but they turned him down and said they needed him worse on the farm. So that -- farming is important.

Q1. Yes.

MD. Your food don't just come from the grocery store, somebody's got to grow it first. (Laughs.)

Q1. Well, I've sure enjoyed it.

Q1.3 The only other thing I can think of that -- and I -- this is -- I love the -- I love everything that you've shared with us. It's just fascinating, but --

MD. I'll tell you something if you'll bleep it out.

Q1. Oh, okay. Well, yeah. The good stuff. Ok! Break out the scotch.

(All laugh.)

MD. (Laughs.)
Q1. Tell us.

MD. I was just going to say, thank God for flush toilets, because I'm well-acquainted with the other kind. (Laughs.)

Q1.2 Yeah that was probably a big deal when the porcelain came around.

MD. Yeah, right. (Laughs.)

Q1. That wasn't so racy. No.

Q1.2 That was pretty good. I was expecting way worse.

MD. Way worse?

Q1.2 Oh, yeah. Before you make a comment in front of us like that --

MD. I remember one time, I went down to our outdoor toilet -- had to go down a path, and Dad had fixed the trellis in front, and had trumpet vines all over it, and the little hummingbirds just loved to come to those trumpet flowers, you know. And when I went in there, there's a little hummingbird in there, and I grabbed at it, and caught his tail, and he released his feathers, and all I had was his tail feathers --

Q1. Oh, my goodness.

MD. -- and he flew on out the door.
Q1. Had to be quick on that one.

MD. (Laughs.)

Q1. What were you going to ask, Casey? [Terri]

Q1.3 I was just going to say, you said that you had after -- all you remembered was Stanley Dunham's name, but you did a little research afterwards. Did you find anything out that connected back to any of your high school memories at all?

MD. No. The only thing I know, after -- about what Clarence Kerns has said about him -- he was in class with him, and knew him, and uh, I've heard what Clarence has been telling people -- and knew him pretty well, I guess, but he was kind of known as a juvenile delinquent.

Q1. That's what you'd said, but that's, you know, sometimes labeled for reasons that, you know, today would be nothing.

MD. Oh, yeah, really. That'd be mild --

Q1. Yeah.

MD. -- today. (Laughs.) So I'm sorry I can't give you any further thing about that.

Q1.3 This has been fabulous.

Q1. You didn't have uniforms in school or anything like that, did you?
MD. No, uh-uh.

Q1. Did you have a dress code?

MD. No, uh-uh. I didn't.

Q1. And you talked about -- one story we talked about before was riding a horse --

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- and you always wore a dress.

MD. Yeah.

Q1. Can you kind of tell me that story again?

MD. Well, when the winter -- why, my brother and sister would pick up another youngster there in the community, and drive to El Dorado to school, and they didn't pay us anything. I guess they didn't have the money, but anyhow, that summer, why, she -- we didn't have a telephone or anything, but she told us that she would give me music lessons to pay for the ride that her son got during the wintertime to school. So for 50 cents apiece -- and I rode a horse up to Pontiac, which was about four miles, I guess. We lived on the old parallel road out here, and I rode this little horse named Pigeon, and she was skittish as could be. She'd jump at every white rock or everything that -- a bird flew, or anything, and -- and girls didn't wear pants back then, and I had on a dress that had a big circle skirt,
and -- sit in the saddle, and if he'd gallop, my skirt would flop out, and the horse would get all skittish, so -- so I just had to go at kind of a fast walk up there for my lesson. I had a satchel on the side that had my music in it, and it'd get to flopping and that would spook her, so she was kind of skittish that way, but --

Q1. A lot of people rode horses for transportation still?

MD. Yeah, yeah. Well, I remember my folks had buggies, and we went to Pontiac to church in a horse and buggies.

Q1. Mm-hmm, yeah. That was kind of a transition period where -- I've seen pictures of El Dorado --

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- where they're with the horses, and the buggies, and the Model-As.

MD. Yeah, Model-T’s.

Q1. Just kind of go back and forth.

MD. Yeah.

Q1. When did your folks first get a car?

MD. My brother got a -- it was an old touring car that didn't even have a top on it. I don't know how much he paid for it, maybe $25. I don't know -- I don't know where he got that, but that was the first car they had, and we thought that was really something. I know he
was driving up the road, and steering it, and the steering wheel would come off in his hand, and -- (laughs) -- probably going five miles an hour, you know. (Laughs.)

Q1.2 It never rained, so why would you need a top?

MD. Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q1. Interesting.

Q1.2 Did you have to crank it to start then?

MD. Yeah, usually did. And they'd kick, too. A lot of people got a broken arm out of a car that'd kick them.

Q1.2 Were they reliable at all -- cars back then? The ones you remembered?

MD. Not very, as I recall.

Q1.2 Always kept horses around just in case?

MD. Yeah, I guess so.

Q1. And they still farmed with horses, a lot of them?

MD. Oh, yeah. Just had horses.

Q1. Tractors were pretty expensive.

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Did your folks have a tractor?
MD. No, he -- my dad had four horses that he hitched up, yeah. One of them's name was Shorty. I remember him. Used to ride him in from the field.

Q1. Good memories.

MD. We had a good time. We didn't know we were poor. We had plenty to eat. Always had plenty to eat. We weren't like the people in the cities where they just didn't have anything, no income, or anything, you know. But we had a big garden and we had all our pork, and beef, and milk -- everything we needed. Mother never bought anything except just staples, I mean, flour, and sugar, and coffee, and that was about it.

Q1. Great. It's been so interesting, Margaret. Thank you very much. I found out some new things, too.

MD. (Laughs.)

Q1.3 You were born exactly the same year as my dad.

MD. Pardon?

Q1. My dad was born in 1918 also.

MD. Really?

Q1. So, yes -- and his family had a farm around Zenda, but he grew up in Wichita. When he went to the farm, it was to visit his cousins.
(Laughs.) Well, it was fun to hear your memories and think of some of his.

MD. Yeah, the war brought us out of The Depression when -- with all the --

Q1.2 Yeah, war's good for business.

MD. -- with all the Government contracts to these -- well, to these companies to build tanks and everything -- Jeeps -- Chrysler company made Jeeps and things like that for everybody to work -- like the airplane plants in Wichita -- Goodness, people came from all over to live in Wichita. Women had to go to work in the plants because the young men were all in the military -- the army and stuff.

Q1. Rosie the Riveters.

MD. Yeah. My two sisters worked in Wichita at the airplane -- Boeing Airplane. My brother was in the service, and he was a staff sergeant, and he was in the Normandy landing, and also The Battle of the Bulge, and went through terrible, terrible things. And his unit helped to liberate two of those horrible death camps, and he saw such horrible things he couldn't even talk about them.

Q1. Most of them couldn’t.

MD. Put in those ovens -- said they had meat hooks hanging up, and they'd hang people by this, right here -- by their chin bone, and they'd hang there until they died. You could see where they'd just claw
with their fingernails and toenails to try to relieve it. Just bones in the ovens, just horrible. You just wonder how humans can be so horrible to their country – their fellow countrymen. I mean, I never understand it. I guess it's still going on.

Q1. Absolutely.

MD. Really.

Q1.2 So do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor happened?

MD. Well, yeah. I remember Pearl Harbor, of course, but I don't remember December the 7th.

Q1.2 Do you remember what you were doing that day or --

MD. I really don't.

Q1.2 Some events like that you just know -- you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing.

MD. Yeah, sometimes I do, yeah.

Q1.2 Did your parents have a radio?

MD. I remember when Kennedy was shot in Texas, yeah. It was -- we lived out here on the farm then, and I had the T.V. on, the radio on. I'd go from one to the other. (Laughs.)

Q1. Did your folks have a radio back then?
MD. Oh, no. Uh-uh. We didn't have electricity.

Q1. Oh, of course.

MD. We had kerosene lights and we had old Coleman lights, which was -- we thought was great because they really made light, you know.

Q1. Yeah.

MD. Had these little mantles -- silk mantles you put on them, and you had to be careful when you opened the door at night or miller [moths] would come in and get in those mantles, and they'd just break the mantle, and then it was just a flame come out, you know, so --

Q1. Oh.

MD. We didn't have electricity. There wasn't electricity until the REA went in. That was during Roosevelt's time.

Q1.3 What about storms, like tornadoes, and -- I mean, you know, we rely on -- if we live in town, the siren or the weather radio to know. Did you ever have any bad storms like that that you remember?

MD. Oh, oh, yeah. I remember -- I remember Dad waking us up at night, and we'd go down to the cellar. We had an old root cellar right outside our kitchen door, and we'd go down there until the -- sometimes it would be -- have six inches of water in it, but we'd go down there until the storm was over. That happened many times, but we never had any -- had anything that blew anything away,
really, but we had some bad thunder storms.

Q1. Did your mom can and keep the canning down in the cellar too?

MD. Oh, yeah. Canned a lot of stuff. Canned a lot of beef, and put them in half-a-gallon jars, and water-pack them out in the yard in the washtub, keep the fire going, and water-pack the beef. And we'd kids would get so sick of eating that beef. (Laughs.) Cut it in chunks, you know, and pack it in the jar, and -- and then process it, put it down in the cellar.

Q1. Hard work.

MD. And they also did this corned beef, you know, where you pack it in with the salt and stuff, and preserve it, because you didn't have any electricity. That was the only way you had to preserve it.

Q1. Well, okay. This could go on all day. We could get into Pontiac, couldn't we? (Laughs.)

MD. Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q1. Pontiac's where, you know, my grandfather's --

Q1.2 Oh, is that right? And --

MD. Yeah. We didn't live very far from Suzie's grandparents.

Q1. Uh-huh, yeah. So they were, we were connected even before they married in, because she married into the family.
MD. Well, people married locally because they didn't travel around like they do now.

Q1. Sure, absolutely. Mm-hmm, absolutely.

MD. And during the war, a lot of men went to different parts of the countries, and maybe married somebody there, and stayed there, you know. So -- but they used to just marry locally, really.

Q1. Mm-hmm. That's so true.

Q1.2 Back then, everybody didn't go to college like today. Everybody -- seems like a lot -- probably the majority of people go to college --

MD. Oh, yeah.

Q1.2 -- so you meet your spouse there.

MD. Well, it was a junior college here. I went there, you see, and got my teacher's certificate there. 60 hours; that's all you had to have back then.

Q1. And that's now the junior high school? Is that what's in that building --

MD. Yeah.

Q1. -- on Central?

MD. Mm-hmm.
Q1.3 Where was the original high school located?

MD. Well, originally, there was a McKinley -- set there on West Central, and that was a grade school, and behind it was the high school, and across the street was a junior high, which was a big red brick building. We had -- went there the ninth grade, and I remember the gym, and that's all that parking lot now.

Q1. The hospital -- it was a hospital.

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Well, what school was that -- the wood park -- that we called it, on Summit? What --

MD. The what?

Q1. The wooden park on Summit Street?

MD. Oh, well, that was a grade school.

Q1. Was that a grade school?

MD. What was it? I don't remember. They were all named. There was Washington, and there was Lincoln school, and -- and -- but that was just the junior high school across there from the -- and then they tore that old McKinley school -- grade school down and built the new high school, that's still there, at that time. But I know during all that building stuff, we just went the half-days for
all -- one year, as I recall, or at least one semester.

Q1.3 I thought they invented that in the 70s. I taught -- I taught at a school that was over -- Creighton, Missouri -- was over-crowded and [? beamed].

MD. Really?

Q1.3 Yes, and I can remember classes for the high school started at 6:00 and ended at noon, or something --

MD. Oh, really?

Q1.3 -- and then the junior high kids came in and stayed until 7:00 or 8:00 at night -- probably 7:00 or something.

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1.3 It was crazy.

MD. (Laughs.) We used to have the graduation down at the old building there -- downtown there -- across where -- well, where that limestone -- that old library is -- where that limestone building is.

Q1. Oh, the Carnegie?

MD. Yeah, Carnegie Library. And there was a big building -- well, it's still there, I guess. It's part of the church.

Q1. Oh, it is? Okay.
MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Which church? Christian?

MD. Baptist.

Q1. Oh, Baptist church.

MD. Baptist, yeah.

Q1.3 Was that originally a Carnegie Library?

MD. Yeah.

Q1. Well, that building --

MD. Yeah. That lime -- that big -- yeah, right there by the courthouse on the corner. In fact, that's where the architects are.

Q1. Wow.

MD. Mm-hmm. That was original Carnegie Library. Little Anna Louise Borger -- remember? She was a librarian there forever.

Q1. Yeah, absolutely. I know.

MD. Well, I hope I've helped you -- give you some --

Q1. Oh, absolutely. Very interesting. Especially learning about that erMD. Yeah.

MD. Nothing very exciting, I'm afraid, just common ordinary folks and people. (Laughs.)
Q1.3 But that's what makes it solid. Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q1.2 Well, its things most people can't relate to now. Most people have no idea --

MD. Oh, I -- absolutely true.

Q1. You may think its ordinary, but everybody else, you know, they don't have a clue.

MD. No, they really don't.

Q1.2 They really don't.

MD. They could care less.

Q1.2 Well, in some sense, I think older people care more. (Laughs.) I don't want to generalize, but yeah.

MD. Yeah.

Q1.2 They just don't know what it was like --

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1.2 -- and I think that's interesting to --

MD. Well, and just like with the family reunions anymore, the cousins don't even know each other because they live far out around -- you know, and so they don't really care about coming once a year for that, and there's just getting to be fewer and fewer of us, and --
Q1. Does anybody in your family do genealogy things? Do you have a sister? Somebody --

MD. Well, my daughter started that but she never did get --

Q1.3  Well, she's too busy taking care of the history of the whole county to do her own, probably.

Q1. And Robert -- her husband's grandparents -- great-grandparents, which is my dad's, of course, my -- homesteaded north of El Dorado in the 1870s, yeah, they homesteaded, and so Teresa [Bachman] and I have done a lot of genealogy.

MD. Yeah, that -- yeah.

Q1. Yeah, so -- and they had 12 kids, so that's why every Doornbos in town is --

MD. Related. (Laughs.) Somehow or another they're connected.

Q1. So there were 12 of them and -- so it's quite a --

MD. And then there was a baby, too, that they lost, too, that's buried up there.

Q1. Uh-huh.

MD. Uh-huh.

Q1. That's -- yeah.
MD. So, yeah, Teresa got a tombstone for him, remember?

Q1. Yeah, uh-huh. So it's --

MD. -- up here at Burns.

Q1. But the Haines side I don't, of course, know much about.

MD. Yeah.

Q1. Have you done much research on them?

MD. Not really.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

MD. I have a whole book on Dad's side of -- of his family that other people have done, yeah.

Q1. A lot of the people in the El Dorado -- have lived other here generations that's the interesting part about it.

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Yes, then that's -- that's a huge difference, probably, in our society now, is that so many people don't have those deep roots anymore.

MD. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Is it a cut?

Q1.2 I think it's a cut. (Laughs)
Note: Images following interview:

1) Stanley Dunham reunion entry, 1976 information

2) Margaret Doornbos looking at El Dorado High School year book

3) Group:

Margaret Doornbos, red blouse (MD.)

Teresa Baumgartner, pink blouse (Q1.3)

Susie Patterson, white blouse (Q1.)
A. -- skating a lot.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. And we both worked in the refinery, in the office, and, uh, Madelyn worked at Boeing.

Q1. Mm-hmm.
A. Some of the other girls did, too, that were in our group. But we went to the theatre. There wasn't much else to do, and --

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. -- they had a little doodlebug train that they took from Augusta to Wichita.

Q1. A doodlebug train?

A. Well, a little ol' -- a little ol' thing, you know. And I think a couple of times we went over there, had lunch at the Allis Hotel, and then went to the show over there, and came back on the train.

Q2. I'm going to have you -- move you over here.

Q1. Okay, sorry.

Q2. I was just looking. Alright. Is that the same one that ran through Beaumont: that train, or was that just from here to --?

A. I don't know. I was thinking just from here to Wichita, but I couldn't tell you for sure.

Q1. Okay.

A. It could have run through Beaumont.

Q2. I see.

Q1. Okay.
Q2. Why -- why do you call it doodlebug? Why is that?

A. Well, that was my name for it. (Laughs)

Q2. Oh, not official. Okay.

A. It was just -- but we didn't have gas to, you know, go back and forth to Wichita like we do now.

Q2. Uh-huh.

A. Uh, some of the boys worked at some of the aircraft factories, and they had weekends off, and we went over to the Blue Moon. I think you saw the picture in the --

Q2. I saw the picture. Was the Blue Moon in Wichita?

A. Uh-huh.

Q2. Okay.

A. And a lot of name bands then, and we went to dance then, and other times we just went the skating rink and -- (laughs) there wasn't a lot to do then.

Q2. Why -- but you had -- made your own fun.

A. Well, we kept busy.

Q1. Laughs) How we doing?

Q2. Good.
Q1. Have you been recording?

Q2. Yes.

Q1. Oh, good.

A. But Madelyn --

Q1. I was thinking, how am I -- how am I going to remember to get three people? (Laughs)

A. Madelyn wasn't with us a lot.

Q1. Pardon?

A. I said, Madelyn wasn't with us a lot. I think --

Q1. So do you remember when you first became acquainted with her?

A. Well, see, I went to a country school.

Q1. Oh. What was the name of it?

A. Tadlock. It isn't there anymore. It burnt down.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. But, uh, I came into school in 1936. I was 12 years old --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. -- and I started high school.

Q1. You were 12?
A. I -- across -- we lived across the way from an oil lease, so my dad worked on the oil lease.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. And it's the same one that Mr. Payne -- he was in the office -- where the telephone office is now. There was a Sinclair office and pipe yard there, and then they lived just around the corner on 12th Street.

A. But we lived -- we moved out of the oil field house, and Dad and Mom bought a farm across the road, but he still worked for Sinclair.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. But the kids over there could go to town school. They were in town district. And they tried to pay tuition for me to go in town, and they wouldn't let me go, so I went eight miles to a country school. (Laughs)

Q1. When the town school would have been closer?

A. Three and a half miles. And so, anyway, I started -- instead of kindergarten, I started first grade when I was five years old, and
took second and third grade in one year, and that made me twelve when I graduated from the eighth grade. So, anyway, it -- country kids were looked down on then. They weren't accepted very well, and it wasn't really until after I got out of school that I became better friends with my classmates.

Q1. Why do you think that was?

A. It's just the way they were then. I mean --

Q1. Did you dress differently? I mean, was there a physical appearance difference?

A. No. We were just country kids. (Laughs)

Q1. Okay.

A. And I wasn't the only one that felt that way. Uh, Devere Brown was a professor down at Norman, Oklahoma, and he gave a talk one time at our reunion about how -- and he was young, also, and said that he never felt accepted in school. But he was brilliant. He really was.

Q1. So do you remember knowing Madelyn in high school?

A. Well, yeah. I saw her -- I mean, she was in some of my classes, and then we were in the senior play together, and really, I got better acquainted with her then.
Q1. Oh. Tell me about that.

A. Well --

Q1. What was the play?

A. You know, I can't remember. (Laughs) You know how many years ago that's been? (Laughs)

Q1. Okay.

A. But I know we were both in it, and I got better acquainted with her then.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. And that's the first time I met Stanley, uh. He came to watch play practice one night, and then Pete's Drugstore was at State and Fifth, I think, on the southwest corner and -- northwest corner -- and they had a jukebox, and we could dance down there, and so we went down there after play practice. Even one of our teachers went with us. But that's the only time I ever met Stanley.

Q1. Were they dating then?

A. Uh-huh.

Q1. That's why he came all the way for the practice.

A. Yeah, so --
Q1. So these times you were talking about where you all started hanging around and doing things together: that was after you graduated high school?

A. Well, I didn't drink. (Laughs) Some of them did that we went with, but, uh --

Q1. Well, I was also referring to going to the skating rink and --

A. Well, we just went down to skate and drank Cokes, I mean (laughs) -- but, oh -- Prigmores ran the skating rink and they wouldn't have allowed any liquor down there, anyway, so it -- they were pretty nice about the group down there, and there was always -- it was always full. We really didn't have much else to do. And then on Saturday nights sometimes, when the buses would bring the people back from Boeing and Cessna, they would let them dance for an hour after the skating quit --

Q1. Oh.

A. -- till 2 o'clock, and, uh --

Q1. Did -- did everybody have a curfew?

A. Well, that's the time they closed down there, yeah. They skated till twelve, I think, and then they let them dance afterwards, but they were -- they were closed by two.

Q1. So how -- how old were you, and in what grade, I guess, when -- when
the war --

A. I was out of high school.

Q1. -- When U.S. entered the war, and everything kind of changed, because it sounds like a lot of the stories you've been --

A. Well, Madelyn and I both graduated in 1940. Now, Nina graduated in 1941, even though she is older than I am.

Q1. I see.

A. And what was it -- Pearl Harbor was in 1941?

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. -- and I remember Carl Dubois. We used to ride around on Sunday afternoons, and one of our class members, his folks had the Lehr's Cafe, and we pulled up, and they ran in for some French fries, and this girl came running right back out, and she says, "Oh, Carl told me that Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor." And that's how we heard about it. And that was in, like I said, '41, and that's --

Q1. Now, were you working then? You worked -- you said you worked for the refinery. You were working there at the time?

A. No, I wasn't old enough.

Q1. Oh.
A. I went to business college after I got out of high school, and I still wasn't old enough to work anywhere, and so I worked at the drugstore -- at Carr's Drugstore in the evenings, and then a friend was -- after they started the draft board, she was the clerk for the office there, and she needed a helper, and she wanted to know if I wanted to come and be a clerk typist, and I said, well, sure, you know. Civil service job; 35 cents an hour. (Laughs) And the head of the draft board was Doc Bohanna. He was also the personnel director at the refinery, and he asked me how come I hadn't put in my application at the refinery, and I said, "Well, I did." And he says, "Well, I didn't see it." He said, "Are you sure you were down there?" And I said, "Yes." I said, "I'm not old enough." And so he wanted to know when my birthday was, and he said, "When you're -- day you're 18, come down. You've got a job." So that's how come I went to work down there, but Nina was already working down there.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. So --

Q1. And so was it working together there that -- where you and Nina became really close, or --

A. Ah, we -- we had become friends, but became better friends down there, yeah. We came -- we were best friends from then on, I think.
Q1. Okay.

A. But -- and like I said, we didn't see a whole lot of Madelyn. She wasn't with the group a lot, but just sometimes on Sunday afternoons, and she didn't skate or anything with us, and --

Q1. And you -- maybe mention again that her -- her best friends were --

A. Um, Martha Elaine Haas was her name at the -- at that time, and Francine Pummel. And I remember she and Francine had snowsuits alike one year, but they were just like this. (Crosses two fingers) They were just buddy-buddies, you know. And then Francine left after her junior year, and left Madelyn kind of -- and Martha Elaine had already moved.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. That's --

Q1. And so she was kind of alone and -- was that when you maybe --

A. I think that's when she started running around with Francis and some of the others. But Francis' brother, I think, ran around with that group, and I think that's probably the reason Francis started running around with her.

Q1. Okay.

A. But --
Q1. And do you -- back to your memories of the beginning of the war and how that affected your lives, you mentioned, you know, the boys being gone. And what was that like, you know, being -- being -- you know - (inaudible)

A. Well, that's -- that's why we took the pictures on Sunday afternoon, to send to the boys, you know, and --

Q1. So you wrote letters to them all?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. All the girls?

A. We had, we had a list of boys that we sent letters to. And, uh --

Q1. That's neat. So where'd you go to take your pictures?

A. Some of them were taken in front of Lehr's, and some down at the park. Garvin Park was a lot prettier then. They didn't have all the baseball fields, and it was very attractive. They had a swinging bridge that we took a lot of pictures -- there.

Q1. And did they write back?

A. Mm-hmm, yeah. Even had a proposal from one of 'em -- so -- that I'd never dated. (Laughs) But boys then, I think, just wanted somebody to -- yeah.

Q1. Somebody to come home to?
Q1. Or think about? A picture to carry?

A. But, uh, I don't know, life was a lot simpler then, and it -- couple of the drugstores had jukeboxes where they danced, and uh, it -- you know, there was -- there was more things to do in town, it seemed like, than what there is now.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So when -- do you remember when Stanley Dunham went to war?

A. No. Like I said, I only met him the one time.

Q1. Oh, okay.

A. And, uh, I didn't, uh -- they were married then.

Q1. Okay.

A. And, uh, that's one reason Madelyn didn't run around like we did either, so --

Q1. Sure. But, but then -- she was, she was part of the weekend picture taking to send -- because wasn't there one of them --

A. There's several pictures, yeah. There's several pictures of her on Sunday afternoon. And we usually went to the show on Sunday afternoon, and since I lived in the country, I couldn't go home. We'd go to church. Well, I'd usually go down to Lehr's and eat. Well, several of us girls would, and then we'd fool around until the show
opened, and take pictures either before or after the show – with the matinee.

Q1. I wonder if that's something that happened in a lot of communities. Most of the boys were gone -- so --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- you weren't going out as boy-girl groups, or dating, and it probably was your way of, also, helping, and --

A. Well, there, there were -- there were a few of the boys, like I said, that worked at the plants, and some of them didn't pass the physical, and some went in service even after they worked at the plant, but they worked at the plant for a while, and they were the ones we went out with on weekends.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. Other than that, we didn't see them because --

Q1. I see. Just trying to think what -- so how long during that time period, when you were working -- you said earlier you were working at the refinery, and Madelyn and -- was it Nina -- were working at?

A. No. Nina and I worked at the refinery. Madelyn and a couple of the other girls -- well, several of the other girls worked at Boeing.

Q1. So how many years would that have been roughly? Madelyn's already
married. Stanley's overseas; right? During that time period?

A. I don't know when he came back or anything. Uh, I know -- I think she quit at Boeing when he came back, but I don't, I don't remember. I wasn't around her enough. Like I said, we were not close friends.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. And Nina could have probably told you more about that than what I can.

Q1. Okay. Well, we'll have to talk to Nina too. (Laughs) Uh, so then after that -- kind of, after that time period ended, and -- did you guys start having your reunions right away, or did --

A. No. We used to have one every five years, at first, and I can't remember when we started having the combined three classes, but I think it was our -- I don't know whether it was our 50th, or what. And we'd had it down at Lehr's, and decorated their, their party room, and everything, and I know Jack said he had never seen it decorated that pretty so -- (Laughs) -- well, we had a lot of fun.

Q1. Did she come to that one?

A. I don't know that she's ever been to any of them.

Q1. Oh, okay. I don't know -- but -- and yet she sent the note that one time?
A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. That was --

A. Well, and then another time, she sent a note with some macadamia nuts and things from Hawaii. But that last one was -- we hadn't heard from her. I think it was a couple years before that, she sent the macadamia nuts, but we didn't used to hear from her at all. They were -- after Stanley came back, they didn't live around here, and I don't know -- it was, I don't know, 10 or 15 years, maybe 20, before we started combining the classes and having the reunions -- but --

Q1. What about the Payne's? I know -- I know eventually they moved to Winfield.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. But do you -- did they come home and visit family? And I mean, I know they moved several places.

A. Well, I imagine they did. That one picture is of her with Stanley Ann on the porch -- and her aunt, and her mother. But like I said, I was not a close friend. I never did see her when she came back. Now, Nina was in that group at that one party, that -- but those pictures wouldn't reproduce so -- well enough to see who they were.

Q1. So how do you think growing up in Augusta was unique from other -- or not -- you didn't grow up in Augusta, I guess. I shouldn't -- it's
not fair to ask you that question. Uh -- when did you move into town?

A. After I was married.

Q1. After you were married. And then have you lived here ever since?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Okay.

A. I lived three and a half miles southeast of town, and I lived there till 1947, so it was quite a while.

Q1. And what was your maiden name?

A. Dashner.

Q1. Dashner.


Q1. And I should have -- I should have asked you this at the very beginning, but Steve snuck in on us, and we didn't know we were being recorded yet. This is -- if -- hopefully this question won't offend you, but this is just, sort of, to place everything in the right historical contract -- context. We've asked people to begin by telling us their name, their age, the date, and where we're doing this interview.

A. Well, Virginia Dashner Ewalt, and uh, I was born, like I said, in
Augusta -- they counted Augusta, but it was southeast of town, and I've lived here all my life. I'm 87 -- I was just 87 years old.

Q1. Oh. When's your birthday?
A. The 8th.

Q1. Of June?
A. Uh-huh.

Q1. Oh. Well, congratulations.
A. Nina June's is the day after tomorrow.

Q1. Oh, so -- and you said you were born in 1922?
A. Four.

Q1. 1924, okay. That's right. Younger -- you were younger. And we are doing this interview in --
A. Uh, Brookside Cottages.

Q1. Which is also where you live.
A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. So is there a story behind how you got your name, Virginia? Are you named after someone in the family?
A. My dad came from West Virginia, and so I was named Virginia, and Lee
is my middle name, and that was his first name.

Q1. Okay.

A. So --

Q1. So now, I know there's an Ewalt Elementary School.

A. Mm-hmm. My brother-in-law's property.

Q1. Okay. Did he donate the property to --?

A. No. They sold it. His daughter sold it.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. He used to raise greyhounds --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. -- and he lived on the other side of the road, and that was where the dog runs were, where the school is.

Q1. Okay. So that's why the school is named Ewalt?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Because it used to be his property?

A. And if you go inside, there is a greyhound that set in the circle of his drive -- a statue.

Q1. Oh, that's an interesting little piece of history.
A. But, he raised the greyhounds, and the oldest brother raced them in Florida, and uh, they did quite well with them.

Q1. That's interesting.

A. Hmm?

Q1. Is that the school's mascot -- a greyhound, or --

A. I don't think so. I think Jane just donated it. She didn't have any place to put it so (laughs) -- and she lives back east, so --

Q1. Mm-hmm. I don't know. I'm not doing so well with more questions. Do you -- what -- just kind of piece everything together again, because you mentioned several places -- things you used to do in town and -- during that time period, there was Lehr's. Could you just kind of describe what downtown Augusta was like during that time period when you were in high school and right after high school?

A. Well, there was Calvert's store down there, and people from Wichita used to come over there to buy clothes. And Lehr's was -- it was on the southwest corner of State and Fifth, and they were pretty well-known. They also had a store in Winfield, and then Lehr's was a little tiny place where -- Brick Street Floral is there now. And they had, oh, a few booths and half a dozen stools to start out with, then they moved across the street and had a really nice restaurant there for a while, and that's where we -- well, I guess when we first
started out, it was still a little one, and then later when they moved over there, we still went over there for lunch and everything when we got off.

Q1. To their present -- to what would be their present location?

A. No.

Q1. No.

A. Then they moved down on Seventh Street and -- where the motel and that empty building is now, and there was another building there, and it burned, I think. And they had a little drive-in down there to start with, and then after the skating rink closed, that's where it was, and they built a large building. They used to have Community Theatre down there. People from Wichita used to come over to it. I said -- I -- my daughter was in one of the plays, and I helped take tickets one night, and half of Wichita Clinic was over there.

A. But see,

Q1. That's the --

A. -- people used to come here all the time for things, and -- oh, there were two other dress shops in town. There was -- oh, one of the members of our class -- they had a -- oh, the bowling alley -- the kind where you use the little tiny balls -- and he -- he and someone else had that for about a year, but he was only here for a year. And
there were just a lot of -- a lot of other things in town. Like I said, there were about five drug stores downtown then, and two of them had jukeboxes where we could dance, and they had a photography studio downtown, and there were just -- so much -- there's nothing down there now. (Laughs)

Q1. So, you know, it strikes me that drug stores were very different --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- in those days than they are now.

A. Soda fountains. They had soda fountains, all of them.

Q1. It was a social gathering place.

A. Grant's Drugstore had a marble counter, and they had copper mugs for root beer, and it was the only one that was like that. But, you know, they were all different, but --

Q1. But it wasn't like a tiny Wal-Mart -- a place where you could get a prescription filled?

A. Oh, you could get prescriptions filled, yeah, but it was mostly, I think -- well, one of them where we -- where we danced, they had three daughters, two twins, that were beautiful girls, and they were a year ahead of me in school, and very popular -- cheerleaders and so on. And so they always had a crowd there. And it was just different than it is now. Then we -- refinery -- we worked down there. We'd have
lunch downtown some place, and sometimes we'd eat at Cooper's Drugstore because Bill Cooper was also in one of the classes, and other times, why, we'd go to Lehr's. But, I don't know, there was always -- you always knew where you could find somebody in the evenings, too, because you --

Q1. You walked everywhere? Did you, or --

A. Most of the time. If I was going to stay over and go to the show at night, I had to stay in town. I couldn't -- I didn't have gas to drive back and forth.

Q1. So -- but you drove in, or did one of your parents drive you in?

A. No. Mother let me have her car to drive. (Laughs) But with gas rationing, I needed my gas to go back and forth to work.

Q1. Tell me what rationing was like. What do you remember about that?

A. Well, the year after the war, I went to Colorado with a couple of my friends, and their dad had a Dodge and Plymouth garage downtown, and he got retreads for her -- made sure she had those on the car, so we could go. It was -- it was different, because you couldn't just take off for Wichita, or anywhere, you know. Oh, and then Nina June and I used to ride the bus to El Dorado, and then walk to the swimming pool over there, because we didn't have a swimming pool then.

Q1. So -- and so did you have to plan more because you knew gasoline was
rationed, and were there things you didn't do that you would have done?

A. Well --

Q1. Did you feel like you were sacrificing, or --?

A. Not really.

Q1. -- did it feel like you were helping with the war?

A. (Laughs) Not really. We had a good time, so it -- it -- like I said, we couldn't go to Wichita whenever we felt like it, but it just -- and then like taking the bus over to El Dorado to go swimming -- but it was a simpler life then. Let's put it that way.

Q1. Mm-hmm. And did -- you had the doodlebug -- doodle -- doodle -- what did you call that? A doodle --

A. I called it a doodlebug, but I don't know what it -- I don't know what it was. It was a little, like, just one car or something.

Q1. Did it ride -- but it went --

A. On the rails, yeah, on the rails, uh-huh.

Q1. Okay.

A. And I don't know what you call it, that's what I called it.

Q1. Did other people call it that, too, or that was your own nickname
for it?

A. Well, Nina and I did. (Laughs)

Q1. Oh.

A. But I don't know -- that's about all I can tell you. (Laughs)

Q1. What do you wish kids growing up in Augusta today could have from the old days?

A. I think -- I think they have too much now, and, uh, they have too many electronic things, and they don't get out and do things like the kids used to.

Q1. Okay. Gosh -- (Interviewer 2) what was it like growing up during the depression, you know? What -- you know, we talked about rationing and all that, but what was that --

A. Well, we didn't have a problem because we had chickens, and turkeys, and eggs, and milk, cows, and everything, and uh, Dad always had a big garden, so we didn't -- really wasn't a problem for us.

Q1. How about people who lived in town?

A. Well, I know my aunt -- her husband had been laid off at the refinery, and she said they -- they would have starved if it hadn't have been for the folks, because they always took them in food, but I don't know whether everybody else had that much of a problem or not. The
neighbors out there always shared if they had different things in the garden, so it really, you know -- and the boys across the road would help Dad put up hay, and things, and he'd give them meat and things like that for --

Q1. So you were fairly young when that -- you weren't even 10 years old, probably, when that was going on.

A. Hmm-mm.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) And what about the Dust Bowl years? Was -- I mean, did your dad's crops suffer during --

A. Well, he didn't really plant except for garden. I mean, he worked in the oil field, and we -- we had the cows, and things, but we just had a -- you know -- just --

Q1. Pasture?

A. Yeah. It wasn't commercial or anything, what he had. And as far as the Dust Bowl here, we really weren't affected that bad. Now, my grandparents out around Russell were, but we weren't here.

Q1. Hmm. (Interviewer 2) You had relatives in Russell?

A. Hmm?

Q1. You have relatives in Russell?

A. Did. They're -- I think most of them -- dead now.
Q1. Yeah. My wife's from there.

A. Oh, really?

Q1. We were just back for Prairiesta, which is their --

A. My neighbor is from there, and she went to that.

Q1. Yeah. I saw her, yeah. (laughs)

A. But -- actually, my grandparents lived halfway between Bunker Hill and Russell, and then they moved into Bunker Hill from the farm when they got older.

Q1. Okay. They were farmers as well?

A. Yeah. Uh, their younger son took over the farm when they moved into town then, but -- yeah, and the Dust Bowl -- they put up wet sheets and things and put up the windows and doors to -- I know we were out there one time when -- but we didn't have it like that here.

Q1. The thing about Augusta, there's -- you know, the highway goes right through town, and it sort of divides the town.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Was it like that back then? Was it as noticeable? I mean, it almost seems like two towns here, now. Was that the case --?

A. About Twelfth Street, the town ended then, and that's about as far
as it went north. And I don't know whether you would remember where the refinery was, or --

Q1. (Interviewer 1) Where was it?

A. Well, you know where the Air Museum is down there now? That was refinery, and we shipped aviation fuel, and road oil, and asphalt that went to, you know, some of the aircraft, or airports, and things, to -- shipped a lot of aviation fuel.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) So El Dorado had a refinery, and you had a refinery also back then?

A. Yeah. Ours was larger at the time. I think we did -- we did more of the aviation fuel and things like that than what El Dorado did, I think, but that's been a few years.

Q1. So it wasn't that big of a deal to have a highway running through town back then?

A. Not really, didn't seem like it.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) It's always been, though, in that exact same place?

A. Mm-hmm, and the highway south of town goes on Walnut Street, now, and it used to go through State on down -- went through the center part of town, then back around the refinery. But --

Q1. So the -- where you grew up -- the -- the -- country -- because you
said -- you referred to yourself as country, not farm, I think. Where you grew up, would that now be in the city limits of Augusta?

A. No, it's three and a half miles southeast of town.

Q1. Oh, southeast, okay.

A. Mm-hmm, about a mile and a half south, and a mile and a half east, and there's nothing there that was there when I was there. Even the oil field -- the roads up to it -- have grown over.

Q1. Hmm. Now, what was it like -- now, was it your -- who worked on the oil lease? Was it your dad?

A. My dad did.

Q1. Your dad did? So you were very close to the refinery, so what was that like?

A. He was hired -- he was hired in about 1916, I think, to work in the oil field, but to play ball. He played in the 1913 World Series, and he threw such a hard fast ball, he hurt his arm, and, you know, they didn't have therapy and things then like they have now, and he couldn't play in the Major League anymore, and they farmed him out. Well, then when he got married, he was traveling everywhere, and they wanted to be in one place, and so he had an offer to come here. And they used to have ball teams -- the refinery did, the oil company, and -- but he worked as a pumper in the oil field, and then played
ball, but he was actually hired for -- as a ball player.

Q1. And -- and he was a ball player for the refinery's ball team?

A. No, for Sinclair.

Q1. Sinclair.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. So what was the refinery he worked for? I thought that was Sinclair.

A. It started out -- no. It started out as White Eagle, and then it went to Socony-Vacuum, and then the Mobil Oil.

Q1. Okay. And as a pumpman, what did he do? What tasks -- work tasks --

A. Connected the wells to pump and disconnected them when the time -- it's -- they had a great big wheel, a huge one, and they hooked the lines onto those that went out to the wells to pump, and then when it -- they'd pump so long, they were to be disconnected, and they had to pump so long, and then rest so long.

