

Obama Kansas Heritage Project

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Interviewer: Teresa Baumgartner

Interviewee: Raymond J. Teegarden

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Location: Teegarden home, LakePoint, Augusta, KS

Videographer: Steve Cless

Transcriber: Jessa Soto, August 2, 2013

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Run time: [50:57]

[Note: Introductory chatter for first 50 seconds]

Q. Well, then, let's begin. And I'm going to ask you to start the same way that I have asked everybody else. So, for the record, so that we have it on the recording, your full name, and your age, and where we are today?

RT. Well --

Q. So, what's your name?

RT. Raymond Teegarden, and --

Q. How old are you, if you don't mind saying?

RT. 90.

Q. 90. Okay. And today is April 3rd, 2013.

RT. That's right.

Q. And we are in your apartment?

RT. Yeah.

Q. At LakePoint of Augusta; right?

RT. Yes.

Q. Okay. So, do you have a middle name, Raymond?

RT. J. James is my middle name.

Q. But you go by the initial?

RT. Yeah.

Q. Were you named after anyone? Is there a story behind how you got your name?

RT. No.

Q. Okay. So, tell me about your family, and your earliest memories.

RT. Well, the earliest thing is my folks moved down here to Augusta, and went to work for Mobil Oil Company. Back in those days, they were still an oil company by themselves --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- and so they - oh --

Q. Take your time.

RT. It takes me some time to think.

Q. That's okay. We have time. They moved to Augusta. Was that before you were born?

RT. Yeah, yes, before I was born. I was born here in Augusta. We lived out in the country, and Dad drove back and forth from Mobil to back home.

Q. Did he also farm?

RT. No, he couldn't. He was a labor foreman --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- and so he had to spend his time with the company -- company work, and then, wouldn't you know, I went over to get a job, and they wouldn't let me have one, so I went over with Mobil Pipeline and got a job from them.

Q. Well, now, was this after the war when you came back from World War II, or --

RT. No, that was before.

Q. Before. When you were first starting your work --

RT. Yes. I had about four or five nights, I think it was, that I worked, and then I got drafted, and away I went.

Q. Okay. So, you grew up -- you kind of grew up, your first few years before school, in the country?

RT. Yes.

Q. And what do you remember about that? Did you have brothers and sisters?

RT. Oh, I had one brother, and that was our family.

Q. What did you guys do when you were little?

RT. We played. Mostly. [Laughs.]

Q. Did you have any favorite games?

RT. No. There wasn't any work. We did have a pony though, so we were happy. [Laughs.]

Q. Of course. What kid wouldn't want a pony?

RT. Yeah, so we had that pony, and we had some chickens, and -- and cows, and we had a dog that was really a nice dog, a shepherd dog, and every day, he would go out into the pasture, and bring the three calves left, bring them up, and put them in the shed so dad could milk them when he got home from work. So we had quite a time.

Q. You had a working dog.

RT. Yeah.

Q. Did you have regular chores, you and your brother, on the -- around the place?

RT. Well, not too regular, because we couldn't do much. We weren't very old. And then, I finally started school out there, and --

Q. What school did you go to? Was it a country school?

RT. Washington School, out in the country, yes. And then, we moved to town after about three or four years of that country work out there.

Q. So would you have been in about the second or third grade when you moved to town?

RT. Yes, the second. Yes, second grade, and --

Q. What school did you go to then?

RT. Then, came in here, and went to, oh, Garfield School, and -- went on through with the school, and of course, my brother was born about two years after we moved in, and so we -- we moved down there, finally. We got about, oh, probably two or three blocks, and that's -- and then we walked to school from there. It was quite a life.

Q. Mm-hmm. Why do you say that?

RT. Oh, being a country kid, and coming to school, you know.

[Laughs.] We had quite a lot of conversation over that, but --

Q. Did you get teased because you were a country kid?

RT. Yes, about milking cows, and feeding them, and all that stuff.

I didn't do that, but --

Q. So did you get into any fights over it? How did you handle being teased?

RT. Oh, no. We didn't get in any fights. And then, we went all through -- all through those two schools.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And let's see. I think it was 6th grade -- in the 6th grade, we went to -- I believe there's about 8 -- no, the next step down, but --

Q. That's okay.

RT. Well, the thing is, the teacher that taught me out of Washington School moved to Augusta, and she taught here, and taught me again in the elementary school.

