

Obama Kansas Heritage Project

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Interviewer: Teresa Baumgartner (with Steve Cless)

Interviewee: Virginia (Dashner) Ewalt

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Location: Brookside Cottages Senior Residence, Augusta,
KS

Videographer: Steve Cless

Transcriber: Jessa Soto, April 17, 2012

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Run Time: [56:43]

Note: Video begins with view of 2 minutes of chatting

between Q1. Teresa Baumgartner, friend Nina

Perry (facing camera), and subject Virginia

Dashner Ewalt as Q2. Steve Cless does audio/visual
checks.

A. -- skating a lot.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. And we both worked in the refinery, in the office, and, uh, Madelyn
worked at Boeing.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. Some of the other girls did, too, that were in our group. But we went to the theatre. There wasn't much else to do, and --

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. -- they had a little doodlebug train that they took from Augusta to Wichita.

Q1. A doodlebug train?

A. Well, a little ol' -- a little ol' thing, you know. And I think a couple of times we went over there, had lunch at the Allis Hotel, and then went to the show over there, and came back on the train.

Q2. I'm going to have you -- move you over here.

Q1. Okay, sorry.

Q2. I was just looking. Alright. Is that the same one that ran through Beaumont: that train, or was that just from here to --?

A. I don't know. I was thinking just from here to Wichita, but I couldn't tell you for sure.

Q1. Okay.

A. It could have run through Beaumont.

Q2. I see.

Q1. Okay.

Q2. Why -- why do you call it doodlebug? Why is that?

A. Well, that was my name for it. (Laughs)

Q2. Oh, not official. Okay.

A. It was just - but we didn't have gas to, you know, go back and forth to Wichita like we do now.

Q2. Uh-huh.

A. Uh, some of the boys worked at some of the aircraft factories, and they had weekends off, and we went over to the Blue Moon. I think you saw the picture in the --

Q2. I saw the picture. Was the Blue Moon in Wichita?

A. Uh-huh.

Q2. Okay.

A. And a lot of name bands then, and we went to dance then, and other times we just went the skating rink and -- (laughs) there wasn't a lot to do then.

Q2. Why -- but you had -- made your own fun.

A. Well, we kept busy.

Q1. (Laughs) How we doing?

Q2. Good.

Q1. Have you been recording?

Q2. Yes.

Q1. Oh, good.

A. But Madelyn --

Q1. I was thinking, how am I -- how am I going to remember to get three people? (Laughs)

A. Madelyn wasn't with us a lot.

Q1. Pardon?

A. I said, Madelyn wasn't with us a lot. I think --

Q1. So do you remember when you first became acquainted with her?

A. Well, see, I went to a country school.

Q1. Oh. What was the name of it?

A. Tadlock. It isn't there anymore. It burnt down.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. But, uh, I came into school in 1936. I was 12 years old --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. -- and I started high school.

Q1. You were 12?

A. I -- across -- we lived across the way from an oil lease, so my dad worked on the oil lease.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. And it's the same one that Mr. Payne -- he was in the office -- where the telephone office is now. There was a Sinclair office and pipe yard there, and then they lived just around the corner on 12th Street.

Q1. And it was 1 -- for the camera, it was 138, wasn't it? The address on the photograph?

A. I think so. 138 12th, yeah.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. But we lived -- we moved out of the oil field house, and Dad and Mom bought a farm across the road, but he still worked for Sinclair.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. But the kids over there could go to town school. They were in town district. And they tried to pay tuition for me to go in town, and they wouldn't let me go, so I went eight miles to a country school.
(Laughs)

Q1. When the town school would have been closer?

A. Three and a half miles. And so, anyway, I started -- instead of kindergarten, I started first grade when I was five years old, and

took second and third grade in one year, and that made me twelve when I graduated from the eighth grade. So, anyway, it -- country kids were looked down on then. They weren't accepted very well, and it wasn't really until after I got out of school that I became better friends with my classmates.

Q1. Why do you think that was?

A. It's just the way they were then. I mean --

Q1. Did you dress differently? I mean, was there a physical appearance difference?

A. No. We were just country kids. (Laughs)

Q1. Okay.

A. And I wasn't the only one that felt that way. Uh, Devere Brown was a professor down at Norman, Oklahoma, and he gave a talk one time at our reunion about how -- and he was young, also, and said that he never felt accepted in school. But he was brilliant. He really was.