Q1. I see.

A. But they had different -- different lines from different fields.

Q1. And then was -- during, like, a workday when he was doing these things, was he going from pump to pump? Did he do a lot of inspection?

A. Yeah, they did that, too. Uh-huh.
Q1. Did he work by himself, or did they have team pairs?

A. No, they usually had one, and they took different shifts. I mean, he wasn't the only pumper, but they -- they took different shifts.

Q1. So when he was -- when he was out at the pumps, he was pretty much the sole -- the only one there at that time?

A. Yeah.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) Did anything remain of your old house?

A. No.

Q1. It's all gone?

A. There's nothing. The windmill was still out there for a long time, and then last time I drove out there, it was gone, too. And, like I said, all the oil field houses -- everything's gone.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) Hmm.

A. The -- new houses built out there.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) Oh; is that right?

A. Yeah.

Q1. Wow. But there's no foundation, or --

A. No, there's nothing.
Q1. Wow. (Interviewer 1) Do you remember when it -- I mean, you know, was it torn down? Did it burn down? Fall down?

A. Torn down.

Q1. Okay.

A. And, like I said, the windmill remained for a long time, and then it was gone, too, and it -- uh --

Q1. So now, growing up out in the country -- when -- before high school, and before you came into town --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- what did you do for fun then? As a kid, what do you remember about that?

A. Well, uh, they played baseball, and uh, my dad helped them with that. And then the kids across the road, their dad built -- uh, fixed where we could high jump and do things like this, and us girls sometimes would walk up in the field and pick wildflowers, and, you know, our mailbox was a quarter of a mile down the road. We'd walk down and get the mail, and, you know, just things like that.

Q1. But you did have neighbors, so you had other kids to play with?

A. Yeah, there were several oil field houses over there. The one I was born in is like that one up in El Dorado at the museum. They called
it a shotgun house, you know, straight through.

Q1. Because you could shoot a shotgun from the front door through the back door? Is that --

A. Straight -- straight through, and -- and the farm boss, as they called him, well, he was the man in charge out there. Now, he had a larger house, but they had four children, too, and they built -- they built on to the house, also, too.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) So the oil company built the house? The oil company built the house?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Okay, so --

A. It was boom town then, if you've looked at any of the pictures, and there were still quite a bit of oil field, even when I went to high school. I mean, it wasn't like it was earlier, but there were still quite a bit.

Q1. On par with El Dorado -- El Dorado was a big oil boom town back in the 30s.

A. Yeah, Augusta -- Augusta and down by Gordon, south of town, you know, where that -- well, it used to be between here and Douglass, but they moved the highway, so it's kind of off-center now, and -- but down that way, there were -- the Empire Company, I think, down there -- City
Service -- but there were a lot of -- a lot of wells and things that --

Q1. How did that impact life in Augusta? How did it impact the city, and, you know, the kind of people that lived here, and that sort of thing -- having oil underneath your feet?

A. Well, it's what paid the bills. (Laughs.)

Q1. Yeah.

A. They always had jobs when a lot of other people didn't.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) Were you aware of that at the time?

A. No, not really.

Q1. As you got older?

A. But -- just things I'd heard since then, but it -- I don't know. It's more of a bedroom community anymore.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So how did you meet your husband?

A. Well, my neighbor down the road, he was spending the night with him, and I had a girlfriend spending the night with me that the other boy dated, and so he wanted to know if I'd go with my husband on a blind date. And we had a few dates, and then he got married to a girl in Douglass. And we came back from service, they were getting a divorce, and ran into him again with the same boy, so he'd asked me to go out, and I said, well, no, I didn't go with married men, and
he said "Well, I'm getting a divorce." And eventually, I started dating him, so --

Q1. So were you married in Augusta in a church?
A. Methodist Church.

Q1. Methodist Church?
A. Mm-hmm. The old Methodist Church.

Q1. And --
A. And that's where Nina June was married, also.

Q1. Oh.
A. She was my attendant, and I was hers, (laughs) but --

Q1. And then you raised -- do you have children?
A. I had four children. I have one left.

Q1. Oh, my goodness.
A. My daughter works at the Gazette.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Okay, so -- but lived in Augusta all your life?
A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) Mm-hmm. It's a good town. (Interviewer 1) Are there any other family memories, or school memories, or anything you
were thinking that you might like to tell us that we haven't touched yet? I don't even know what time it is, Steve; do you?

A. I don't know anything that --

Q1. 2:20? Well, I wouldn't want to, you know, not ask you something that you wanted to share with us.

A. (Laughs) I can't think of anything right now.


A. It was a lot simpler time than it is now, I think.

We had one black in our school, and I think he was in Nina June's class.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. He ended up being a pro-football player, and then after he retired from that, he went to work for the city of Los Angeles, and I can't remember what -- what his title was there. I know he sent me a letter one time on letterhead stationary with his name on it, but he was -- the football team wanted to elect him as captain, and the school wouldn't let them, so they all said, well, they were quitting football, so they let him be captain and -- because all the kids were going to quit football. And anyway, that was one of the things about him. (Laughs)

Q1. Did -- so did he -- I would think that would be kind of difficult
during that time period for -- do you know how he came to live in Augusta with his family? Was his dad working the oil fields or --?

A. No, I think he -- I've got a sheet over there I'll give you about it. I can't remember what all it was now. But anyway, he did quite well for himself. They came back to one reunion, and they sat off -- they were all dressed up. He had on a white suit, and she had on a white dress, and they were really dressed up, and they sat off by themselves. And I don't know whether you remember when Davey Cohen used to have a discount store in Wichita? The first one that was in Wichita?


A. Davey Cohen. Well, anyway, he says, "Well, I had enough of this." He went over, and asked her to dance. And the jitterbug, that was his thing when he was younger, so he -- they got out there in the middle of the floor, and everyone sat around and watched them dance, so after that --

Q1. He and his wife, or --

A. He and the -- the black girl. The boy's wife.

Q1. Oh, okay. Okay.

A. And so then everybody -- they came over and visited then with everybody. Everybody got -- and I heard from him quite a bit after
that. Nina and both have had letters from him. He died, I think, about a year or so ago from cancer.

Q1. So he figured out a way to get over the awkwardness by dancing?

A. Well, if you'd have known Davey that was. (Laughs)

Q1. That was his name; Davey?

A. Davey Cohan, yeah. He was a Jew.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. He was Jewish, but he wasn't a Jew. Let's put it that way.

Q1. Jewish African American, huh? Did he have a lot -- sounds like he had a lot of friends in high school if the whole football team stood up for him.

A. Well, Davey was the Jew.

Q1. Oh, oh, oh, we're talking about two different boys now?

A. Yeah.

Q1. Okay.

A. I think he did. I didn't really know him in high school. I got acquainted with him after that, but I -- I didn't know him in high school.

Q1. So now, which one are we talking about?
A. The black --

Q1. The black kid?
A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Okay.
A. Yeah, Davey was always a friend, so -- and he started the first -- you know, to have a group that didn't go to college -- we had quite an extraordinary class. Dick Scholfield was a member of our class, and Davey, like I said, started the first discount store that was in Wichita, and Daryl Thompson had a trucking firm, and uh, they all ended up practically millionaires.

Q1. Really made something of themselves.
A. Yeah, and I started to think who else -- there are others in that group, but I can't think -- I can't think who they are now, so -- but it was an unusual group, really.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Sounds like it.
A. And then, we had, like, Devere Brown, and he was a professor at Norman, Oklahoma, but uh, when he was in service, he'd been taught Japanese, and was getting ready to go over. They thought they were going to invade Japan, and then the war ended. Well, he has been to Japan and uh, to China, and taught language over there, and he's written a book, and I don't know what all, but, anyway, he was -- he was a
One of his books is entitled "The Farm Boy".

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. But -- and then we had another one that was a POW in Germany, and he had been kind of a -- cut up all through school, and then after he'd been that, he decided he was going to do something with his life, and he went back to school, and got his education. And, he was professor -- I think he taught at WSU for a while, and then at Pennsylvania, and uh, I don't know where else. He had -- when he died, his wife sent me a deal out of the paper, and it was practically a full page written about him.

Q1. Oh.

A. And it was Howard Hamilton, and --

Q1. What about the women in your class? I mean, there -- women were a lot more limited at that time --

A. Very limited.

Q1. -- to make a reputation for themselves.

A. Well, of course, Madelyn. (Laughs)

Q1. Yes, yes, Madelyn. Yes.

A. And I think she'd top the list. (Laughs) I can't --
Q1. She raised herself an amazing grandson.

A. Well, she did. I can't -- can't think right now in the women. I can't -- can't -- can't remember what -- but they didn't have the opportunities then that the men -- the men came back from war, a lot of the women lost their jobs, and it was different.

Q1. Yeah, I bet that was hard.

A. But -- and if you were pregnant then, you couldn't work. That was another thing, because I had to quit when I was pregnant, and uh, I don't know -- there just -- it's just a different world now than what it was. Well, even a few years later, I was working over at Coleman Company in personnel department over there, and so my husband came back from overseas, and I was pregnant again, and they didn't want me to quit, but I was getting car sick every time going back and forth, so --

Q1. You kind of had to for that reason.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Very interesting.

A. But it's just -- you can see how times have changed.

Q1. Yeah. Well, what, I mean -- you don't -- you may not have an answer for this question. If you don't, that's okay, but it just occurred to me. Is there something from -- from back, you know, in those early
days that you really wish were still here? Is there something that is better today in Augusta in -- and, you know -- or from then that you don't miss? Does that make sense even; that question?

A. Well, I don't know. I think that --

Q1. In what ways has Augusta changed for the better, I guess, and --

A. I don't know that it has.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. Because people used to, like I said, it's more or less a bedroom community now, and people don't really support it the way they used to.

Q1. Do they know each other as well as they used to?

A. No, and there are more people here now. I think they said nine thousand and some on the last census, but I don't know with -- well, see, my grandson, he's going to college, but I said he -- they don't do things like we used to do -- to get out and go, like, to the Blue Moon and places, and we saw name bands, I mean, it was, you know, it was something to go see those people, and uh, they don't have the opportunities to do this, and they don't dance, and things, like we used to. (Coughs)

Q1. Mm-hmm. I suppose the closest equivalent would be the concerts. Kids go to concerts now, I suppose. Where's he going to college?
A. At Emporia.

Q1. Oh, great. Well, Steve, I think we've --

Q2. -- covered the life.

Q1. I believe we have.

A. I don't know that you've -- had at anything.

Q1. Did you want to shoot any of the --?

Q2. Yes.

[Photo follows.]
FL. Madelyn Payne and I started school together in Garfield School, and we went clear through school together. She lived -- I lived on Clark Street, and she lived up on State Street, so it was -- we didn't really, other than school, see each other or know each other very much, until high school, maybe a little of junior high. High school we became great good friends, and there was kind of a rock and stone wall from State Street, around the curb, and up toward the high school, and at noon, we all met there early before school, and talked, and joked, and laughed, and checked to see what boys were there, and that sort of thing.

... 

Madelyn was very, very smart, very, very intelligent. Why we were friends, I don't know, because I wasn't. But anyway, she was on the honor roll clear through school -- and I love this.
This is important -- until her last semester in high school. That's when she started going with Stanley.

...

She had a wonderful personality; laughed, joked, all through high school.

...

She was an important part of my life for uh, most of school.

...

-- and so we did lots of laughing, and lots of joking, and lots of -- uh, she just was part of my growing up.

It seems to me like at one time, she kind of thought she would -- that's what she would do.

Q. Madelyn?

FL. Uh-huh, would be a school teacher. And, of course, Madelyn would have been very good at that. She could communicate.

...

-- in Hawaii, grandmother is "tutu", and so Obama called Madelyn "Toot", and we called ours "Tu-Tu". But anyway, no, she would have been a good -- she -- and I kind of think -- what little sticks in my mind about that, maybe that was what she'd like to do.
-- well, and he even says, Toot was the big influence in his life, and he even liked his grandfather.

... 

God love her. She would never have thought she would be the grandmother of a president either, but she wasn't going to be just -- she was -- she had always -- in school, in junior high, high school, didn't make any difference -- Madelyn always wanted better. Does that -- am I saying it right?

Q. Sounds right to me. That's why she pushed him to learn.

FL. Uh-huh, because she was always going to be -- always -- she didn't dream just about being a wife and mother, she was going to be somebody, and she ended up being somebody. She sure did.

[END]
Q. So we can start? Yes. This is an odd way to start, it may seem to you, but it helps to place everything in context. So can you tell me your name?

FL. Frances Lawrence.

Q. And it would have been your full name before you were married. It would have been --

FL. Mary Frances Kennedy.

Q. Okay, thank you. Your age?

FL. 88.

Q. The date?
FL. August 9th, 1922.

Q. Great. And today's date is June 21st, 2011 --

FL. Mm-hmm.

Q. -- and we are -- and where are we?

FL. We are -- 1700 Fairway in Augusta, Kansas.

Q. Fabulous, okay. Now, wherever you'd like to start, at the beginning.

FL. Well, Madelyn and I -- Madelyn Payne and I started school together in Garfield School, and we went clear through school together. She lived -- I lived on Clark Street, and she lived up on State Street, so it was -- we didn't really, other than school, see each other or know each other very much, until high school, maybe a little of junior high. High school we became great good friends, and there was kind of a rock and stone wall from State Street, around the curb, and up toward the high school, and at noon, we all met there early before school, and talked, and joked, and laughed, and checked to see what boys were there, and that sort of thing. One really lovely day, Darlene Scott, at that time, and Madelyn and I decided we didn't want to go to school, and so what did we think we wanted to do -- and we discussed it sitting on the rocks, and, and finally decided we'd just go down to Cooper Drugstore, and I do not -- and I swear to this day, I don't know who had the cigarettes or where they came from, but we
smoked in the drugstore and batted them -- smoke -- anyway, we were there the rest of the afternoon, and by the time I got home, the school had called my mother and Madelyn's mother. Madelyn's mother -- probably you would say -- I want to say holier-than-thou. Does that make sense?

Q. She was very religious?

FL. Well, kind of. Anyway, she told Mr. Robinson, who was our principal at school that Madelyn was at home. My mother said no, I wasn't, I was at Cooper's smoking a cigarette, and Darlene's mother -- and Darlene still lived south of town. Anyway, I couldn't go back to school for a whole day, and my mother had to take me. Well, now, this did ruin the friendship. Her mother thought I was not a good -- well, she was quite sure that I had led them into this. Probably, I had. I don't know. Anyway, but the fact that she said Madelyn was at home, and I was -- and my mother said no -- of course, my mother had been a school teacher, so, you know, so you had to do it all proper. That really hurt the friendship. We -- it was probably toward the end of our senior year that this little episode happened.

Before that, Madelyn had a sister, just younger, and then Charles, and he was a her brother, and he was dear, so he was with us some through this -- oh, probably most of our high school if we did anything
together like walking to--on downtown, or, of course, in those
days you walked everywhere, and, of course, we did, and so I knew Charles
real well. I did not know her sister at all. They didn't get along, so I just--I really didn't know her.

Madelyn was very, very smart, very, very intelligent. Why we were
friends, I don't know, because I wasn't. But anyway, she was on the
honor roll clear through school--and I love this. This is
important--until her last semester in high school. That's when
she started going with Stanley. Stanley lived in El Dorado, and
Darlene and I did not care for Stanley very much. He was a bit
arrogant. He was--he was tall. Well, you know, only somebody
that's a bit arrogant would name their only daughter Stanley Ann,
so that kind of tells you about him.

After high school, I went to--I--well, during the high school, my senior
year in high school, I went to work for Peterson Drug, and that's
where all the kids hung out, and there was a--you could plug
the--whatever--and there was--and there was a little area in
the back where the booths were, and you could dance. Now, on occasion
Stanley met Madelyn there. Not very often, but some. After school,
I went to work at Cessna, and Madelyn went to work at Boeing, so we
saw very little of each other, just on occasion. And--and then,
she was still going with Stanley, and at Cessna I met Raymond
Lawrence. Well, he would come to Augusta to see me, and so--they
were both going to BCC, Stanley and Dutch. And he would come down to see me, and Stanley found out, and he didn't have a car, Dutch did. And so -- now, we never double-dated, ever, but he came down with Dutch, and I don't know where he went. Did he -- I don't know whether he went to Madelyn's. [Phone rings several times in the next few minutes] I don't know -- that I just simply don't know.

Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. We never one time in all that time double-dated, ever, but he always came with Dutch. And how, uh, he worked at a furniture store in El Dorado. After they were married, he worked in a furniture store in Wichita, and I guess he was working in a furniture store in Hawaii, too, 'cause Jenny [Virginia Ewalt] knew her more after. Well, they were in a play together, and then, I think they both rode in the same car, didn't they? Going to Wichita to work after high school?

Q. Jenny and Madelyn?

FL. Uh-huh.

Q. Might have been somebody else. I think Jenny said she worked at the refinery.

FL. Yeah she did, too.

Q. Probably somebody else, but you said they were in a play together. You mean, Jenny and Madelyn?
FL. Uh-huh.

Q. Yeah, she did tell us that.

FL. And she did --

Q. [Videographer to Q.: Just talk to her. Don't worry about the camera.] Yeah, look at me, I guess.

FL. I -- other than just girlhood things that -- we told each other lots of our wishes and dreams.

Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. And -- before the cigarette incident.

Q. Incident?

FL. Uh-huh, because that really kind of -- I was a bad influence.

Q. That's too bad.

FL. But before that, we did lots, and so I knew -- well, I don't think she ever wished to -- to -- we never, ever, got to wishing to go to Hawaii, but she knew that -- and, you know, she didn't go on to school. She didn't go to -- even to BCC. We both went to work.

Q. But that was fairly common then, wasn't it?

FL. Yes, but to end up as President of the bank -- wasn't she?

Q. I know she had a position of real importance.
FL. Yes, yes.

Q. The bank in Hawaii, you're talking about?

FL. Yes.

Q. And I know she just -- they just had the one child. They lived in Wichita, and I don't -- I can't remember after that first summer after school when my husband-to-be and Stanley came down all the time. I did see her. I did talk to her a lot. We never double dated, never.

Q. Never were couples friends? Is that the --?

FL. Huh-uh, huh-uh, not ever, even though they came from El Dorado down together, the two guys. There was a lot of snide remarks -- unkind remarks about Stanley between all of us who knew Madelyn. I cannot remember -- even the few times that they were at Pete's Drugstore -- and I don't believe they came together. I think she was there and he came on occasion, but her friends teased -- made fun of -- and I think sometimes to her -- didn't seem to -- I've been trying, in my mind, to recall one single instance when she got mad at us for being unkind, because kids can be, and, and I can't remember. But she knew that we were making fun of him. Didn't bother her a bit, not a bit.

Q. What do you think that she saw in him?

FL. It had to be something special.
Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. Yeah.

Q. Any idea what it might have been?

FL. Honey, how could I have any idea when we only saw the arrogance and the -- he was tall, taller than my husband, and, of course, Madelyn was a little -- yeah, Madelyn was quite a bit taller than I was, and Darlene and I were the same size, but Madelyn was taller. She had a wonderful personality; laughed, joked, all through high school.

Q. Can you remember some of the things she laughed and joked about for example?

FL. Well, one -- (Laughs.) We had an English teacher and her name was Arethusa Lowery. She also had the study hall. The study hall went the whole length of that side of the building, and there were chairs and desks the whole way. Daryl, who I showed you the picture of -- Bob Bisanuelle, he had the theatre here, his dad and mother. Anyway, they managed to always sit in -- one at one end of the study hall, and one at the other -- the end, and they would roll marbles --

Q. (Laughs.)

FL. -- down the whole length of the -- now, we all were part of that, and did lots of laughing, and lots of encouraging, and that sort of thing. Now, Daryl swore that in high school he dated her. I know
better than that, but Daryl said he did. I mean, that's his story. Well, anyway -- but anyway, she and I were part of that teasing Arethusa, and we would go outside after school and laugh at -- she would start running. She was a little lady, and she would start running when the marbles started down to try to catch whoever. And we did lots of joking and teasing about Mrs. Lowery, but I don't think -- to this day, that's the first time I've ever said Mrs. Lowery. It was always Arethusa Lowery. Isn't that ridiculous? But we did. We made life very uncomfortable for her. We had one teacher, and her name was Miss Thompson, and she had an affair with the druggist across the street from Pete's and we did lots of sneaking around to watch that little affair. Now, if you want to know what we did and laughed about -- typical high school -- not being nice, and we weren't, and yet we didn't -- [shrugs].

Q. High schoolers rebel. That's part of the deal, isn't it?

FL. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. It was -- and she was an important part of my life for most of school.

Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. So --

Q. Well, you said you shared wishes and dreams, and you don't do that with people who aren't very close friends.
FL. Huh-uh, and we did. And I lived on Clark Street, and she lived up on State, and we would come down, and meet, then walk on to -- downtown to the drugstore, because that's where everybody went. You went down for a coke.

Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. And sometimes she was aggravated because we had to have Charles, and sometimes she was, you know -- and he was -- he was a dear little boy.

Q. But he was little enough he couldn't be left alone, so when she went somewhere she had to babysit him and take him with?

FL. Yeah, and take him with us. But -- and so we did lots of laughing, and lots of joking, and lots of -- she just was part of my growing up.

Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. And -- and --

Q. Were there other girls that -- was it just the two of you?

FL. Oh, no, Darlene -- oh, Darlene and Mary Barnholdt -- oh, no.

Q. Okay.

FL. Darlene lived out on the -- her dad was City Service, so was Madelyn's. Madelyn lived on the corner and most of behind -- clear down to the
next street was the pipe yards -- City Service Pipe Yard. I could remember Pat Schooley lived down on the other corner. And now, there were many times when I was there and we played in the pipe yards. I think about it now, and that was a dangerous place. It was, you know. The pipes were oilfield pipes, and I wouldn't like my grandkids playing there, but we did, and wondered around. And there were always two or three others, never just Madelyn and I when we were that much younger, like, junior high.

Q. Oh, okay. I was going to ask how old you were.

FL. Mm-hmm, probably junior high when we were there. And I don't believe I ever saw her dad, ever. I did see her mother a lot.

Q. So when you played on the pipes, were you, like, balancing and walking on them? Were you playing imaginary games? Do you even remember what you played?

FL. Yeah, see who could get under that row and down quicker than -- ridiculous things, now. I think about it, and I think -- and her mother -- their house was there, and the pipe yards were all -- clear down. There were a lot of them, and there were always -- there just was not Madelyn and I, ever, when we were that young in junior high. There were lots of kids, and we all played in the -- on the pipe yard. We went under. They were on -- I don't know, things, so you could get under. They were never on the ground,
ever, but they were piled up on top of these things. And how somebody didn't get hurt, I'll never know, but we didn't, I don't think, ever -- anybody got hurt, but that was my first -- where we did things. That was junior high, and that was lots of kids together, and it wasn't until high school that we came -- we became -- where we talked about what we wanted to do. What -- that sort of thing.

Q. Do you remember what you wanted to do when you were that age? When you were in high school, what you dreamed of doing? And if you don't remember, that's fine.

FL. (Laughs.) Yeah, but we won't go there.

Q. Oh, okay. That's fine too.

FL. My mother was a school teacher and -- and I had an older brother who was a terrible tease. Anyway, I knew one thing for absolute certain; I didn't want any part of being a school teacher. It seems to me like at one time, she kind of thought she would -- that's what she would do.

Q. Madelyn?

FL. Uh-huh, would be a school teacher. And, of course, Madelyn would have been very good at that. She could communicate.

Q. Do you see some traits -- I mean, she was an important part of her grandson's education. Did you see traits in her then --?
Q. -- that might have applied --

FL. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And I can see her, if he got out of line, correcting him. I mean, I can just -- I can see her. And in Hawaii -- I have another friend whose family grew up in Hawaii, and in Hawaii, grandmother is "tutu", and so Obama called Madelyn "Toot", and we called ours "Tutu". But anyway, no, she would have been a good -- she -- and I kind of think -- what little sticks in my mind about that, maybe that was what she'd like to do, and I know she had -- Madelyn would have liked to have gone on to school.

Q. And could have gone far.

FL. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And when -- I don't think it was -- I don't think money was ever a problem. Stanley --

Q. Well, and girls didn't just go automatically to school then, either.

FL. Nope. She was going with him, and -- and -- and some of the girls, Jenny was one -- prom night was when they ran off and got married.

Q. Who?

FL. Stanley and Madelyn.

Q. Oh, senior -- was this Madelyn's senior year?

FL. Uh-huh, uh-huh. Jenny didn't mention that?
Q. Oh, in our interview?

FL. Uh-huh.

Q. She didn't.

FL. Because I think -- who else was with them? But anyway, before high school -- before school was out, they were married.

Q. So they snuck off on prom night?

FL. Mm-hmm.

Q. They eloped?

FL. Mm-hmm.

Q. Did they tell people right away?

FL. I don't think so. I can remember graduation, and nope, no, we had -- that's why I think -- who discussed that long and strong, the actual going to get married?

Q. Mm-hmm. Did they start at the prom and then leave or they -- they didn't show up at the prom because --

FL. I don't think they showed up.

Q. Okay.

FL. And he couldn't have gone anyway because he's El Dorado, we were Augusta.
Q. You had to be --

FL. Uh-huh, back then. And we had H.H. Robinson for a principal, and he was very strict, (laughs) and so, you know, he would not have approved of El Dorado. There was -- there was a fight. The El Dorado boys and the Augusta boys --

FL. Oh.

Q. -- out on the railroad tracks. And I remember Madelyn and I -- they wanted -- at that time, you wore hose, but not pantyhose, and they wanted hose. And I remember -- and it seems to me like she did, too. Robert David -- anyway, they put bars of soap in the end of them, and dampened it. Made quite a --

Q. Oh, like a slingshot?

FL. Uh-huh, uh-huh. And now, I remember we were kind of part of that, Madelyn and I, Darlene, Mary Barnholdt, some of the girls.

Q. So it was planned ahead of time?

FL. Oh, yeah.

Q. Who won? Do you remember?

FL. Well, now, of course. Well, there's a reason we won, but we won't go there. But anyway --

Q. And how much trouble did everyone get in afterwards?
FL. Not any then, but Robert David had a truck with -- and the back had a -- kind of a built-up wooden thing. Anyway, we'd take -- we'd collect money and buy gas. Well, he took a whole bunch of them to El Dorado to return a little bit of a fight, and the police caught them. They -- oh, they got rotten eggs from one of our high school buddies, and -- and he furnished the eggs -- rotten, not good eggs, and they went to El Dorado. And we were not part of that. We stayed here. The guys went to El Dorado, and they were throwing eggs at the El Dorado guys, and the police caught them, and they only knew one person. He was the one who threw the eggs left-handed; my brother.

Q. Uh-oh.

FL. And they were all in jail. The whole truck load of them were in jail.

Q. Oh, we were so upset. Everybody -- we all got together, and moaned, and groaned, and carried on. And Mr. Bisanuelle was going to El Dorado to get them out of jail.

Q. One of the fathers?

FL. Uh-huh, Robert David's dad. And my mother said no. She had always said, if you would get in trouble, you will stay. Well, Mr. Bisanuelle couldn't stand it, so he brought him home anyway. And I remember we were at my house on Clark that afternoon -- Darlene, Mary Jo, the girl next -- okay, anyway, there were several of us,
and Mr. Bisanuelle brought him home. We had a screened-in porch on the back, and my mother wouldn't let him come in, and so we girls had to leave because she made him take his clothes off, because she knew there would be bugs from jail --

Q. Oh.

FL. -- and he could not come in. We did have an uproarious time over that. Trying to think of good things -- good -- and see, I haven't told you a good thing, and so --

Q. I think you have. Yeah, you have great stories.

FL. What?

Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. Well, I hope it was worth your time, okay?

Q. Absolutely, mm-hmm.

FL. Okay, but I really am -- truly am -- you know, and you get to -- there's -- I forget -- I have a granddaughter, and she comes, and she'll say, Nana, tell me a story about so and so. So I've always been a storyteller, but it's usually about family, and to be a storyteller about someone --

Q. Yeah, you knew her well, but you don't know as many intimate details as you do your own family.
FL. No, and at the time, I know we did, and at the time, I know we discussed -- oh, I know we discussed wants, dislikes, likes, that kind of girl talk.

Q. Sure.

FL. But -- and I do know she really -- she had planned on going on to school and -- but evidently --

Q. Love happened instead.

FL. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Q. And if, you know, if it hadn't, there would be no Barack Obama.

FL. This is absolutely true, yes. And, you know, I think --

Q. And that's the truth.

FL. I was just thinking of Stanley Ann, and her rebellion, and some of the things she did, and --

Q. It just made her a normal teenager, really.

FL. Normal?

Q. To rebel -- I mean, that is -- that's part of growing up, is going through that, testing the boundaries.

FL. Well, this is true. And we did in our way, I suppose. We just didn't go to another country and find somebody to marry, and, you know -- but
I am sure that -- that Madelyn was -- well, and he even says, Toot was the big influence in his life, and he even liked his grandfather. (Laughs.)

Q. (Laughs.) Wouldn't it have been fun to know then that she was going to be the grandmother of a president?

FL. Oh, golly. Just think about it.

Q. Mm-hmm.

FL. It really -- and when I think about -- oh, God love her. She would never have thought she would be the grandmother of a president either, but she wasn't going to be just -- she was -- she had always -- in school, in junior high, high school, didn't make any difference -- Madelyn always wanted better. Does that -- am I saying it right?

Q. Sounds right to me. That's why she pushed him to learn.

FL. Uh-huh, because she was always going to be -- always -- she didn't dream just about being a wife and mother, she was going to be somebody, and she ended up being somebody. She sure did.

[END]
BD. And I had a -- I left out a piece. At about -- after -- in December of '42, came home to get married, and I didn't get married. It was a blizzard. (Laughs.) Then, I got married. I finally got married in Las -- Las Vegas, Nevada, but my wife's sister had a -- was in a bad accident, and she had to go to California to take care of her down at Los Angeles, so I wrangled around, got a 5-day pass, was going down there intention of getting married.

Q. To Los Angeles, now?

BD. Huh?

Q. To Los Angeles?
BD. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

BD. And I got down there, we went in to the license bureau, and said -- went to filling out the papers, and I -- well, three day waiting period? Shucks. I don't have the time. (Laughs.) So I got over to the guy who's in charge in there, and I said, "Well, if we got our license today, how long would it be before --" he said, "Oh, it'd be six or seven days." I said, "No, I can't do that." And went back over, and I -- oh, I says -- I reach down -- pulled -- told them to throw my paper in the trash can. I says, "We can't get married." She says, "Why?" I says, "Well, I'll be AWL three days." (Laughs.) "And I don't want that to happen." And we walked out of there, went down to a theatre, and went in there, sit down, watching the movie, and sit there a minute. Well, I noticed when we went in there, across the street was a bus terminal. And oh, little bit, I turned around, I said, "Let's go get married." She says, "Well, you said we couldn't do it." I said, "Yeah, we can." And so we go over to the bus terminal and found out there was a bus leaving right quick to Las Vegas, and she calls her aunt, and sister, and tells everybody she was going to Las Vegas and getting married, and oh, they threwed a fit. They wanted to have the wedding there, but we got on that bus, and was out there, and the next morning we was married in the Frontier Hotel on the balcony, in -- March 9th, 1943.
Q. Mm-hmm. And what year was it when you came -- when you were discharged from the service, what year was that?

BD. Yeah.

Q. After the war, when you came home, what year was that?

BD. Who?

Q. When -- when you were discharged from the service, and came back, what year was that? 1945 --

BD. 5.

Q. 5.

BD. 1945.

Q. Okay.

BD. October the -- I don't know what -- 14, 15. I've got my papers yet.

Q. Now, you must have -- did you go to school in Augusta? Is that how you met your wife?

BD. No.

Q. No?

BD. No. (Laughs.) Nah, I don't know.

Q. Well, tell me about your schooling, because you --

BD. Huh?

Q. Tell me about your schooling. You moved around a lot.

BD. Oh, I started school in -- (Laughs.) I always said, my birthday's the second day of September. Well, if it was the on the first Monday that -- I always -- school started first Monday in September, and I hated it because it was on my birthday. (Laughs.) Anyway, I
went -- the first year I was at school, me and two other students, two girls, took first and second grade. We took two grades in one year.

Q. Where?
BD. Huh?
Q. What school?
BD. Gordon. [Butler County, KS]
Q. Okay.
BD. And the funny thing that -- the teachers' names were Gordon, the two Gordon sisters. It was a two-room schoolhouse. The first year that it opened -- and -- (Laughs.)
Q. You must have been a good -- you must have been smart.
BD. Well, I was interested.
Q. Uh-huh.
BD. But by the time I got the -- I was supposed to have -- graduated, which was a year ahead of time, and I (laughs) passed the county exam. See, you had to take a county exam.
Q. Hmm.
BD. But that old teacher flunked me out.
Q. Why?
BD. (Laughs.) Because my daily work wasn't up to standard or something. I never did know exactly what the deal was, but -- well, coming around, it was the next year then, and I told my dad. "Dad" I says, "The only reason she flunked me, I'm the only big boy in school." And
she had the -- the eighth graders, boys, take care of the furnace room. We had a coal furnace, and we had to go down there, and carry out the ashes, and stoke the furnace. (Laughs.) I said, "The only reason she kept me here is so I'd have to work on that furnace." He said, "Well, we'll just send you down to -- you can go down, and stay with Grandma in Douglass, and go to school in Douglass."

Q. So that would have been after eighth -- your -- that would have been ninth grade you were in Douglass?

BD. Yeah, well, it was -- I would had have had to take eighth grade over, eighth and ninth grade, see, which --

Q. Oh.

BD. See, I went clear through school, and have never had a diploma of any kind. (Laughs.) But little discussion, when I went into the service, I thought -- I had three times the amount of credits for graduation. But I liked two: English composition and, I don't -- I don't know, government, I believe it was. I flunked out. That's why I went in the service.

Q. Because you said you went in before the war started.

BD. Yeah, in December, 1940.

Q. So you never went to school in Augusta at all?

BD. No.

Q. No?

BD. Not before that. Well, I started in -- I -- after I spent two years in Douglass, and I took the eighth and ninth grade --
Q. Mm-hmm.

BD. -- and then I come back, and I -- I got a driver's license, and I was hauling kids. Dad bought an old Chevy, and I hauled kids from Gordon to Augusta High School, I don't know, three or four years.

Q. Because Gordon didn't have a high school?

BD. No, eighth grade.

Q. Okay. So you hauled the kids, did you also go to school?

BD. Huh?

Q. Did you also go to school after you hauled them? You stayed and went to school?

BD. Yeah, I went and stayed, but once in a while I'd get disgusted -- and I'd go out and work for a farmer all summer, and make my own money, but when school started, if I went -- was at home -- (Laughs.)

Q. So -- so how -- can you remember how many years you went to -- to Augusta High School, or what year you would have graduated?

BD. Uh, I couldn't tell you for sure. Let's see. I went '36, '37, '38, and '39, and part of '40. I was about six different years, and I went to summer school once. Year got all -- some -- if I didn't like a subject, I wouldn't do it. (Laughs.) And I'm still that way. If I don't like it, I don't do it.

Q. Now, I'm trying to remember when we talked on the phone, you -- you -- we talked a little bit about the years -- what year your -- whether you remembered Madelyn Payne from school, and --

BD. No, I -- I said I knew of her.
Q. Of her.
BD. Yes. I knew of them, and they -- but I had no -- see, I laugh. You know, up here at Cooper Drugstore, well, the, the Kessners and Kappelmanns -- me and my brother had this old Chevy car that Dad had bought from a guy who had hauled kids to school before, and we charged 50 cents a week to haul them to school and back.

Q. Would -- you said you knew of her. Would she have been younger or --
BD. Well, yeah. She's --

Q. She would have been younger or older than you, or ahead of you at school or behind?
BD. I don't remember. Let's see. I tell you -- oh, I can't think of her name. Oh, Nelva Wentz.

Q. Mm-hmm.
BD. She might know.

Q. Mm-hmm. Was -- now, were -- was Nelva your --
BD. They were in -- yeah, they were in the class of '40.

Q. Okay.
BD. '41?

Q. So you were the same -- you were about the same time finishing, only when you finished you went straight into the military -- the National Guard.

BD. I -- I tell you, I think -- I laugh about it yet today. The -- when they published their -- I don't remember, it was '35 -- '30 -- somewhere along there, but I was going down there.
Well, I always drew. I always made sketches, and drawing things, and I think I still got one of them, but the bulldog on that -- when -- I drew it.

Q. Oh, on the yearbook?

BD. Huh?

Q. On the yearbook?

BD. Yeah, on the Douglass senior -- oh, that's for their prom or something. It was --

Q. Oh, okay.

BD. I've got -- I've got one. And I'll tell you something else. I made Christmas cards. Back when my folks was running the grocery store, linoleum cuts, you know --

BD. Mm-hmm.

Q. -- and Mom would take that linoleum cut, and bring them up here to The Gazette office, buy a stack of penny postcards, and have them printed. I've got some of them.

Q. So that was your family's Christmas cards? You still have any?

BD. I -- and you've seen that picture of the museum?

Q. Mm-hmm.

BD. You know what it's off of? It's off of Sandy Evan's drawing. That --

Q. I remember her.

BD. Huh?

Q. I said I remember her. She had -- she had a studio --

BD. She was an artist, and a good one.
Q. Uh-huh.

BD. I always laughed about it. She just opened her first gallery, and she'd print -- made this ink drawing, you know, of the museum, and had a bunch of them, and I got ahold of one of them, so I took -- put it on a piece of mahogany and cut it, and then I went down to her shop, and I took it in and showed it to her, and I said, "I hope you don't sue me for -- for copyright." (Laughs.) And she says, "Well, I didn't know you'd get that much detail in a wood carving." And I said, "Why --" I said, "There's one thing that ain't in there that was in your picture." She hadn't even missed it. Was a -- on the drawing was a basket on there where this cat -- the cat's there, but the basket one I was carving, it had chipped out. I said, "You have a little problems once in a while."

Q. (Laughs.) Have to go with the grain of the wood.

BD. And oh, I've carved a lot of animals. I'll never forget one time, ol' Don Williamson and Doc, we'd -- a bunch of us would get together, and they was talking about their wood carvings and they said, "What have you been doing lately?" "Oh, I've been burning hair." (Laughs.) They looked at me. "Well, that stinks, don't it?" I says, "Yeah, smells like pine." (Laughs.) I had burned the hair on the -- a bear.

Q. Oh. (Laughs.)

BD. I carved a bear out, and burning hair. It's marvelous how you can take a -- one of them little wood burning irons.
Q. Uh-huh.

BD. And I always laugh. Don and them, they went over to Wichita to the college and took a course on wood burning technique. Well, they -- they had to get some special irons. Well, one -- well, we was all working together one day, says, "Well, you don't have no special irons." I said, "Yeah, every one of mine's special. They're -- they're not a $1.98 soldering irons, they're the cheapest I can buy." And I said, "I take the tip of them and make one that fits for what I'm going -- I take a little piece of copper tubing, make it shaped like the leaf I want, or -- well, one, I shape it, put it on there, and then I just --" (Laughs.)