Q. And was that at Garfield, or was it different?

RT. It was at Garfield.

Q. Okay.

RT. But then, there was a -- a - think a used to be -- yeah, I think fourth grade -- or sixth grade, I mean, and she taught all, all of us there. But my brother, he was behind me about three years, so he was going to a different school.

Q. Mm-hmm. So --

RT. And my grandfather lived in the country, and he sold his property in the country, his farm that he had, and built a house up there on top of the hill on High Street -- or, I mean, State Street.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And then, we kind of took off, and went on after he -- he finally passed on, and got out before -- or about the time we were getting out, when I went on to high school, and he went on to -- well, my same teacher.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. So he knew her.

Q. So did you then move into your grandfather's house after he passed?

RT. No.

Q. No?

RT. No, my father bought a house, and we moved into that, and that's where it was about 10 blocks from the school -- or, I mean, from our home to the school, and we would go down there. Oh, now -- well, anyway --

Q. So when you were in your new house, you were walking to Garfield, but you were walking a farther distance?

RT. Yeah.

Q. Do you remember when you were in grade school, when you first -- maybe when Madelyn was first in your class, or when you were first aware of her knowing who she was, or --?

RT. Yeah. I didn't know who she was.

Q. Well, she was just your classmate, or she was just your schoolmate.

RT. Yeah. Oh, I don't know. We used to walk to school. That's where I really met her, because they had enough people to have two -- two rooms.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And then, they started building new schools, and we went on from there, and --

Q. But you said -- you did say before we even started taping that you walked to school. You and Madelyn both walked to school with a bunch of kids. Can you maybe repeat that, and tell me a little bit more about that?

RT. Well, yeah. There was three boys, and course, at that time, we were about 7th grade when we moved up to the new house. Why, we got, we -- about three or four blocks from where Madelyn lived, and we would walk downtown, eh, down to school, and she would talk to us, and walk along. There was about four or five of us that did that --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- and we had a good time.

Q. Well, you were in the 7th grade, and she was in the same class as you. Did you think she was pretty cute? Did you like girls yet?

RT. Yeah. I wasn't too worr-, too worried about girls until I got in high school, and then I started asking them for dates, and so forth, and I never did ask her, Madelyn. I should have, but I didn't, because she was pretty sharp. She was a brain, in my opinion, anyway.

Q. But I hear you -- you did hang out together some. Can you talk about that?

RT. Oh, yes. Well, we'd go -- they had a little hamburger shop down there, and we went down to that, and had a Coke, and something like that, about every other week.

Q. Was that a bunch of you, or was that just you and Madelyn?

RT. No. I never did go out with her by --

Q. One-on-one?

RT. Yeah. But I liked her. She was a pleasant girl.

Q. Do you remember what made you think so? I mean, what made her different? What kind of things did she do that made you think she was special?

RT. Well, she tried to teach me.

Q. What?

RT. That was about impossible.

Q. What subject?

RT. Huh?

Q. Do you remember what subject she tried to help you with?

RT. No. About anything. And then, we got -- we got out of there, and went on to the junior high. We went on to high school, and, and I didn't see her much because I was too busy playing football and sports. I spent too much time trying to learn how to do it. I never was too great.

Q. So were you -- we've heard stories about the football team. And Herman Reed, a black guy, was the captain of that team?

RT. Yes.

Q. Were you on that team?

RT. Yes.

Q. Oh, can you tell us about that? That sounded so interesting.

RT. Well, it was interesting. Herman's father was a shoeshine man down at the barber shop, and he was a good one, and they were nice -- very nice people, and so we decided he was all right, so

we all liked him, and he didn't have any trouble playing with us. He played football, and we went -- one time, we went down to Fredonia to play them, and we had a restaurant there, and he was in a different car than I was in, so we went on in, and sat down, and ordered, and they was starting to fix our dinner, and oh, boy, they wouldn't let him eat in there. He couldn't eat with us. So we just got up, and walked out, and left them there. I thought we'd be in trouble, but we didn't get in trouble. People, I don't understand them.

Q. You were way ahead of your time.

RT. I don't know. Anyway, we enjoyed it.

Q. Well, there was a story about him being made the captain of the team. You guys voted him to be the captain of the team. Do you remember that?