Q1. So do you remember knowing Madelyn in high school?

A. Well, yeah. I saw her -- I mean, she was in some of my classes, and then we were in the senior play together, and really, I got better acquainted with her then.

Q1. Oh. Tell me about that.

A. Well --

Q1. What was the play?

A. You know, I can't remember. (Laughs) You know how many years ago that's been? (Laughs)

Q1. Okay.

A. But I know we were both in it, and I got better acquainted with her then.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. And that's the first time I met Stanley, uh. He came to watch play practice one night, and then Pete's Drugstore was at State and Fifth, I think, on the southwest corner and -- northwest corner -- and they had a jukebox, and we could dance down there, and so we went down there after play practice. Even one of our teachers went with us. But that's the only time I ever met Stanley.

Q1. Were they dating then?

A. Uh-huh.

Q1. That's why he came all the way for the practice.

A. Yeah, so --

Q1. So these times you were talking about where you all started hanging around and doing things together: that was after you graduated high school?

A. Well, I didn't drink. (Laughs) Some of them did that we went with, but, uh --

Q1. Well, I was also referring to going to the skating rink and --

A. Well, we just went down to skate and drank Cokes, I mean (laughs) -- but, oh -- Prigmores ran the skating rink and they wouldn't have allowed any liquor down there, anyway, so it -- they were pretty nice about the group down there, and there was always -- it was always full. We really didn't have much else to do. And then on Saturday nights sometimes, when the buses would bring the people back from Boeing and Cessna, they would let them dance for an hour after the skating quit --

Q1. Oh.

A. -- till 2 o'clock, and, uh --

Q1. Did -- did everybody have a curfew?

A. Well, that's the time they closed down there, yeah. They skated till twelve, I think, and then they let them dance afterwards, but they were -- they were closed by two.

Q1. So how -- how old were you, and in what grade, I guess, when -- when

the war --

A. I was out of high school.

Q1. -- When U.S. entered the war, and everything kind of changed, because it sounds like a lot of the stories you've been --

A. Well, Madelyn and I both graduated in 1940. Now, Nina graduated in 1941, even though she is older than I am.

Q1. I see.

A. And what was it -- Pearl Harbor was in 1941?

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. -- and I remember Carl Dubois. We used to ride around on Sunday afternoons, and one of our class members, his folks had the Lehr's Cafe, and we pulled up, and they ran in for some French fries, and this girl came running right back out, and she says, "Oh, Carl told me that Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor." And that's how we heard about it. And that was in, like I said, '41, and that's --

Q1. Now, were you working then? You worked -- you said you worked for the refinery. You were working there at the time?

A. No, I wasn't old enough.

Q1. Oh.

A. I went to business college after I got out of high school, and I still wasn't old enough to work anywhere, and so I worked at the drugstore -- at Carr's Drugstore in the evenings, and then a friend was -- after they started the draft board, she was the clerk for the office there, and she needed a helper, and she wanted to know if I wanted to come and be a clerk typist, and I said, well, sure, you know. Civil service job; 35 cents an hour. (Laughs) And the head of the draft board was Doc Bohanna. He was also the personnel director at the refinery, and he asked me how come I hadn't put in my application at the refinery, and I said, "Well, I did." And he says, "Well, I didn't see it." He said, "Are you sure you were down there?" And I said, "Yes." I said, "I'm not old enough." And so he wanted to know when my birthday was, and he said, "When you're -- day you're 18, come down. You've got a job." So that's how come I went to work down there, but Nina was already working down there.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. So --

Q1. And so was it working together there that -- where you and Nina became really close, or --

A. Ah, we -- we had become friends, but became better friends down there, yeah. We came -- we were best friends from then on, I think.

Q1. Okay.

A. But -- and like I said, we didn't see a whole lot of Madelyn. She wasn't with the group a lot, but just sometimes on Sunday afternoons, and she didn't skate or anything with us, and --

Q1. And you -- maybe mention again that her -- her best friends were --

A. Um, Martha Elaine Haas was her name at the -- at that time, and Francine Pummel. And I remember she and Francine had snowsuits alike one year, but they were just like this. (Crosses two fingers) They were just buddy-buddies, you know. And then Francine left after her junior year, and left Madelyn kind of -- and Martha Elaine had already moved.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. That's --

Q1. And so she was kind of alone and -- was that when you maybe --

A. I think that's when she started running around with Francis and some of the others. But Francis' brother, I think, ran around with that group, and I think that's probably the reason Francis started running around with her.