Q. Create your own.

BD. I'd -- I've ground rocks. I've prospected.

Q. Done lots of things.

BD. I just -- there's more gold out there than they've ever found.

Q. But you've always come back to Augusta?

BD. There's gold -- there's -- down there at Mulvane, that sandpit that they -- down there where we used to pump water out of there in the droughts in the 50s, there's gold in that. (Laughs.) It may be a small amount, but rigged up a deal, went down there and tried it out, but my gosh, you'd have to move 10 ton of it to get enough to pay.

Q. Ah. (Laughs.) Not enough to get rich from it.
BD. No. Well, when you stop and think where it came from, it's pretty fine. Roll down that Arkansas River all the way from the Rocky Mountains. (Laughs.)

Q. So why do you suppose other people have grown up and left small towns? What keeps you here? Why did you stay in Augusta? Why do you think some other people left?

BD. Well, Augusta has problems. Every time we get any industries, why, a lot of the ordinances -- I don't understand them, but they are just -- I don't know. They --

Q. So it's jobs?

BD. Jobs is one thing. About only -- see we -- we get a good industry going here, the first thing some bigger outfit turns around, buys them out, moves them out. That's what happened to Loadcraft Trailer. That's what happened to several other deals. The last refining unit we had here was -- it just -- too many -- too many ordinances.

Q. But you stay. Why do you -- why did you stay, you think?

BD. Well, didn't have anywhere else to go.

Q. Well, you worked on -- I haven't asked you yet about working on the railroad, because you worked on the railroad, for what, 36 years; is that right?

BD. Yes.

Q. Tell -- tell us a little about that.

BD. Well, I -- I told you I come home in '45, but dad-in-law thought I was going to be a farmer with him, and I didn't want no part of farming.
I'd worked for farmers before, and I knew they was seven days a week, daylight to dark, so I wanted to get a degree in art, and I filled out the papers, got everything ready to go, got a job with McCormick Armstrong, advertising agency. The day I showed up to go to work the guy that had the job before come home from service. They had to give it back to him, so I was out of a job yet.

Q. And that was going to be how you paid for school too?

BD. Yeah, I was going to go to Wichita U in art and learn a little more on commercial art. Anyway, I -- well, I was getting desperate, and I seen a place that was hiring on the railroad, so I went down there, and I hired out. Went to work January 2nd, 1946. Didn't start on the first day -- that was a holiday. My first day of work was a holiday. (Laughs.)

Q. (Laughs.)

BD. Anyway, I worked on the sections here in Augusta, and then Douglass, in Winfield, in Mulvane, but I -- I worked two, and then in '47 I went to working as a machine operator, running the track machinery, and I ran nearly every kind of a piece of track machinery they ever had.

Q. So what kinds of machinery would that be in? What would they do?

BD. Well, there's so many different ones. You got wrenchers, you got jacks, you got cranes, and motor cars, and all kinds of equipment. Tampers, you see --

Q. So you operated the machinery itself?
BD. Yeah. The operator's the one that pushes the buttons.

Q. (Laughs.)

BD. That's what they amount to today. I got -- I got so tickled here, oh, a year or two ago. They brought in a new machine, a Plasser, and I'd worked on one of them, oh, back 10-15 years before. And this Plasser, it was a new automated tamper, everything, and it was built by a German company in Canada and I -- I'd run a lot of jacks, and electric, and Fairmont, and different company machines, but that Plasser -- that was one of the sorriest ones, and I wouldn't run it. Well, when they brought that one in, I said, "Well, I hope they finally got all the bugs out of this machine." He says, "Why?" I says, "Well, I told them it was probably 10 years ago, before, I'd worked on one." I said, "It was broke down more than it would run."

(Laughs.)

Q. (Laughs.)

BD. I said -- anyway, the -- this operator, "I don't know, Bill." he says. I broke him in as an operator years before, and he says, "Well, you never had a machine like this. It's air conditioned, temperature control." And I started laughing at him. He says, "Well, what's so funny about that?" I said, "They didn't -- the company didn't put that in there for you." He said, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "They put it in there for the doggone computer. It has to be taken care of or it'll quit." (Laughs.) And he sat there a minute and said, "I never even thought of that." (Laughs.) I said you
notice them other machines that don't have a computer in them don't have this kind of a cabin. It's all computer operated.

Q. Yeah.

BD. Is -- in there you can push what elevation, how many inches you want, and how long -- how many tamps.

Q. So you must have operated some of that computerized equipment before you retired?

BD. Huh?

Q. You must have operated some of that computerized equipment.

BD. Oh, yes. One of the most dangerous ones I operated was pulling that long rail, 1,400 feet long, 136 pound rail, and that's 136 pounds every three feet, see, off of a train load, a rail -- hook into it, pull it through these deals and down, fasten it down on the ground, then the engine gets behind and pushes the cars out from under it. (Laughs.) 1,400 feet, that's a quarter of a mile of rail.

Q. Wow, that's a lot. So before you did this, you said you started out working on the sections. What was that? What was that? What kind of work was that when you said you worked on sections? Are you talking laying track?

BD. Well -- well -- well, the track maintenance.

Q. Mm-hmm.

BD. The maintenance way is a department of the railroad. It's a -- they were divided in sections. About it -- and the sections usually had a four to five men on a foreman, and sometimes there was more, depended
on how long their -- how many miles the -- the section was. And they maintained the track, like, from Augusta to Douglass. The -- the Gordon section was there in Gordon. They took care of it -- Augusta -- to it from Augusta. Well, then they had -- during the war, they moved the headquarter from Gordon, up here, to Augusta and ran clear to Winfield. Well, then they got to cutting off section after section, and expanded, because we was getting machines to do the work. They had -- when I first went to work, you had a pick, a shovel, and a fork, bars, and wrenches, but by the time I quit, they didn't even use them anymore. It was all power tools off a big truck.

Q. So how many of those railroad lines still run today? Are they -- are they all still in operation?

BD. Oh, yeah. Well, a lot of the branch lines are not in operation, like the one from, oh, McPherson out to, oh, Marion. I don't think that line's in there, and there's a lot of them lines like that one. I -- I heard one the other day that I didn't realize they still had it, part of it, and that's up there by Abilene, and they -- they still run a -- an excursion locomotive over it.

Q. Oh, for tourists?

BD. Uh, there's one -- one big deal that I got in on while I was railroading, and I've always laughed about it, because the railroad company, uh, brought ice and iron into Abilene, and for over a month before that, they took two or three of us extra gangs that we had
doing branch line work, and put us in Abilene cleaning the place up, and fixing the track, and everything, set ups for the cars, you know, the presidential train, and all that election -- all that election stuff. Okay. We put up lights, and raked the yard down with white gravel, everything. Well, the week that they was having that, I called into the office. I said, "Well, I'm not running any machine out here." And I said, "How about me taking my two weeks' vacation now? You won't have to have anybody relieve me." Boy that suited the clerk right quick. She goes, "Well, that'd be just fine." Says, "You go ahead and take your vacation." So when they had the big day up there, when Ike was -- I was on vacation. When I come back, these other operators said, "Well, how'd you get out of it?" I said, "Well, I took my vacation." "Why'd you do that?" (Laughs.) And I says, "Because I didn't want to have to dump all that potties under the cars." (Laughs.) And them guys said, "How did you know we was going to?" I said, "I knew just as well as could be it wasn't -- it wasn't going to be any laborers. They'd already cut them back. It wasn't going to be nothing but the machine operators, which they had to pay a bunch of their salary anyway." I said, "We was going to be stuck with nothing but them cans under all them coaches." (Laughs.)

Q. You were thinking ahead.

BD. And so I -- yeah, I was thinking ahead and I -- oh, my ol' buddy -- ol' Dick Mayo says, "Well, why didn't you tell me?" (Laughs.) The day was busy.
Q. So, well, why do you think the railroad has meant to Augusta? Is it a part of the -- an important part of the --

BD. Well, that's the funny thing about it. The railroads built this country, but they got a lot for it. A lot of people never realized that lots of them right-of-ways that we went through on land condemnation, or something like that, they got in some -- some of the territory, they got 20 miles each side of the track up on the branch lines, up there where -- in the Mennonite area, around McPherson and Lindsborg, and off up in there -- all them areas. All them farmers that was in there, that -- a lot of that was railroad land: Rock Island's, and Union Pacific's, Santa Fe's. They brought people from overseas over here to homestead on this.

Q. So they made money by --

BD. See, some places it was from the center of the track for a mile, and then other places it was 10. Out in the panhandle of Oklahoma, it was out there about 20 miles on each side of the track.

Q. How about -- how about around here?

BD. Well, this one place here I was telling you about, out there at Soldier's --

Q. Mm-hmm.

BD. The Soldier Post Office --

Q. Where you were born?

BD. Yeah. Okay. They had a regular war over that. Well, it wasn't a few years later, they went to drilling oil wells out across that
country. And that was in -- oh, in the 50s. Late 40s and 50s -- and one day we was riding on a motor cart, and ol' foreman says, "Well, looky there. They're drilling that well right against the right-of-way fence." Says, "We better measure that." And I started laughing at him, and then he says, "Well, what's the matter?" I said, "It ain't going to do you any good." And he says, "Why?" I says, "Ain't nobody got mineral rights here." We was on a land condemnation, and then -- and then the one -- the landowner or nobody, they had no mineral rights. They took the right-of-way through there -- through that cut and stuff, and --

Q. So when you say land condemned nation --

BD. Mm-hmm.

Q. I'm not --

BD. It was big stock yards all over out there. It was time and time again. I'll never forget, in the 30s, they'd bring in train loads of cattle that would drive here from -- the big ranchers would buy dollar or so heads of cattle in Texas, and New Mexico, Arizona, and they'd ship them up here, unload them, and drive them out to pasture. I's always laughed about one time, they unloaded a bunch there in Gordon, and there was nothing but sandburs growing, two kinds: The Mexican type, settin' low, and the grassy. That's about all there was growing. It was so dry. They unloaded them cattle, and they eat sandburs and all. They had their nose plugged full of thorns, and they was eating
it. They was hungry. And they stripped the highway out of the old cut road clear into Latham and off over in the hills.

Q. Mm-hmm.

BD. There goes another train by.

Q. I was going to say, I hear one right now. You can feel it, too.

BD. I like to see them trains going by. (Laughs.)

Q. Makes you think of -- just a good comforting sound?

BD. Huh?

Q. Why do you like to hear the trains go by? Why?

BD. Why? They're still paying my -- sending me my paycheck!

Q. Ah. (Laughs.)

BD. You don't know why? I -- I don't have no social security. All I've got's railroad retirement.

Q. Oh, yeah?

BD. Yeah. (Laughs.)

Q. Well, we about worn you out?

BD. Yeah. I've set here about as long as I can set in one place.

Q. Well, it was very --

BD. I've been sitting down here about a lot of the stuff I knew about.

Q. Yeah. Is there anything we should ask you about that we shouldn't -- that we didn't?

BD. Oh, I don't know. My wife says I get to telling about tall tales and I don't know when to shut up.

Q. And she's heard them all.
BD. I -- I get so tickled with her. I walk off and leave my glasses laying somewhere, or my cane's hanging in the other room, or something, and I'm griping about it. "Well, don't blame me. It's not my fault." (Laughs.) I -- I never said it was her fault. (Laughs.) She blames herself for everything. I get so disgusted.

Q. Well, we'll -- nothing else you wanted to ask, Steve? We'll -- we'll wrap it up and let you get on with your day, but we sure thank you for your time.

BD. I've got -- well, my time, I'd probably be sitting, dozing, in the easy chair at home.

Q. Well, this was more fun than that.

BD. She --

Q. Did you carve your cane?

BD. What?

Q. I see your cane is carved. Did you do that?

BD. It's about to wear out. One time it had silver rings all up and down it, but they don't stay together too good. Yeah, I've got -- I got an idea for a cane. I'm going -- I'm going make one out of either stainless steel or aluminum.

Q. Mm-hmm.

[END]
Q. If you have any -- have any nicknames -- had any nicknames, that doesn’t -- that’s not as crucial. Uh, and I’ll say for the recording that we are at Nina Parry’s home in Augusta on October 1st, 2012. And so, your names, and then your birth date, and age, if you don’t mind doing that. So --

NINA PARRY: Go ahead.

NELVA WENTZ: Okay. I’m Nelva Seaburn Wentz. I was born on February the 24th, 1923 in Sycamore, Oklahoma, but now it's called Grove because the lake covers it, and I am 89 years old. I’m going to be 90 in February, so - I, I lived in Augusta since I was about
two months old, they tell me, and I have married to Donald Wentz. I have Trudy Jacobson and David Wentz. And what else do you want?

Q. What brought your family to Augusta in the first place? You said you moved here when you were two months old.

NELVA WENTZ: Well, I think -- I think it was to find a job. And, uh, my daddy helped to lay all these brick that used to go to -- the one that went to Wichita and the downtown, in 1924, I think, and then he went to work for Henry Bennett Pipeline -- Pipe Company. And he passed away in January of '29 and my mother continued to live here. And I had a brother, and two sisters. And, I don't know. I went to high school... all the way through school here with Nina.

NINA PARRY: It's true.

Q. We'll let Nina, let Nina do her thing, and then I kind of have things divided up by topic, a timeline through the years, and so, you know, we might come back to some of the things that you touched on here.

NELVA WENTZ: Okay.

NINA PARRY: My name is Nina June Swan Parry. I never had a nickname because I was already three little short words. But anyway, I was born June the 23rd, 1923. I was born here, and I've always lived here, so kind of boring in a way, but we liked it. So
anyway, my -- the reason we're here is because my dad was a ball player, and they needed a catcher down at the White Eagle. White Eagle always had a baseball team. That was quite important in those days. This was the olden days. And, ah, anyway, they ask him to come to work for them so that he would be a catcher for their ball team, and he and Mother had, had not been married too long, and they moved here for that reason. I'll be 89 -- no. I am 89. (Laughs.) I was 89 in June. I can't think of anything else. I was an only child, which was not too good.

NELVA WENTZ: No.

NINA PARRY: But anyway --

Q. Great.

NINA PARRY: Why?

Q. No, I said, "Great." Thank you. Do we leave anything out there--? [No.] Ok.

NINA PARRY: Oh.

Q. So the early years -- what are some of your earliest memories? You've already talked about where -- that you lived in Augusta, but where -- you know, what, what, what neighborhood did you live in, or I know some the people we've interviewed lived outside of town and then moved into town, uh, so - and, and anything leading up to -- anything in your childhood leading up
to high school that you want to talk about would be fair game. So who wants to go first?

NELVA WENTZ: Well, let's see.

Q. You mentioned 1929, the dust bowl, your father dying. Maybe that's a good place to pick up the thread and talk about that a little.

NELVA WENTZ: Okay. We lived on uh, Walnut Street just off of 7th, and then my mother moved to 6th and Walnut, and we only lived a block from uptown, the main street, and the Phillips Pantry grocery store, was right behind the alley -- across the alley. And we didn't have a car, so it was real easy to walk uptown. And we would always go to the P&T Bakery, and we'd get a nickel, and it took a long time to spend that nickel for penny candy. And then we lived close to the library, and Augusta had a nine o'clock curfew, and they'd blow the whistle. It was on top of the police station, and they'd blow that whistle at nine o'clock, and everybody had to be, go home at that time. And behind there, right in the center of the block, east of the Main Street, they had a park. It had a merry-go-round and swings, and we spent hours and hours swinging, clear to the treetops. And then we moved from there in my junior -- 7th grade. We lived on Gregg Street, and I'd walk to school with Faye Jones, and Evelyn Stennett, and, and later, we'd walk up the street
with Obama's grandma, which we didn't know about that time he was going to be President, but she was really nice, Madelyn -- would -- she'd walk up the street. She'd go to the left, and I'd go to the right, but that's as much as I was with her, really, because I wasn't in her class. But then -- that's about all I can remember. I lived on Broadway, and I walked to school with Hazel Grady, that was somebody in our class. And my senior year, they let us work for our grade, and we'd opened a new McCaslin's store, so I worked there, and kind of got used to the public. I was always kind of shy, so I kind of got used to meeting the public.

Q. What kind of store was McCaslin's?

NELVA WENTZ: Well, I think they called it a dime store then, I believe, wasn't it?

NINA PARRY: Who's store?

NELVA WENTZ: McCaslin's.

NINA PARRY: Yes, that was a dime store.

NELVA WENTZ: Like a dime store. And I think they put me back in hardware, just -- but I did get a grade for it, and that was about -- that led up to my senior year. And I remember I cried because I graduated and didn't -- I couldn't go to school anymore because I knew I couldn't go to college, and that's about all that led up to that.
Q. Well, going back to -- you -- 1929 and when your mom was the sole bread winner for your family, how did she -- how did you survive? What did she have to do to keep you guys --?

NELVA WENTZ: I had a brother, seven, I was five, and Lucille was three, and my other sister was fifteen months old. And I don't think women worked like they do now, and so she would, uh, take in laundry, no washing machine. And I can remember she had a -- some kind of a stick, or pole, or something, and she'd pound them to death, I guess. But anyway, she took in laundry and she'd do house cleaning, but she'd only clean for people that would let us come with her because she kept real good track of us. She didn't let us go stay all night anywhere. I asked her, I said, "Why didn't you let us go stay all night with our cousin?" She said, "Well, if you got sick, I couldn't take you to the doctor." So we had real strict orders. She wasn't -- she was real good about it, but when she told us we had to do something, we knew to do it. I mean, she never had any trouble with us because we knew when Mom told us to do something, that's what we were supposed to do. And we had to be home at a certain time. We'd always be home, not because we was going to get beat or anything, but just because we -- I guess, we wanted to do what she wanted us to do.
Q. Do you think you were aware of how hard it was for her at the time?

NELVA WENTZ: I think so. I was the oldest girl, and I can remember doing everything. I'll do things now different than other people, and I said, "Well, I didn't have anybody tell me how to do it, so I did it my way."

Q. Can you think of any examples?

NELVA WENTZ: Well, my sister's been here, and we were making some sausage gravy, and I put my flour on my sausage because I think it needs to cook too, and she told me she puts hers over to the side like our mother did, and then make the gravy. But I can see since she's been visiting that we both do everything differently.

Q. Huh.

NELVA WENTZ: And that's okay. But -- I don't know, being the oldest girl, I think I tried to be mother maybe. I don't know. But we got along good. Of course, we didn't have a lot of things other children had, but -- we walked everywhere. We didn't have a car, and I think that was good for us. And I don't know. We didn't know we didn't have things other people had. We didn't eat junk food like they do now because my mother couldn't buy it.

Q. And a lot of it probably didn't exist. (Laughs.)
NELVA WENTZ: No, we never were sick. We didn't, didn't go to the doctor. We didn't have anything wrong with us.

Q. Did she make your clothes, too, your mom?

NELVA WENTZ: No. I think as soon as I took Mrs. Chaffin was our teacher in sixth grade, and I remember we had learned to embroidery, and I think that soon as I learned how to sew, I think I did a lot of sewing, making dresses especially, but I suppose my mother made enough money to, to buy. Course, back then, even in high school, you could -- down at Calvert’s you could buy a pair of shoes for $2.98, brown corduroy skirt for $2.98. So I think that -- I think that -- is -- well, money went further. I don't know if you're ready to go on to when we got married, but you could buy a lot in a box for $5 of groceries. You couldn't do that now, but you could then. But we didn't know we were poor. We didn't know we didn't have things other kids had.

Q. How about you, Nina? How about your early years?

NINA PARRY: Well, I was born down on Walnut, and then by the time I can remember, we lived on Broadway -- 400 block of Broadway. And I mean, it was full of kids, and two of -- two of -- the girls that were just up from me have been friends of mine all these years. And right now, they both live in California, and we still communicate all the time. But, uh, anyway, life wasn't
easy at our house either. Uh, it was while my dad was here in
town and working, and then we did go to Port Arthur, Texas for a
while. He worked for Badger Company. He had quit down here
because they were laying off, and he had the opportunity to go
with Badger Company so he did. And then another time we went to
Gary, Indiana and spent time. I had my fifth birthday while we
were there. I really thought my folks forgot it because they
didn't say anything all day, and then at -- that night, they
surprised me with a cake (laughs) after Daddy got back home.
But anyway, my father was hurt and, uh -- very badly when I was
in the second grade, so we had to go down to Austin, Texas.
They didn't think he would live at the time, but he did get
better.

Q. What happened to him?

NINA PARRY: And he stayed with his -- my mother and dad, by then,
were separated, and he stayed with his sister until he could
walk again. And then he went to work for Loomis Company, which
is the same kind of -- they built units and, uh, uh -- like
Mobil Oil Company down here. They built units like the Houdry,
and the Alky units. Anyway, but those were lean years in
between, and mother worked for $5 a week, and that was -- I'm
not too sure that she didn't work at McCaslin's, but she worked
at a dime store -- a, a little store.
Q. And that was after your parents were separated?

NINA PARRY: After they were separated and dad was hurt, yes. But anyway, they were pretty, pretty poor years. I think everybody had a poor year. Almost everybody, anyway, had, had a poor year. If they lived on a farm, it was great. I got to go to the farm in the summer and at Christmas time. Uh, my grandmothers had passed away, and my grandfathers were uh, not -- I had one grandfather living in that -- when I was born, and I didn't see much of him, so I had a step-grandfather who stayed a lot with the family around here. But anyway, I had grandaunts, so -- and they were, they were that -- so anyway, then by the time we got to high school, I was still terrified of school, and the teachers, and (laughs) everything. And --

Q. Do you know why? Do you remember why you were afraid?

NINA PARRY: Well, I think I got in trouble, not because I did something, but because the boy that was sitting in front of me did it, and then I got blamed in the third grade, and I had to stand in front of the class. And I had just come back from Austin, Texas then, and I tell you, it just killed me (laughs). I was so terribly embarrassed. It was awful. And from then, on it was -- (laughs). And then came Meg River, and oh, she was a wonderful teacher. That was in junior high that we had her. She was great to all of us. She was very strict, but very good.
Q. So did she change your attitude about school?

NINA PARRY: Oh, I liked school. It wasn't that I didn't like school, I was just scared to death, and if they called on me, I --

NELVA WENTZ: You weren't very big either.

Q. Well, did she bring you out of your shell?

NINA PARRY: Ah, a little bit, but I came more out when I was in high school with Mr. Grimes. Uh, he was our history teacher. He was real good with students, I think. And then Mr. Gustafson, who became our principal, uh, when we were seniors, and he was just wonderful. I worked at the -- ah, at the draft board for a quarter an hour during one hour. I got credit for working down there when I was a senior. That was good.

Q. Now, when did the outbreak of World War II occur in your high school? Was it during high school or -- I'm trying to think -- was it after high school?

NINA PARRY: No, I was away at, at s... -- I was, yeah, I was away at school, at, uh -- I went to (inaudible) Christian College in Missouri, and that happened on Sunday morning, and they called us into the chapel to tell us what had happened, that we had been attacked, and oh, it was terrible. And they thought that a lot might take their children -- their girls, it was a girls'
school -- take their girls home from school because nobody knew what was going to happen. It was terribly frightening, so -- most actually stayed there, most of the girls. Very few of them did go home. I think the first thing was the fear of what was going to happen, and then everybody settled a little more.

Q. Do you remember what you were afraid to and what you were afraid of? Were you afraid of invasion, or?

NINA PARRY: Yes. I think they were afraid of invasion. They were afraid that since they had attacked over there, would they attack here? And of course, there were girls from all over Texas. You know, they were vulnerable. They were on the coastline, and, uh, there were girls from all over, and they were far away from school, a lot of them, so the parents were, were very uneasy for quite a little while. And like I say, I think things settled down after the first terrible shock that we had, but then after that, we came home. I think we all got jobs some place. I went to work at Mobil.

NELVA WENTZ: I got married.

NINA PARRY: She got married (laughs).

NELVA WENTZ: When I graduated, I thought, "Oh, dear, what am I going to do? I can't just keep working at this job." And it just so happened that I was going to church that evening, Christian Endeavor, and I went in the skating rink, I wasn't skating, but
Donald came in. I think his cousin was with him, and wanted me to go to the movie theatre in El Dorado. And I said, "Well, my mother doesn't let me go out of town." He says, "How do you know she won't let you go?" I said, "Well, because she's never let me go." Well, you'd have to know Donald, don't you? Uh, he says, "Well, let's go ask her." So we went and asked her, and she let me go, so I says, "Well, Mom, how come you let me go?" She said, "Well, when I was 18, and a boy with pretty brown eyes -- I would have gone to the movie with him." So she let me go. Well, anyway, we went -- that was in the summer. We got married in January, and Donald got his call to go to the service in July, and I thought the world had come to an end. We were at his parents' café in Leon -- he was born and raised in Leon, and his cousin came up to the car window, and he said, "Oh, Pearl Harbor's bombed." Everybody was so excited they didn't know what they were doing. But anyway, we were married eight months, and he had to leave then to go into the service, and he was with Kit Bryan and Jim Warren, and they all left on the same bus. So through the war, Erma Bryan and Catherine -- we all lived together in the service, and we always -- we were in the army just the same as they were, and we pooled all of our money together to pay for the groceries and the rent. And then, we all had to come home when they sailed for overseas. And they
went in on Omaha Beach, all three of them. And Trudy was born -- he left the 6th of August, and Trudy was born the 20th of August, so he was, she was 11 months old when he came home. But he had been working at Saucony-Vacuum, and then it's Mobil now, but he went right back to work just as if he'd never been to war. He could have been off a month, but he went back in two weeks, and he was so happy to be home, and see Trudy, and his baby. He just fit right in. But now, I think if he had to go back like they do now, I don't think he would have gone -- whatever the alternative would have been, but he went with Patton's Third Army clear across Europe, and came back on the same ship he went over on. We were married 69 years, and I don't know what else to tell you. I know when Trudy was little, we were in the army, we could buy milk for 14 cents a quart, and I mean, we had to make our money stretch. We got married, there was -- everything was downtown, the doctors' offices, all apartments. I think the edge of town was Cowley Road.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh.

NELVA WENTZ: It was just a mud street. But we got an apartment at 605 State. That was the Plains Hotel, and everybody on that floor worked at Saucony-Vacuum. And we paid our rent, and bought $5 worth of groceries in a great big box, and we had $6.50 left until he got another paycheck every two weeks.
Q. And it was enough?

NELVA WENTZ: Yes, because you could buy a lot for 14 cents. Probably -- milk was probably less than 14 cents then, but in the war, it was still 14 cents. But we got by. We were happy, married 69 years.

Q. Did he ever talk about his war experiences?

NELVA WENTZ: Yes, he did. He -- the children from high school would come interview him and that's when I learned a lot about it. And we have videos of it, and the, the mothers would come and take a video of -- it was for the class. And then later, the soldiers got older and retired. Well, they started going to reunions, and they told a lot at reunions. I could write a book. Well, his doctor friend did write a book. He was a little 18-year-old sent from military school. And he'd never had training. Donald had two years of training, and they were in the foxhole. And we call him Junior because his name's the same as my husband's name. He said he wanted out. He says, "Where you going?" He didn't know. He said, "Are you getting shot at here?" "No." He said, "Well, I believe I'd stay here if I was you." But he said so many times Donald saved his life because he didn't know what to do and Donald did. His parents came to visit. They lived in Omaha, Nebraska, no -- Norfolk, Nebraska. And he was a good friend, lived next door to Johnny
Carson, and I guess the two of them was quite a pair. So anyway, his parents came to visit. Said they wanted to see this person that had saved his life so many times. And they are friends today yet. He wrote back in Donald's funeral memorial and said that he was the best friend he ever had. He was a doctor and --

Q. What a tribute.

NELVA WENTZ: For real -- full of vinegar, just like Donald (laughs). But I guess they were real true friends.

Q. So they stayed in touch all through the years --

NELVA WENTZ: Yes.

Q. -- even though they were, I guess, at adjoining states, but still.

NELVA WENTZ: Yes, they still -- up until the last reunion they went to, and our Trudy and David got to meet him. He wrote a book.

Q. And I think you were telling me about the book on the phone. Do you know -- do you have a copy of his book?

NELVA WENTZ: No, I didn't think to bring it.

Q. You have one; you just don't have it with you?

NELVA WENTZ: It's at home, and it's really something everybody ought to read. I mean, it's just like the two boys. His name's Donald Arthur. We call him Junior, but it's just like it happened every day. He was a doctor, and really intelligent.
Donald said he could read something, and remember it, even tell you what page it's on. But he was ornery as a doctor. He lived in Longview, Washington, and Donald was best man at his wedding. But there's something about the army that changed, I think, everybody, don't you?

NINA PARRY: Oh, it did.

Q. In what way?

NELVA WENTZ: It made you appreciate everything. A good friend was maybe closer than a relative sometime. I think life meant a lot more to people. I don't think material things were as important. If you were poor, I don't think -- you didn't know it. You just did it best you could. But I think there was something about the war that changed that whole generation.

Q. Now, are you speaking of the men, or the men and the women in that generation?

NELVA WENTZ: I think everybody in general, because I'd go to the army reunions with him, and we got to be just like one big family. They're almost all gone now, but one or two widows, but we were just like relatives.

Q. Did you go back to Normandy?

NELVA WENTZ: I didn't go, but this doctor friend of Donald's goes every year. He's still with us. He and one other man is, in Donald's company, is still here, but he goes back every year.
And they were called the Iron Men of Metz. And they go to Mets, France, and the Americans are really honored over there, and they have memorials in Metz. And Donald's company, and this doctor friend were the first ones in the hotel, and Metz had never been taken before. But we have pictures of him with some of the leaders of the Germans they've captured. I said, "Donald, where were you?" He said, "Standing beside the photographer." But anyway, it was quite an experience. It made our life different. We wondered sometimes what would we’d done if there hadn’t been a war. He would have kept working, but I think everything means more to you after you've been through that. It's just an experience. We're just lucky he came back. I'm sure a lot of mothers were, too. But I don't know -- how did the war? It ended while Donald was in Germany, and then they sent him home on a 30-day leave, and they had 30 days, and then they were sent back to Camp Polk, and you'd get so many points then you get discharged. And the saddest thing that happened was the men that didn't get -- have enough points to get discharged left, and went to California, and shipped out to Japan. The war hadn't ended over there yet, and those men never -- their ship was sunk because the Japanese didn't know the war was over. And I thought that was really bad after they'd fought
across Europe, and then were sending them to Japan, and they didn't make it. That was the sad part.

Q. So -- and this was the men that were in the same --

NELVA WENTZ: The same outfit, and fought all the way across the Germans, all the way across Europe.

Q. How sad.

NELVA WENTZ: It was terrible. I just feel like we were lucky to -- he got extra points because we had Trudy. That was the reason he got to come back. The one that -- his doctor friend had to go to California at the time. They lowered the points that time and he didn't have to go, or he would have been on that ship.

Q. Feels like a brush with death, I bet.

NELVA WENTZ: I bet that's terrible to have to fight through a war, foot soldiers, and then end up having -- I don't know what the parents did, or the wives. It was terrible. Anyways, that's -- we just came back home and stayed here and lived here the rest of the time.

Q. So, uh, you were -- we left you, uh, Nina, at that school at the beginning of the war?

NINA PARRY: Mm-hmm.

Q. And then you came back home. Did you finish that year out?

NINA PARRY: I finished the year.

Q. Uh-huh. And that would have been your first year of college?
NINA PARRY: My first year, uh-huh. And during the summer, I worked for, uh -- we called him Judge Cox. It was -- Ardie Cox was a lawyer, and I worked for him. And there was an opening down at Mobil, and which, like she says, it started out White Eagle, as you all know, and then became Saucony-Vacuum, but, uh, it's now Mobil. Anyway, there was an opening, and he told me to go down and, and see about a job. Anyway, I really didn't want to very badly, but he said, "Now, you can't do better than that. You go down there." So I went, and I was terrified, of course, just like with my teachers, and I got the job. And, uh, after I got over part of my fright, I loved it. I loved it and I should have stayed, but I didn't. But anyway, then, uh, my mother started a store in 1935. She had worked at, uh, at Martin Brothers Motor Company, and they had put, uh, refrigerators and so forth in there, and she was the sales person for those things, and they allowed her to go out on her own in 1935, and, and, uh, she started the store, and then, uh, things got so bad they couldn't have any -- I'm going to say white goods to sell, because they didn't make them, because of the war.

Q. What are white goods? I'm sorry.

NINA PARRY: No -- refrigerators, washing machines --

Q. Because they were white?
NINA PARRY: That's why they called them white goods in the beginning, uh-huh. But the store -- she also had electrical radios and so forth at that time. But anyway, uh, of course I always worked there, and we lived -- we moved down there, and lived upstairs in an apartment. And uh, anyway, uh, she started in with, uh, little gifts because she couldn't get anything to -- else to sell. She started with little gifts, and then she had a nervous breakdown, but she got better, and went -- she remarried. And, uh, they were -- they went ahead with the store, and then they could get all these things that they couldn't get during the war, and she went into the china business. So I guess I worked there all my life, more or less, until after, uh, we, we left for ah, Lake Charles. Sherman and I left for Lake Charles, and I didn't work there anymore, but I always worked Christmases when I had the children and so forth, but -- if I was needed. But, uh, anyway, during the war, everybody -- they had -- we were, more or less, confined because of the gas shortage, and tire shortage, and everything, so you -- whatever you did, you did it in town. Like, there was a skating rink, and movie house, and you just -- you found things you could do. So all of us did things like -- we had slumber parties, and we really had a good time. That's the women, all the women -- these women, and that included aunts, and mothers,
and so forth that'd go to the shows with us. And uh, I had one aunt that -- she wouldn't miss a show, but she slept all the way through it because she was so tired. Oh, and I went to work at Boeing and uh, rode with her. We got up at 4:00 to be able to get there by 6:00 because she had -- you could only go 35 mile an hour and you had to go through Andover at that time on, on Central. So uh, anyway, she was tired. I knew she was tired. That's why she had to sleep through, but she wanted the companionship, I guess, of some of us. But we had -- we had a lot of fun, the girls did, but we lost a lot of -- lot of friends. It was hard.

NELVA WENTZ: Mm-hmm. No men --

Q. Hmm?

NELVA WENTZ: No men -- my grandpa was the only man Trudy knew. Trudy cried the first night Donald was home because she didn't know who he was, and her grandpa was the only one. It was a vacant town almost.

NINA PARRY: Oh, it was.

NELVA WENTZ: Even older men in their 40s and 50s were being called.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

NELVA WENTZ: And everybody that was -- could work, worked in the defense plants.
Q. Now, you, you described that you were married, and had a child, and you were still single. Do you remember -- do you remember being involved at all? Probably not, because you were --

NINA PARRY: No, she wasn't home. She was off with her husband.

NELVA WENTZ: No. We lived in Austin, Texas,
Q. Oh, that's -- and you stayed there after he --

NELVA WENTZ: and San Antonio, and then we went to Louisiana on maneuvers, and then they were sent to California.

Q. I'm sorry. I misunderstood. I thought you had come back when he was shipped overseas.

NELVA WENTZ: No. We lived with, and then we went to Pennsylvania, Erma and I -- Erma Bryan, and Catherine Warren, and I. But then when Trudy was born, I stayed here until he got out. I stayed here forever, but --

Q. So now -- and Madelyn would have lived here too then, because I remember Virginia talking about her working at Boeing, I believe. Did you run into her at all when you were working at Boeing? Did you overlap?

NINA PARRY: We -- we played together. We uh, went -- we had (unknown) like I mentioned, we had slumber parties, and went to the movies together, and sometimes some of us went skating, but the women kind of -- we moved around as a group, and there were singles, and married, and it didn't make any difference. Age
didn't make any difference, but of course, we were all friends, and there was a bunch of us that ran around together. The classes mixed up in the ones that I was closest to. The classes mixed together the -- while we were in high school, they did, the class of '42, and '40, and '41, so that's why these girls ran around together, so many of them. Madelyn was one of them and did these things with us.

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah, I skated in El Dorado with Madelyn's husband. Lucille skated with him. They all knew each other.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh, yeah.

NELVA WENTZ: We're just a friendly neighborhood -- a friendly little town.

Q. Now, Virginia told me a story about -- well, I don't know if it was a story, but she talked about all the things that you've talked about, but she also said that on Sunday afternoons you would take photographs of yourselves and send to the boys overseas. Tell me a little about that. What do you remember about that?

NINA PARRY: Oh, yes (laughs). Well, they were crazy pictures, a lot of them, I mean, you know.

Q. How crazy or what?

NINA PARRY: We went to the -- we went to the -- out to the park -- out to Garvin Park, and like I said, we had -- at that time, we
had the swinging bridge, and had picnics, and, you know, we did something to occupy our time. Uh, and like I said, we were more or less isolated in this town. Then we went to work wherever we worked, like to Wichita and so forth, and -- but then you came home in the evening and we were there. Of course, you usually went to bed early, so the weekends were pretty -- if you had a weekend, you were pretty, uh, loose to go wherever you wanted.

Q. But you did take these pictures and send them overseas to the boys; right?

NINA PARRY: Well, I, I think a lot them were, yes, I do.

Q. So you took pictures in the park on the bridge. Where else did you go take -- did you pose and take crazy --

NINA PARRY: Oh, yes. Oh yes, we did crazy pictures, and we went out -- which they've closed that now -- which was the, uh --

NELVA WENTZ: Bois-D'Arc?

NINA PARRY: -- you know, that iron bridge?

NELVA WENTZ: Bois-D 'Arc?

NINA PARRY: No, not Bois-D 'Arc, out here just, just, uh -- where the, where so many have drowned. Uh.

NELVA WENTZ: Dry Creek?

NINA PARRY: Huh-uh, huh-uh, just outside of town. Just --

NELVA WENTZ: Whitewater?

NINA PARRY: -- south of town was a, uh -- that road went down --
NELVA WENTZ: There was one there --
NINA PARRY: -- across the railroad track, and you make a turn, and there was that bridge.
NELVA WENTZ: On Thunder Road?
NINA PARRY: Yeah.

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah, that was there by the refinery tanks.
NINA PARRY: Yeah, kind of by the refinery. And they -- that's --
NELVA WENTZ: It wasn't even a mile. It wasn't even a mile.
NINA PARRY: No, it wasn't a mile. Goodness. You didn't have the facility to go to a mile hardly.
NELVA WENTZ: No tires -- you had to get tires retreaded.
NINA PARRY: Yeah.
NELVA WENTZ: My grandpa took ours down and had them retreaded. You couldn't -- rationed -- coffee was rationed, bananas was rationed --

NINA PARRY: Everything was rationed. Shoes -- shoes really hurt me, bad (laughs). I used to --
Q. You're a shoe horse? (Laughs.)
NINA PARRY: Uh, no. They were made --
Q. Oh, they were uncomfortable?
NINA PARRY: They were not leather. They couldn't use leather, and it was a, a put together -- I don't know what that --
NELVA WENTZ: We bought the first wooden baby bed that the store, the store got in here, Firestone.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh.

NELVA WENTZ: Everything was hard to get. Everything -- it's like it died, except airplanes, you know, and military.

NINA PARRY: Yeah.

NELVA WENTZ: It made it a whole different world.