RT. Huh-uh. I don't remember that.

Q. You don't remember? I'm trying to think. There were a couple of the women who, you know -- and, of course, they weren't on the team, but -- but they said that when -- when his teammates voted him to be the captain of the team, there were some adults, and I don't know if it was school officials, or town officials, that told him that he couldn't be the captain of the team, and the team all said, "Well, if he's not the captain, we're not going to play."

RT. Ah, but he -- I don't know whether that's what happened, but I do know that they had problems, and we had a lot of time to make up the problems, and there were some, those guys -- some of them were not too good, but we would let him play anyway. We had a good time.

Q. Were there any other -- were there any other African American kids that played football that your teams played, or was Herman the only one?

RT. He was the only one, but I can't -- I think it was -- oh, we had one guy that -- the captain of the team was Perdin [phonetic spelling], and he was a very good football player. In fact, he went and played with the New York Giants, and they really didn't win that time when they had him. Of course, it wasn't him always, because they put him on kicking. He was -- he was the quarterback, but when he got up there, they didn't let him be quarterback.

Q. So did you -- uh, I know. I was going to ask you one more question about Herman Reed if you don't mind. He was the captain of the team one year, wasn't he?

RT. Yes, I think, yeah.

Q. Do you remember which year?

RT. No. I think it was a year after we graduated. He -- he was about two years younger than we were.

Q. Oh.

RT. And so we all got out of the there, and then, he moved to -- his parents moved to California, and he went with them.

Q. So that's what happened to him after high school, then?

RT. That's right. And I'm not certain, but I think he got into pro ball, but I'm, I can't remember. That's --

Q. That's what other people have told us, that he played pro, and even came back for one of your high school reunions.

RT. Yeah. I think some of them did, because as soon as we -- when I graduated in 1940, why, I worked a while for Mobil, about three or four months, and then they let me go, and says, "We'll have a job for you when you get back." So I was gone for a little over three years, and they just went ahead and -- and carried my retirement, and everything, like I had been working all that time. So they were quite good about that.

Q. Was the patriotic thing to do, too.

RT. In fact, they were -- you treat them right, they'd treat you better than right.

Q. So did your -- was your whole career with -- did you work with Mobil for the rest of your career?

RT. Yeah, 42 years, and Mobil -- I was still working, and Mobil went to Dallas.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And that was headquarters, and they tried to get me to go down there, and work in the office, and I was oh, a -- a movement

scheduler, so they had plenty -- plenty for me to do, but I wouldn't go because I was 62 and my wife couldn't. She was a teacher, and she couldn't go down there in Texas and teach until she went to school and learned Texas history, so I told them, "Well, I'm not going to go down there." They shut their refinery down, and moved them all out, and transferred. Oh, quite a thing.

Q. That was a hard thing to see go, wasn't it?

RT. Yes. That made Augusta -- after that, it just started going downhill.

Q. So what all -- to look around at Augusta then, what was different because Mobil was in the community?

RT. Because about everybody that worked lived in Augusta.

Q. Mm-hmm. To go back to high school for a minute, do you mind going back to high school for a minute? I think Faye said -- Faye said something about a -- the drugstore, that the kids -- you mentioned the hamburger joint, they all used to meet there?

RT. No. They had a drugstore downtown where we -- this place was about where --

Q. Which? The drugstore, or the --

RT. The drugstore was downtown.

Q. Okay.

RT. And -- and I'm trying to think of his name. Scare was the owner of the drugstore.

Q. Was the drugstore, then, Scare Drugs, or --

RT. Yeah.

Q. It was named after him. So it's not still there?

RT. No, no. It's --

Q. Do you know if the building is still there?

RT. Yes, the building is still there, but it's changed around.

Q. Tell me about hanging out in the drugstore with your high school classmates, including Madelyn, or not.

RT. Well, she didn't come down there much.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. I don't know why, but she was --

Q. She was probably busy studying. [Laughs.]

RT. Yeah, I think so, but we'd -- I don't know about her -- I never -- never met her father, and I met his mother -- met her mother -- excuse me.

Q. I knew that was what you meant. [Laughs.] You met her mother how?

RT. When we had a play -- junior play, and I was in that play, and so she came up, and congratulated me on my great ability to be -
- [laughs] -- to be an actor.

