

Obama Kansas Heritage Project

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Interviewer: Sonja Milbourn

Interviewees: Nelva (Seaburn) Wentz and

Nina June (Swan) Parry

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Run time: [1:05:09] (Includes part 2, 04:43

conclusion)

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 at -- did being with her 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 Metz, 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, 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.

NINA PARRY: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

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 --

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 tho- -- 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]