NINA PARRY: You saved your grease. You had to save your grease to take it to the -- you got a meat point for the -- everything came with points, and --

NELVA WENTZ: You had little ration stamps to buy with.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

NELVA WENTZ: I still got some. It was real -- it was really different. The kids nowadays, they just wouldn't survive, would they?

NINA PARRY: Well, you wonder if they could. They're so --

NELVA WENTZ: We always played games. We'd play hopscotch and we'd play

NINA PARRY: Blackjacks.

NELVA WENTZ: --jacks. We played games. We didn't have TV like they do now. You made up your own games and you played with the neighborhood. All -- we had 36 in our neighborhood when Trudy was little.
NINA PARRY: You took your children.

NELVA WENTZ: Trudy wrote in her family history, "I had to be the happiest girl in the world." She played with kids. She didn't -- they didn't have TV. She'd draw, and color, and, I mean, even Trudy should have been here today. She'd tell you what a different world and she's only, what, 68? But it was different. You can't hardly explain it. My mom's time was probably different than our time.

NINA PARRY: Oh! I remember my mother-in-law saying, "I'm glad that I don't have children today because I could not handle this."

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah.

NINA PARRY: And you know what we say today? Same thing. (Clock chimes.) Each generation has their --

NELVA WENTZ: Well, back when my mother grew up, they made their own. She played the piano, and she played the guitar, and Daddy -- he played this, and that, and sang, and they made their own singing group, and they did their own thing to make, you know, entertainment.

NINA PARRY: Mm-hmm.

Q. So did you pass this along to your -- to the next generation?

NELVA WENTZ: Well, I hope -- good -- I hope it was good.

Q. The influence -- I was going, I was going to ask, uh -- and it doesn't all have to be back in the context of, of Madelyn and
her, you know, her family and her future grandson, but, but what traits do you feel like you, you either tried or you instilled in your own children to, uh -- as you were raising them that -- that came from both living through the things that you did, and also living in a -- the small town of Augusta, and uh, you know, a more rural area, I guess? But maybe you didn't think of it as a rural area.

NELVA WENTZ: Well, I think with, with us, our children, I always did what Mom told me to, and I always came home when she told me, and I think our children's kind of done that. I know Trudy called one day and she was with Janice Carter somewhere, and she said, "Mother, do I have to come home? Janice Carter --" and I said, "Yes, you do, and I told you cause I work." And she says, "But Janice Carter doesn't have to." And I said, "But Janice Carter's mother doesn't have to work." But they always came home, and like, maybe we didn't have to worry about them. Maybe that was -- I don't know. I always tried to do what my mother wanted me to. I think they kind of do to this day. Trudy will still ask me if she can do something, you know. I don't know. I just think that they didn't cause us to worry about 'em. They came on home and did what they was supposed to do.

Q. I remember some -- uh, I just remember some common themes, and maybe they were even sayings that my parents, you know, had,
that I -- and one of them was "You can do anything you set your mind to."

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah, that's true.

Q. And my mother used to talk about -- she'd meet a difficult person, she -- the thing to do is to nicely nice them to death (laughs). Were, were there things like these that you told your kids or that you consciously, you know, wanted to teach 'em? If not, that's okay.

NELVA WENTZ: I'm trying to think.

Q. I'm just going down the wrong path.

NINA PARRY: Well, you're a -- work. You had - you, you work, and all of our children, they do.

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah. When -- Trudy had three jobs when she was in college, and then David, when he was in college, he even got an evening job so he could work. They both did, did good in college. I think they -- well, they learned from -- Donald was a worker, and he was a striver, and I think we both worked. I think they were both -- wanted to do what Daddy and I thought wanted them to do. I don't think we had any trouble. I don't know. I just -- they've always worked. David carried the Augusta paper in that little bag. It'd almost drag on the ground. I guess if you want money, you work, you know. Mobil really didn't pay good like the refinery, the air - I've always
heard they paid good over at Boeing. I don't know, but I don't think Mobil paid that good. But they didn't get everything they wanted. They had to work. Trudy had three jobs when she went to Lindsborg. I think it made good -- good children out of them. I think they did good. And David --

NINA PARRY: Uh, yeah.

NELVA WENTZ: -- I just think they did good. I don't know why. Maybe Donald and I -- maybe we were -- maybe you do things, and you don't -- you aren't conscious of what you're doing, and they try to do what you do. But if you was around Donald, you worked. He was busy all the time. I don't know.

NINA PARRY: Our granddaughter has, has come to live with me right now because she's going to school in, in Wichita, and she, uh, went two years in Hutchinson, and she had two jobs. She worked every day at this one place, and then she worked nights at, uh -- so she's a worker, too -- nights at Chili's, and she, when she got here she said I have to have a job because I have to -- I have to have so much money each month and -- to be able to pay everything, and uh, so she hustled around. She kept going over to see if she could get a job, and she got one at, uh, Red Lobster. So she's tickled, and so am I (laughs). But anyway, she's going to be able to make it, and I think that comes from -- partly from what we taught our kids.
NELVA WENTZ: Yeah.

Q. Take that credit. You deserve it.


Q. I mean, there is -- there's such a thing as, I think, sort of a generational traits that -- some it may be nurture, some of it may be nature, but when you, uh -- when you think about this in the context, and I know you didn't know Madelyn very well and she was in the class ahead of you, but what, what of those kind of traits do you imagine that she might have passed along that could have been, contributed to her grandson's - uh --

NELVA WENTZ: Well, she was always on the honor roll.

NINA PARRY: Oh, yeah. Madelyn was smart. We knew Madelyn pretty well.

NELVA WENTZ: So was Arlene.

NINA PARRY: Really?

NELVA WENTZ: Lucille went to school with Arlene.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh. As a matter of fact, first of all, we knew our classmates much more than they know classmates today, because we grew up in the same kind of circumstances, so many of us, and uh, we were close. And it's like, we had the three classes that went together to have reunions, and they attended the reunions very well. We had a lot of people at our reunions.

NELVA WENTZ: I've got lots of pictures.
NINA PARRY: Uh-huh.

Q. So you say you knew Madelyn well. Tell me what you know about her or what you remember.

NINA PARRY: Madelyn was a rather private person, I would say. Her best friend moved away when she was, uh, a junior, and this was very hard for Madelyn because they were very, very close. They depended upon one another a lot. I think she depended upon Francine more than Madelyn -- more than Francine depended upon Madelyn, but they were still close friends, however. Uh, you know, when people move away then things aren't quite the same as they were, but this is when we became a lot closer to Madelyn and --

Q. And how did that happen?

NINA PARRY: -- and so when we went to -- when we went to the movies, Madelyn was with us. And then, of course, she was married and -- and when her husband left, then of course, she had her little one, and she had responsibilities.

NELVA WENTZ: Believe it or not.

NINA PARRY: But before that, where, you know, we did the same picture taking, the same (laughs) -- I'm laughing because I was thinking -- I wondered which set of legs you'd know, (laughs) because Madelyn was always in on those pictures, you know (laughs).
Q. Did she have good legs?

NINA PARRY: Oh, yeah (laughs). But anyway, I mean, you know, we took goofy pictures like that, and knock-kneed, and bowlegged, and (laughs) -- but anyway, just fun things, you know. We did fun things and, and uh -- Madelyn was a part of all of that. And she was --

Q. After she was married and --

NINA PARRY: Well, before she was married.

Q. Before she was married.

NINA PARRY: And, uh, while she was still in school, we were running around together.

Q. Mm-hm.

NINA PARRY: And then afterward, also. So anyway -- anyway, Madelyn was -- she's very, very smart.

NELVA WENTZ: Oh, yeah.

NINA PARRY: And her brother and -- brothers -- I always forgot about that little one.

NELVA WENTZ: My sister went to school with Madelyn's sister --

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh.

NELVA WENTZ: -- Arlene, and she said she was really smart.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh, uh-huh, yeah. She taught at Chapel Hill. I think you probably know that -- that Arlene taught at Chapel
Hill. I don't know what -- I should remember, but I can't remember --

NELVA WENTZ: I don't know about the boys.

NINA PARRY: -- what Charles did, and then the brother -- but I'll tell you, that one picture of them when they're older, they all look alike. They all look so much alike that you can hardly tell the difference between them.

Q. Were you -- did you spend any time at -- in their home -- or--

NINA PARRY: No.

NELVA WENTZ: I didn't.

Q. -- or get acquainted with the parents?

NINA PARRY: No, not in their home. I think Madelyn's folks were probably pretty strict with her. She did get to go with us on -- like the movies and things like that, which some of the kids didn't. There was -- uh -- I'm going to say something bad. There was one church here that they said that their children could not -- or the people were not to go to the movie on Sundays, and they were not to do a lot of things on Sunday.

NELVA WENTZ: It's a small town.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh.

NELVA WENTZ: I think being in a small town --

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh, yeah, because, because it caused other people to work, and you didn't do that, so, uh, uh --

35
NELVA WENTZ: A lot of things shut down on Sunday.

NINA PARRY: Huh?

NELVA WENTZ: A lot of things shut down on Sunday, grocery store, or anything.

NINA PARRY: This is true. That's true. Everything was closed except for the movie, and I think the skating rink was open, too.

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah, because that's the night that I met Donald. I mean, I wasn't skating; I wasn't skating because I'd worn heels to church, uh. Not very many things were open on Sunday back then. I didn't skate that night, but it was Sunday night because I'd been to Christian Endeavor.

Q. You both very clearly remember when the war began for the United States, and Pearl Harbor. Do you remember the end of, you know, the war?

NELVA WENTZ: Excuse me?

Q. Do you remember the end, the announcement of the end, I mean, I know it was --

NINA PARRY: Oh, yes. The whole town was celebrating.

Q. How did that news come? Where you, and what were you doing?

NELVA WENTZ: I was in a car with Erma Bryan, and we were, uh, going down to an apartment that Donald had rented, and Erma -- we were
in Vicksburg, and Erma said, "Nelva, we just better stop because they'll be celebrating and it -- probably be drinking."

NINA PARRY: (Laughs)

NELVA WENTZ: And Donald and his doctor friend of his had cleaned the whole apartment, and was there that waiting on us, and we stayed over in Vicksburg instead of driving over into Hattiesburg, and we got there. We stayed all night cause Erma said, "I don't want to drive on in." So we stayed, and when we got there, we cleaned the apartment and everything. But we were in the car when it was announced on the car radio.

Q. And this was victory in Europe?

NELVA WENTZ: No, this was for the Japanese war.

Q. Oh, this was --

NELVA WENTZ: Donald had already been home, and had his 30-day leave, and was going back, and going to go to Japan.

Q. Okay.

NELVA WENTZ: When the war was over, oh, it was a happy day. Erma said, "Nelva, I just, we just can't go. There will be drunks everywhere (laughs)." And she was probably right.

Q. Some things never change.

NINA PARRY: No, no, it was "Thank God it's over."

NELVA WENTZ: Now, I have a picture of Donald sitting outside eating, and it's written on that picture that this was the 8th, the day
the war was over in Europe, and they, he, they found it out. I don't know -- I never did ask him how they found it out.

Q. But for him, it meant not having to go?

NELVA WENTZ: They stayed put, uh-huh. They were waiting -- what they were doing was waiting for the Russians to get to Berlin, and that's the reason we have a divided Berlin -- is our boys were -- had to sit back and wait. They could have gone on, but Patton wanted to go on and they wouldn't let him.

NINA PARRY: Mm-hmm.

NELVA WENTZ: So that made it divided when the Russians got there. But we got lots of stories about General Patton, and Donald said he would just stand up in the Jeep without anything over it, and ride in the storms, and he was a real, wouldn't you say, bloods and guts?

NINA PARRY: Oh, yeah.

NELVA WENTZ: You've heard that before?

NINA PARRY: Oh, absolutely.

NELVA WENTZ: He was a -- he was a good leader, but he was there to win.

Q. Do you remember what you were doing when you heard the announcement, Nina?

NINA PARRY: I can't remember, but I do remember going downtown, and I mean, this -- of course, our town was -- it was a town, but
everybody was out and celebrating. They were having -- oh, it was such a joy.

NOTE: End of Part 1. Transcript concludes in Part Two, a separate oral/video history DVD. They are a single YouTube video on the website.

NOTE: Part 2 (conclusion, Run time 04:34) was created when Q asked for Nina Parry to repeat explaining that Madelyn wouldn't come back to reunions after audiovisual recording ended abruptly and was restarted.

NINA PARRY: Well, uh -- when, Mad - I - let's see. Madelyn called me, I guess, and asked me, "Why did you send me that invitation?" She said, "I get these invitations, and I will not, not come back to the mainland again," because of the experience that she had when they flew in the last time before. And she said, "I'm not going to do it again." So, uh -- and Madelyn, you know, had a good position over there. They didn't allow women to, uh really be anybody in Hawaii when they were first over there, but she came -- became one of the, uh, top people in the bank that she -- where she worked. So, Madelyn was good, and she was -- she was very smart.

Q. But even though she didn't come back, she did keep in touch?
NINA PARRY: A little. Not, not much, but a little bit, yeah.

Q. And didn't she write a note, or a letter, or --

NINA PARRY: She sent nuts.

NELVA WENTZ: Mm-hmm, macadamia.

NINA PARRY: She sent, uh, she sent these macadamia nuts to me. She said, "Take these to the reunion and let everybody enjoy." So I did. Anyway --

Q. That's Hawaii.

NINA PARRY: That's Hawaii, that's right. It was the perfect thing to do. If she couldn't come, she'd send nuts (laughs). But anyway --

Q. What -- I wanted to follow up to make sure I have it clear in my mind, when you were talking about walking to school with -- partway to school, and partway home from school with Madelyn --

NELVA WENTZ: Mm.

Q. -- and I think when I was talking to you on the phone you may have said something about her kind of being older and looking after you, or --

NELVA WENTZ: Well, no. She was ahead of me in class, but we'd both get out of school at the same time. It was the big school they tore down, right up -- on the corner of High. And all we had to do was go straight up School -- School Street, and when we'd get up to School Street, why, she'd make a left and go to her house,
and I'd make a right and go to Dearborn, and then I had to go on over to Gregg Street, but we just visited, whatever was going on at school I suppose that day. But, uh, we did that, I was in seventh and part of, part of eighth grade. Probably whatever had happened that day, we talked about.

Q. And her sister was with you, too?

NELVA WENTZ: No. Her sister went to school with my sister.

Q. Oh, oh, that's right. I'm sorry. You did say that.

NELVA WENTZ: All the way through school, yeah. She, she talks about her a lot. She knew her real well, but I don't know any of the things she could tell you though cause I didn't know Arlene. Did you? I didn’t.

NINA PARRY: Oh, yeah. I knew Arlene. I knew both of them, Charles and Arlene.

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah, Trudy and Lucille did, too.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh. But the younger brother, you know, was an afterthought.

NELVA WENTZ: Yeah, and Lucille never mentions him, just Charles.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh. So --

Q. You mean a caboose baby?

NINA PARRY: Yes, (laughs) one that came a little later (laughs).

Anyway, uh, we never became acquainted with him because he was a
little boy, and I think -- was Madelyn in high school? I think she was in high school when he was born.

NELVA WENTZ: I don't remember.

NINA PARRY: I think so.

NELVA WENTZ: I don't remember him, I remember the others.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh. But anyway --

Q. Were they close as siblings, or do you know the two girls?

NINA PARRY: Well, you know, you couldn't tell.

NELVA WENTZ: Huh-uh. I think everybody was close, really.

NINA PARRY: Yeah, everybody was close --

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh.

NINA PARRY: -- in our day.

Q. Some sisters fight a lot --

NINA PARRY: Oh, yes.

Q: -- and make friends later, and some sisters are -- always get along.

NELVA WENTZ: I don't know that, well. I don't know, know Arlene. You will.

NINA PARRY: Huh-uh.

Q. Well, that's okay. Is there anything else --?

[End]
Q. I guess we're ready to start, so I'm going to ask -- I'm going to start by just asking you to state your full name, and your maiden name, and -- and then I'll just say for the camera we're in El Dorado on October 4th in the BCTV studio, and interviewing Lois. And so can you state your full name, Lois?

LC. You want my full name?

Q. Including your maiden name.

LC. Okay. Lois -- Lois Olsen Cox. And birth date?

Q. Sure.

LC. 3/16/24.

(Second Interviewer): That's my birthday, March 16th.

Q. Really?

(Second Interviewer): Yes, '54. Wow.
Q. Do you mind giving your age?

LC. I don't mind. 88.

Q. 88. So -- and you have a birthday coming up in March. All right. Well, one of the things we're particularly interested in is just -- uh -- understanding what it was like to grow up in or around Augusta, Kansas in the 20s, and 30s, and early 40s. I -- you know, I mean, if you graduated in 1941 -- and so I might just ask you to tell us a little bit about your early life and your family growing up.

LC. Well, I grew up on a farm. Um -- getting to high school was -- rode to high school with a neighbor the first year, and then --

Q. Who drove?

LC. Pardon me?

Q. Who drove, your neighbor?

LC. The -- the young man -- Charles Chance was the boy that had the car, and they were neighbors, and that was the first year of getting to high school. Uh, the second year and after that, I had my own car, a '34 Plymouth, and I drove by myself for two years. And then I -- my last year, I had another high school girl, and my future husband (laughs) rode with me the last part of my senior year to high school. The old Plymouth -- one of the interesting things about that, if you wanted it to start in the morning when it was really cold, took a pan of coals from the heating stove, took that out, and set it under the oil pan, put a flat iron that you ironed with -- put that on the manifold under the hood, put a blanket over the whole thing, and in a few minutes it was warmed up enough you could start it. It was
two miles of mud road, which I got pretty good at that. One particular time -- the girl that rode with me lived on the highway, so we had a deal that if I couldn't get back home in the mud, or snow, or whatever, I could stay with her, and that would be worth one week's pay, riding the -- riding. Now, everybody -- everybody did pretty much the same thing. Parking lot was full of old cars. One time in particular with the mud, it'd been thawing, and moisture, and the soil had gotten to the place of molding clay, but I didn't know that. And driving home, pretty soon I had mud packed in the wheels until they wouldn't move, and I dug them out with a hedge post that was laying in the ditch, and got back out of there, and went back to my girlfriend's. That had to do with how we got to school. My freshman year, the first thing that happened was that -- early on, I went to Banner school, rural school, and our mathematics was just plain old arithmetic. Well, I had algebra class, and the teacher was -- they had too many for the regular math teacher, so the teacher that I had was the manual arts teacher. I guess he understood mathematics, but he didn't understand how to teach it, so when we'd get an equation which I'd never seen before, with XY equals Z, I couldn't figure that out, and I asked questions until he got exasperated with me. We could watch out the window of the high school, which we have a picture of, they were tearing down an old high school. I'm not sure what it was called -- whether it was Lincoln or some other, but anyway, it was a big stone building and they were dismantling that. They didn't have big old movers that
were men, WPA workers. This would have been, what, 1938, '37, somewhere along there. Anyway, the exasperated math teacher said, "If you were one of those WPA workers, you could never figure out your salary -- your wages." And I thought, "Well, this is not going to work." So I went to the principal's office and said, "I want in the regular math class so I can learn to do this right." And that was -- that was one of the things that happened.

Q. Did you get into the regular class?

LC. Yeah, I did, and the man was -- and the teacher was very patient after school and explained and caught me up so I could do the algebra.

Q. Good.

LC. Well, the second year, talking about math -- the second year was kind of interesting. We were seated in -- same teacher -- we were seated alphabetically, and the boy that was sitting next to me, his last name was Purdin. I don't remember his first name, but his girlfriend was Lucy Osage, and she was very smart. She helped him all the time with his homework, and he was a senior when we were sophomores. Well, I would catch him looking at my papers every once in a while, but -- we never talked, and we had the semester test -- geometry has theorems and truths, and I saw him copying off my paper, so I'd figure out a problem, and I'd leave one step out or I'd do it wrong. (Laughs) When we got our papers back and I had a good grade and he had a bad grade, that was the only thing he ever said to me, was "How did you do that?" (Laughs)

Q. What did you do? After he copied you, you went back and --
I went back and corrected it, yes. He handed -- he quickly handed his paper in, and I --. Uh, Lucy Osage got me in another situation when I was a senior. All through the first three years, I tried real hard to be included in the agriculture class because I loved farming, but girls could not be in the agriculture class. Then my senior year, I didn't try for the agriculture class, and the principal -- he was a wonderful man -- Gustafson was his name -- came to the classroom where I was on the first day of school, and begged me to take agriculture because Lucy Osage, who was prominent in the town -- I don't know if her dad was on the school board, but the principal was -- had to make him happy. Uh, he, he said, "You do me a favor. I've got to have another girl because Lucy Osage wants to take agriculture, so if I have two girls, it will work." Got to agriculture class, and the teacher was so unhappy. He looked around over the class and made one lecture about the town boys being in the class, and then, the girls that was -- that was just it. But I saw the young man across the room that I had my eye on, and that -- that settled it. Going down the hallway after that class, Lucille said, "I'm not going back." And I said, "Did you buy a book already?" And I bought her book, and I took agriculture, and I caught the young man, (laughs) and we were married on December the 30th, 1941. I don't know that I can think of too many other things. I could talk about school all day, but --
Q. So you - (inaudible). Now, I forgot what I was going to ask her. So how long have you been married then? This last -- in December this would be --

LC. 70 -- 70 plus years. It'd be 71 years in December.

Q. Well, congratulations.

LC. That was the December after graduation, and my husband, Henry, was in the class of '42, so he had another year. Uh, Madelyn was -- Lucille, Nina Perry, and all those that you mentioned -- Madelyn was very well respected. Her name was pretty common in school. Everybody knew Madelyn, but she didn't do the things that the rest of them did. She didn't -- she didn't party with them. She just tended to her class and was very dignified and -- and mature. And I guess I must have admired her or I wouldn't have asked her to write in my book, but I didn't really know very -- a whole lot about her. But I was pretty excited to find that I had her in my book.

Q. And how did you -- how and when did you discover that?

LC. That I had --

Q. Recently, I suppose? Before you sent your letter to the White House?

LC. Yes. Somebody wanted some memoirs for something, and I was looking through the box that things were stored in, and I just took my autograph book out, and was thumbing through it, and all of a sudden I saw Madelyn's name there, and I go, "Oh, my goodness. Look at this!" And so then I thought that the President ought to know what she wrote when she wrote that friends were -- sometimes wanted -- just wanted what they could get from you. But she didn't
like that, she wanted friends that were sincere, and she gave me that compliment.

Q. Do you think that shows -- reveals anything about the kind of person that she was?

LC. Yes, she was -- she was always -- she always dressed properly. She always -- she just had a very good reputation with everybody, with students, and teachers, and she was a very friendly person without being attached to anybody, really.

Q. And, you know, sometimes people who are -- who aren't as involved, or who are not attached, they don't -- everybody thinks that there's some reason, and I don't know whether they are suspicious, but they don't -- uh -- necessarily -- they don't necessarily like those people, and yet you said that Madelyn was so well liked and respected. Besides her being thoughtful, can you think of reasons why, despite the fact that people didn't know her well, they respected her so much? Anything she did that you can remember?

LC. She was just always prompt, and, and she could be helpful. Somebody maybe would be having a little trouble, and she might help somebody in study hall a little bit, but nothing that would -- she might help somebody one time, and not help them again until maybe they might ask. But she just kind of went her own way, and well, like, for instance, when I thought about the girls that -- Lucille -- that helped her boyfriend and all that, she -- this group of girls would probably not even talk to me, because I was a country girl. They had all come through kindergarten together. Uh, I don't know how
long Madelyn had been in classes with them, but while she was -- they respected her name. They -- they -- if they wanted to do something scholastic, they might be sure they included her, but she didn't ever mix with them. She just was an unusual person.

Q. Did you have any classes with her?

LC. No, I didn't.

Q. Do you remember after you found the autograph book and realized that she had -- did any memories come back to you of that day when you were getting all the autographs?

LC. No. Actually -- actually, I was surprised to find that I had it -- that I had her page, so -- but see, she was the kind of person that an underclass girl could walk up to her and say, "Would you like to sign my book?" She was that kind of person, and where the -- uh, many of the others -- there was kind of a difference. The country girls kind of stuck together, and the city girls kind of stuck together, and she was just good to everybody, and not a part of any group.

Q. But by where she grew up, she would have been a city girl?

LC. I think she would have been, but I now don't know how long she had been in Augusta to be -- the ones that were in Augusta all their school years, you know, they were -- they knew each other so well. They didn't include other people a lot of times.

Q. Well, you grew up on a farm. I'm going to change the subject just a little bit. Um -- what -- you would have probably been living on the farm during the Dust Bowl years and the Great Depression?
LC. Oh, yeah.

Q. What do you remember about that?

LC. The Banner school, located on Harry Street, on 110th Street now, it's on the south side between Tawakoni Road and Santa Fe Lake Road.

Q. Is the building still there?

LC. The building's still there. It's a residence. The first dust storm come in, it got darker and darker, and red soil, silt, came through the cracks around the windows, and that, I don't know -- it seemed like that lasted maybe off and on for, I don't know, two or three weeks maybe. It wasn't -- it wasn't that -- we didn't have like drifts of dust like some places did, we just had the soft powdery stuff all over. And again, in those years in the country school, we didn't have any such a thing as a snow day holiday. We just went to school anyway, and --

Q. You didn't have too far to walk?

LC. Didn't what?

Q. You didn't have very far to walk?

LC. Mile and a half, but that wasn't very far. And the kids had -- when it was snowy, they had their sleds and stuff, and we played, and everybody played together. And sometimes, there was -- there were, there were times when there were all eight grades in one room, there was somebody in every grade. And the way that worked, the teacher really spent time with the upper class: the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade; and in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade's time -- spare time, they helped the first, second, third, and fourth grade. And that
was kind of -- that was kind of when I began to think I'd like to be a teacher.

Q. Oh.

LC. And everybody carried their lunches. My husband's story of his school days -- he went to the Indianola School, which is west of August.

LC. And now, that was a -- I believe that was a two-room school, and that's still standing. It's a residence. And he tells about the teacher that he had for several years. Every morning, she put a Bible verse on the blackboard -- a different Bible verse every morning, and when they got ready to eat their lunches, if it was still warm weather, they'd be out on the porch, or not -- in the other -- couldn't be on the porch, they'd be in the schoolroom. And this teacher would have a blessing, a prayer, before they ate. We didn't have much trouble with -- and --

Q. Where in school, wasn't forbidden.

LC. That was the way things were then, and it wasn't quite that way when I was teaching.

Q. What did you teach?

LC. First, and I taught 2nd and 3rd grade, mostly.

Q. Where?

LC. My first year was in Turner, Kansas, a suburb of Kansas City, and then for, oh, I believe it was eight years in Arizona, and then back to Kansas in Arkansas City. My husband was a pastor at the IXL Church, south of Ark City, and I taught -- I taught school in Sleeth Community. Now, Sleeth was on the other side of the tracks, across
the railroad, and across from the river. (Laughs) That's where that was. But, uh --

Q. Now, you say you have five children. Quite often in those days, women weren't allowed to teach after they started a family. Did you teach and raise your children at the same time?

LC. I got one year of college before. Well, I got one year of college before we had any children, and then different times where we might live where I could pick up some more college hours, I finally got a bachelor's degree from University of Missouri in Kansas City. This Robert that we have here with us today, he was like two years old, and when I started teaching, he was about three or four years old. And then I taught -- the others were through high school and college.

Q. Looking back on your teaching career, do you have any favorite memories from that?

LC. In teaching through the years?

Q. Mm-hmm.

LC. Oh, I really had -- I was kind of - uh, did things different. I have a class with -- we did a lot of interesting things besides the regular lessons. We had different ways of teaching, like having a booth, and have -- made fun of it -- made fun out of teaching. Had a mother one time that went to the principal and said that her child wasn't being taught because all they did was play, and he challenged her to bring her lunch and spend the day with them in that classroom, and at the end of the day she reported, well, there was teaching going
on all day, those kids thought they were playing. So that was kind of my style.

Q. Going back a little bit, you talked about the Dust Bowl. Do you remember The Depression? Do you remember being aware of what was going on and how it affected your family and life on the farm?

LC. Uh, I was being raised by my grandfather's sister and her husband. My mother died when I was born. I had no grandparents except ol' GrandpLC. We were not -- The Depression didn't seem to bother us a whole lot. We didn't realize it if it did. We had, always had plenty to eat, and one of the things that was a tricky little thing with -- back to the high school days, when this teacher had a problem with girls in class, I really had -- he couldn't -- he couldn't throw me out because the Building and Loan Association had gone bankrupt and people that had investments would -- could make like -- take a mortgage over and get their money back by the individual paying, so my folks held the mortgage on this teacher's home, so he had to be good to me.

Q. Did he ever say -- did he ever say anything about that or --

LC. No, he knew.

Q. Just something he knew?

LC. And I -- I just knew him already. I -- you know, he brought his payments to our house. Now, my husband's family, they had just a little more Depression stories than I did because they really had to be careful -- real careful, but apparently -- apparently my parents that was raising me did not suffer financially through the -- I
remember when Roosevelt had what was called the bank holidays, and the banks were all closed for a short time, and audited, and so forth, and so on. And there were two banks in Augusta; the Prairie State Bank and First National Bank. And First National Bank was the big bank, and everybody just knew that it would be all right, and the Prairie State Bank was home owned and had a very small start. Well, guess what. When the banks opened up again, First National was not allowed to open, and Prairie State kept going. It's now Emprise.

Q. Interesting. Uh -- what do you -- uh -- let's see. When you were young and before high school, and just growing up on the farm, um, you must not have had a lot of the kinds of entertainment that kids today have. What (laughs) did -- what did you do for fun, and what kind of family traditions do you remember?

LC. My uncle was -- he was kind of a politician. He liked politics. He liked the neighborhood. He always had something going on, on the Fourth of July. There was a four mile creek that ran through our farm, and there was a little area -- there was a little park area. He cleaned that all out, and put up some makeshift tables, and we had a Fourth of July picnic. I don't know about -- we only did that once or twice, but that was -- that was one of the things that, uh -- and, you know, we didn't -- we didn't need entertainment. For me as a child, he had a swing in the tree. He figured out how I could have a teeter-totter with a big ol' rock on the other end to be my partner on the teeter-totter, and just made, made my own things to play with. And we didn't go -- we didn't go to movies much.
Now, my father came from Denmark, and he remarried after -- I was -- I was the only child, and in a couple three years, he remarried and lived out of Leon. And through the summer, from the time I was about eight years old till, I guess, probably high school years, I would spend a couple weeks or so with him and his family, and they always went to the Saturday night movie since it was held in Leon. I think the screen was probably one side of a building. And all the old cowboys, my half-brothers were -- they played cowboys and all that stuff, and we enjoyed those kinds of things, but I liked my kind of stuff better.

Q. What was your kind of stuff?

LC. All by myself, with whatever I could figure out to do.

Q. Did you have an active imagination?

LC. Oh, yeah. (Laughs)

Q. Do you remember any of the imaginary games you played or any of the imaginary play that you did?

LC. Oh, from -- well, one of the things that I have done in the last 10, 10 years or so, I wrote a little book on the kinds of stuff that -- that I did, just as a -- almost as a toddler, and it was a lot of fun things that -- my imagination was going then. I had a -- I had a whole family. I had a playhouse and the yard fixed up so that I had different places where I'd meet with my imaginary family.

Q. Was the playhouse real or imagined?

LC. Uh, it was -- it was real, and the fact that there were boards that outlined the, the walls -- the rooms in my house, under the tree, and
there were -- there was a nice big rock that was made a stove, and all that sort of thing.

Q. Maybe that's how you became so good at making learning, like play for your students later. You had a lot of practice.

LC. Uh-huh, yeah, yes, I did. I did a lot of things like that.

Q. What about -- you talked about your -- your husband. Any interesting courtship stories we should hear?

LC. (Laughs) Well, probably not for publication. (Laughs)

Q. Or in front of your son?

LC. Well, one that I like to tell sometimes, it's kind of funny. See, I've got my eye set on him long before he noticed me, and I was about to, coming down to the last month or so of school, and there hadn't been any -- we did go to the -- we called it the Junior-Senior Banquet. We did have a date to that, but there wasn't any kind of commitment, and I couldn't figure out what I was going to do. And I had a diary that I seldom used. I'd write in it for maybe a month, and then it'd be a long time, and I'd write in it some more. There was a lot of blank pages. So I wrote in my diary, one night, different things that we did that was kind of getting -- you know, we, we were almost engaged, and yet there wasn't any kind of commitment. And so I put down everything that pleased me. Like our agriculture class would dig in the dandelions in the school yard. That was our project for a couple of weeks, and he and I found a place where the -- it was kind of sheltered from everybody else, and we always left enough dandelions that we could go back. So we had, kind of, a dandelion
courtship. That's kind of funny about that. So I wrote such things as "I think he loves me. I love him.", and I just embellished it up pretty good. And we come down to the last two or three days of school, and I put that diary on top of the dash, and he picked it up, and I made a scuffle. "You can't be looking in that." And of course, that -- that tweaked him. He wanted -- he really wanted to see after I didn't want him to, so before we tore the diary up, I let him have it. And so that -- we've always hung on to the idea that I salted the diary, that -- and then we were engaged soon after that.

Q. So it did kind of lead to a proposal?

LC. Yeah. And my uncle that was my guardian -- you know the song "Wolverton Mountain"?

Q. Yes.

LC. You ever hear that song?

Q. I think so.

LC. It's an old western. "Go Up Wolverton Mountain." The birds and the bees let -- birds and the -- I think it's the birds and the bees, let ol' whatever-his-name-was know when the boys were coming, and nobody would go up Wolverton Mountain to get that girl. Well, my uncle was like that, and so we had quite a -- quite an experience with uncle, and we sort of eloped, and after all was said and done, my uncle decided that he was a pretty good guy after all.

Q. Wow. So you think he wanted to protect you, or he didn't approve?
LC. Oh, it was just kind of like, you know -- kind of like dads don't want their girl to get away, that sort of thing.

Q. Nobody's good enough. That's neat. Um. One more thing I should maybe ask you about, um, and that is -- let's see, you graduated in 1941, and that's leading right into the war years. Um, what do you remember about that? Or -- were you married in 1941, also?

LC. In December, after, but now, he was still in school. He still had another half a year to go.

Q. So do you remember learning about Pearl Harbor, and do you remember those early days?

LC. I was in college in Ottawa University, and I didn't live in the dormitory, but I lived in a house right practically on the campus. It was -- the word went out that everybody was to go to the college on a Sunday morning, wasn't it? Seemed like it was. Anyway, we heard on the radio -- they played the radio -- that Franklin Roosevelt had declared war on Japan because Pearl Harbor had been -- and I remember how -- how disturbed the older -- I -- I just kind of, was kind of in shock. I didn't -- it didn't really matter to me right then, but the young men that were older knew exactly what it cost them, and they were pretty emotional at that announcement. And that's what I remember about where I was and what -- the Pearl Harbor day.

Q. Do you remember a lot of them enlisting after that?

LC. Well, no -

Q. Or you did you finish out that year, did they finish out the year?
LC. Yeah, they finished out the year. They weren't -- there wasn't a
draft that swallowed them up right away, but they knew -- they just
knew that their age -- and they were right, a lot of them were, but
I don't remember -- I don't remember them having to leave school to
go in the service.

Q. How about your husband, did he serve in the war?

LC. What?

Q. How about your husband, did he -- was he -- was he drafted or --

LC. No, he was too young for a while.

Q. Well, a blessing.

LC. He was 17 -- 16 -- 17, and yeah, he was 16 when -- I was 17 when we
were married. Then, eventually, he - we, we got a farm, rented a
farm, lived on a farm, and he eventually worked for a rancher. So
all the time that he was in agriculture, they didn't draft
people -- men that were part of the agriculture. They needed the
farmers.

Q. Mm-hmm. Wow. Did the war touch your life in any other way, friends
or family?

LC. Not -- not -- not especially, no. Uh. My brothers were too young,
and I think what -- what is most shocking was the high school reunions,
and it was kind of like the roll call of the ones that -- our classmates
that were killed in service. That was probably the -- touched the
most. During the war, we had put up with rations of sugar and
different things, and tires were hard to come by, and gasoline was
rationed. Then, you just sort of put up with it.
Q. Um. Uh -- I -- I don't want to over -- I don't want to take too much more time. Steve, anything you can -- well, we might just come back at the very end to your -- your autograph book --

LC. Mm-hmm.

Q. And -- did you just right away decide to send this to -- you sent it to the White House after the 2008 election?

LC. Oh, yes. Yes.

Q. And then how long was it before you got the reply back?

LC. I noticed that I pulled -- I pulled the letter up on the computer this morning, and by the letter -- the date on the letter, it seemed like it was -- my letter was in April, and I got the reply back in December. It took a long time.

Q. Long enough that you probably thought you weren't going to get a reply back? (Laughs)

LC. Yeah. I was kind of excited when the envelope came from the White House. I kept the envelope for a long time.

Q. Well, so given what you -- what you remembered about Madelyn, and told me, is there anything that you see in the President that makes you think might have been her influence, or -- and I'll make that my last question.

LC. I would say very much so, because she was a determined person. She knew -- she knew what she wanted and how to get it, and she was a very hard worker, and just an impeccable reputation. I mean, there might be gossip stories going around about different ones, and
different things, never any -- never any gossip stories about Madelyn.

Q. She didn't give them any food for gossip?

LC. No, and she was never in any -- in any kind of disciplinary problems, whatsoever.

Q. Um. Oh, great.

LC. And she just had -- she just had good judgment about things, so as -- and she was -- she was the right age for the class. Now, sometimes, we had a few people in school that were maybe three or four years older than -- they'd done something else when they got out of high school, but she was right -- she was the right age. She wasn't older, but she acted older, and yet she was a happy person.

Q. (Inaudible) Go ahead. Were you going to say something else?

LC. I don't think of anything else about her.

Q. Okay. I thought I had interrupted you. Well, those are nice memories, and thank you so much for sharing them with us. And I bet -- Steve, do you want to try to get a shot of the page in the autograph book?

(Second Interviewer): Sure.

Q. And I might - (inaudible).

[END]

Note: Conclusion of the audio transcript is followed by visual shots of
three documents:

Document 1 from autograph album, time stamp 50:47 to 51:03:

Dear Lois, (date not clear)

Remembrance is all I ask

But if it serves a task

Forget me,

Your Schoolmate,

Billy Burris

Document 2 from autograph album, time stamp 51:03 to 52:31:

April 24, 1939

Dearest Lois,

Altho you + I have never “paled”
together I regard you as one of
my truest friends. So many are
“friends” for just what you
can do for them, but I believe
you are sincere.

Love,

Madelyn Payne
The White House

Washington

Dear Lois –

Thank you for the wonderful note.

It’s good to know that my grandmother was sensible even in her early years!

Best Wishes, Barack Obama
Q. Well, then, let's begin. And I'm going to ask you to start the same way that I have asked everybody else. So, for the record, so that we have it on the recording, your full name, and your age, and where we are today?

RT. Well --

Q. So, what's your name?

RT. Raymond Teegarden, and --

Q. How old are you, if you don't mind saying?

RT. 90.