Q. What was the play? Can you remember the name and what role you played?

RT. [Laughs.] Oh, well --

Q. Do you remember the name of the play?

RT. Two of them, junior and senior both.

Q. Oh, okay. But what was the play? What was the name of the play?

RT. Oh, gosh. I can't even remember.

Q. That's okay. What kind of character did you play? What kind of part did you play?

RT. Uh, boys going to school. That was one of them, and the other one was -- oh, I can't even remember what it was now.

Q. Why do you think you remember that Madelyn -- or Madelyn's mother congratulated you for being such a good actor?

RT. Well, I never -- never met her before, only one time we -- that one time, but I didn't get to speak to her -- talk with her.

Q. See, I don't remember being that interested in my friends' parents when I was in high school. I thought maybe there was some reason why she stood out to you.

RT. Well, no, I just -- I knew, of course, there was a group -- I think, a group that she went with, with that were all that way.

Q. And what way is that?

RT. They were all get together, and talk over, oh, what's going on, and all that kind of thing.

Q. Parents that helped at -- that were actively involved in helping at school?

RT. No.

Q. Not that. Okay.

RT. First one thing, then another. A lot of them belonged to the -
uh, let's see. No, I can't remember now.

Q. A ladies organization of some kind?

RT. Oh, yeah, it was where they -- let's see. Oh, and that's too
far back. I can't --

Q. That's okay. We'll just move on.

RT. I can't think.

Q. Well, when you guys hung out at the drugstore, what did they --
what was it like? Did they have a soda fountain? Did they have
a little dance space, and a jukebox, or --?

RT. Oh, they -- oh, yeah. They had a Wurlitzer, and they played,
and we danced. They had booths in there, and we'd sit there,
and -- and get up, and go dance, and get back, and oh, boy. A
big time.

Q. Was that one of the highlights of -- of your free time when you
were in high school?

RT. Yeah, that's right.

Q. Do you remember any particular conversations? You said you and
Madelyn had a hamburger and Coke, or she was there when you kids
were all there. Do you remember any particular conversations
you ever had with her?

RT. No, I can't.

Q. That's okay.

RT. She -- she was above me. I found that out, so I didn't bother her too much.

Q. She was above you why? Because she was smarter, you thought, or --

RT. Yes. And I can't remember when, when they left Augusta, but her father was a -- some kind of an oil --

Q. Did he work for the oil company, too?

RT. Yes he -- he was a -- I don't know exactly what he was. I don't know, even know who he worked for.

Q. That's okay.

RT. But I know she told us that he was a supervisor, and I imagine he was. He lived in a company house, so it would be my idea that he was. Running what company, I don't know.

Q. What do you mean by "a company house"?

RT. Well, the company owned the house.

Q. And then rented it to its employees, or --

RT. And then, then -- well, back in those days, they used to do that, and, and my folks lived in a company house for awhile, when they were -- Dad worked for --

Q. Not Mobil?

RT. No, it wasn't Mobil. Well, he worked for Mobil, but for a while, we went to -- well, gosh. I can't even remember the towns now.

Q. But when -- during that time, you lived in a company house?

RT. Yes.

Q. Was that before you bought your -- you bought your house?

RT. Yes. That was before we ever --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. I was just a -- oh, about three or four years old when we worked for them --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- and we had quite a time.

Q. Do you remember your childhood as being fun?

RT. Hmm?

Q. Was your childhood fun?

RT. Yes.

Q. So you were starting to tell me about your experience in the service before we started the interview. When did you -- were you drafted, or did you join, and what branch? And tell me a little about that.

RT. Well, I joined, and the reason I joined is because I wanted to be in the Air Force, I thought. So I just signed up, and then went up, got a physical, and -- then we're going to send you down -- down and -- then, ohhhh --.

Q. So you didn't get to be a pilot?

RT. No, I didn't get to be a pilot.

Q. Did you stay in the Air Force? They kept you in the Air Force, didn't they?

RT. No, no.

Q. Oh, Army?

RT. They just signed us -- I just signed up, and they sent us where they wanted you.

Q. Oh, I see.

RT. So I was happy I got to get an easy job.

Q. So what -- where did you end up?

RT. I got to be weapons manager.