Q1. Okay.

A. But --

Q1. And do you -- back to your memories of the beginning of the war and how that affected your lives, you mentioned, you know, the boys being gone. And what was that like, you know, being -- being -- you know -- (inaudible)

A. Well, that's -- that's why we took the pictures on Sunday afternoon, to send to the boys, you know, and --

Q1. So you wrote letters to them all?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. All the girls?

A. We had, we had a list of boys that we sent letters to. And, uh --

Q1. That's neat. So where'd you go to take your pictures?

A. Some of them were taken in front of Lehr's, and some down at the park. Garvin Park was a lot prettier then. They didn't have all the baseball fields, and it was very attractive. They had a swinging bridge that we took a lot of pictures -- there.

Q1. And did they write back?

A. Mm-hmm, yeah. Even had a proposal from one of 'em -- so -- that I'd never dated. (Laughs) But boys then, I think, just wanted somebody to -- yeah.

Q1. Somebody to come home to?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Or think about? A picture to carry?

A. But, uh, I don't know, life was a lot simpler then, and it -- couple of the drugstores had jukeboxes where they danced, and uh, it -- you know, there was -- there was more things to do in town, it seemed like, than what there is now.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So when -- do you remember when Stanley Dunham went to war?

A. No. Like I said, I only met him the one time.

Q1. Oh, okay.

A. And, uh, I didn't, uh -- they were married then.

Q1. Okay.

A. And, uh, that's one reason Madelyn didn't run around like we did either, so --

Q1. Sure. But, but then -- she was, she was part of the weekend picture taking to send -- because wasn't there one of them --

A. There's several pictures, yeah. There's several pictures of her on Sunday afternoon. And we usually went to the show on Sunday afternoon, and since I lived in the country, I couldn't go home. We'd go to church. Well, I'd usually go down to Lehr's and eat. Well, several of us girls would, and then we'd fool around until the show

opened, and take pictures either before or after the show - with the matinee.

Q1. I wonder if that's something that happened in a lot of communities. Most of the boys were gone - so --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- you weren't going out as boy-girl groups, or dating, and it probably was your way of, also, helping, and --

A. Well, there, there were -- there were a few of the boys, like I said, that worked at the plants, and some of them didn't pass the physical, and some went in service even after they worked at the plant, but they worked at the plant for a while, and they were the ones we went out with on weekends.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. Other than that, we didn't see them because --

Q1. I see. Just trying to think what -- so how long during that time period, when you were working -- you said earlier you were working at the refinery, and Madelyn and -- was it Nina -- were working at?

A. No. Nina and I worked at the refinery. Madelyn and a couple of the other girls -- well, several of the other girls worked at Boeing.

Q1. So how many years would that have been roughly? Madelyn's already

married. Stanley's overseas; right? During that time period?

A. I don't know when he came back or anything. Uh, I know -- I think she quit at Boeing when he came back, but I don't, I don't remember. I wasn't around her enough. Like I said, we were not close friends.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. And Nina could have probably told you more about that than what I can.

Q1. Okay. Well, we'll have to talk to Nina too. (Laughs) Uh, so then after that -- kind of, after that time period ended, and -- did you guys start having your reunions right away, or did --

A. No. We used to have one every five years, at first, and I can't remember when we started having the combined three classes, but I think it was our -- I don't know whether it was our 50th, or what. And we'd had it down at Lehr's, and decorated their, their party room, and everything, and I know Jack said he had never seen it decorated that pretty so -- (Laughs) -- well, we had a lot of fun.

Q1. Did she come to that one?

A. I don't know that she's ever been to any of them.

Q1. Oh, okay. I don't know -- but -- and yet she sent the note that one time?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. That was --

A. Well, and then another time, she sent a note with some macadamia nuts and things from Hawaii. But that last one was -- we hadn't heard from her. I think it was a couple years before that, she sent the macadamia nuts, but we didn't used to hear from her at all. They were -- after Stanley came back, they didn't live around here, and I don't know -- it was, I don't know, 10 or 15 years, maybe 20, before we started combining the classes and having the reunions -- but --

Q1. What about the Payne's? I know -- I know eventually they moved to Winfield.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. But do you -- did they come home and visit family? And I mean, I know they moved several places.