RT. That's right.
Q. And we are in your apartment?
RT. Yeah.
Q. At LakePoint of Augusta; right?
RT. Yes.
Q. Okay. So, do you have a middle name, Raymond?
RT. J. James is my middle name.
Q. But you go by the initial?
RT. Yeah.
Q. Were you named after anyone? Is there a story behind how you got your name?
RT. No.
Q. Okay. So, tell me about your family, and your earliest memories.
RT. Well, the earliest thing is my folks moved down here to Augusta, and went to work for Mobil Oil Company. Back in those days, they were still an oil company by themselves --
Q. Mm-hmm.
RT. -- and so they – oh --
Q. Take your time.
RT. It takes me some time to think.
Q. That's okay. We have time. They moved to Augusta. Was that before you were born?
RT. Yeah, yes, before I was born. I was born here in Augusta. We lived out in the country, and Dad drove back and forth from Mobil to back home.

Q. Did he also farm?

RT. No, he couldn't. He was a labor foreman --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- and so he had to spend his time with the company -- company work, and then, wouldn't you know, I went over to get a job, and they wouldn't let me have one, so I went over with Mobil Pipeline and got a job from them.

Q. Well, now, was this after the war when you came back from World War II, or --

RT. No, that was before.

Q. Before. When you were first starting your work --

RT. Yes. I had about four or five nights, I think it was, that I worked, and then I got drafted, and away I went.

Q. Okay. So, you grew up -- you kind of grew up, your first few years before school, in the country?

RT. Yes.

Q. And what do you remember about that? Did you have brothers and sisters?

RT. Oh, I had one brother, and that was our family.

Q. What did you guys do when you were little?

RT. We played. Mostly. [Laughs.]
Q. Did you have any favorite games?
RT. No. There wasn't any work. We did have a pony though, so we were happy. [Laughs.]
Q. Of course. What kid wouldn't want a pony?
RT. Yeah, so we had that pony, and we had some chickens, and -- and cows, and we had a dog that was really a nice dog, a shepherd dog, and every day, he would go out into the pasture, and bring the three calves left, bring them up, and put them in the shed so dad could milk them when he got home from work. So we had quite a time.
Q. You had a working dog.
RT. Yeah.
Q. Did you have regular chores, you and your brother, on the -- around the place?
RT. Well, not too regular, because we couldn't do much. We weren't very old. And then, I finally started school out there, and --
Q. What school did you go to? Was it a country school?
RT. Washington School, out in the country, yes. And then, we moved to town after about three or four years of that country work out there.
Q. So would you have been in about the second or third grade when you moved to town?
RT. Yes, the second. Yes, second grade, and --
Q. What school did you go to then?
RT. Then, came in here, and went to, oh, Garfield School, and --
went on through with the school, and of course, my brother was
born about two years after we moved in, and so we -- we moved
down there, finally. We got about, oh, probably two or three
blocks, and that's -- and then we walked to school from there.
It was quite a life.

Q. Mm-hmm. Why do you say that?

RT. Oh, being a country kid, and coming to school, you know.

[Laughs.] We had quite a lot of conversation over that, but --

Q. Did you get teased because you were a country kid?

RT. Yes, about milking cows, and feeding them, and all that stuff.
I didn't do that, but --

Q. So did you get into any fights over it? How did you handle
being teased?

RT. Oh, no. We didn't get in any fights. And then, we went all
through -- all through those two schools.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And let's see. I think it was 6th grade -- in the 6th grade, we
went to -- I believe there's about 8 -- no, the next step down,
but --

Q. That's okay.

RT. Well, the thing is, the teacher that taught me out of Washington
School moved to Augusta, and she taught here, and taught me
again in the elementary school.
Q. And was that at Garfield, or was it different?
RT. It was at Garfield.
Q. Okay.
RT. But then, there was a -- a -- think a used to be -- yeah, I think fourth grade -- or sixth grade, I mean, and she taught all, all of us there. But my brother, he was behind me about three years, so he was going to a different school.
Q. Mm-hmm. So --
RT. And my grandfather lived in the country, and he sold his property in the country, his farm that he had, and built a house up there on top of the hill on High Street -- or, I mean, State Street.
Q. Mm-hmm.
RT. And then, we kind of took off, and went on after he -- he finally passed on, and got out before -- or about the time we were getting out, when I went on to high school, and he went on to -- well, my same teacher.
Q. Mm-hmm.
RT. So he knew her.
Q. So did you then move into your grandfather's house after he passed?
RT. No.
Q. No?
No, my father bought a house, and we moved into that, and that's where it was about 10 blocks from the school -- or, I mean, from our home to the school, and we would go down there. Oh, now -- well, anyway --

So when you were in your new house, you were walking to Garfield, but you were walking a farther distance?

Yeah.

Do you remember when you were in grade school, when you first -- maybe when Madelyn was first in your class, or when you were first aware of her knowing who she was, or --?

Yeah. I didn't know who she was.

Well, she was just your classmate, or she was just your schoolmate.

Yeah. Oh, I don't know. We used to walk to school. That's where I really met her, because they had enough people to have two -- two rooms.

Mm-hmm.

And then, they started building new schools, and we went on from there, and --

But you said -- you did say before we even started taping that you walked to school. You and Madelyn both walked to school with a bunch of kids. Can you maybe repeat that, and tell me a little bit more about that?
RT. Well, yeah. There was three boys, and course, at that time, we were about 7th grade when we moved up to the new house. Why, we got, we -- about three or four blocks from where Madelyn lived, and we would walk downtown, eh, down to school, and she would talk to us, and walk along. There was about four or five of us that did that --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- and we had a good time.

Q. Well, you were in the 7th grade, and she was in the same class as you. Did you think she was pretty cute? Did you like girls yet?

RT. Yeah. I wasn't too worr-, too worried about girls until I got in high school, and then I started asking them for dates, and so forth, and I never did ask her, Madelyn. I should have, but I didn't, because she was pretty sharp. She was a brain, in my opinion, anyway.

Q. But I hear you -- you did hang out together some. Can you talk about that?

RT. Oh, yes. Well, we'd go -- they had a little hamburger shop down there, and we went down to that, and had a Coke, and something like that, about every other week.

Q. Was that a bunch of you, or was that just you and Madelyn?

RT. No. I never did go out with her by --

Q. One-on-one?
Yeah. But I liked her. She was a pleasant girl.

Do you remember what made you think so? I mean, what made her different? What kind of things did she do that made you think she was special?

Well, she tried to teach me.

What?

That was about impossible.

What subject?

Huh?

Do you remember what subject she tried to help you with?

No. About anything. And then, we got -- we got out of there, and went on to the junior high. We went on to high school, and, and I didn't see her much because I was too busy playing football and sports. I spent too much time trying to learn how to do it. I never was too great.

So were you -- we've heard stories about the football team. And Herman Reed, a black guy, was the captain of that team?

Yes.

Were you on that team?

Yes.

Oh, can you tell us about that? That sounded so interesting.

Well, it was interesting. Herman's father was a shoeshine man down at the barber shop, and he was a good one, and they were nice -- very nice people, and so we decided he was all right, so
we all liked him, and he didn't have any trouble playing with us. He played football, and we went -- one time, we went down to Fredonia to play them, and we had a restaurant there, and he was in a different car than I was in, so we went on in, and sat down, and ordered, and they was starting to fix our dinner, and oh, boy, they wouldn't let him eat in there. He couldn't eat with us. So we just got up, and walked out, and left them there. I thought we'd be in trouble, but we didn't get in trouble. People, I don't understand them.

Q. You were way ahead of your time.

RT. I don't know. Anyway, we enjoyed it.

Q. Well, there was a story about him being made the captain of the team. You guys voted him to be the captain of the team. Do you remember that?

RT. Huh-uh. I don't remember that.

Q. You don't remember? I'm trying to think. There were a couple of the women who, you know -- and, of course, they weren't on the team, but -- but they said that when -- when his teammates voted him to be the captain of the team, there were some adults, and I don't know if it was school officials, or town officials, that told him that he couldn't be the captain of the team, and the team all said, "Well, if he's not the captain, we're not going to play."
RT. Ah, but he -- I don't know whether that's what happened, but I do know that they had problems, and we had a lot of time to make up the problems, and there were some, those guys -- some of them were not too good, but we would let him play anyway. We had a good time.

Q. Were there any other -- were there any other African American kids that played football that your teams played, or was Herman the only one?

RT. He was the only one, but I can't -- I think it was -- oh, we had one guy that -- the captain of the team was Perdin [phonetic spelling], and he was a very good football player. In fact, he went and played with the New York Giants, and they really didn't win that time when they had him. Of course, it wasn't him always, because they put him on kicking. He was -- he was the quarterback, but when he got up there, they didn't let him be quarterback.

Q. So did you -- uh, I know. I was going to ask you one more question about Herman Reed if you don't mind. He was the captain of the team one year, wasn't he?

RT. Yes, I think, yeah.

Q. Do you remember which year?

RT. No. I think it was a year after we graduated. He -- he was about two years younger than we were.

Q. Oh.
RT. And so we all got out of the there, and then, he moved to -- his parents moved to California, and he went with them.

Q. So that's what happened to him after high school, then?

RT. That's right. And I'm not certain, but I think he got into pro ball, but I'm, I can't remember. That's --

Q. That's what other people have told us, that he played pro, and even came back for one of your high school reunions.

RT. Yeah. I think some of them did, because as soon as we -- when I graduated in 1940, why, I worked a while for Mobil, about three or four months, and then they let me go, and says, "We'll have a job for you when you get back." So I was gone for a little over three years, and they just went ahead and -- and carried my retirement, and everything, like I had been working all that time. So they were quite good about that.

Q. Was the patriotic thing to do, too.

RT. In fact, they were -- you treat them right, they'd treat you better than right.

Q. So did your -- was your whole career with -- did you work with Mobil for the rest of your career?

RT. Yeah, 42 years, and Mobil -- I was still working, and Mobil went to Dallas.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And that was headquarters, and they tried to get me to go down there, and work in the office, and I was oh, a -- a movement
scheduler, so they had plenty -- plenty for me to do, but I wouldn't go because I was 62 and my wife couldn't. She was a teacher, and she couldn't go down there in Texas and teach until she went to school and learned Texas history, so I told them, "Well, I'm not going to go down there." They shut their refinery down, and moved them all out, and transferred. Oh, quite a thing.

Q. That was a hard thing to see go, wasn't it?

RT. Yes. That made Augusta -- after that, it just started going downhill.

Q. So what all -- to look around at Augusta then, what was different because Mobil was in the community?

RT. Because about everybody that worked lived in Augusta.

Q. Mm-hmm. To go back to high school for a minute, do you mind going back to high school for a minute? I think Faye said -- Faye said something about a -- the drugstore, that the kids -- you mentioned the hamburger joint, they all used to meet there?

RT. No. They had a drugstore downtown where we -- this place was about where --

Q. Which? The drugstore, or the --

RT. The drugstore was downtown.

Q. Okay.

RT. And -- and I'm trying to think of his name. Scare was the owner of the drugstore.
Q. Was the drugstore, then, Scare Drugs, or --
RT. Yeah.
Q. It was named after him. So it's not still there?
RT. No, no. It's --
Q. Do you know if the building is still there?
RT. Yes, the building is still there, but it's changed around.
Q. Tell me about hanging out in the drugstore with your high school classmates, including Madelyn, or not.
RT. Well, she didn't come down there much.
Q. Mm-hmm.
RT. I don't know why, but she was --
Q. She was probably busy studying. [Laughs.]
RT. Yeah, I think so, but we'd -- I don't know about her -- I never -- never met her father, and I met his mother -- met her mother -- excuse me.
Q. I knew that was what you meant. [Laughs.] You met her mother how?
RT. When we had a play -- junior play, and I was in that play, and so she came up, and congratulated me on my great ability to be -- [laughs] -- to be an actor.
Q. What was the play? Can you remember the name and what role you played?
RT. [Laughs.] Oh, well --
Q. Do you remember the name of the play?
Two of them, junior and senior both.

Q. Oh, okay. But what was the play? What was the name of the play?

RT. Oh, gosh. I can't even remember.

Q. That's okay. What kind of character did you play? What kind of part did you play?

RT. Uh, boys going to school. That was one of them, and the other one was -- oh, I can't even remember what it was now.

Q. Why do you think you remember that Madelyn -- or Madelyn's mother congratulated you for being such a good actor?

RT. Well, I never -- never met her before, only one time we -- that one time, but I didn't get to speak to her -- talk with her.

Q. See, I don't remember being that interested in my friends' parents when I was in high school. I thought maybe there was some reason why she stood out to you.

RT. Well, no, I just -- I knew, of course, there was a group -- I think, a group that she went with, with that were all that way.

Q. And what way is that?

RT. They were all get together, and talk over, oh, what's going on, and all that kind of thing.

Q. Parents that helped at -- that were actively involved in helping at school?

RT. No.

Q. Not that. Okay.
RT. First one thing, then another. A lot of them belonged to the — uh, let's see. No, I can't remember now.

Q. A ladies organization of some kind?

RT. Oh, yeah, it was where they — let's see. Oh, and that's too far back. I can't —

Q. That's okay. We'll just move on.

RT. I can't think.

Q. Well, when you guys hung out at the drugstore, what did they — what was it like? Did they have a soda fountain? Did they have a little dance space, and a jukebox, or --?

RT. Oh, they -- oh, yeah. They had a Wurlitzer, and they played, and we danced. They had booths in there, and we'd sit there, and -- and get up, and go dance, and get back, and oh, boy. A big time.

Q. Was that one of the highlights of -- of your free time when you were in high school?

RT. Yeah, that's right.

Q. Do you remember any particular conversations? You said you and Madelyn had a hamburger and Coke, or she was there when you kids were all there. Do you remember any particular conversations you ever had with her?

RT. No, I can't.

Q. That's okay.
RT. She -- she was above me. I found that out, so I didn't bother her too much.

Q. She was above you why? Because she was smarter, you thought, or --

RT. Yes. And I can't remember when, when they left Augusta, but her father was a -- some kind of an oil --

Q. Did he work for the oil company, too?

RT. Yes he -- he was a -- I don't know exactly what he was. I don't know, even know who he worked for.

Q. That's okay.

RT. But I know she told us that he was a supervisor, and I imagine he was. He lived in a company house, so it would be my idea that he was. Running what company, I don't know.

Q. What do you mean by "a company house"?

RT. Well, the company owned the house.

Q. And then rented it to its employees, or --

RT. And then, then -- well, back in those days, they used to do that, and, and my folks lived in a company house for awhile, when they were -- Dad worked for --

Q. Not Mobil?

RT. No, it wasn't Mobil. Well, he worked for Mobil, but for a while, we went to -- well, gosh. I can't even remember the towns now.

Q. But when -- during that time, you lived in a company house?
Q. Was that before you bought your -- you bought your house?
RT. Yes. That was before we ever --
Q. Mm-hmm.
RT. I was just a -- oh, about three or four years old when we worked for them --
Q. Mm-hmm.
RT. -- and we had quite a time.
Q. Do you remember your childhood as being fun?
RT. Hmm?
Q. Was your childhood fun?
RT. Yes.
Q. So you were starting to tell me about your experience in the service before we started the interview. When did you -- were you drafted, or did you join, and what branch? And tell me a little about that.
RT. Well, I joined, and the reason I joined is because I wanted to be in the Air Force, I thought. So I just signed up, and then went up, got a physical, and -- then we’re going to send you down -- down and -- then, ohhhh --.
Q. So you didn't get to be a pilot?
RT. No, I didn't get to be a pilot.
Q. Did you stay in the Air Force? They kept you in the Air Force, didn't they?
RT. No, no.

Q. Oh, Army?

RT. They just signed us -- I just signed up, and they sent us where they wanted you.

Q. Oh, I see.

RT. So I was happy I got to get an easy job.

Q. So what -- where did you end up?

RT. I got to be weapons manager.

Q. And you were in the Pacific theatre; is that right? I heard you say something about a Japanese sword.

RT. Oh. You heard of the Battle of Okinawa?

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. Okay. We were in that, and what we did was -- I got to work on that, too, because I was an arms -- those arms were my assignment, to make sure they were working, and so I had to go help put them together and -- and -- then, we got over there in Okinawa, and what it was, was in the bottom of the tank, used to sit up high, there was four men in the tank, and we got it down to where there was only three, and then, they, they had a flamethrower out of that 75 millimeter cannon, and put a -- a raised -- I tried to tell you there -- [motioning] -- I don't know -- raised the bottom of the cabin. I mean -- well, yeah, raised it up as high as they could, and put barrels -- three barrels in there, and filled them full of napalm, and then, we
got to go in after we got -- got up there. We went in on the first load with the infantry, and took the tanks in, and we took that napalm, and we'd go -- we had oxygen in there, and we had a car spark plug --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- set right up, at the top of the -- or when the napalm came up, and went up through the barrel with the oxygen pushing it up, and we could throw a flame about -- I would say, probably, some of them we could do it from a hundred yards, and then, most of them was from 80 to a hundred in there, and that's what that -- we got rid of that, got the Japanese, but see, we went from here to Hawaii. And Hawaii, after we were there, we got to go have a practice with a -- with our weapons in the top of the volcano --

Q. Hmm.

RT. -- and you could see smoke coming up out of that. And those were the days.

Q. Hmm.

[Videographer: I've got 15 minutes of tape left.]

Q. Okay. Did you have any contact with, you know -- did your -- did you get letters from home? Did you get letters from any friends when you were overseas during the war?

RT. Yeah.
Q. Did you ever hear from any of your friends from home, classmates, or --?

RT. Oh, yes, some of the girls I was going with, a couple of them.

Q. Did they send you pictures?

RT. No. [Laughs.]

Q. No? But they sent letters?

RT. Yeah.

Q. Had you met your wife then --

RT. No.

Q. -- before? So you didn't meet her until after you got back from the service?

RT. I had met her -- she went to school over in Pittsburg, and got her diploma over there, and then she came over here to go down to -- to Ark City, and they were supposed to have a job for her down there, and she got over here, and they had uh, rain, and she had to stay here in Augusta, and while she was here, one of them told her that the Phys Ed teacher just went ahead and quit, so she could take her place, so she signed up right away, and -- cause she couldn't take the bus down there because of the high water.

Q. Your -- just your luck, huh?

RT. Yeah, just my luck.

Q. So how'd you meet? How did you meet?
RT. Well, my brother told me, says, "Hey. I know there's a gal up here. She's a teacher, and you can go see what you can do." So, "Okay." I did. It finally worked out, and had a big time. Got married for 65 years so far.

Q. Wow. Congratulations. And you have two daughters; is that right?

RT. Yes.

Q. And do they both live here nearby, or --

RT. What's that?

Q. Do they both live near here? Where do they -- where do your daughters live?

RT. I live up there where I am now. 901 --

Q. Okay.

RT. See, I had a stroke, and --

Q. Oh.

RT. -- and, why, this half -- this one -- this one is really -- my right arm, just can't do much with it. See, it's starting to peel off, oh -- and that's -- I married her. She was happy, and so was I. I'm still happy.

Q. 65 years is quite an accomplishment.

RT. Yes, it is.

Q. Well, as we wrap up, is there anything that you wanted to tell us that I didn't ask you about?

RT. No, not that I can think of.
Q. Okay. Well, part of what we want to do is pass on this heritage to our children, so if there was any -- if there was any piece of Augusta's history that you could pass on to today's children, what would you want them to know about?

RT. Well, I think that they should all go to school, and go to school until they graduate, and -- because they're going to need an education.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And most kids are really capable of it if they just do it.

Q. Mm-hmm. Good words of advice.

RT. Yeah.

Q. Anything else we missed, Steve?

[Videographer: No, I'm pretty darn sure.]

Q. All right. Well, thank you very much. I guess we're finished.

RT. Well, that's all right, I hope --

Q. I hope we didn't wear you out.

RT. No.

Q. We might have made you miss Elvis, though. [Laughs.]

[Note: Interview ends at 50:42]
Q. -- For, uh, for your husband, so. Are we ready? [We're ready.]

Okay. So, umm, we'll just start by -- if you can say for the camera your name, your age, the date -- it’s April 24th -- and where we are.

MS. Okay. I'm -- I'm at the El Dorado Junior College, but I'm Margaret Shirk, or Mrs. David L. Shirk. My birthday is August the 18th, 1917, and today's date is April the --

Q. The 24th.


Q. Good. And -- and since, also, you're sharing David's memories, would you also just say for us his full name and his birth date?

MS. His full name was David Lee Shirk, and his birth date was November 14th, 1915.
Q. And what year did he graduate from El Dorado High School?
MS. 1935.

Q. Excellent. Okay. So where were you both born? And I'll just ask you that first. Where were you -- where were you born and raised, and where was your husband born and raised?
MS. I was born and raised in Lawrence, Kansas, where I still live. My grandfather came there from Missouri with teacher -- school teacher in Missouri during the Civil War. They shot a hole through his jacket, and he started moving. He lived there. My father was born right where I live, and I was born right where I live, and I still live there.

Q. Wow.

MS. David was [sound of audio crackling] -- well, he was born in Salina, Kansas, but beyond that, they moved a lot. And when -- when he was in the second grade, he lived in five states, so I couldn't begin to tell you where all he's been.

Q. How do you remember -- do you -- do you know how old he was when they moved to El Dorado, approximately?
MS. How old he was?
Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. Well, I think he was -- he started, I think, in the second grade after he had moved five times.

Q. Okay. So when and how did you two meet?
MS. Well, we met -- I went to -- I graduated from Lawrence High School in the class of '35, and I was attending KU, and he was
attending KU. Of course, he was a football player. I did not know him at that point, but he -- when he finished his senior year playing football, he had to work, and he worked three jobs to even go to school, so he would -- worked at the filling station that my father and I bought gasoline and had our tires worked on. He put gas in my car the Christmas after he was through playing football, and it was Christmas vacation. Everybody was gone, so we decided to have a date. And so that's how I met him.

Q. That's a lovely story. (laughs.)

MS. He -- I mean, he was -- he could have been my football hero, but I mean, he wasn't. I met him there, but of course, I watched him play all the time.

Q. You just didn't know that he was going to be --

MS. I did not.

Q. -- Your future husband -- or that he was your future husband?

MS. Yeah.

Q. Well, since you were talking about his working three jobs to be in school, and since you were here today to give a scholarship to the Rotary Club in, in your husband's memory, let's just start with that. Can you tell the story? Tell us the story of how that scholarship came to be, and what happened to him, and why now you wanted to come back and remember that.

MS. Well, the Rotary Club and I -- probably through Jack Bond, but anyway, that was an attorney here at that time, but anyway, he
was -- he -- he wanted -- he was a good football player in high school, and he went to Citizens' Military Training Camp in Fort Leavenworth, I think probably just to save money, put food on the table for the rest of the family. But anyway, Ad Lindsey, the football coach from KU, happened to be up there to train some of them, you know, for physical education and all, and he had heard about David anyway. And then, I think he was a friend of Jack Bond's too maybe, but he said, "Would you like to come and play football for KU?" And David said, "I'd love to play football, but I have no way of coming to KU," and so that was dropped.

So he came back home, and -- and I think probably through Jack Bond -- the Rotary Club contacted him and said that they would give him a loan of $60 to buy a few clothes to come, and you know, he'd -- I mean, at that point, there were no scholarships. You had to pay all of your expenses -- all of your expenses -- your matriculation, your everything: books, board and room, everything. So he said, "I wouldn't have any way of going to KU," but Jack -- I mean, the Rotary Club said, "Well, this $60 would help. If you want to try to go, we'll give you the $60 loan if you will pay it back in five years with no interest." So they gave him this loan, and he kept it with him all the time, had -- had all his life, and so he said, "Well, I will attempt to do that."
So he -- he bought a few clothes, put them in a paper sack, and got to Lawrence someway, I don't know. He probably thumbed his way, I don't know. But anyway, he got to KU, and he made the team, and from there on he just made it. But he had -- they said they would find him a job, you know, that was in -- that would be what now they'd give you a paid scholarship, but then, he said, "Well, we will try to find you a job." Well, he got three jobs, yeah, on his own. He got one that they found, and then two others that he found for himself. He was having -- he was taking three -- had three jobs, going to school, playing football, going to class, never missing a class, and he did that all through school, and got his first degree, then he got his master's. He -- he just did it.

Q. What were his degrees in?

MS. What?

Q. What were his degrees in?

MS. Oh, well, his first degree was in just --

Q. Liberal arts?

MS. What?

Q. Liberal arts?

MS. Well, it was in just a college, but he had to go a fifth year to get an education so he could teach. And then, he got -- his other degree was in education, master's, but entomology really is what he studied until he got into the physical education part.
Q. My son-in-law is an entomologist, which has nothing to do with this, but --

MS. Well --

Q. -- I find that interesting.

MS. The instructor with entomology wanted him to stay with it, but when they played a football game in Washington D.C, she told him to go to see something, and he went down. He said he went down in the basement of some building, and saw all these stuffy old bugs, and things, and he said that was enough, 'cause he was an outdoor person anyway. So he came home, and that's when he decided, and Dr. Allen -- Phog Allen said, "You need to really be a coach," so that's when he took his education.

Q. So he didn't just have a relationship with the football coach, but also with Phog Allen?

MS. Oh, Phog Allen was at our wedding. He was a real good friend of David's, and so was Dr. Naismith, the inventor of basketball. He said that David was -- well, he, he said he was -- he gave him, David a picture of himself, and wrote on it to David, and so did Dr. Allen. But anyway, he thought a lot of David, and he performed. He was -- Dr. Naismith, you know, was a minister, he was a doctor, and he was also a student of physical education.

Q. Interesting.

MS. And he was also a personal friend of our family. He married my aunt and uncle in our house when I was five years old, the house that I live in yet now, and I was flower girl. I was five years
old. (Laughs.) So his -- his children and my aunts and uncles went to high school together, and all through school.

Q. Okay. So you would say both Phog Allen and Dr. Naismith were sort of mentors to your husband -- mentors and friends? They, they inspired him --

MS. Oh, yeah.

Q. -- And helped him along the way?

MS. Sure. Oh, Dr. Allen thought that he should be a coach from the get-go. He said that David was good with kids, and students, and -- yeah.

Q. So -- well, and you did say in his coaching career, he taught three -- or he coached three years at Augusta High School, and that was at the time that Madelyn Payne, the President's grandmother --

MS. Grandmother.

Q. That was at the time she was a student there. Tell me a little about that.

MS. Well, he didn't, of course, have her, but she was in school there, because at that time -- because he taught physical education to boys, and of course, he didn't have her, but she was there in school, and he knew who she was, and all. And of course, he knew Obama's grandfather, because he was in his high school class.

Q. Right. Well, if he knew -- it's interesting that he knew her. She must have stood out in some way when he was coaching there.
Did he ever say why -- why she came -- why he would have even known who she was if he didn't teach her?

MS. Well, no, but he knew the family. Augusta isn't that big. You know all the family. And she had a sister and so forth that was in school. No, at that time, he didn't know anything about that connection, but he knew the family, and so forth.

Q. Okay. And were you married then? Were you married at that time to each other?

MS. Yes. Well, we were married in 1940.

Q. Okay.

MS. And then, he went to Augusta in 1940 to '43, and then went to the service for four and a half years. He was drafted.

Q. And of what branch did he serve in, and where?

MS. Army. Army.

Q. Army. And he was where during the war?

MS. Well, he was all over, but he was at Fort Benning. We were -- we lived at Fort Benning for a while, and then he got -- when he was discharged, he was a captain.

Q. Okay. So did he go in at the, sort of, at the end of the war, or after World War II, or --?

MS. Well, he went in in 1943.

Q. Okay. So --

MS. I mean, he was drafted in 1943.

Q. Right, right, right, but he didn't have to go overseas?
MS. Well, he was -- yes, he was supposed to, and was all ready to go, but he had a spinal fusion in the service, and that kept him on stateside for a while, but then he got his orders to go, and, but some way, he didn't ever. I mean, it was too late, I guess, and so forth, but yeah, he -- he did get his orders. And had -- he was all packed. In fact, I think his trunk already went over but without him. But, anyway --

Q. Okay. Well, that's very interesting, too. So if you lived in Augusta for three years during that time period, did you -- and you knew Madelyn's family, the Payne's, did you socialize with them, or go to church with them?

MS. With who?

Q. With Madelyn's family.

MS. Oh, no, not to my knowledge.

Q. Just -- just like you wouldn't know who somebody is in your community?

MS. Sure, sure.

Q. Okay. Well, let's back up a little bit then. I just thought while we were talking about coaching, that would be a good time to bring in that connection, but your -- your husband grew up in El Dorado. You said he came in the second grade. What are some of the most memorable things that he shared with you and with his daughters about what it was like to grow up in El Dorado during that time period?
MS. Well, he never talked about it. He never talked about his past at all, and I never insisted.

Q. Do you think that was because the family was poor?

MS. Well, no. I mean, I really don't know, because he and his family -- he had an aunt that had a son that was his age that died after he was in college with a kidney infection, but beyond that, his family really -- he had a brother that was -- went to the service, and never came home, you know, finally married a girl in California, and he never saw him much, or -- his family really didn't -- he didn't connect with them too much, because when he left, he left. And, and of course, you know, if you don't have any money, you don't -- you can't call, and you don't write, you don't have time. He was -- had three jobs and all, and so really, I never heard much about it. And, course, they came when he graduated to our house and stayed. He, and his mother, and sister -- one sister, but beyond that, they didn't even come to our wedding, so I just -- I don't know why.

Q. So he had a -- well, customs were different during that time period, too. I know that, but he had a brother and a sister?

MS. He had two sisters, and a brother, and two half-brothers.

Q. And, but he was the only one of all those siblings to go to college? Is that right?

MS. He was the only one.

Q. And it was because he could play football and the Rotary Club gave him that scholarship?
MS. Yeah. I mean, you know, that's the only way he would have gone to college --

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. -- was because of that scholar-- -- that $60 that they loaned him.

Q. Mm-hmm. So, okay. Well, he's in high school now. I assume he probably didn't know Stanley Dunham until he was in high school, or did they go to school -- did they go to grade school together, or anything like that?

MS. Who?

Q. Your husband, David, and Stanley Dunham, the President's grandfather.

MS. Oh, yeah. Well, I don't know about that, but they did go to high school together.

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. Yeah.

Q. So you know some things about -- oh, things that your husband told you about Stanley as a student, and can you share any memories that you can rem- -- that he shared with you about -- about Stanley?

MS. Oh, no. I mean, when we were in Hawaii, and we were house-sitting over there, when David hurt -- and fell off the roof, and he came to see us, and that's the only time that I ever heard about him, really. I mean, David didn't talk too much about people, you know --
Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. -- unless they were his really good friends.

Q. But that visit, or that connection, in Hawaii brought back -- he was sharing his memories?

MS. Yeah.

Q. Well, I have to ask you, because you mentioned it, and lots of adolescent boys get in trouble in high school.

MS. Yeah.

Q. What about -- he didn't graduate with his class?

MS. No. Stanley -- and this was in the newspaper at one point. Stanley some way slapped the principal. (Laughs.) I don't know why, but then he later graduated, but not with my husband's class, but that was -- that's when he should have graduated was in our class. But that was never brought up anymore that I’d ever heard. But then, when we were in Hawaii, he spent a whole day with us. He was real charming and nice.

Q. So how did you know even that he was in Hawaii? How did you make -- how did you guys make that connection when you were house-sitting?

MS. Well, I -- I don't know, probably Stanley found it out through somebody in El Dorado. I don't know, because we weren't -- he wasn't communicating with him or anything, but probably through the El Dorado Times or something.

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. I really don't know.
Q. So he spent a whole day with you. What did you do?

MS. Well, he came and stayed at the house with us, because my husband, you know, couldn't do anything. He'd -- he'd broke, I mean, he'd hurt his leg, and was -- well, the doctor said, "He can go over there and rest," he said, and I -- he gave me a doctor's name over there, but he said, "Just -- just keep off of it." And he couldn't really walk very good, or anything, but we just stayed at home, and went out to eat lunch, I think, but stayed in the car. And of course, we could use these people's car and everything, so -- and then, of course, Stanley had his car, so we went out to eat at noon, and then, and we didn't do a thing but just talk, they did.

Q. Mm-hmm. Well, what did they talk about?

MS. You know, I don't know. I probably didn't listen too good.

(Laughs.)

Q. But you remembered a couple of things about Stanley that Stanley said about his own family?

MS. Yeah. No, he didn't. Oh, well, he did tell us about this boy that was living with him that was in high school at that point, and he said, "He is really a smart kid," and he said, "I think he'll go a long ways," and that's all he said. He was just saying how nice he was, and all. He said, "Our daughter's a little different," but he said, "He's a real nice boy." And I think his daughter was away from home at that point. So anyway,
he was telling us about this boy, but we did not get to meet him.

Q. Did you get to meet Madelyn then, or did you see her that -- when you were in Hawaii?

MS. No.

Q. No. So you spent that day --

MS. She was working.

Q. Okay.

MS. I mean, she was in -- she worked in a bank over there.

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. I think she was Vice President or something. Anyway, she had a pretty good job.

Q. Mm-hmm. Well, Stanley turned out to be a prophet, I guess. “He'll go far,” if he said that.

MS. Yeah, yeah.

Q. Let's see. After that visit, did you -- did David and Stanley stay in touch at all?

MS. No, no. I mean, that was -- you know, our lives were different, and we just -- but he was very nice while we were over there.

Q. So what year did your husband pass away?

MS. Beg pardon?

Q. When did your husband pass away?

MS. Oh, in 2009.

Q. So he was still living when Barack Obama became President for his first term? That was in 2008.
MS. Oh, well, then he would have been, because he -- he passed away in November the 2nd of 2009. If he'd have lived, I think -- well, until the 14th, he would have been 94. So --

Q. I see. So -- but was he -- do you know if he was aware that that was the same person?

MS. Oh, yeah.

Q. Okay. Did he have anything to say about that?

MS. Well, my husband had his mind until the very last.

Q. Uh-huh. So did you talk about it at all?

MS. It was just that he'd broke his hip twice, is what happened to him.

Q. Well, that's a blessing that he -- not that he broke his hip, excuse me, but a blessing that his mind was sharp.

MS. Yeah. Oh, I know. Yeah.

Q. Did you talk at all about how interesting it was that Barack Obama was Stanley Dunham's grandson, or --?

MS. No, I don't think so.

Q. Okay. Um. Let's see. Um. We've --

MS. We might have, you know, I don't know. But his interests were basketball. That's the main thing we talked about, cause he went to every basketball game. I took him in a wheelchair his last two years, and I took him to all the basketball games, and if he'd have lived about four more days, I'd have taken him to the first game in 2009.

Q. Ah. (Laughs.)
MS. He was looking forward to it.

Q. Well, and he had a long, successful coaching career, too, didn't he?

MS. Oh, yeah, sure. That's all he did.

Q. He coached a lot? Mm-hmm. He must have loved it.

MS. Administrator, coach, and teacher.

Q. Okay. Is there anything else -- we've heard a lot from people about growing up during the Depression, and the war years, and how -- what an influence that was on their lives. Is there -- are there anything from that time period that -- anything from that time period that stands out in your memory that would have been an important influence?

MS. In his life?

Q. In his life, or in yours.

MS. Well, his -- his life -- I mean, he didn't -- they didn't have anything. Well, he lived in a boxcar, and they didn't have food for one day. They'd get -- go down and get free buttermilk, and that's all they had one day a week. And his father worked on the railroad if they had a job, and so it was just touch-and-go, really. They had beans, and maybe a little pork once in a while in it. I mean, they really were like -- Clarence Kerns, you know him? He's --

Q. Mm-hmm.
MS. Well, he was -- he was one of David's best friends. He could tell you everything about him, and he said that he was the poorest of the poor.

Q. Wow.

MS. So -- and then, they'd go, and, and the kids would, you know, make faces, and do that to the engineers on the trains, and they'd throw coal to the kids, and the kids would pick it up, and that's the only fuel they had to stay warm and to heat with, or to cook with. I mean, he grew up poor, and that's why I started this scholarship. I just -- you know, if you could change somebody's life like his was changed, it would mean a lot.

Q. And the scholarship is -- do you want to maybe finish by telling us what -- what -- what -- what is -- what are the terms of the scholarship? Who does it go to, and what do they have to do?

MS. It doesn't necessarily go to the smartest, because they have other avenues to get scholarships. This is supposedly to help the poor people.

Q. And so students write --

MS. The ones that need it.

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. The neediest people.

Q. Okay.

MS. Of course, now, it's different than it was then. I realize that. The poor people now have it easy compared to what my
husband had. I know that, but then, still, they're too poor to go to college.

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. And if they can have a little bit of money to start college with, it --

Q. Sure. Well, are there any -- this might be an appropriate question since you just gave two young people a scholarship to start their education -- their higher education: Are there are words of wisdom you'd pass along to -- to the students who receive those scholarships?

MS. Any what?

Q. Any words of wisdom you would -- you would like to give those students who get the scholarships?

MS. Well, yes. I would like to see if -- I mean, I would hope that they would some way pay part of it back, at least. I don't know the terms that the Rotary Club gave them, but David said that he wanted them -- that it was to be paid back in five years with no interest. I have no clue what the Rotary Club did to this --

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. -- But I would hope that in some way they would pay something back someday.

Q. And I don't know if you said for the camera, David did pay back the scholarship in five years?

MS. Yes.

Q. Your husband paid the scholarship back.
MS. Yes, yes. And he can -- he wrote on the back of it how he paid it, $10 at a time, and so forth, and then I gave him back that note.

Q. So now the Rotary Club in El Dorado has the receipt from that original scholarship?

MS. They have it.

Q. Mm-hmm. I think that's wonderful.

MS. I didn’t -- I mean, he kept it all the time because it meant so much to him.

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. And so when -- when I decided to do this, I said, “Would --,” I called, and I said, "Would you like to have a -- a note that you gave -- that the Rotary Club gave my husband when he graduated from high school," and they said, "We've never done that", and I said, "Well, I beg your pardon, but I have a note that you gave my husband in 1935." And they were -- they couldn't believe it. I said, "Well, I have it, and you can have it if you want it, because --," I said, "-- I really don't need it now." So they -- they accepted it, and realized that they did do it, but she said they had never done it before, or since, I guess.

Q. So is there anything -- any memory, or story, that you were thinking about sharing that I haven't asked you about? Any --

MS. Oh, not really, but I'm glad to do it all. I want to pay back, if I can, some of the things that -- I've been blessed in a lot of ways, and so --
Q. Well, just sharing your experiences is a --

MS. So I just want to --

Q. -- in addition to the scholarship is an important way of doing that. And those two students will become contributing members to society, and that's a way of paying back, too, huh?

MS. Well, yes, and I volunteer a lot with --

Q. Mm-hmm.

MS. And, of course, I worked at the Alumni Office at KU for 50 years, and volunteered there, and the endowment, too, sometimes. David and I both -- he would -- he would make trips to Kansas City to pick up people all during commencement, and everything, and to the athletic department. We have volunteered more at KU than you can believe.

Q. Well, what you do in your free-time says a lot about what is important to you, and I would say education has been an important thing--

MS. Yeah.

Q. -- To both you and your husband.

MS. But I just got my degree two years ago.

