

Obama Kansas Heritage Project

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Interviewer: Sonja Milbourn

Interviewee: Caroline (Ewing) Short

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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.

Q. Really? Oh, in Colorado. Okay.

[END]