

Obama Kansas Heritage Project

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Interviewer: Susie Patterson (with Steve Cless and Teresa Baumgartner)

Interviewee: Margaret Doornbos

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Videographer: Steve Cless

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Note: Q1. Susie Patterson, Q2. Steve Cless, and Q3. Teresa Baumgartner

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.

Q1. 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 feet even. And she was from Missouri, and she never wasted a thing. (Laughs.)

Q1. 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.

Q1. Uh-huh. And you were one class ahead of him, but then he --

MD. Yes, uh-huh.

Q1. Okay. Well, in what -- you told us what years you attended high school. Graduated in '36?

MD. Uh-huh.

Q1. And we talked once about your -- walking to school in bad weather of all kinds.

MD. Oh --

Q1. 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. 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, MD. 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

now.

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 WichitMD. 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 WichitMD. 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)



[END]

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.)