Q. Tell us about that.

MS. You know why? I mean, officially got my degree. I graduated in '35, walked down the hill. I was in the program and everything, but I had a job at the Board of Trade in Kansas City the next day, and I didn't go pick up my diploma, therefore, they never put me in their records as a graduate. (Laughs.) And we were
talking -- my son-in-law and I were talking with the -- when he was in the legislature at that time, and he said -- I mean, we were talking, and the fellow that he was talking to asked me, he said, "Did you graduate from KU?" And I said, "Well, I -- I walked down the hill, and I was in the program, and I think I did, but I didn't ever pick up my diploma," and he said, "What?" And I said, "No, I didn't," and he said, "Well." I said, "I always thought I'd go back, and see what I'd have to take to catch up, you know, and make it official." He said, "Well," and then that was dropped. And that was about four years ago, or so, or five.

And so he and my son-in-law decided that they'd find out, because he worked with the college. The other guy worked with the college at that time, and the college, they -- he said that they took one of their women, and they put her on my name. Took her three months to figure out why I didn't get a diploma, and they couldn't find any reason, so -- (laughs) -- so they finally gave me my diploma. (Laughs.)

Q. Well, good for them.

MS. But the next -- the next week in the paper -- it was in the Lawrence paper how if you didn't pick up your diploma in 10 years, you had to take some more classes.

Q. Well, I'm out of luck then, because I never picked up my KU diploma either.

MS. Oh!
Q. I have it that I graduated on my transcript though.

MS. Well, but so what? I did, too, but I mean, I never needed a diploma, so I didn't pick it up. So see, I'm not any dumber than you are. (Laughs.) I thought I was pretty stupid, personally. Well, I'm glad to know there's a few, but I know my neighbor, she has two kids, and they're, you know, young now, and they -- neither one of them picked up theirs. And I said, "Now, look, Eileen. You got to get them their diploma, because," I said, "they maybe don't need it now, but someday, they might." And I was never listed as a -- a C '39, I was always just a '39. Now, I'm a C '39.

Q. Class of, I guess. Graduating class of 1939. Well, congratulations on getting your diploma, and thank you so much for sharing those memories with us, and thank you for -- for giving back to the community where your husband grew up with these scholarships.

MS. Well, I know he'd be pleased, and I'm pleased to be able to give it to you.

Q. I wish we could have met him, but you are a fabulous representative of, of him, so thank you very much.

MS. But you better go get your diploma.

Q. Oh, it's too late. It's been more than 10 years. (Laughs.)

MS. She doesn't wanna. You don't want to take any more classes.

Q. Besides, I managed to get my master's degree without having a diploma saying I had my bachelor's degree.
MS. Really?

Q. Yeah.

MS. How are you --?

Q. Well, it says on my transcript that I graduated.

MS. Yeah.

Q. So I always thought, well -- and I got a teaching job, and I graduated in December, so I didn't walk down the hill, and I always regretted that.

MS. Oh, I walked down the hill.

Q. I made both my daughters walk down. You turned that off, didn't you? [No.]

Q. No? Oh.

MS. I walked down the hill, and I was in the program, and everything.

Q. I made both my daughters walk down the hill, because I wished I had, but I was working by then, and --

MS. Well, I worked at the Board of Trade, and I eventually sold stock and bonds, and I'm still in the stock market.

Q. Are you? My brother-in-law --

MS. That's probably why you can get this money.

Q. My brother-in-law is a stockbroker in Lawrence.

MS. What?

Q. My brother-in-law is a stockbroker in Lawrence.

MS. Who's that?

Q. Steve Edmonds.
MS. Oh, I know him. Your brother-in-law?

Q. Yes.

MS. Oh, for heaven's sake. Yeah, I know him.

Q. Ah.

MS. I mean, I've known the Edmonds' for a long time.

Q. Well, yeah, because his dad had a grocery store there.

MS. I know it, and the -- Norman Edmonds was in my high school class.

Q. And, yeah. Norman and Wanda were great people.

MS. And -- and the girl, Barbara -- Barbara Edmonds, that's Norman's sister.

Q. I didn't know her.

MS. Well, she sang at my wedding.

Q. Oh! So -- but -- but I know the Edmonds boys, because the oldest one married my oldest sister.

MS. Well --

Q. So -- well, thank you so much.

MS. Okay.

Q. This has just been delightful. I'm so glad you came down from Lawrence for the day for this. And thank you, too, Nancy.

[END]

[Note: Nancy is Margaret’s daughter.]
Q1. Whatever. (Laughs.) All right. Christine, I'd like you to start by stating your full name and your date of birth.

CS. Okay. I'm Christine Snyder, born June the 1st, 1923.

Q1. All right. And what is today's date?

Q2. The 28th.

CS. October the 28th, 1913 -- I mean, 2913 [sic]. I'm sorry.

Q1. 2013, uh-huh. And where are we at today? In your home.

CS. Oh, you're in my home --

Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. -- in Wichita, Kansas.
Q1. In Wichita, Kansas, uh-huh. Okay. And so, what were your parents' names?
CS. Ed and Gladys Henry.
Q1. Ed and Gladys Henry, uh-huh. And where were they from?
CS. Illinois.
Q1. Illinois. And how did they end up in the Augusta area?
CS. They came out here on a train and got off in El Dorado, and then they went down around Atlanta first and worked in the oil field, my dad did.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. Then, he was moved to south Augusta.
Q1. What kind of work did he do for the oil field?
CS. He was -- he ran the pump station.
Q1. The pump station, uh-huh.
CS. Uh-huh.
Q1. And then, where were you born at?
CS. South Augusta in a home.
Q1. All right. And you told me that was called Browntown?
CS. No, that's the school I went to.
Q1. Oh, okay. So you were -- it was a home in south of Augusta that you were born at.
CS. I live -- what they call -- on Miller Corner. It would be what they call a shotgun house.
Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. Several people lived in that neighborhood.

Q1. Okay. So there was a large neighborhood out there outside of Augusta?

CS. Yeah, not really large, but it was -- I don't know how many homes was there.

Q1. All right. And so you went to grade school at Browntown.

CS. At Browntown.

Q1. And what grade did that go up to?

CS. Eighth grade.

Q1. To eighth grade, mm-hmm.

CS. We had to go to El Dorado to take a test to see if we was able to go to high school.

Q1. Oh.

CS. That's something new, isn't it?

Q1. Uh-huh. So can you tell me a little bit about the -- the school? You said it was pretty special.

CS. It was a large school for that area, larger than any others, and they also had several classrooms. They had a stage. And bathrooms for boys and girls, and then we had a gym area that we played -- got to play basketball in or games.

Q1. Huh-uh. And a lot of elementary schools didn't have those kind of facilities back then; right?
CS. No. And they had a lot of what they called "community nights" that different things would go on around the school, and people come there.

Q1. Uh-huh. So you took your test in El Dorado and apparently passed it --

CS. I guess.

Q1. -- Because you got to go to Augusta High School. How did you get to school?

CS. My mother drove me every day to school.

Q1. Uh-huh. And what kind of car did she have? Do you remember?

CS. You know, I don't know. Let's see.

There's somebody at the door. Oh, that may be a guy checking the -- I don't know what he's doing.

(The video skips)

-- car. We had a -- I think it was an Essick. Phonetic spelling. Essex was an auto brand]

Q1. An Essick?

CS. Essick car.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

CS. Essick.

Q1. I've never heard of that, but you know I'll be looking it up online.

CS. Well, I have some pictures of it.

Q1. Oh, uh-huh. Maybe you can share those with us later.
CS. Then -- then we got a new car. I don't know -- a new Ford. I don't know when we got it.

Q1. So you went to school in Augusta, then, from 9th through 12th grade?

CS. Yes.

Q1. And graduated in --

CS. 1941.

Q1. 1941. Did you happen to know Madelyn Payne, the President's --

CS. No, I didn't --

Q1. -- Grandmother?

CS. -- I didn't. I knew -- I'd heard of her, but I mean personally, I didn't know her.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. She was a year ahead of me, and when you live in the country, you don't really mix with a lot of kids.

Q1. Oh, uh-huh. We've heard that from several different people that --

CS. Well, mainly, because you had to go right -- a lot of them had to go home and do chores, but I didn't have to do that, luckily. But the only time I'd stay late after school is when I played in basketball, or so, or tennis, or something like that.

Q1. Oh, uh-huh. Did they have girls' teams for basketball and tennis or --?

CS. Just in our homerooms.
Q1. Just in your homerooms.
CS. You couldn't have girl teams then.
Q1. Uh-huh. But you played basketball and tennis?
CS. Yeah.
Q1. That's fun. Did you have any siblings?
CS. One sister, Donna Dee. [Phonetic spelling]
Q1. One sister. And then, did she -- did she go to high school the same time you did or --
CS. No, she started grade school when I started high school.
Q1. Oh, so she's quite a bit younger than you are then.
CS. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, she's nine years younger than I am.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. They let her come to Augusta school. She should have went to Browntown, but they let her go to Augusta, because my mother took me to school every day, so make it easier on everybody to send her to town.
Q1. To have you all in town.
CS. She went to Garfield School. You probably did too.
Q1. Oh. I did for a few years.
CS. Mm-hmm.
Q1. So Browntown was mostly a community of houses, so you did all your shopping in Augusta?
CS. In Augusta.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. There was a little store there across from the school, a little grocery store --

Q1. Oh.

CS. -- but we did our shopping in --

Q1. So it was kind of a convenience store in Browntown.

CS. Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah.

Q1. Uh-huh. Are there anything -- anything special that you remember about your times of coming in town? Was there -- you know, when you did your shopping and stuff, was there anything, you know, that you got to do? Like, did you ever go to the movies or --?

CS. Oh, yes, went to the movie.

Q1. Uh-huh. And was the opera house built during that time?

CS. I don't think so.

Q1. Okay. And --

CS. I don't know how new the Augusta Theater was at that time, but we went to that a lot.

Q1. I think it was built in '38, but I'm not exactly sure.

CS. Well, then, it probably started there when I started high school. That's when it was going then.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So in going back to high school, I know that you had to go home probably a lot, but some of the people that we'd interviewed said that they had gone to the drugstore and
listened to the jukebox and that kind of thing. Were you ever allowed to do something like that?

CS. Well, I never -- I didn't do that. I just had this little sister. If I had a basketball game, my mother knew I wasn't going to be able to go home until later, and she would come over to the high school and sit and wait until I got -- you know, she'd watch the games, then we'd go home. My mother would come and get us.

Q1. Were there any other kind of clubs or anything in school that you were involved with?

CS. Well, we had Girl Reserves, and I belonged to the Pep Club.

Q1. Uh-huh. What are the Girl Reserves?

CS. Well, it's really a Christian group, kind of like Hi-Y, but I can't think what they really -- it was kind of like a Christian group.

Q1. Okay. And Hi-Y was a Christian group too?

CS. That's the boys, uh-huh.

Q1. Okay. Well, that had come up when we were talking to Virginia Ewalt, and she wasn't sure what that was so --

CS. Well, I think it was -- pertained to a Christian background to it.

Q1. Uh-huh. So after school -- after you graduated from Augusta, you told me that you went to Butler County College.

CS. I went to nurses' -- entered nurses' training that year --
Q1. Nursing training.
CS. Uh-huh.
Q1. In El Dorado?
CS. El Dorado, Allen Memorial Hospital.
Q1. And did you live over there or --
CS. I lived in the nursing home in the -- wait a minute. Come back. It's not a nursing home; it's where the students lived, you know, in a home. We called it the nurses' home.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. Today that sounds bad.
Q1. Big difference, isn't it?
CS. But we didn't have a very fancy place to live in, because I was in a room with three girls, and they were used to being with that many girls. We had two twin beds, one rollaway under the bed.
Q1. So it was kind of crowded quarters, huh?
CS. Yeah, it was.
Q1. So --
CS. Then, see, I went to junior college there --
Q1. Okay.
CS. -- plus having classes at the hospital, plus working too. They kept us busy.
Q1. Sounds like it. So did you graduate from the junior college?
CS. No, no. I just had classes pertaining to -- that fit in our nursing schedule education.

Q1. Uh-huh. And then, was it during that time that you went to Kansas City for the training?

CS. Well, my husband was a Marine. He was in California, and he was sent to Chicago for schooling, and then he had a furlough, and he was going to come home and wanted to get married then, and at that time, the nurses could not be married and be in school, and so I went to the head lady and asked her if I could get married. I think her hat just went up [motions]. I was scared to death. So she finally gave me permission. Then, I took -- take my exams, and then we got married, and then we had car trouble, and I couldn't get back over here to go catch a train to Kansas City, and he had to go into Chicago with me too, so he was both being -- you know, had to wait for a -- get a ride.

So anyway, the next day, we went -- I went to Kansas City, and he got off with me, and this lady was really -- to me, she wasn't very nice at all. She said I had to go on duty right now. I had to change clothes and go to work. I said, "I'd like to tell him goodbye." She said, "No, you cannot do that," and I said, "Well, I am," so it sounded real crazy today. I'm glad my kids didn't do what I was doing.
Anyway, I came home, and he went on to Chicago, and that was a very tearful crying session for me.

Q1. Uh-huh. So -- so what year did you -- you and your husband get married?

CS. 1943.

Q1. And what is his name?

CS. Gilbert Dean Snyder.

Q1. And he was already enlisted in the military at that time?

CS. He's a marine.

Q1. Uh-huh. And how did you two meet?

CS. We met at Cumberland Church. Do you know where that is? South of Augusta.

Q1. Yes, yes, out off of old Haverhill Road, I think.

CS. No.

Q1. No.

CS. It's not very far from 77 now.

Q1. Okay. I know the area.

CS. There's a cemetery out there --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

CS. -- Cumberland Cemetery. I think it's called Cumberland.

Q1. And so you met at church services there?

CS. Yes, uh-huh. Yeah. He was in high school and so was I. We'd known each other for a long time.

Q1. Oh. Did he -- and so he went to Augusta High School too?
CS. No, he went to Potwin.

Q1. Oh, okay.

CS. His parents had moved down there on a farm, and they used to live in that area, and they went to that church, so he was in school in Potwin living with his sister, so he came down to see his parents and came to church with them, and that's how I met him.

And what's funny, he used to -- my little sister was little, you know. He would always wink at her, and she'd say, "Mama, that man just winks at me all the time." My mother told her turn around, he couldn't wink. [Laughs.]

Q1. So where did you and Gilbert --

CS. Where were we married?

Q1. -- make your home at? Yeah, where were you married at?

CS. First Baptist Church in Wichita.

Q1. Okay. And then, where did you make your home at when you were first married?

CS. Well, we didn't until I went to California when he came back from overseas, and we lived in a garage apartment.

Q1. Okay.

CS. First, we ended up playing room in a garage. Very hard to get a place to live.

Q1. In California?

CS. In Central California in Pearl Valley.
Q1. Mm-hmm. So can you tell me a little bit about his service?

CS. Well, he -- after he graduated from school in Chicago, he went back to California and was sent overseas right then, to South Pacific -- on a lot of different islands. They repaired planes that had been shot at, and then they were bombed an awful lot on this island -- these islands, several islands. And he really -- he had a good way of telling his parents where he was, because he had a grandpa that was Gilbert, had a school friend, Mary Anna, and an Uncle Roy -- the Roy Islands -- and some more. They could keep track of him.

Q1. So he could mention those names --

CS. Yeah.

Q1. -- And they knew where he was that way?

CS. Yeah. They'd just say something about them, you know, because at that time, they censored all the mail --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- you know.

Q1. So did you have any children?

CS. I do. We did, yes, after we got back out of the service, 1947.

Q1. Okay. So after he got -- came home from the war then.

CS. We lived here in Wichita, and he went back to work at Beech. See, he worked at Beech before he went in the service.

Q1. Oh, okay.

CS. He enlisted in the marines.
Q1. So after -- we'll go back to when you were in the nursing -- the nursing home.

CS. Yeah.

Q1. Did you graduate and become a nurse --

CS. No.

Q1. -- Eventually? No.

CS. See, I -- no, I didn't go back.

Q1. Oh, you didn't go back after that?

CS. No.

Q1. And so -- but Gilbert was gone overseas, and you were here during the war?

CS. Yeah. Then I worked at Boeing then.

Q1. You worked at Boeing. And what was your job there?

CS. I worked in small parts, riveted with machines.

Q1. You riveted with machines?

CS. Uh-huh.

Q1. So you were a Rosie the Riveter?

CS. Yeah, that's me.

Q1. Uh-huh. How long did you do that?

CS. Let's see. I don't know for sure when I went to work. Probably -- let's see. Probably in June I went to work. I lived in Augusta and rode the bus -- Ballinger's buses --

Q1. Oh, uh-huh.
CS. -- back and forth. I worked on -- I worked third shift, because I got more money - [laughs]
Q1. Oh, yeah, the shift differential.
CS. -- and I worked there until probably December of '44, because I had -- I had an appendectomy, and he was -- he was on his way home when I was in the hospital.
Q1. Oh.
CS. I got word that he was coming home when I was in the hospital.
Q1. Uh-huh. And so, when he came home, where did you live then?
CS. Then we lived in California.
Q1. That's when you lived in California.
CS. Uh-huh, yeah.
Q1. Okay. And how long were you there?
CS. Uh -- that would be in December '44 until '45 when the war was over, and they released everybody. We got out, I think, in -- oh, November the 11th, Armistice Day, he got out.
Q1. Oh, mm-hmm.
CS. I remember that real easy.
Q1. And so, after the war, did you move back to Augusta?
CS. No, we moved here in Wichita.
Q1. You moved here to Wichita.
CS. Uh-huh.
Q1. And then, is that where your sons were born --
CS. Yes.
Q1. -- were here in Wichita?

CS. Uh-huh, yeah.

Q1. So you would have grown up during the Depression era?

CS. Yes.

Q1. Is there anything you -- or what can you tell me about times here?

CS. Well, I was going to say, at my age at time, we were lucky. My dad had a good steady job, and he made good money, more than a lot of them did, because he ran this pump station -- pump engine.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. I guess that's what you'd call it. The men that worked on the rod -- rod roof -- worked on the rod lines -- that wasn't him but --

My folks, you know, they come from farm life, themselves. So they always had a big garden, and they raised chickens, and so we had plenty to eat, so I've never been one that didn't have enough to eat.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

CS. We -- we didn't have a cow. We had milk delivered. I don't know who did that. I can remember seeing a bottle of milk when it was so cold, it was frozen, and the cream was up over the top [motions], you know. I picked it up. Oh, I don't know.
Q1. So -- and I know -- what -- can you tell me a little bit about your house, like, as far as how was it heated and --

CS. We had gas heating. We had gas for heats and gas for lights, so our lights -- to us, they were bright, brighter than the lantern -- I mean, the lamps that people had, Coleman lamps.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. And we had plenty of gas. We'd cook with gas too. We had running water in the house, but it was cold. We did not have a bathroom in the house, but my dad had -- on this house would be a shotgun house, but they'd added a large room for a kitchen, and then my dad built a porch on it inside, covered up, you know, walls on it, and that's where we could take baths at in the wintertime.

Q1. Uh-huh. So you'd heat your water and fill the tub or --

CS. Yeah.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. We'd use a tub -- big ol' round tub.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. Can't imagine getting clean there, but it did.

Q1. So -- and is that the -- probably the same tub, maybe, you did your laundry in?

CS. No.

Q1. No?
CS. My dad was very mechanical, and he figured out -- he took a big oil tank, a clean one -- you know, a big -- I guess you'd call it an oil barrel --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- cut a hole in it, fix it, and so -- fasten on the rod line, and it would go back and forth and wash your clothes.

Q1. Oh, so you had your own homemade washing machine then.

CS. Yeah, we had a washer.

And then, to rinse the clothes, around this big -- had the engine in it. They had a huge tank -- wooden tank that had warm water in it, because it circulated in through the engine for the -- that kept it working inside --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- and so it was warm, so my mother used to rinse clothes in that water, but my sister and I, we were told not to get around it, but we could get up and kind of help, but we never -- that was a no-no for us, and we knew that you could drown in that thing, because it was tall.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. I know my dad used to take baths in there in the summertime, you know.

Q1. Uh-huh. So --

CS. It was always clean water.
Q1. That's good. As far as your clothes, did you buy those at the store? Did your mom sew?
CS. My mother made a lot, and we bought some at Calvert's.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. Yeah.
Q1. Calvert's was a great store, wasn't it?
CS. That's right. Wonderful people worked in there.
   It was really funny; when my niece got married in California, I couldn't find a dress anyplace in Wichita, and I -- one day, I went to Augusta, found one. I bought it at Calvert's. I told my sister, "This is really hilarious; went back to Augusta to Calvert's."
Q1. Have to leave the big city to find what you wanted.
CS. I guess that's hard to do today over there, to find something.
Q1. It is. It is. It just is not quite the town it used to be.
CS. That's too bad.
Q2. Are you looking at me?
Q1. Yeah. Where do I need to go now?
Q2. Well, I'd love to hear -- because you -- you grew up -- the little shotgun house you --
CS. Yeah.
Q2. -- described from your childhood, was that by the pump? Was that on the same land as the pump --
CS. Yes.
Q1. -- Out in the oil field?

CS. Yes, uh-huh. Yeah, we had another -- we had a cave there we could go in storm -- thunder storms. My dad had -- we had beautiful flowers down there. My mother planted beautiful -- had planted a lot of gladiolus bulbs --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

CS. -- and they were beautiful. In fact, she took a bouquet -- I get -- in the hospital when I was in training, the flowers. And we -- my dad -- I don't know where -- I've often wondered -- you know, stuff you wonder when you get older -- where he got the lumber at, because he built a double-car garage. We had a house for chickens, and he also built a barn. He also built me a nice playhouse. Where he got all this lumber, I have no idea. You know, you just think, "Well, where did all this stuff come from?"

Q1. So the cave was -- was that a natural cave?

CS. No, man -- man-made.

Q1. It was one that you dug out for a storm shelter?

CS. Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. It -- it had another building right by it that had all the -- where my dad kept the records of everything of the power. And then, a big slab of cement in front of this powerhouse was where I learned how to roller skate on that.
Q1. Oh.

CS. It was a big -- big porch-like --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- and that's where I learned how to skate. And I loved to skate. Augusta had their nice skating rink when I was in high school. That's one place I went to a lot.

Q1. Was to the roller rink?

CS. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh. So now, did they have the -- did they have shoe skates back then, or were they just -- you strapped them onto your shoes?

CS. Clip-on, yeah. Clip on your shoes.

Q1. Uh-huh. And you used a key, I think to --

CS. Yeah. Mm-hmm, yeah. Yeah.

Q1. -- To tighten them, or make them shorter or longer, and locked them into place.

CS. I don't know if they ever got shoe skates there at Prigmores or not.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

CS. I just don't know how -- when they went out of business, really.

Q1. Now, was the roller rink -- was it on 7th Street?

CS. Uh-huh, down there where Jack -- where Jack has his restaurant.

CS. Uh-huh. Yeah, that's where it was.

I don't -- I don't think it burned down. The -- his restaurant burned down one time, but I don't know what happened. Maybe it was tore down, I guess.

Q1. It could be.

CS. But (inaudible) that was a good place to have real good clean fun at. Wasn't anything going on bad then.

Q1. Uh-huh. A lot of the girls talked about during the war years that they would get together and, like, go to the park and take pictures to send to the guys overseas. Did you ever do anything like that?

CS. No, because, see, I wasn't around there. I spent most my time working at Boeing, because I worked, then, ten hours, shifts, and then it took me an hour to get to work and an hour to get home.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. Didn't have much time.

Q1. And you were still living with your parents at that time; right?

CS. Mm-hmm. Yeah, I was living in Augusta. I was staying -- we was living in the oil building then.

Q1. Oh.

CS. It was easier to get to work --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- and back out and forth out there.
Q1. Uh-huh. So they had moved into town then?
CS. No, just my mother and my sister.
Q1. Okay.
CS. My mother worked out there too.
Q1. Out at Boeing?
CS. At Boeing.

Yeah, that's a long time ago; isn't it? You know, in high school, I had perfect attendance except for one day. They had a blizzard, and I could not get to school, and so they ended up letting me have perfect attendance for all four years.
Q1. Oh. For all four years?
CS. Uh-huh, because -- because the snow storm kept me from coming in.
Q1. They probably didn't have school that day anyhow, did they?
CS. No. I don't know if they did or not.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. To me, they had bigger snows then than we do now. I don't know if we did or not.
Q1. Uh-huh. So you said you were in the Pep Club?
CS. Yeah.
Q1. So was that for basketball and football?
CS. Yeah, for everything, uh-huh.
Q1. Mostly, uh-huh.
CS. Yeah, basketball.
Q1. So you'd go to all the games then and --

CS. Uh-huh, stand out in your sweater and freeze to death.

Q1. Okay.

CS. You know, when -- I was going to say something else. Oh, forgot what I was going to say.

I used to -- see, we lived out in the middle of the field. When we moved -- we lived over on the corner, and then we moved to the Wallace lease, and that's when we lived down in the middle of the field, and I had to walk to catch the bus.

Q1. Oh, uh-huh.

CS. And there was three different areas I could get off at, and if the boys was ornery on the bus, I'd get off of this one and go home that way. So I didn't want them teasing me when they got -- when I got off.

Q2. Describe the Wallace lease. What's -- what was that?

CS. Well, the Wallace lease is just natural grass there. It was a big area. There was -- a stream came down through there from the water running off these oil tanks, and there would be water. When it rained, it'd be a lot of water, but it wouldn't be very big, you know. But it made -- the salt in the water made a solid -- you could walk down there and not get in the mud, and I used to play down there.

My daddy built a bridge, and it was just so wide you wondered if you was going to hit it when you drove across it in a car.
Q2. So when you lived on the --
CS. See, I was gonna --
Q2. The first house you described, the -- the -- the little shotgun house --
CS. Yeah.
Q2. -- was that on the Wallace lease, or was that before that?
CS. No, that was -- that was up there at Miller corner.
Q2. Oh, okay. Okay.
CS. Another thing, when our -- where I lived, there was an area that was smaller than this room, but it was kind of rounded-like and dented in, and the nicest grass was in there, and they always said that was a buffalo wallow place.
Q1. A buffalo wallow?
CS. Where the wallow -- where the buffalos wallowed in that.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. And it was a different kind of grass and everything. It had a lot of pretty flowers around there. You know, wildflowers --
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. -- in the fields. I used to run all over picking flowers.
One time, my dad made a big sled, a large sled, pulled it behind the car, and we drove in this empty field over there and got -- you know, it was a lot of fun. You didn't -- wouldn't hit anything.
Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. And my dad used to hunt rabbits when it snow -- in the snow, and kill them. We used to eat a lot of rabbits.

Q1. Eat lots of rabbits.

CS. But just ate it when, when it was -- snow was on the ground or -- they were running rabbits. They was alive or --

Q1. Oh, uh-huh.

CS. -- healthy rabbits, I should say.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So I saw that Augusta held -- held several, like, fall festivals and that type of thing. Did you ever come in town for those or --?

CS. I can't remember much about that.

Q1. Okay. Can you tell me where you were at when you first heard that the war ended?

CS. Oh, I was in California.

Q1. You were in California?

CS. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh. And --

CS. And that was -- that was a shocking day to me in a way. Uh, Dean's was a group that worked on the airplanes -- or in the morning it got so hot, you couldn't touch them in the afternoon -- and they didn't fly them.

And so when the war was over, he came to the house, and we picked up -- they all just left the base, just bingo. Didn't have any passes. There was three couples of us, and we didn't
want -- this is a bad thing to say, but it's the truth: they didn't like this one guy real well, but he had gas tabs
[laughs] --

Q1. Oh.

CS. -- so -- so he was good to have with you. He had gas tab. So we all -- they all left, and we went to San Diego. Now, we lived in El Centro. They went to San Diego, and Dean had a brother there in the navy. And then, by that time, it was lunch time -- or passed lunch. Everything was -- they didn't have any food left over, sold out. They were just sold out. And then, we went up to the coast to LA, got rid of both these couples, and we had -- Dean had a marine friend that lived in Santa Ana, and he said, "Well, let's go see them," and they knew a place where we could go eat. We hadn't eaten all day, because everybody was just running. And like, I had another friend that worked in Douglass. She said everybody just left, just walked out of the plant.

Q2. To celebrate?

CS. Yeah, just sat -- you know, it's strange. And like, we stayed all night up there in -- in California in Santa Ana, it was. It really a -- close to Santa Ana. Stayed all night and came back, and I wondered, "Gee, what's going to happen?" Nobody said anything. They all came back to the base. Crazy.

Q1. So they must have kind of expected everybody to just --
CS. I don't know what they thought.

Q1. So did you hear it on the radio or --

CS. I heard it from him.

Q1. You heard it from him when he came home?

CS. Yeah. Uh-huh, yeah. You know, it was kind of surprising to just think -- and of course, then -- see -- that was in August wasn't it? The war was over in August?

Q1. I think so.

CS. Yeah. Like he had a furlough to come up in June, and we didn't think he could get out right away, so we were both lonesome to come home, so we drove home. By that time, we had a car. We'd been walking before that [laughs]. We had a car, and then June got back there, and the first thing we knew in November, we was out.

Q1. Oh. What kind of roads were between here and California? Were they paved roads?

CS. Yeah, oh, yeah. They was paved. It was nice paved.

Q1. They paved that, uh-huh.

CS. I know we had -- our car had on -- I don't know if they were retread tires there or maybe it was poor. He told me when I was driving -- he'd like to -- he'd sleep a lot, and I'd like to drive. He said, "Don't you go over 50 miles an hour," so I didn't. [Laughs.]
Q1. Well, that was another commodity that was kind of hard to come by during the war too, wasn't it?

CS. Oh, yes, tires. Yeah.

Q1. Tires, and you had gas rationing. What other types of things were rationed?

CS. Sugar.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

CS. Well, it was hard to get shoes then too.

Q1. Oh, yeah. Nylons? Stockings?

CS. Well, nylon came after the war.

Q1. That was after the war?

CS. I remember getting my first nylons down at Kress's.

Oh, I tell you, this is really funny. We was coming home. We was in Clovis, New Mexico. We'd been driving -- well, from -- we drove from Yuma, Arizona, clear to there to Clovis. That's on the edge of Mexico -- New Mexico --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- and I said, "I can't drive anymore," and he said he couldn't either, so we stayed all night in a real nice hotel, we thought. Had beautiful beds in it. Had twin beds, so we had -- each had a bed, and I took a bath and went to bed, and something started -- I had itches, and I got up, and I looked all over the bed. I couldn't find anything. I took another bath, got back in bed again, and dozed off, and something started eating on me again.
I jumped up, found a bed bug on the wall, which I did not know it was a bed bug, but I thought it had to be. Had a bite under my eye, bites on my arms, my leg, so then I had another bath, got in bed with him in a twin. Neither one of us -- we couldn't sleep, so we got up and left. And we was too young to know we should have complained, but we didn't. We just left. Everybody was afraid of us at first, thought we'd brought them back with us. [Laughs.]

But, you know, that -- my son got bed bugs in Colorado this summer.

Q1. That's what I was going to say. That's the big thing lately, it's been bed bugs.

CS. Yeah, it is. Yeah.

Q2. They're making a comeback.

CS. Oh, gosh.

Q2. She's looking at me.

Q1. I'm looking at you, yeah, that's right.

CS. Can't hardly see you.

Q2. I -- I don't know if it would be difficult to do this or not, but because you lived several different places during the war years, and that was when you were married and -- could you kind of summarize a chronology of -- from -- from when you first heard about the war to where you lived when, or would that be too complicated?
Well, I was -- I was in training when I heard the war. In fact, I had a date with Dean. That was on -- that was on a Sunday, wasn't it? And we came back. I don't know where we had -- where we had been. Come back, and somebody told us there was a war, and the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.

And at that time, you were still in --

Nurses training in El Dorado.

In El Dorado. And what was he doing?

He was working at Beechcraft.

Okay. You told us that.

Yeah.

I'm sorry.

Yeah, mm-hmm. That's all right. I -- I'm all mixed up myself.

And then --

And then I lived in El Dorado until I was married then, and I left then, and I lived at home for a short time.

After you were married?

Uh-huh.

And when did -- when did -- when and how did he enlist?

When and how?

Mm-hmm.

Well, he -- he came over to join the Marines here. He was really from Butler County, classified. He came over here to enlist in the Marines, and they were full. They couldn't take
him, so they -- they said, "Well, we'll get you later," so then he came -- went home. He had a notice he was going to be drafted in the army. He did not want the army, so he came back to the Marines and showed them this letter. They said, "We'll send you to Kansas City and get you --." So he wasn't taken here, but he was sent to Kansas City and then put in the Marines.

Q1. And so then he enlisted in the Marines then?
CS. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Q1. And was that in '43?
CS. '4-- well, let's see. When would that be? That'd be probably '42.

Q1. '42?
CS. Yeah, because he was in the Marines three years. It would be '42, in the fall of '42, because I know he was in California at Christmastime in the Marines.

Q2. And you weren't -- were you out there with him from the beginning?
CS. No, no. No, no. No. We all thought he was in, you know, basic camp, and then he got out there. I can't remember when they sent him to Chicago. It might have been -- I don't know. I know it'd be after Christ -- it'd be in the -- it would be in '44 when he -- no, wait. It would be in '43 he went to Chicago.
Then he graduated. I went to his graduation in July. His mother and sister and I went up on the train. Then -- then after his graduation, I was going to see my grandmother that lived on the eastern part of Illinois, and so I was scared to death I was going to have to get -- get a cab by myself to go catch a train, because they looked so grumpy, old guys up there, and so he was lucky to get off the bus -- I mean the base and took me down there to -- to get on, so I never will forget it. We cried so when I left him in Kansas City. He said, "Now, don't cry this time." I said, "I won't," but back of my mind, when he got settled, I was going to California, so that was that, so --

Q2. So when in all this time period did you work at Boeing? Was that when he was in training?

CS. No, when he -- no, when he was overseas.

Q2. When he was overseas.

CS. No, wait a minute. He had went -- he hadn't left Chicago yet. I think he went overseas, I think, in August, and I don't know for sure.

Q1. And Chicago is where he did his training?

CS. Advanced training.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. He did the basic training in San Diego. There's a lot of bases around there. You have to take your -- shooting guns and
whatnot. Marksmanship I guess you'd call it. I don't know what you call it, but --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

Q2. So do you remember how long you worked at Boeing?

CS. I don't know for sure. Probably from June to -- May or June. I don't know. I know I quit in December of '44.

Q2. I'd -- I'd love to hear more about your time as -- as a Rosie the Riveter and like --

CS. Oh.

Q2. -- How you -- how you learned that jobs were available. It seems like a lot of women paired up with family members or friends and --

CS. Well, I heard --

Q2. -- commuted back and forth.

CS. I knew they had a school, and north of the Broadview Hotel is where I went to school. They had a training school. The man that taught me ended up being -- had a real good job at Beech, and I think he's still alive, but he's -- he's really old now. He in -- has to be in the late 90s if he's alive.

I -- they taught you how to drill and -- and how to put the rivets in and how to take them out and -- and just all stuff like that. It was hard to get -- I rode a bus over to the Kings-X on -- used to be a Kings-X on Oliver --

Q1. Mm-hmm.
CS. -- and -- what -- Kellogg, yeah, and I'd get off the bus, and go in there, and wait until a city bus came, then we'd go downtown on Douglas, and you'd run up there, and then you really had to rush to catch a city bus to come out, so you didn't want to miss your bus going to Augusta, because everybody was moving like that.

Q2. Was it hard to learn -- did you -- did you have the natural strength to do it, or did you have to --?

CS. Oh, I enjoyed doing -- I enjoyed doing that.

And then, oh, when I went to work at Boeing, I always -- they used -- I don't think I ever did drive any rivets. I used these machines to make your parts.

What was real hard, you knew you had to work fast, and you'd work fast, and you didn't do it good, so they'd tell you, "Don't be so fast, just --". You had to take the oil off a lot of these pieces of aluminum. You'd have to do that.

No, I enjoyed doing that. I used to get so tired when I worked third shift. I - oh, I could just sleep if I'd lay on the floor. [Laughs.] But it seemed like you'd come and go, you know, you wouldn't wake up.

Q1. So after your children were born, did you work outside of the home then?

CS. Not very much. I used to sell Avon --

Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. -- and then I worked at our church on a Mom's Day Out program for about 26 years. And to me, at that time, I thought it was important to raise my children good. That's the way I looked at it.

Q1. I agree. And it seems like they're taking good care of you now so --

CS. They -- they both went through college, and the youngest boy went to the University of Alabama to get his master's degree so --

Q1. So did your husband -- what did he do after the war? Did he continue working for Beech?

CS. Yeah, he come out and work for Beech.

Q1. Uh-huh. And did he retire from there?

CS. Yes, uh-huh, after 45 years.

Q1. What did he do at Beechcraft?

CS. Well, he started in working on the line, and then he built up to -- to -- he ended up being a foreman, but I can't think what you call before that. Oh --

Anyway, he was lucky. He had worked in probably all of the departments out there. He helped to work on the hel- -- it was over the -- not over, but was one of the main guys over helicopters. He used to be a dan dover [phonetic spelling] --

Q1. Oh, uh-huh.

CS. -- and there was a bell.
Q1. And what year was that that he retired?
CS. 1986, I think.
Q1. ’86?
CS. I think that's about right. He went to work in -- in '40 -- I don't know if he went to work in '40 or '41. It'd be -- '41 would be 45 years, wouldn't it? Yeah.
Q1. I think so. That's not my strong suit.
CS. Yeah. ’40 -- '41. ’45 would be six -- '86 -- '86 when -- well --
Q3. Do you have any recollection of the Dust Bowl?
CS. Yes, I remember that.
Q3. How was it in this area? What was life like then?
CS. Well, to me, it wasn't real dirty dust, you know, a lot of heavy dirt; it was -- it would be dusty. You wouldn't see the sun, but it wouldn't be really what you'd call heavy. You could see, but dust would come around, you know. And I guess at the age I was it didn't faze me too much. They just said, "The Dust Bowl," and the dirt was blowing. I don't know.

What I remember more than everything was the grasshoppers, the invasion of the grasshoppers.
Q2. Describe that.
CS. They'd come through the garden, you know, and just -- just a lot of them. You'd try to catch them, you know, chase them out, which was silly, but you did being a kid, you know, and I'd
catch some of them and try to -- and then all of a sudden they was gone. I don't know.

Q1. Probably pretty much ate your whole garden and --

CS. They would eat your garden, you know, and stuff. I don't know. I can remember when -- and they used to have these -- I don't know what they called it in El Dorado, maybe some kind of, like, festival there. One time, they -- we was catching turtles, the box turtle -- I'm sure that's what it'd be --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- took a load of box turtles over there to enter in, and they'd already called it off. I don't know what happened to all them turtles my dad had up -- trailer.

Q1. So your sister was nine years younger than you?

CS. Yes.

Q1. What did you do to entertain yourself when you were younger and at home?

CS. Oh, I was -- I always followed my dad around when he checked his wells. I did that a lot --

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. -- and I played outdoors, and I had this playhouse, and --

Q1. Oh, you said he made you a playhouse.

CS. Yeah, a nice playhouse. When I was, I think, about eight years old, I, at school, liked to play on the merry-go-round, and I hit my ankles every time and got an infection in them.
And I walked home from the bus one night, my folks wasn't home, and I was sick, and I got near the playhouse, and they came later, took me to the doctor. I had blood poison in my ankle. It went -- streaks went clear up my leg. I was lucky I didn't lose my leg. I know my mother doctored me day and night with that. At that time, they put a black tar-like stuff on you. I don't know what it was. I don't know. I doubt they'd do it today.