Q. And you were in the Pacific theatre; is that right? I heard you say something about a Japanese sword.

RT. Oh. You heard of the Battle of Okinawa?

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. Okay. We were in that, and what we did was -- I got to work on that, too, because I was an arms -- those arms were my assignment, to make sure they were working, and so I had to go help put them together and - and -- then, we got over there in Okinawa, and what it was, was in the bottom of the tank, used to sit up high, there was four men in the tank, and we got it down to where there was only three, and then, they, they had a flamethrower out of that 75 millimeter cannon, and put a -- a raised -- I tried to tell you there -- [motioning] -- I don't know -- raised the bottom of the cabin. I mean -- well, yeah, raised it up as high as they could, and put barrels -- three barrels in there, and filled them full of napalm, and then, we

got to go in after we got -- got up there. We went in on the first load with the infantry, and took the tanks in, and we took that napalm, and we'd go -- we had oxygen in there, and we had a car spark plug --

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. -- set right up, at the top of the -- or when the napalm came up, and went up through the barrel with the oxygen pushing it up, and we could throw a flame about -- I would say, probably, some of them we could do it from a hundred yards, and then, most of them was from 80 to a hundred in there, and that's what that -- we got rid of that, got the Japanese, but see, we went from here to Hawaii. And Hawaii, after we were there, we got to go have a practice with a -- with our weapons in the top of the volcano --

Q. Hmm.

RT. -- and you could see smoke coming up out of that. And those were the days.

Q. Hmm.

[Videographer: I've got 15 minutes of tape left.]

Q. Okay. Did you have any contact with, you know -- did your -- did you get letters from home? Did you get letters from any friends when you were overseas during the war?

RT. Yeah.

Q. Did you ever hear from any of your friends from home, classmates, or --?

RT. Oh, yes, some of the girls I was going with, a couple of them.

Q. Did they send you pictures?

RT. No. [Laughs.]

Q. No? But they sent letters?

RT. Yeah.

Q. Had you met your wife then --

RT. No.

Q. -- before? So you didn't meet her until after you got back from the service?

RT. I had met her -- she went to school over in Pittsburg, and got her diploma over there, and then she came over here to go down to -- to Ark City, and they were supposed to have a job for her down there, and she got over here, and they had uh, rain, and she had to stay here in Augusta, and while she was here, one of them told her that the Phys Ed teacher just went ahead and quit, so she could take her place, so she signed up right away, and -- cause she couldn't take the bus down there because of the high water.

Q. Your -- just your luck, huh?

RT. Yeah, just my luck.

Q. So how'd you meet? How did you meet?

RT. Well, my brother told me, says, "Hey. I know there's a gal up here. She's a teacher, and you can go see what you can do." So, "Okay." I did. It finally worked out, and had a big time. Got married for 65 years so far.

Q. Wow. Congratulations. And you have two daughters; is that right?

RT. Yes.

Q. And do they both live here nearby, or --

RT. What's that?

Q. Do they both live near here? Where do they -- where do your daughters live?

RT. I live up there where I am now. 901 --

Q. Okay.

RT. See, I had a stroke, and --

Q. Oh.

RT. -- and, why, this half -- this one -- this one is really -- my right arm, just can't do much with it. See, it's starting to peel off, oh -- and that's -- I married her. She was happy, and so was I. I'm still happy.

Q. 65 years is quite an accomplishment.

RT. Yes, it is.

Q. Well, as we wrap up, is there anything that you wanted to tell us that I didn't ask you about?

RT. No, not that I can think of.

Q. Okay. Well, part of what we want to do is pass on this heritage to our children, so if there was any -- if there was any piece of Augusta's history that you could pass on to today's children, what would you want them to know about?

RT. Well, I think that they should all go to school, and go to school until they graduate, and -- because they're going to need an education.

Q. Mm-hmm.

RT. And most kids are really capable of it if they just do it.

Q. Mm-hmm. Good words of advice.

RT. Yeah.

Q. Anything else we missed, Steve?

[Videographer: No, I'm pretty darn sure.]

Q. All right. Well, thank you very much. I guess we're finished.

RT. Well, that's all right, I hope --

Q. I hope we didn't wear you out.

RT. No.

Q. We might have made you miss Elvis, though. [Laughs.]

[Note: Interview ends at 50:42]

[END]