Q1. To try to draw it out or something?

CS. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. And then she soaked me. And I can remember sitting in front of a gas heater, you know, the stove, and on my little chair leaned back, and turn the chair upside down, you know, and lean it back, and lean back on that, soak that foot.

Q1. What was your --?

CS. And that has hurt me for years when the weather changes.

Q1. Oh, uh-huh. What was the -- your favorite meal that your mom made?

CS. Probably fried chicken.

Q1. Fried chicken?

CS. Yeah. We had a lot of fried chicken. [Laughs]

Q1. What was the favorite meal you liked to make for your family?
CS. Oh, I just don't have any -- we always liked chicken and noodles, and we always -- my mother made her own noodles, and I do too, and I like chicken and noodles.

Q2. Sounds like you had a really happy childhood --

CS. I did.

Q2. -- And really wonderful parents. What do you appreciate --

(phone rings) oops. Is that your son?

CS. Well, you know today --

Q2. You can't be too careful.

CS. If I told him there's three more in the house, he would faint [laughs] right on the phone.

Q2. He'd probably call the police -- (simultaneous talking)

CS. He probably would. He probably would. Bless his heart.

Q2. Oh, well, that's a sweet son. I tell you what.

Q1. "Mom held hostage. We need the SWAT team."

CS. He said, "Don't give any names." I said, "I'm not giving any names." I guess I did give your two -- my two boys' names. Take them off.

Oh, that was -- bless his heart. They are always telling me, "Don't -- keep your screen locked, so they can't come in." But, you know, today is a different world, you know.

Q1. It sure is. It sure is.
CS. Like, I used to ride a bicycle around where I lived on the, to -- streets and roads. Now, I don’t drive the car around by myself.

Q1. Even with the doors locked.

CS. Yeah. I mean, it's -- it's sad.

Q3. How is -- how is the world different today than it was when you were growing up, just in general? How has that changed from a -- from a kid's prospective today?

CS. Well, you'd probably say, because you have TV, and you hear about the whole world, never knew that other world existed until today. Don't you think that's true? You know, really, we can worry about more stuff. What'd I hear today? England and them had a bad rain yesterday or something. You know, you think, "Well, them poor people." Never had them on my mind before. I don't know. I think it's because people know about everybody really today. Things -- you know, you pick up more stuff. I don't know.

Of course, everything's so different, you know. Like when I was in nurse training -- it's so different now, you know. When I was in -- which I think was a good deal -- and now they -- so free. In the hospitals, they just had certain hours for visiting only. You could not sit on a patient's bed, which is good. Today you can sit on that bed. You can go all day long, children can come and go, and they are good to bring little bugs. I don't know.
Maybe they don't. I don't know, but they do. That's one thing I notice.

Q1. Yeah, there's not as many rules for some.

CS. And there's more staph infection today than they ever had before. That's why I guess I had surgery two years ago. I was going to have it in the morning, and they couldn't get me in until afternoon, which is good for me. I got to stay all night. Otherwise, I would have went home that afternoon, and I -- I just don't know.

Medicine has changed so much. They do so much. I have a friend 90 years old. She's a little bit older than me. She had four bypasses, but she just had a lot of trouble. I don't know if it's worth it or not.

You're not too old yourself, do you think things changed since you was a kid?

Q3. Yeah. Are you kidding me? Technology's --

CS. Telephone's shocking to me, kids and their telephone. They get the weather, they get -- take pictures, they look at pictures, they can find the news. Someday we're not going to have a newspaper around. But ol' fuddy-duddy like me doesn't have a internet or -- or nothing.

Q3. How are -- how are people different now than they were? Just, you know, people in general. How are people different do you think, or are they?
CS. Oh, I don't -- I don't really know.

Q3. Are they friendlier now? Friendlier then? Happier than they are now? Busier?

CS. I'm sure they are busier. People are busier. Probably people -- certain groups have always been friendly and happy, and some people are sad. I don't know. I think we have a lot more mental illnesses now than we ever had before, and why, I don't know. I don't know if it's kids getting on drugs or liquor. I don't know what causes it. I can't understand -- you know, children -- never heard of children having, what, autism.

Q1. Autism?

CS. Yeah, never heard of that before.

Q1. Uh-huh.

CS. And maybe it's been there, and we didn't know it. I don't know.

Q1. Uh-huh, and the ADDH [sic], or the hyperactive disorder.

CS. Yeah, they got so much, yeah. I just don't know. Hmmm. Well, anything else you want to know?

Q1. Is there anything else you want to tell us about the --?

CS. Oh, you're talking about how I rode the bicycle a lot. That's something else I did when I was in the country.

Q1. Was ride your bicycle?

CS. Uh-huh, get out my (inaudible) and get on the street.

Q2. Ride it on the roads?

CS. On the road, uh-huh. It was kind of hard, the rocky roads --
Q1. Mm-hmm.

CS. -- gravel roads.

Q1. Oh, yeah.

CS. And then we -- in high school, we had a club to earn your letter A for Augusta, and another girl and I, we rode our bicycle a lot on 77, went south then east down there where I live. I mean west, then south again. It's no wonder we didn't get killed by riding a bicycle on that highway, because big old trucks would go around us.

Q1. Yeah, all the oil-field trucks and --

CS. And gasoline trucks were --. Of course, today you have huge trucks going down the highways. That new -- that 77's a new road that comes close to my house -- our house now straight out of Augusta, straight south, where it used to go over east -- I mean west. Have you ever heard of Alexander Corner up there?

Q1. I don't think so.

CS. Yeah, then heads straight down toward around town. That's all empty.

Q1. Uh-huh. And were those brick roads at the time or dirt roads?

CS. I think they was paved, maybe gravel too. Probably gravel, probably gravel. I don't know. I know our streets around us is -- my dad -- we -- when we moved out of the field, my dad would -- I don't know where he got all this extra oil, but it was old
oil, and he made a road out of that by pouring that on it, let it get hard, so we didn't have a muddy road to drive through.

Q1. Did you ever get to go on vacation anywhere?
CS. Went to Colorado. I used to go to Illinois too.
Q1. To see the --
CS. Grandparents.
Q1. -- Family?
CS. Yes. I just had one grandmother left. Real young my grandparents let -- died when I was young. My grand -- my grandmother on the Henry side died when my dad was 11 years old, and then when I was about five or six, my grandfather died, and then my other grandfather died when I was a little bit older, not much. I know before my sisters were born, so I had to be under eight then when that happened.

Q1. Oh.
CS. Then my grandmother died before my oldest boy was born.
Q1. When did your father pass away?
CS. '59.
Q1. '59?
CS. Uh-huh.
Q1. If you don't mind me asking, you said that you and your mother lived at the oil building in Augusta?
CS. At that time, it was easier to get to work to stay in town. We'd go home on the weekend.
Q1. Oh, okay.
CS. Uh-huh.

Q1. So your dad stayed out at the house --
CS. Uh-huh, yeah.

Q1. And -- and your little sister stayed with you too --
CS. Uh-huh.

Q1. -- During the week?
CS. To go to school, uh-huh.

Q1. About how far out was Browntown from Augusta?
CS. Well, I lived about four miles south of Augusta, and it was probably about --

Q1. Okay.
CS. It was probably the same. It'd be the south, where we'd go east a little ways.

Q1. Uh-huh. So did you ever go out to, like, Gordon or Bois d'Arc?
CS. I went to Gordon, because that's where they voted. I can remember my parents voted there.

Q1. Uh-huh.
CS. And Bois d'Arc, we had friends that lived out there at Bois d'Arc.

Q1. Uh-huh. And wasn't there a flyer mill out there at one time?
CS. I don't know.

Q1. Okay.
CS. I used to go to Rowkie -- Camp Rowkie – [phonetic spelling]
Q1. Oh, uh-huh.

CS. -- and loved to wade in the water. That was when they had the low water bridge. Do you remember that?

Q1. Uh-huh, I do.

CS. Did you ever get in the water and get leeches on you?

Q1. Oh, no.

CS. I had leeches on my toes. If you didn't get them off, you had a sore toe.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Was the Augusta swimming pool --

CS. No.

Q1. Was it built then? No.

CS. No, no pool.

Q1. So you had to go swim with the leeches?

CS. Yeah. I just waded. I never did get to really swim.

Q1. Well, is there anything else that you would -- any words of wisdom for future generations or --?

CS. No, I don't -- I don't know of anything.

Q1. Anybody else?

Q3. I've got about 30 seconds of tape left.


So -- well, thank you so much, Christine. I loved hearing your story and --

CS. Oh, I -- you know, when you get my age, there's so many things to think about that has happened -- that has happened.
Q1. So, well I hope that your --

CS. Good things, sad things, happy things.

Q1. I hope your sons will really enjoy seeing your DVD.

Q2. I'd have loved to have met your parents. They sound like wonderful people.

CS. Well, nothing else on the DV now?

Q1. I think we're done are we done. Are we done?

Q3. Yeah.

Q1. Okay.

[END]
Q1. All right. We're here with Esther today. I'd like you to please state your full name, today's date, and where we're filming this interview.

EM. My name is Esther Mayes. This is November the 5th, 2013, Wednesday -- or Tuesday. Tuesday.

Q1. And where are we filming this interview?

EM. At my house on Athenian in Wichita, Kansas.

Q1. All right. And what was your maiden name, Esther?

EM. My maiden name was Gonzales.

Q1. Do you have a middle name?
EM. No. I think there were so many of us that they ran out of names.

Q1. Okay. And what were your parents' names?

EM. My mother was named Lupe. Do you want her maiden name or --

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. It -- it was Arritola, A-R-R-I-T-O-L-EM.

Q1. All right. And what was your father's name?

EM. Frank.

Q1. Frank. And when were you born?

EM. I was born March 8th, 1924, before any of you were a gleam in anybody's eye.

Q1. And how old would that make you?

EM. 89.

Q1. 89 years old -- or young -- years young. And where were you born at?

EM. Marion, Kansas.

Q1. And how many siblings do you have?

EM. Now or had?

Q1. Well, have had.

EM. I have one brother left only, and then I had four sisters and two other brothers.

Q1. And they're all passed?

EM. Yes.

Q1. Okay. And what was your father's occupation?

EM. He worked on the railroad, Santa Fe Railroad.
Q1. The Santa Fe, mm-hmm. And your mom, I imagine, stayed home and took care of kids?

EM. She had to. With eight children, you'd -- I mean, besides, then, I mean, she was an immigrant. She hardly spoke English when they came in there when --

Q1. Uh-huh. When did they come to America?

EM. When or where?

Q1. When.

EM. In 1914.

Q1. In 1914.

EM. And you know, now they always say they come for a better life and everything. My dad came to escape the Revolution in Mexico.

Q1. Uh-huh. And did he move to Marion --

EM. No.

Q1. -- right away or --

EM. He -- they crossed the border, and at that time it cost $2 to cross the border, and you came in and got a work permit.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And they went to El Paso. They lived in El Paso. I had a sister born in El Paso, and then they went to Deming, New Mexico, and from there they came to -- to Marion, Kansas.

Q1. Okay. And what year did you move to Augusta?

EM. In 1928.

Q1. In 1928. And what brought the family to Augusta?
EM. Well, my dad was transferred. He worked in the railroad in Marion, and they transferred him, and he had a choice of Florence, Kansas or Augusta, and he picked Augusta, because the schools would have been better for us kids.

Q1. Uh-huh. And what did he do for the railroad? Do you know?

EM. He laid track, and then he was -- he was kind of a maintenance man for the switches. Back then, you know, they had -- they had to move the tracks, or the switches, for the trains, and he was kind of the maintenance man, kept the weeds out of them, and he just did manual labor.

Q1. Uh-huh. And your nephew, Steve, had said something about when it was cold or snowy and icy outside --

EM. He had to go to work to take -- keep the ice off of the switches.

Q1. Uh-huh -- that they lit some kind of balls or fire by the --

EM. They were torches.

Q1. Torches, okay -- and to get the ice off so that they could move the tracks.

EM. Uh-huh, yeah.

Q1. Uh-huh. And can you tell me where you lived at in Augusta?

EM. Yes. It was 200 School Street, but it's where the dike -- levee is now, and the -- they built the levee in 1937. We lived there until 1937, and then the City bought the -- the property.

My dad was buying it from a family named Deshirley, and of course, this was during the Depression, and they were very good to me
dad, because a lot of times he couldn't make the payment, and they didn't insist, and it was a big house. It had four rooms upstairs and four -- five downstairs.

And when they had the flood in 1928, which was a very bad flood, we had just moved there, and the Mexican families that lived -- two of them came to our house, and one of the ladies was going into labor at the time, and I can remember this just as plain -- one of the men swam to -- into town, into Augusta. We were across the tracks --

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. -- and Dr. Garvin came back in a boat with this man and delivered that child.

Q1. And then, Garvin -- Dr. Garvin was who Garvin Park was named after.

EM. Right, uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And then, the next day, he sent -- I -- I think Dr. Garvin did it -- he sent the boat back with food for us, and that's the first time I ever tasted peanut butter, (laughs) but I can remember tasting that peanut butter, and -- and that's all I remember about that flood. I don't remember the water going down, or what happened, or anything.

Q1. But a baby was born, and you got to taste peanut butter.

EM. Well, my mother became that child's godmother.
Q1. Oh. So after the flood -- or after '37, when they sold the house to the City, where did you live at then?

EM. Then we moved to 236 Oak Street.

Q1. 236 Oak, uh-huh. And you went to school, grade school, at Garfield School?

EM. I started in kindergarten there, and my teacher was Ms. McCoid (phonetic).

Q1. Ms. McCoid?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Mm-hmm. And what do you remember about Garfield School?

EM. Well, I remember that our class -- the building was kind of shaped like this, -- and our -- our room was the first one, and then, of course, they weren't -- you had to go out to go to another room.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And then, they had first and second divisions. The brighter kids were in the first division. Can you imagine them doing that now? And the -- the slower learners were in the second division. And that -- you know, that says I was in the first division: that paper you -- I showed you.


EM. And well, I remember we had a little band in kindergarten, and we went to different other schools and played our little instruments. I played the blocks, and there was sticks, and triangles, tambourines.
Q1. Do you remember any of the songs that you played or --?
EM. No.
Q1. No.
EM. No.
Q1. What did -- what kind of things did you do at recess time?
EM. Well, we got to go out on the playground when it wasn't too cold or the weather was nice and played tag.
Q1. Mm-hmm. Swing on the swings and the --
EM. We didn't have any swings there.
Q1. No swings. The merry-go-round?
EM. No. No, not there.
Q1. No, no, no. Did you get to play --
EM. And we had -- we had a rug, you know, where we took our naps. I don't know whether they still do that or not. And then we had -- they brought in milk in a little -- half-pint bottles, and it was 15 cents a week, and you got a little half-pint of milk every day.
Q1. Uh-huh. Did you go home for lunch?
EM. Yes.
Q1. Uh-huh.
EM. Well, of course, in kindergarten I only went half a day, but --
Q1. So --
EM. But I -- like I said, we lived on -- at School Street, which was on the other side of the tracks, and I can remember that my -- I
had a sister that went to junior high, and she was to pick me up and take me home.

Q1. Walk home with you?

EM. Mm-hmm. And one day, she didn't show up, and I stood, and I waited, and I waited, and I watched all the other kids go by and everything, and so finally I just started walking, and I -- I found my way home by myself. That was the first time. After that, she didn't have to come by.

Q1. Did she get in trouble?

EM. No --

Q1. Okay.

EM. -- but of course, I -- when I told my mother what happened, you know, she said, "Well, hide, so when -- so when Lupe gets home, she -- she won't know you're here, and she's -- she'll think she did something wrong." But anyway, it all worked out fine. After that, I was able to find my way home by myself.

Q1. So what grade did Garfield go up to?

EM. Kindergarten, first, and second, and then we went to third grade -- we went to -- it was called Lincoln School then, and it was that big old stone building. I think they built the junior high there eventually --

Q1. Oh, uh-huh.

EM. -- but it was called the Lincoln Building. And then we had third, fourth, and fifth grade there, and then we went to junior high, which was at 12th and State Street.
Q1. Oh. There was a junior high at 12th and State?
EM. Mm-hmm.
Q1. See, I live right next to 12th and State.
EM. Yeah. That was where I went to the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade there --
Q1. Uh-huh.
EM. -- then ninth grade to high school.
Q1. To the high school.
EM. Uh-huh.
Q1. And where was the high school located at that time?
EM. On -- it would be Cliff Drive and State Street --
Q1. Okay, where the junior high is now.
EM. -- and Clark -- end of Clark Street.
Q1. Mm-hmm.
EM. The junior high's there now?
Q1. Uh-huh. Middle school, I guess, is what they call it these days.
EM. Mm-hmm.
Q1. So you went to -- what year did you graduate from high school?
EM. 1942.
Q1. In 1942.
EM. Mm-hmm.
Q1. And I know that Madelyn Payne, the President's grandmother, had gone to grade school at Garfield and then graduated in 1940.
EM. ’40 -- 1940.
Q1. '40, uh-huh. Did you know her?

EM. I can remember seeing her, and that was about it.

Q1. That's it. And --

EM. She was tall, blonde. I can remember when -- see, we didn't have a -- a prom. They said she got married the night of the prom, but we didn't have proms. We had banquets, and the junior class paid for the senior class banquet, so it had to be after one of the banquets that she got married. And of course, the story was that her folks didn't know it. She eloped and --

Q1. Mm-hmm. And you said Nina June told you a little secret?

EM. Nina -- Nina June told me that, that -- said if her -- Madelyn's folks had found it out, they'd had it annulled.

Q1. So they weren't for it at all. Not at that young age, I'm sure. And then, you said also that you remember Arlene?

EM. Arlene and Charles a lot -- lot, because they were near my class.

Q1. Uh-huh. And what do you remember about them?

EM. Well, I remember they had big round faces, and now I think of it, they were just like happy faces, because they were always smiling. Then, that -- that's about all I -- I remember about them.

Q1. Do you remember where they lived at?

EM. No. I think they lived on the north end of State Street, but I'm not sure.
Q1. Okay. And -- let's see. In 1929 was the Black Friday and the start of the Depression. What do you remember about that?

EM. About the Depression?

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. Well, my dad was a proud man, and he would not have accepted any -- he wouldn't have asked anybody for help is what I'm saying.

He -- they had a big garden, and they raised everything. My mother -- when they first moved to Marion, an old German lady took her under hand and taught her to bake bread, and to can, and make jellies, and so we had this big garden. My mother would can everything, and we had an old pear tree, and she canned those old pears. I hated them, but I wish I had one now. And she made watermelon preserves. I mean, anything to -- to keep food on the table, you know. And she baked -- always made her own bread, and --

And I remember my dad -- we -- we got to go up and pick his check up at the Santa Fe Depot, and then we would pay the grocery bill, and I remember once that check for two weeks -- it was $12, and I don't think the railroad was unionized then. I think it didn't -- I'm not sure, but I don't think it got unionized until Social Security came into being, which was, what, in '36, I think. And then, my dad -- the -- he didn't work under Social Security, it was Railroad Retirement Board --

Q1. Mm-hmm.
EM. -- and I think that's when the wages got better.

Q1. But he -- but he was able to work all through the Depression and --

EM. Oh, yes. The railroads -- that was the only way -- or one of the ways that things moved. There was a lot of trains went through Augusta. And I can remember during the war -- you know, when the war started, there was troop trains night and day going through Augusta full of servicemen.

Q1. Uh-huh. Did people, like, line the streets to see them off or --

EM. No.

Q1. They just went through.

EM. But it's like I told you, that day when my brother Frank was killed, we had a little ol' telegraph operator. His name was Cy Young, and he had a -- the telegraph office, Western Union, was in the corner of that hotel, 5th Avenue Hotel, and would he get the message, and he would go running down the street, tell everybody, "Frank got killed. Frank got killed." Well, everybody knew it before my folks did. And the lady that managed -- she and her husband managed the hotel -- she came to the house and told my mother that Frank had got killed. Then, when we got the message from Sus (her brother), it was at night, and it came in at the towers, the Santa Fe Tower, and then he contacted my dad's boss, railroad boss, and he came to the house at night and told -- told my dad -- my folks.
Q1. Things were a lot different back then.

EM. Yeah, uh-huh.

Q1. So --

EM. But then, you know, we had no ways of communication like we do now.

Now, my dad always had a -- we always had a newspaper in the house, and I -- I don't know. He just wanted us to -- to read, and to this day I read a lot.

Q1. Oh. To keep up on current events and know what was going on?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. So when you were in high school -- we'll go back there for a minute. Were there -- what class -- was kind of classes did you take in high school?

EM. Well, it was home economics, civics, algebra, and I took Spanish so I could learn to read and write it. I spoke it fluently then, but I wanted to learn to read and write it, which I did. And of course, American history, world history.

Q1. Mm-hmm. What was your favorite subject?

EM. History.

Q1. History. Me too.

EM. I wasn't any good at music, so I didn't -- didn't have any music.

Q1. So did you get a job at any time?

EM. Yes, I -- I got married, you know, right away after I graduated, and -- but I did work at Boeing and -- for a while.
Q1. When was that?

EM. Oh, that would have been in, hmm, 1944.

Q1. So were you one of the Rosie the Riveters?

EM. Sheet metal, mm-hmm.

Q1. Sheet metal, mm-hmm. And were you living in Augusta at that time?

EM. Yes, because my husband was in service.

Q1. And how did you get back and forth?

EM. From -- to Boeing?

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. There was a bus service. Ballinger's had the bus service, and they ran the buses. I don't remember now what it cost, but I don't think it was very much.

Q1. Okay. So you got married after high school, you said, in October of 1942?

EM. Yes.

Q1. And what was your husband's name?

EM. Eldon. Eldon Mayes.

Q1. Eldon Mayes?

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. And what kind of work did he do?

EM. Well, when he got out of the service, he was in the dry cleaning business, and he -- he did that until 1963, and then he went to work as a salesman for -- selling dry clean, and laundry supplies, and industrial chemicals.
Q1. Mm-hmm. How did you two meet?

EM. Well, he was stationed at Fort Riley, and the Y -- YMCA had get-togethers for everybody, and it was on North Topeka upstairs. They'd have just friendly get-togethers. I don't think they had any dances or anything, we just --

Q1. Was that in Wichita?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh.

EM. And I met him there.

Q1. Met him there. And how long did you know him before you were married?

EM. I met him in June and married him in October. He was a southern boy with lots of charm. He was in Virginia.

Q1. He was from Virginia?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh. And -- oh. And so he ended up at Fort Riley, because he was in the service?

EM. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh. What branch of the service was he in?

EM. He was in the Mechanized cavalry.

Q1. Mechanized cavalry. And then, you said he went overseas?

EM. Yes, he went overseas in 1944.

Q1. Okay. And where was he, like, stationed out there?

EM. He was in England, and then -- he was in mechanized cavalry, and they went in afterwards, after all the battles were over, and
kind of cleaned up, but I mean, he wasn't in any serious battles or anything.

Q1. Mm-hmm. And so when he came back, what year was that?

EM. In 1945.

Q1. '-5, uh-huh.

EM. July of 1945.

Q1. And where did you all live then?

EM. We lived in Augusta with -- with my folks, mm-hmm.

Q1. With your parents. And was that still on Oak Street?

EM. Yes.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Were you able to, like, correspond with him?

EM. We had the V-mails. You remember -- ever -- did you ever see one of those?

Q1. No. What's a V-mail?

EM. Well, they took a picture of -- of one. I've got one from my brother. We should take it out. And it was censored. If there was anything they shouldn't -- like their location or anything, it was marked out. It was just a little picture of a letter they sent. But he -- he -- he was able to write letters also. And I -- I remember he wrote one letter, and he was on Maginot Line, which was in France, and he said, "I'm drinking a Coca-Cola on the Maginot Line." (Laughs.)

Q1. Probably seemed a little surreal to him.

EM. Pardon?

Q1. I said it probably seemed a little surreal to him.
EM.  Yeah, to be drinking a Coca-Cola over in the middle of France.

Q1.  Uh-huh.  So World War II began -- began in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland --

EM.  Mm-hmm.

Q1.  -- and you were probably about 16 years old then.  Do you remember hearing about that, or --?

EM.  Oh, yes.  Like I said, we always had a newspaper and then radio. We had a -- I don't know where he got it, but Frankie brought a radio home, and it -- it had to be in the 30s when he brought that, and it was called -- it was an Atwater Kent, and it was about that long (indicating) and about that high (indicating) and it had an old speaker on it, and we would gather around that and listen to Edgar Bergen, and Charlie McCarthy, and Red Skelton.  But it seemed like we always had a radio.

Q1.  Mm-hmm.  So at that time, did you think that the war would have -- impact your life?  No.

EM.  No.  It -- I -- I didn't think about it until my brothers went into the -- the service.

And then, Sus was home on leave when Pearl Harbor happened, and we didn't have a telephone, but he went into town and used the telephone, and they told him to get back to -- he called his camp, and they told him to return immediately.

Q1.  Okay.  So let's talk about your brothers Frank and Sus.  What can you tell me about them?  Did they graduate from Augusta?
EM. Well, you know, I -- I -- I don't remember Sus as well as I did Frank, because Frankie was -- we grew up together, you know, and --

Q1. Sus was older then?
EM. Yes.
EM. And Frankie used to sit us down and read Shakespeare to us and -- just there'll never be anybody like him. And he would, you know, just talk to us, tell us about things that were going on and everything.
And like I told you -- and maybe I shouldn't say this, but he's the one that made me a Republican, because, like, it was right in the middle of the Depression, and my dad had a little old sha-- house that he rented for $3 a month, so you can imagine what kind of a house it was, and these people that lived in it, they called it then on the County, and they got commodities. They got flour. They got -- I think they got sugar, and they got corned beef. And the reason I can remember the corned beef -- this was during the Depression -- they would come over and sell it to my mother, the corned beef, so they could go to the movies on Wednesday and Thursday, because they had double features on Wednesday and Thursday, and they could go for 15 cents. And they -- and we ate a lot of corned beef and cabbage, because -- and it was -- you -- they had the -- the welfare, the entitlements then, and they had the abuse then as they do now.
Q1. Mm-hmm. So were you able to go to the movies?

EM. Oh, yes, but we had to go to Sunday school. If we didn't go to Sunday school, we didn't go to the movie. On Sunday afternoon, we went to the matinee, and -- but we -- if we didn't go to Sunday school, no movie.

Q1. So -- and --

EM. And I don't care how much we cried and begged, you did not go.

Q1. What church did you attend?

EM. We went to the Methodist, because it --

Q1. The Methodist Church.

EM. -- because it was where all our friends went, and it was closest to the house.

Q1. (Laughs.) That makes sense, especially on cold mornings.

EM. We just went to Sunday school.

Q1. Hmm. Well, let's talk about -- when did -- you said -- did Frank join the army?

EM. He and Martin Mahannah, which Martin Mahannah's dad was superintendent, the Mobil -- Socony or whatever it was, Flying Red Horse, then.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. They went together to join the Marines, and they took Martin and wouldn't take Frankie, because he was color blind, and so he -- he joined the -- the Guard, National Guard, and they activated the Guard that December of 1941.

Q1. All right. And then, so when did he go overseas?
EM. Frankie -- or Sus went overseas right away. He -- he probably went in -- in '43. Well, I know he did. Uh-huh, '43. And Frankie went overseas in '43 also. No, Sus must have gone in '42, because he went through the African Campaign, and -- and then Frankie went in '43.

Q1. Okay. Do you want to talk a little bit about Sus -- what Sus did?

EM. Well, he was a paratrooper, and I -- he was really good about writing home -- writing letters home. And of course, you know, then, they couldn't tell where they were or about any of their battles or anything, and he went through the African Campaign. He went through Sicily Campaign, Italy, and then that's when they sent him -- he was -- the war was kind of winding down, and he -- they sent him to England, and they were processing him to come home, because he'd been over so long, when the Battle of the Bulge happened, I think in -- in January of '45, and that's when he got killed. He made the jump into Holland and was killed there.

Q1. And he was decorated?

EM. No, he wasn't, but he died in a field hospital, because he -- he was wounded on the 29th of January, and he died on the 30th, but he did die in a -- in a field hospital.

But no, Frank was the one that was decorated. He -- at the Battle of St. Lô.

Q1. Okay.
EM. It was shortly after D-Day.

Q1. And there's -- I -- I read some of the accounts of the battles that your brother Frank went through. There was a month, in July of '45 I think it was --

EM. Well, he would -- you know, the -- those cartoons used to say you got a -- a Purple Heart if you had a headache. But anyway, he -- he was wounded on the 18th of July in a skirmish, and he did get a Purple Heart then, and that's when he got the Silver Star. Then, he was killed on August the 2nd. But I don't know how true this is, but a -- the guys -- see, it was the 37th Infantry Company I, and they were -- most of them were all out of Augusta, Wichita, this area, and one of the soldiers came and told us that the battle where Frank got killed, they had been pinned down all night long and most of the day, and they were out of food, out of water, and Frank says -- he was the second lieutenant. He had gotten the battlefield commission in July, and he told them, he said, "I'm getting you guys out of here." A sniper was shooting them, and he said -- Frank said, "I'm going to get you guys out of here," and he stood up, and when he stood up, the sniper saw him and shot him, killed him. And when -- the rest of the guys, they saw where the sniper was then, and this fellow told us -- he said, "Every one of us took a shot at that sniper."

Q1. Well, I believe it just from the historic account that I had read about him in July.
The reason that he received the Silver Star was because his commanding officer was killed --

EM. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- and he jumped in and took control of the troops --

EM. Yes.

Q1. -- and -- and got them out of a really tough situation then too so --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

EM. -- it was very heroic indeed.

EM. Yeah, he was. But that's -- that's the kind of guy Frankie was.

Q1. So -- and you said that Frank was buried in France.

EM. In France. And

Q1. And Sus was --

EM. Was in Holland.

Q1. In Holland.

EM. -- in Belgium. Belgium. It's Gillian (phonetic), Holland.

Q1. Uh-huh. And do you want to talk about what your dad --

EM. And my -- my dad wanted their remains together, so he -- their remains were brought back to Augusta in 1948 -- May of 1948, and they are in Elmwood Cemetery.

Q1. What part of the cemetery?

EM. It's out of the first gate where you go in and just right over to your right about -- oh, I think about three plots back. All my family is there.

Q1. Do you have any questions?
Q2. Excuse me. You mentioned that -- was it Frankie was so good about writing letters?

EM. Mm-hmm. Well, both of them were, but I -- you know, the boys, they were a long ways from home --

Q2. Well, sure.

EM. -- and I think they were all homesick. I had a --

Q2. Do you have any -- did any of the letters survive time? Do you have any of them?

EM. Well, like I said, I have that V-mail from one of them. And this is interesting: In that one letter Frankie wrote, he said -- he told about how rough it was and everything, and he says, "Don't believe everything you read in the newspapers or hear on the radio." True. True today.

Q1. Still today, that's exactly right. Or on the internet. So did you and Eldon have any children?

EM. Yes, we had two boys.

Q1. Two boys?

EM. Two sons, uh-huh. And I lost -- we lost one boy six years ago -- seven years, soon to be seven.

Q1. And then, your other son, does he live near here?

EM. Yes, he lives here, works at the library.

Q1. Oh. So you passed on that love of learning to him it sounds like.

EM. (Laughs.) Well, he's a history major and a civil war buff.
Q1. And I think Steve had told me about a cousin that lives in Rose Hill that wrote a book.

EM. A who?

Q1. I don't know if it was a cousin or --

EM. That lives where?

Q1. In Rose Hill. Robert Garcia.

EM. It's a -- well, my mother's sister was married to this man, John Garcia, and there were three children from that union, and then the -- my mother's sister passed away. My mother raised -- well, had one of the -- my cousin and sister, and my mother kept him until he remarried again, then he remarried and had all these other children. They called us cousins, but really we're -- you know, we're no blood related except for the three.

Well, I'd like to tell you a story about Augustine. He's the one my mother kind of raised. He always called her Mama Lupe, and he went to school in El Dorado, graduated from El Dorado High School, and then he went to Pittsburgh State teacher's college and graduated from there. Then he got a job after he graduated at Cassoday -- you know where Cassoday is?

Q1. I do.

EM. A spot in the road -- teaching. The school board found out that he was a Mexican, and they told him, "We cannot have you."

Q1. What year was that?

EM. In 1936 during the Depression.
Well, he was so crushed and knew that he could not probably find a job, and he went to Mexico that day, and he became an executive with PEMEX, which is Petróleos Mexicanos, PEMEX Oil Company. The government owns it yet to this day. He became an executive. He -- because he was bilingual, had a degree, and he was head of the Olympic basketball -- or coached the basketball, Olympic men and women's. He helped. He went to all the Olympic Games in Montreal, Munich. He was in Munich when that happened over there, and -- but, you know, when he would come to visit, I could just tell by looking at him in the way he would pick up everything and just read every word of it he was still a little bitter that that happened to him, but then at times he'd say that was the best thing that ever happened to him.

Q1. (Laughs.) Uh-huh. Well, I mean, discrimination of any kind isn't -- do you ever feel like you were discriminated against, living in Augusta?

EM. No. I like to say I'm an American with Spanish heritage. No, I never was.

Q2. Do -- did you observe anything growing up in Augusta that was -- it -- it's kind of interesting, because you may -- you probably know the story of Herman Reed.

EM. I went to school -- he was in my class.

Q2. He was in your -- oh. Well, we should have you tell us what you remember about him. But, you know, it wasn't his classmates, but apparently it was the adults --
EM. Uh-huh.

Q2. -- who said, no, he can't be the captain of the team.

EM. And he became the captain.

Q2. Right. And so -- but did -- did you notice in -- in any setting any discrimination --

EM. Yes.

Q2. -- Against Mexican people? And -- and was there much of a -- you said there were two other families you knew of during the flood when you first moved there, but --

EM. Well, there was about seven Mexican families that -- they lived in what they called the Section, and it was railroad houses. But when we were in the eighth grade -- we were always -- in school, they put you alphabetically, you know, and of course, I was G. I was with Grady and Gordon. But that one year, this teacher -- his name was Andy Murphy -- in eighth grade, he decided he was going to move everybody around, you know, different. We weren't to sit alphabetically anymore, and Herman Reed sat behind this girl, and she went home and told her parents, and her dad came to the school and raised Cain, and they moved her, so she wouldn't have to sit -- I don't want to mention any names, but I told this story to one of the -- this girl's sisters, and she said, "Oh, yeah." She said, "I can see my dad doing that." She said, "That's the kind of man my dad was." She said, "Oh, yeah," and then one of them remembered it.

Q2. What do you remember about Herman?
EM. Let's see. That would have been in 19-- -- Let's see. We were in the -- we were in the eighth grade. No, we were in the ninth grade, because it was in high school. Mm-hmm. So it would have been, what, 1939?

Q1. Uh-huh.

Q2. Did -- do you remember spending any time with him or working with him in school or -- Herman.

EM. Did what?

Q2. Did you -- were you friends? Did you --

EM. No. He kind of -- he stayed to himself, you know, but he was very -- I -- I think real nice, and he made something of himself too. He went on to play professional football.

Q2. Sure did.

Q1. Do you remember -- I haven't checked it out completely, but do you know if Frank and Stanley Dunham were in the same outfit during the war?

EM. No, I imagine Stanley went in through El Dorado, because --

Q1. Did you know him?

EM. No.

Q1. No.

EM. All I know is what I heard about him (laughs).

Q1. Did you -- did -- well, did you have an opinion about him then?

EM. No.

Q1. No. I know Mary Frances Lawrence had told us that she didn't like him, so --
EM. Well, that's what I've -- I heard from different ones, you know, that he was a ne'er-do-well, and that's why his -- her folks objected. I think her folks kind of protected her a lot too and --

Q2. Is there -- is there anything -- any -- any great stories about growing up that we didn't ask you about that you'd like to tell us?

EM. Well, I can't -- can't --

Q1. Did you have any holidays or birthdays or --?

EM. It was -- it was -- it was just a great time to grow up. I think today kids miss a lot, because we -- we learned to swim in the old Walnut River, and it was -- it was clear. You could look from the bottom, stand there and -- and my brother Frankie taught us to swim, and he would take us out in that deep water, and he'd say, "Sink or swim." We swam. (Laughs.) And I can remember once there was a boy drowning. It was the dam. The water ran over the dam, and this young kid got under that water and couldn't get out, and there were people -- we were up on that bridge over the old Walnut River watching him, and this Mexican man, he took off his clothes and jump -- went around and jumped in and got that boy out from under that water, saved his life.

Q2. Did you know the man? Did you know who it was?

EM. Yeah.

Q2. Who was it?
EM. Manuel Cabrales was his name.

Q1. Oh, Cabrales.

EM. Uh-huh. He -- and well, the boy that was down there drowning was Dale. I can't even think of his last name now. But anyway, Dale always told the story himself, you know, that -- he said, "I know that he saved my life." He said, "I would have drowned, because nobody was making a move to help me and --"

Q1. Were there any special traditions that your family had when you were growing up?

EM. No, but let me tell you a story.

My mother made tortillas every day, and that was at -- at noon, she fixed a Mexican dinner, because my dad, you know, ate that, and then in the evening it was -- she fixed American food. But anyway, she made this pile of tortillas, and my brother always had a bunch of kids, because we had a big yard out -- they'd always gather there at our house, and this one boy, his name was Louie Myers -- my mother would make the tortillas early, you know, so the kitchen would be cool by the time my dad come home, and she set them on the -- set this pile of tortillas, and they were wrapped in a tea towel, and Louie come in the house and grabbed those and run down the road with them, because he -- he loved them (laughs). And so anyway, there was no tortillas for lunch that day.
But anyway, later on, he asked Frankie, he said, "Is your mother mad at me because I did that?", and Frankie says, "No. She said she wasn't mad, but she wants her tea towel back." (All laugh.)

And -- and Louie Myers was killed in the war too.

Q1. I bet your dad wasn't very happy about not having his tortillas for lunch.

EM. No, my dad was easygoing. He probably didn't care, and my mother probably had the homemade bread that we -- she always made.

Q1. He didn't go hungry? (Laughs.)

EM. No, huh-uh.

Q1. And neither did Louie apparently.

EM. No.

Q1. So did your mom teach you how to cook?

EM. No, she wouldn't let us in the kitchen. She was -- of course, we did it on purpose too. Like drying dishes, we'd clatter them, you know, and she said, "Get out of here before you break my dishes." (Laughs.) And anyway, she wouldn't let us in the kitchen half the time, because we got in her way, and she liked to -- she didn't have the time or the patience to mess with us.

Q1. What other chores did you get out of that way?

EM. But anyway, to this -- I like to cook, and I did learn how to make Mexican food.

Q1. Ok. You were good.

Q2. Yes.
A. Is that it?

Q1. Yes. You're a star.

[END]

Note: Chatter and questions follow end of interview at [40:17]. Video moves to showing view of both brother’s medals and ribbons.
Q1. Okay, now we're really ready. Okay. Well, we always begin with some identifying information, and so I'm going to state -- can you hear me okay? Do I need to speak up a little bit?

BH: (Nods head.)

Q1. All right. So I'm going to state that today is Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015, and I'm going to ask you to state your full name.
BH: Berry, B-E-R-R-Y, Harris, T., middle initial T. I won't tell you what that's for.

Q1. You won't?

BH: No.

Q1. I was going to ask. Okay. And your birth date?


Q1. 11-27-29. Okay. And where we are right now where this interview is taking place is --

BH: Huh?

Q1. And we're in your home; right?

BH: Yeah.

Q1. Okay. So why don't we start. Maybe if you could talk a little bit about where you're from and where you were born, a little bit about your family, anything you want to tell us about that.

BH: I was born in Chockie, Oklahoma, which is in Atoka County. I was born between Highway 69 and Acadia Railroad tracks. And right across the tracks where I was born, that was Johnny McEntire's ranch, who is the grandfather of Reba McEntire. We moved from Chockie up into a place called -- up there to a place called Spenler's Ranch (phonetic), my mom, my dad, my uncle, and my aunt, and we moved back from down there back to Chockie. Well, my grandparents came from Cheyenne, Oklahoma, my grandmother and my grandfather, my mother's sister and her son, Opal and Melvin. And my grandfather built a log structure right by the
highway where the tracks run here and the highway was here close to each other. My grandfather built a log structure with a deck floor, and he went down to Atoka and boughted him a tent. And he stretched that tent across that and made a house out of it. And everything was done in that one room: cooking, eating, sleeping and everything in one room.

My dad went in the CC camps 'cause he was a World War I veteran. And in the process of that, him and my mother divorced and she married Fred Carbin (phonetic) and they moved to Boggy Bend. But let's go back to Chockie. 'Cause this was the height of the school, right yonder the school was there in Chockie for black kids, was in Chockie. And then we moved to Boggy Bend, which was all-black settlement, and we moved to Stringtown, and I went to school in Stringtown and I end up going to school in Atoka High School. And I go in the Army in 1948, September the 9th, 1948. And I spent from 1949 to 1952, middle of 1952, in Osaka, Japan. I was a -- in 5627P Company. Do you want to hear the bad part of that or good part of it? I ended up with a heroin habit. And I got sent home and I kicked that habit in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. And I came back to Stringtown. Then I moved to McAlester, and I was all over Oklahoma. I hitchhiked all over half of Oklahoma, going to cotton fields and different places.
Well, always, I always was fooling around with a guitar because my cousin Melvin played guitar, or he -- he could just pick up an instrument and play it. I couldn't do that. But out there on Boggy Bend was three old men: Mr. Bernie Sanderson, Mr. Homer Watkins, and Uncle U.L. Washington, who was the uncle of U.L. Washington who played shortstop for the Kansas City Royals. That's kind of the beginning of my guitar playing. And I played a little guitar when I was in Japan. But I've always been musically inclined and telling jokes, that's 'cause I always do that.

I wasn't very -- I wasn't a very good scholar in school because I just never applied myself to be. It's always been -- it's always been more like wanting to be an actor or something, you know, when I was going to school. I was good in plays, and blackface middle school, we had blackface middle school. And I was good at that. I was good at doing my part. But I never could comprehend math. It just didn't boil in my mind. Well, I played no sports because I was too little to play sports. I didn't learn to swim.

I ended up in Muskogee, Oklahoma, playing in a band, and that's why I got here 'cause Jerry Burns, who was the uncle of Carla Burns, came and got me and a saxophone player and a drummer, and I came here playing that old Flagley Garden (phonetic), and from old Flagley Garden down on Ninth Street. Well, I left Flagley
Garden, I guess I played some on Ninth Street. I ended up playing at The Bomber Club out there on George Washington Boulevard as you go under McConnell Air Force base. The guy's name was Phil Beech. I was told that he was a test pilot. I wouldn't say whether he was or not but that's what they said he was, and he worked at Boeing. He had another club there on Harry called the Tick Tock Lounge.

And playing at The Bomber Club is where I met Madelyn. Madelyn, Nancy, I want to say her name was Suzanne Obenchain (phonetic). I don't know whether the first name was Nancy. I know Suzanne Oberchain, Madelyn, and another girl, and I think her name was Marilyn. I don't really know. But they used to come to the club all the time when we were playing there.

Q2. Mr. Harris, what year was that?

BH: Huh?

Q2. What year?

BH: It was in 19 -- we got married in 1957, so that's in 1957.

Q1. Okay.

BH: And we got married in -- she don't know, either -- 1957, 1958, 'cause Yvette was born in 1959. But anyhow, that's how I knew them. We lived in the 1500 block on Pennsylvania. And they drove a Thunderbird. They used to come over there all the time.

Q1. They drove a Thunderbird?
BH: I don't know whether it was Madelyn driving the car or Marilyn. One of 'em. It's a man in Augusta, I don't know if he's still living or not, that had run the D Club. You remember where the club used to be on -- on State Street, the D Club?

Q1. The D Club?

BH: Yeah.

Q1. I don't. I'm from Augusta.

BH: His last name is Hancock. He run that club up there. He's a white guy. R.D. Hancock ran Flagley Garden. R.D. Hancock had a greyhound dog, and that dog showed -- like told me 21 times out of 23 for first place. I know the dog's picture's in the Greyhound Museum in Abilene. And later on the Langovers, Levi and Goldie Langover, was running the club when I came here, it was called River City. I guess that's -- I ended up playing -- I guess I played in every club in town, you know. I end up being -- have -- running the bands and playing for the Masonics and playing for social clubs and playing for everybody.

And then a period of time come along there where we didn't have much places to play because people that were playing what I was playing, young musicians didn't want to play that. They were playing more Sly and the Family Stone or hip hop music, you know. And I wasn't -- really wasn't that active during that period of time. But I ended up -- a guy opened up a club down on Douglas down there, and the name is Rick's Rib Rack. And I
started playing for him and the Ninth Street Blues Band. And we played down there for him for about three years. And he sold it to Dennis White. And Dennis White named it Panama Red Roadhouse. We played there another four years. We played about seven years there on St. Francis and Douglas. Right next door to that was a lady that run a clothing store, and she was in the paper because she had -- she was in the concentration camp. You remember that article in the paper about her? 'Cause she had a number on her arm.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: And her husband had died. She died here about two or three years ago. That's where the club was at.

And I played all over, down in Oklahoma. I ain't never been on the road. I ain't never made no records, none of that stuff, because I got married, you know, and I done something I ain't never done before, I went and got me a job. That wasn't in my intentions, to get no job at that time before I got married because I didn't need one, you know. I didn't need very much because I would always live with not very much.

So not having much didn't bother me because that's the way I was raised. Didn't have much. You know, we were what you may call poor folk, poor folks. But I didn't know that. I didn't know that. Everything was all right in my life, you know. Then I met Loretta and I got married. And I worked all kind of
dead-end jobs, whatever I could find. I worked two jobs and played music at night. You know, wasn't making much money but I was working, taking care of wife and two children. And Loretta, she was working, too. She worked at an attorney's office and then she worked for the Wheatley Children's Home, she sold real estate. And we had two children. And one child died in January of '06. She was two years old when Loretta and I got married. I was -- she was always my daughter. She was never nothing else but my child. And she died and Loretta took sick too, two, three months later. From '06 to '09, Loretta was in the hospital three times and four nursing homes. And from '09 till this moment, I haven't been away from her over two hours. I don't leave her.

Q1. So Mr. --

BH: I don't go nowhere without her.

Q2. I know. I saw you all at -- absolutely, I saw both you and Loretta at the old Dunbar --

BH: Yeah.

Q2. -- when you played there. And, and -- Miss Loretta was with you. And I saw you, another event that I was at, so I know that you never leave her.

BH: Yeah.

Q2. With Madelyn, how did you know her last name?

BH: I didn't.
Q2. Okay. So --
BH: I didn't know her last name until -- but I knew who she was, I knew who she was.
Q2. So what made you -- how did you know who she was?
BH: By conversation. Listening to what Obama and them said about her, I knew who she was.
Q2. Okay.
Q1. You figured that out after the fact?
BH: After Obama.
Q1. See, 'cause there's -- it's a little bit confusing to me because they, in 1950 -- let's see, it was in 1955 or '56 they were in El Dorado and then they moved.
BH: No, it --
Q1. So I'm trying to figure out.
Q1. Do you remember how old she was at that time?
BH: About 18. Somewhere. I wouldn't know. I'm presuming she was about 18. 'Cause I was -- I was twenty, what, 27, 28, I was 29 years old.
Q1. What club were you playing at?
BH: Bomber Club.
Q1. Bomber Club.
BH: Yeah. Phil Beech ran The Bomber Club. I told you he was a test pilot out there at Boeing. He went to Chicago and brought Kid
Thomas and Tricky here. I knew he flew airplanes 'cause he went to Chicago and got them. But I know who Madelyn was. I knew who she was. I know exactly who she was because I didn't know her last name was Payne but I knew that she was going with Stanley, who she married.

Q2. Okay. So you knew who Stanley was?
BH: Yeah, I knew who he was.

Q2. And how long had you known him?
BH: Oh, the same period of time I knew her.

Q2. Okay.
BH: 'Cause he come in the club, too. He didn't come there often but he came there. But he never came over there where we were on Pennsylvania. So I know who she was.

Q2. So Stanley was about her age or old --
BH: Yeah.

Q2. Okay.
BH: I imagine he might have been -- I guess he was 21, 22 years old.
I don't know.

Q1. You were never in Wichita before that, though?
BH: Huh?

Q1. You were never in Wichita before 1957?
BH: Me?

Q1. Yeah.
BH: No, huh-uh.
Q1. Okay. So during that -- at that time they would have been married. And I'm just trying to figure out. There must have been an overlap somewhere but I know that Madelyn loved the music.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: Yeah.

Q1. I know that she, you know, I know that she -- she and her classmates were all crazy about the Swing and the Big Band. But what kind of music did you play?

BH: We were playing Blues.

Q1. You were playing Blues.

BH: Right. Up till what we doing little Richard and Blues. You know, we called it Blues, but we were playing whatever was on the jukebox, you know.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: We was playing music. Well, this other girl, Suzanne Obenchain, she lived 805 State Street. That's right there by the bridge.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: Huh? You know?

Q1. Well, I know State Street.

Q2. In El Dorado?

Q1. Oh, no, Augusta.

BH: Augusta.

Q1. Yeah.
BH: That would be about the 800 block. 805, I'm pretty sure that's what -- because she liked me.

Q1. Okay.

BH: You see, I was kind of cute back then. And I hadn't met Loretta. I hadn't met Loretta at that time.

Q1. Uh-huh.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: I didn't meet Loretta until I moved from Pennsylvania down here on Elm. I didn't know who Loretta was.

Q2. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: But she came there. Well, I guess we had -- had talked about getting married, but she had one child; right? And then she ended up pregnant again. And I wasn't going to take care of two kids. And then the next thing, the fact that I had to look at taking her home to my mother. After all --

Q1. She was a white girl; right?

BH: Yeah. You know what I'm saying?

Q1. Yeah.

BH: Well, my mother said that would have been all right but I don't know that. You understand what I'm saying? So I met Loretta. And when Loretta and I got married, I knew I could take her home. But I don't remember no sexual involvement there. I know it wasn't there between us two.
Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: And I don't see none there with the other two girls either.

Q1. Uh-huh. But yet -- but I think Sarah, who connected us with each other, I think you told her that they also -- they didn't just come to listen to the music, but they also came and spent some time interacting with people in your neighborhood?

BH: Yeah.

Q1. So tell me about that.

BH: Yeah, they just came over there. They come over there in the daytime. It'd be in the daytime. There's always somebody drinking, playing music, you know. They said -- the white police wanted to say we were all over there getting high, but wasn't nobody smoking no weed. None of us smoked weed at the time. None of us. We all were a bunch of drunks, you know, just drinking whiskey, partying, having a good time.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: And we sure didn't like laying around with each other because there's too many people in the house that weren't part of us. It's a rooming house, you see, so I don't see no sexual thing going on there at all. As a matter of fact, it didn't happen. It was that -- everybody was just friendly with each other. Now who liked who, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know if they -- anybody liked the others. I have no idea about that. I
know that the only person that come close to having an idea was me and this other girl. And I was not going to raise two kids.

Q1. Uh-huh.

Q2. So you and Stanley were friends?

BH: Huh?

Q2. You and Stanley were friends?

BH: No.

Q2. You just knew him?

BH: I just knew who he was. No, we were not friends. We -- just them three girls. And I'm sure Madelyn is the one that I know -- well, I knew all three of them, so I can't help but know her, see?

Q1. Uh-huh.

Q2. How long did they keep coming out to the club? How long did they come to the club?

BH: How often they come to the club?

Q2. How long, a year, six months?

BH: Well, I guess -- I guess I played out there, what, a year?

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: I guess. I don't know. Seven, eight months I played out there.

Q2. Okay. So a year or less.

BH: Yeah. And then when I quit playing there, I didn't see them anymore.

Q2. Okay.
BH: Because I started playing on Ninth Street.

Q2. And they didn't come up there? They were out by the base?

BH: Yeah. They never come to the clubs over here.

Q2. Right.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: They come to the house where we lived at in the daytime.

Q2. Oh, okay, back -- oh, where did you live at then?

BH: 1500 block on Pennsylvania.

Q2. Okay. So they would come up -- they would come and hear you play --

BH: At The Bomber Club at night.

Q2. -- at the club at night but they would also come up to the house?

BH: Yeah, in the daytime.

Q2. The rooming house?

BH: Yeah.

Q1. They made separate trips?

BH: Huh?

Q1. They made separate trips?

BH: Yeah. Well, we were friends.

Q2. Uh-huh.

Q1. Uh-huh.

Q2. That's not unusual.
Q1. Now, how were they received by other people in the neighborhood? You said the police were bothered by it.

BH: Well, police, you know, wherever black musicians and white people were coming, we'd all be dopeheads. That was standard procedure here in this town --

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: -- you know.

Q1. So did they break it up? Did they make the girls leave or --

BH: No, no, no, they never came. They never came there. But we got word, because her mother's friend worked at the courthouse, Loretta's friend worked at the courthouse, and she told her son to tell us to move from up there because the police was going to raid the place.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: I don't know who else moved. I moved down on -- I moved down there on Cleveland, and then I started playing at The Sportsman on Ninth Street. And then Loretta come in there one Saturday night. And I seen her and I said, "That's what I want right there." And I went on home that night, and I didn't know -- I didn't know her name, didn't know where she lived or nothing. I woke up Sunday morning wondering who in the hell was that. And I got to talking to somebody, Kenneth Rogers, and he told me, he said, "What's she have on?" I said, "She have on a red dress."
He said, "What's she looked like?" I told him. He said, "That's Loretta Anderson."

So I called her and asked her could I come to see her, and she said yes. Her mother told me I was welcome. So I walked in the house. I walked in the house and I walked over to Mr. Anderson and I introduced myself to him and I introduced myself to his mother -- to her mother, and I turned around and picked Carla up. She was two years old. I picked her up and I picked her up, I'd pick her up now, she's been dead since '06 but I still pick her up every now and then. And I started going with this girl. She started talking about going to Washington, somebody wanted her to. I said, "Let's get married." She said, "Okay." So we went and got married in Newton. We've been married 56 years. It's been a pretty good ride. Ain't it been pretty good, Loretta?

Q3. Yeah, yeah.

BH: Don't think she ain't got nothing to say. She got plenty to say.

Q3. Yeah.

BH: So that's kind of the story of my life, you know.

Q1. So do you have any idea why these -- you said that it went on for -- we think it went on for about a year that these three white girls came to listen to you play, and they were the
only -- were they the only white people who came in and listened at the club?

BH: Yeah.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: At the club?

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: It was a white club.

Q2. It's The Bomber.

BH: The Bomber Club is a white club.

Q1. Oh, okay, okay.

BH: Yeah, everybody there was white.

Q1. So what was unusual was when they came to your neighborhood, that's when it became very unusual.

BH: Well, they're the only ones that came to our neighborhood.


BH: But we played in a white club. The Bomber Club is a white club.

Q1. All right.

BH: See, we integrate the white clubs. But you got to understand this, see, black musicians have always been able to play in a white club. We could always go where other black people couldn't go. It's always been that way.

Q1. Uh-huh.
BH: Huh? Always been that way, see? 'Cause they like that black music, that (using onomatopoeia), that funky music, you know, doing the Funky Chicken and all that stuff.

Smile over there, girl. [Laughs]

Q3. I didn't go there.

Q1. So did you think much of that at that time, that what you were doing --

BH: No.

Q1. -- was something that your peers couldn't do?

BH: No.

Q1. It was just --

BH: No, I never thought about it one time. I ended up playing at old Rock Castle out there. I played out there for the McVicar's, McVicar's Oil, McVicar's Clothing. Bill McVicar lived in Park City. I ended up playing out there, and that was the Rock Castle. Then I played out there when it was something else for James (unintelligible). I played out there when it was the Cowboy Inn 'cause they burned the Cowboy Inn down on West Street. I played at the -- what the heck was the name of the club on Main Street? You start playing at 9:00, the fights start at 9:05. You seen that movie where they got the thing up to keep the bottles from hitting you? That's the way it was. Can't recall the name of it.

Q2. Was it on Ninth Street?
BH: Huh?

Q2. On Ninth Street?

BH: No, no, this white club on Main Street.

Q2. On Main Street.

BH: Right off of Douglas, right off of Douglas. And they would come out to the Rock Castle and they'd give them a section over there where nobody would fool with them. The Greeley Club, I think, is what they had on their shirt. Oh, I played all kind of dumps, you know. But I played -- I played for the Topeka -- in Topeka for the Shriners and the Pleas ionnaires Club (phonetic) [Legionnaires Club]. I played 26 years for the Pleas ionnaires and 28 years for the Shriners in a row. I been through the mill playing.

Q1. Yes, you have.

BH: I hated Junction City. I did not like Junction City.

Q1. How come?

BH: I didn't know nothing about prostitution. I had never heard the word prostitution in my life until I went to Japan. Well, I seen prostitution in Japan because the people were poor and the women were selling their bodies to survive. I seen that. When I come back to Oklahoma, I don't see prostitution. That's just like doing drugs, (unintelligible) nothing because I don't see nothing. I come to Kansas, right, and I go to Junction City and I seen prostitution.
(Doorbell rings.) Is that somebody at the door? Un-huh. God dammit.

[Break]

BH: We had prostitution in America, but I didn't like Junction City because Ninth Street in Junction City come right off of Main Street and there's a hole like this.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: And that was the black part of Junction City. And I never seen prostitution until then. And I hated Junction City because we couldn't get no place to stay in Junction City. We couldn't sleep in the motels. And this is 1959, 1960, you know, no place to stay in Junction City. We slept in the bed where the whores slept. I didn't like that at all. I still don't like Junction City. I like Manhattan.

Q2. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BH: But Junction City's changed.

Q2. Yes.

Q1. Well, so other places you played that were out of town, were you able to stay in the hotels there, or was it just --

BH: Yeah, later on we played Topeka, we could always get rooms in Topeka.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: I played Kansas City, Kansas. We could always get rooms there. My last venture I went to -- I went to Nags Head, North
Carolina. You know where that is? Nags Head. They call that Outer Banks.

Q1. Oh, Outer Banks I know of. I never been there.

BH: Well, Matt Walsh (phonetic), a young white kid, played guitar. He's from Statesville, North Carolina, but he lived here for a while. And so he went back to North Carolina. They flew me from here to Charlotte and back. And they paid all my expenses down there. I stayed with Matt. We drove from Statesville down to Nags Head, and I played 45 minutes. They paid me $1500, and they offered to send me to Europe for six weeks. I can't go to Europe. Loretta's in a nursing home. I can't go to Europe. I'm too old to fly. I'm not going to do that flying. I'm what, let's see, I'm 85 now, I guess I'm 78, 79 years old. Uh -- 'cause I'm going Sunday to a blues festival. I go to Oklahoma for Labor Day Blues Festival, Dusk Till Dawn Blues Festival. And I'm thinking that this is going to be my last trip.

I want to go home. I want -- I want to go home. I don't know whether I'm going to be able to go home or not when I go to Oklahoma. There's something strange about going home in my life. The last time I went home, I went up on the hill, and all the people I knew were up there on the hill, and it was a kind of an eerie feeling. Everybody I knew was up there on that hill. I got sense enough to know that I'm on my way out of here. I don't know when, but I know I'm on my way. I can look
over there and see the hole in the ground. I used to couldn't see it. And everybody will be able to see the hole in the ground if you look.

You understand where I'm coming from, don't you?

Q2. Yeah.

(Phone rings.)

BH: I wish that phone -- tell them people, whoever it is, I'll call them back.

Q3. Berry will call you back soon.

BH: Is that Mark?

Q3. He hung up. I don't know who it was.

BH: So, anyway, I want to go home.

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: I don't want to go and spend no time. I just want to drive through Stringtown. I want to drive up -- up on the road and come back down to Stringtown and get the highway and come on back home. And I'm more likely to do that Monday morning. I'm going to leave here Sunday morning and go play in the festival. And my daughter going to drive, and I'm going to go home. This is going to be my last trip going home.

I have lived a good life. I've been a well-blessed man. I've been well treated in the people of this town. I never knew -- I never thought that nobody ever know me. It's strange how things come into your life that you don't know gonna come there. Well,
I ain't got rich. You come and see that, I haven't got rich, but I've lived pretty decent.

I played last Sunday. They give me a hundred dollars for playing. They tipped me a hundred dollars and then they turned around and donated me a hundred dollars. I left home thinking I was going to get a hundred dollars, I end up back with $310. I played Pig in Pig Out Barbecue. I been there over three years. I am not a great guitar player. I'm just an average guy. You know what I mean? But I play. I like to play. I play keyboards. You see I got all that junk sitting over there. I can play a little of everything I got in here.

I been a very fortunate man. God has blessed me. I ain't never been in jail in my life. I don't have no kids. I never lived but with one woman. That's the only woman I ever lived with. I got a little habit, I do, and I don't care who knows it. I smoke a little bit. I have to do something to maintain sanity 'cause I'm a little out of stress. I'm under a lot of stress. I'm under a lot of stress. I worry about this woman, you see. It's stressful. I got to make sure that the medicine is right. I got to make sure that she's clean. I got to make sure that everything is right in her life. I can't walk away from this, can I? I wouldn't be a man, would I? I wouldn't be a man to walk away. I'm a man, baby. I'm not a pair of pants walking around here.
Q3. I understand.

BH: I'm a man. My mother raised me to be a man. I understand. Lots I didn't understand. I didn’t like my mother. I didn't like her. Boy, but when I went in the Army I knew what discipline was because she had demanded it from me as a child growing up, you see, when she finally got a chance to raise me. She knew what I'd do.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: She knew what I'd do. She knew when I was telling the truth and when I was lying, and I usually got a good ass-whipping when I was lying. So it shaped me. It shaped me to treat everybody right. I got no charge (phonetic) for people. I treat everybody right.

I don't know nothing about segregation, to tell you the truth. I don't. Because where I was raised at, there was none. Everybody was poor folks. White people and black people, were all poor. We were all eating out of the same bucket. You understand what I'm saying to you? They didn't have nothing. We didn't have nothing. And they was all getting drunk together and sleeping with who they wanted to sleep with. I was a kid. I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know nothing about segregation.

I never ate beef until I was 16 years old. I was never called a nigger until I was 17, 16 years old.
Q2. Can you tell us what —

BH: And I ain't never been called that but about once or twice in my whole life. What else can I say?

Q1. Did you -- did you go to segregated schools?

BH: Huh?

Q1. I was thinking that the schools in Oklahoma, you said, were segregated. But no?

BH: The schools?

Q1. Yeah.

BH: Oh, yeah, so --

Q1. You went to segregated schools but you didn't think it was unusual?

BH: Well, I didn't think nothing about it.

Q1. Uh-huh. It's just the way it was.

BH: The black kids went to the black school, white kids went to the white school, you know. Just like I said, I didn't know about segregation because I was raised in the country. I went in the back door all the time, you know, in momma's house and any other door I wanted to go in, you know. And the first time I knew anything about segregation, I went to a cafe because I wanted a hamburger. You know, hamburgers was good back then, because I hadn't ever ate any beef. And Popeye was eating them hamburgers, Wimpy was eating hamburgers in the comic book, you know. And I like mustard, pickles, and all that stuff. I keep
jars of mustard with crackers. I still can. Sandwich bread and crackers, that's one of my favorite diets, mustard.

Q3. Not one of mine.

BH: Well, Wimpy was eating that mustard.

Q3. He was.

BH: And so we stopped -- I was 16 years old. I was running with the big boys. They were 21, 22 years old. And we were drinking that Silver Fox beer. 'Cause the war was on, that's the only beer you could get, the Silver Fox. And we stopped at the service station because we had a flat. And somebody went over there and got some hamburgers. They was a nickel apiece.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: So I don't know, I go over there to get me two. I went in the front door and ordered me two hamburgers and a sodie water, you know. [Laughs] And the man back then, his office -- well, the girl is cooking the hamburgers. Well, he sees me and he comes out there and told me to get -- "You get your black ass out. We don't sell to niggers in here." And I said, "What you say?" I ain't never been called a nigger in my life, you know. We didn't use that word when I grew up. I said, "What you say?" He said, "Goddammit, I'll show you." So he run behind the counter there to throw me out. Well, I got to ease out a special knife in my pocket, one of them long-blade knives, and I got a reach out a (unintelligible) under that blade 'cause we
have a quick draw. I come out of my pocket with that knife quick draw, and after that blade, he back up, and he stopped with his hands up. He said, "Get out." I said, "Throw me out." He said, "Get the nigger his food and get out of my goddamn place." I took my food and walked on out the door.

Q2. Uh-huh.

Q1. But you did get your food?

BH: Huh?

Q1. You did get your food?

BH: Yeah. I didn't know nothing about that kind of stuff was going on. I didn't know nothing about it. I -- I ain't never been called that by a white person since. Since. I don't know nobody calling me that. Black people call me that all the time. Well, we said that's all right. It's not all right.

Q2. Uh-huh, I hear you.

BH: It's stupid. It's not all right. Well, you shouldn't be mad about somebody else call you that if you turn around and use it all day long. I don't know.

Q2. Uh-huh.

BH: I don't know. But I been wrong. People, people have treated me very nice in this town. Black people, white people, any kind of people. I don't do nothing to nobody. I don't bother nobody. I don't fight. I don't go to jail. I don't do none of that, none of that.
So I've lived a pretty good life and I'm thankful for what life has brought to me to this point in my life, you know.

Q1. Uh-huh. So can I ask you what do you think -- do you think your life would have been any different if you didn't have your music in it?

BH: Yeah, yeah. Well, let me talk about that music aspect.

Q1. Okay.

BH: See, I say to you that there's only been three girls in my life that I thought that I liked. The first girl I thought that I liked, her name was Kayako (phonetic). And she told me one time, she said, "My heart speak of you. Too much I love you. My heart speaks." She said, "I love you. I love you too much." She said, "Tell me, son, do you hear my heart?" I said, "Hi (unintelligible)." That means yes. She said, "No, you don't hear my heart." She said, "You're too far from home. You don't hear my heart."

Well, I come back to the states and I meet another girl, in high school. And I'm crazy about this girl but her mother don't like me. And she took this girl and went to California. Well, that ended that. And I met this girl and I'm trying to play music at this time. Well, I'm glad I didn't marry this girl over here because I would never have been able to do what I wanted to do. This girl didn't stop me from doing what I wanted to do. She never supported me by going and hanging out with me, but she always
understood that what I was doing was to supplement with what I was making. See, this was supplement to what I'm trying to feed me, her and the kids.

Tell you a little story. I go to work at McConnell Air Force base, and I'm staying the 1800 block on Green. They tell me, they said, "You can eat when you come to work and you can get a hot meal in the morning, breakfast." So that morning I ate half a dozen eggs, almost half a loaf of bread, and two or three big slices of ham, and some -- whatever they had, I just gulled (phonetic) myself. And I ate this, I ate. And I done that for about three or four mornings in a row. Well, this white man who was the cook, he said, "Berry, you can sure eat." I say, "Yeah, it takes a lot of food for me." Is this thing still on? He said -- so I confronted him one morning. I said, "Hey, man, I got -- I have a wife and two kids at home." I said, "How about letting me take my breakfast home?" He said, "Oh, all right." I got me a half a dozen eggs. I got me a half a loaf of bread. I got me two great big potatoes, and I got me whatever else I needed and some sugar and this, that and the other, and some jelly, and I took that home. Every morning I took that home. Every morning I took all this food home every morning. So I got -- I stocked up my refrigerator.

So I'm pulling -- I'm walking through the building and they got big old locks on the doors up here where all the food is stored, and
I'm pulling these locks. I pull one and it come open. I said, "Looky here." So I reach up there and I got me a -- I got me a steak, a good, big steak over there at the officer's club. I wrapped that steak up and went in the back and got me a steak, I got all these eggs and all these potatoes and all this bread and all this steak; right? I'm taking that home. I went through another one and I found some pork chops. I reached and got me a pork chop, a steak, all that eggs and stuff, I'm taking that all home. I got in the liquor cabinet. I'm bringing all this home, with the (unintelligible) standing on the street, I'm keeping them drunk and feeding them. We've got plenty of food. I'm hustling. I'm struggling. You understand what I'm saying? I'm feeding me, my family, and everybody else.

Okay. So now my dad told me when I was a kid, he said, "Boy," he said, "I would never go to jail." He said, "I'd shovel against the wind." You know what he said right there, don't you?

Q1. Uh-huh.

BH: Well, I did that. Because they built a golf course out there. And they brought it stacked this high, flaky. I'm on top of it with a shovel shoveling. And it gets down about like this, it changes the complexion of it. It starts to getting kinda loose. And by the time it gets here I'm in rubber boots, and we're shoveling it in the hopper and it's blowing back on my clothes. I have to throw my clothes away. I get home, home with them
clothes on, I got to throw them in the trash. And then every morning I got to take some old raggedy clothes to do this job with 'cause I'm trying to make a living.

I never would have been be able to do what I've done with another woman, 'cause she stood by me and let me do what I wanted to do. And I -- and I still play, you know. I ain't been perfect, but I been good. I made some mistakes. There's thing's I've done, some things I wish I had not done, but not many, not many. I'm not walking around with no guilt trip. I don't even think about it, you know what I mean, because the good outweighed my bad part of my life.

I'm a Christian-thinking man. I read the Bible. I believe in what it teaches. What else can I say? I'll treat you the way I want you to treat me. And that's the way my life has always been. And that's the way it'll be until I die. I'm thankful for God that he woke me up every morning of my life, so I make sure -- I pray, and I ask God -- my cousin, he's a pastor at a church. He said I'm selfish. But I'm gonna tell you what I ask God. I ask God to take my wife first. And there's a reason why I ask God to take her first. Because if he takes her, I will be ready to go, like Mr. Carter said in the paper. You read about what Mr. Carter said he was prepared to do? Did you read that article in the paper? Mr. Carter had brain cancer, he said -- Q2. Yes, President Carter.
Q1. Oh, yes.

BH: Jimmy Carter. He said, "I worship the God that I serve, and I am prepared for whatever comes down the road." I am prepared. And, God, take this woman first, because I know that I will take care of her until that goes down. But if he takes me first, I don't know what happens to her. I am not selfish. I want to take care of her, make sure that she's taken care of. I don't care what they do to me. Maybe they stand me up beside a tree. I could care less. If my daughter don't take care of me, that's all right with me. See what I'm saying to you?

Q1. Yes.

BH: 'Cause I've been alone. I've been by myself all my life to a degree. It won't hurt me by myself 'cause I can be peaceful with myself as long as I take care of Loretta. I don't want to leave here and leave Loretta in the hands of nobody. Uh-huh? I want to take care of Loretta. I want to bury Loretta, and I know that everything has been all right in her life. And then you can put me in the hole too right there the next day. I don't care.

I lived my life. I lived way past my allotted time. Seventy years is my allotted time, isn't it? Ain't that what the Book says, three scores and ten? I'm not living -- I'm living in the grace period of my life. I may live to be a hundred years old. I feel like I could live to be another 30 years. I feel that way.
I don't feel like I'm dying. And I don't know how long she's going to live.

I just asking God to let me take care of her until she die. Don't leave her in Yvette's hands. That's our daughter. They don't come to see about us that often, so they ain't going to come now. You understand what I'm saying?

Q3. Well, they go to work, you know.

BH: You always got time to go see about your mother. I don't care what you do.

Q1. The mother's got to stick up for her kids.

Q2. Throw that in.

Q1. I know how that is.

Q2. Yeah.

BH: You always take time to go see about your momma, but daddy ain't so important. Momma's the important person in your life. She's the one that lay down and brought you into this world. Your daddy, he just helped. He's a good man. And I love that, too. I think some people got good daddies and you love your daddy, but your momma's the one that brought you here. If you can't take care of your momma, you can't take care of nobody. That's what I think. Now, that may be wrong, but that's the way I feel. I'm entitled to believe what I want to believe, am I? Am I -- am I talking stupid to you people?

Q2. No.
BH: Huh?

Q2. Not at all.

BH: That's what I believe. That's what I'm going to do, take care of Loretta, you know. After that, if Loretta die tomorrow, I'll be ready the next day. But I ain't gonna to kill myself. I've been to the point if I wasn't -- if I wasn't really a strong man I'd have done jumped off the bridge two years ago. Whoo, don't nobody know the trouble I see.

Q3. Hallelujah.

BH: Don't nobody know what's going on in my life and my mind and the hurt I go through, 'cause I ain't got nobody to talk to. I can't tell it to her. Huh? I smile a lots, but I cry a lot, too. I sat there on that crouch and cried a many a night. From '06 to '09 I sat right there where she's sitting, and I sit there. And you can think the hell out of me if you want to, that's your business. If it hadn't been for having a drink and a smoke and a little weed, I'd have lost my mind, huh? I can't sit here and not do something. I'm the only man that get up in the middle of the night and go to the nursing home and stay all night in the bed with his wife. The people at the nursing home at Andover say, "You're an exceptional man. We ain't seen nobody do this but you." I ain't do that for show. I had to go. I couldn't do -- her brother said, "You need to stay home,
boy. You're killing yourself." I said, "Let it happen, Lake (phonetic). I'm going to see about Loretta."

Q1. You've done well.
BH: Huh?
Q1. You've done well.
BH: I've done what is right. That's what God asks -- told me. I told God when I married this woman that that's what I would do. I didn't say I was going to half-ass do that. I said I would do this. And that's what I been doing. I been -- I made them mistakes. I tell you that. I ain't been perfect, but I been good. You understand what I'm saying to you? There have been times when I should have kept my (gesturing), but I been good, you know.

Q3. Just keep on talking. [All laugh]
BH: I try to be -- I tried to be a good man. I tried to be a good person. That's all I know to do. I guess that's about all I can tell you about me. Anything else you want to know about?

Q1. You have told us a lot. And I thank you very much. Does anybody else have a question? No?

Q4. No.
BH: What'd she say?
Q1. I asked if anybody else had a question. She said no.
Q4. Where was your favorite place to play your music, where did you like to play the most?
BH: No certain place.
Q4. What was that?
BH: No certain place.
Q2. No certain place.
Q4. No certain place, just everywhere.
BH: Anywhere where I could get the guitar on the band stand.
Q4. As long as you had your guitar.
BH: No certain place. I play, don't care whether it's nice or a dump, don't matter to me just as long as somebody is listening. No certain place to play.
Q3. I don't even go to some of those dumps.
Q5. How long you been playing an instrument?
BH: I guess there's a lots more, you know, that I could talk about, you know, because -- I know I'm leaving out something that I really wanted to tell you, but I can't remember what it was because my mind is not that sharp like it used to be.
Q1. Steve had a question.
Q5. How long you been playing instruments and how many instruments have you played and can you name them?
BH: How many years I played? I think it's 70.
Q5. Seventy.
BH: Seventy.
Q5. So how many instruments do you play and can you name the ones that you do play.
BH: I been playing -- you mean, playing in the band?

Q5. How many instruments can you play? How many instruments can you play?

Q1. Guitar, keyboard, how many instruments, different instruments?

BH: Oh, I play keyboard, harmonica, and guitar. I'm also a comedian. I do dirty jokes, very dirty. I could do them for two or three hours at a time. When I was a boy growing up, we didn't have no radio.

Q2. So they're bad.

BH: So the old men sat around and told jokes; right? So the boys told jokes. Well, we sat on the railroad tracks till 1:00 or 2:00 o'clock in the morning telling jokes. Well, when I go in the Army, boy, you really learn 'em in the Army.

Q2. Oh, yeah.

BH: Well, we learned this toast in the Army. It's a difference in toast and jokes. You know the difference in toast and jokes? The signifying monkey, the pool-shooting monkey, the cause of the freak, the revenmo (phonetic). These are toasts. They'd be 10, 15 minutes long. So when I get into that stuff, too, I tell all them signifying monkey and all these short jokes I know. Well, I could have been rich because this guy want to record me, but at this time, 1952, 1953, this is pornography, you go to jail for this stuff. Well, here come -- what's his name --

Q2. Redd Foxx?
BH: What's the name?
Q2. Redd Foxx.
BH: No, no, Denny Bruce -- what's his name?
Q1. Lenny Bruce, yeah.
BH: Lenny Bruce opened the can up; right?
Q2. Yeah, he did.
BH: But that ain't who opened the can up. Lenny Bruce just got the lid halfway up. Richard Pryor broke it all the way open.
Q1. Oh, he did.
BH: Huh? Well, you see, but there are a lot of good comedians that I like. I like Red Skelton, and I like Jonathan Winters, and I like all them, too, back there, see. But Redd Foxx broke the vulgarity all the way open. You say what you want to say? See, so now he can get rich, but I can't get rich in 1953 because I'm going to jail if I do this. I can record underground but I'm still taking a chance in going to jail. And jailhouse is not where Mr. Berry Harris wants to be. I want to be out there where they're drinking whiskey and looking at the girls. I have no desire to go to the jailhouse. So I'm not going to record. But I'm good at that, too. I can tell, I can tell them jokes. I can tell them as fast as you want to hear, and the more I tell the more I hear, and don't let nobody start telling them with me, because every time you tell one I'll tell three.
Q1. Ahh.
BH: And they're just long. I got a tape in there if you want one.

Q1. Might make me blush.

BH: I've got -- I tell good jokes, dirty jokes. They're just -- all of them are not so dirty. I have some racial jokes that I could tell. I had a guy --

Q3. Well, don't tell 'em.

BH: I had a guy while I was working on the missile bases. I worked on these missile bases, put all these missile bases around the Wichita. You know about these missile bases?

Q1. Oh, yeah, the missile bases.

BH: Yeah, they got 18 around here. They had 18 around Wichita. I worked at them. On worked on Site 13 for almost over a year. Well, this white guy he wanted to be funny with me. Every time I looked up he was telling me one of them racial jokes, (unintelligible), Lila (phonetic) jokes. And I told him, I said, "I don't like that," you know, "I don't like that. Don't tell me."

[END]

NOTE: End of interview transcript, 53:14. Music, including singing and playing guitar, chatter, and un-transcribed conversation with student assistant Keison L. Walker to 1:03:01