A. Well, I imagine they did. That one picture is of her with Stanley Ann on the porch -- and her aunt, and her mother. But like I said, I was not a close friend. I never did see her when she came back. Now, Nina was in that group at that one party, that -- but those pictures wouldn't reproduce so -- well enough to see who they were.

Q1. So how do you think growing up in Augusta was unique from other -- or not -- you didn't grow up in Augusta, I guess. I shouldn't -- it's

not fair to ask you that question. Uh -- when did you move into town?

A. After I was married.

Q1. After you were married. And then have you lived here ever since?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Okay.

A. I lived three and a half miles southeast of town, and I lived there till 1947, so it was quite a while.

Q1. And what was your maiden name?

A. Dashner.

Q1. Dashner.

A. D-A-S-C-H, D-A-S-H-N-E-R.

Q1. And I should have -- I should have asked you this at the very beginning, but Steve snuck in on us, and we didn't know we were being recorded yet. This is -- if -- hopefully this question won't offend you, but this is just, sort of, to place everything in the right historical context -- context. We've asked people to begin by telling us their name, their age, the date, and where we're doing this interview.

A. Well, Virginia Dashner Ewalt, and uh, I was born, like I said, in

Augusta -- they counted Augusta, but it was southeast of town, and I've lived here all my life. I'm 87 -- I was just 87 years old.

Q1. Oh. When's your birthday?

A. The 8th.

Q1. Of June?

A. Uh-huh.

Q1. Oh. Well, congratulations.

A. Nina June's is the day after tomorrow.

Q1. Oh, so -- and you said you were born in 1922?

A. Four.

Q1. 1924, okay. That's right. Younger - you were younger. And we are doing this interview in --

A. Uh, Brookside Cottages.

Q1. Which is also where you live.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. So is there a story behind how you got your name, Virginia? Are you named after someone in the family?

A. My dad came from West Virginia, and so I was named Virginia, and Lee

is my middle name, and that was his first name.

Q1. Okay.

A. So --

Q1. So now, I know there's an Ewalt Elementary School.

A. Mm-hmm. My brother-in-law's property.

Q1. Okay. Did he donate the property to --?

A. No. They sold it. His daughter sold it.

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. He used to raise greyhounds --

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. -- and he lived on the other side of the road, and that was where the dog runs were, where the school is.

Q1. Okay. So that's why the school is named Ewalt?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Because it used to be his property?

A. And if you go inside, there is a greyhound that set in the circle of his drive -- a statue.

Q1. Oh, that's an interesting little piece of history.

A. But, he raised the greyhounds, and the oldest brother raced them in Florida, and uh, they did quite well with them.

Q1. That's interesting.

A. Hmm?

Q1. Is that the school's mascot -- a greyhound, or --

A. I don't think so. I think Jane just donated it. She didn't have any place to put it so (laughs) -- and she lives back east, so --

Q1. Mm-hmm. I don't know. I'm not doing so well with more questions. Do you -- what -- just kind of piece everything together again, because you mentioned several places -- things you used to do in town and -- during that time period, there was Lehr's. Could you just kind of describe what downtown Augusta was like during that time period when you were in high school and right after high school?

A. Well, there was Calvert's store down there, and people from Wichita used to come over there to buy clothes. And Lehr's was -- it was on the southwest corner of State and Fifth, and they were pretty well-known. They also had a store in Winfield, and then Lehr's was a little tiny place where -- Brick Street Floral is there now. And they had, oh, a few booths and half a dozen stools to start out with, then they moved across the street and had a really nice restaurant there for a while, and that's where we -- well, I guess when we first

started out, it was still a little one, and then later when they moved over there, we still went over there for lunch and everything when we got off.

Q1. To their present -- to what would be their present location?

A. No.

Q1. No.

A. Then they moved down on Seventh Street and -- where the motel and that empty building is now, and there was another building there, and it burned, I think. And they had a little drive-in down there to start with, and then after the skating rink closed, that's where it was, and they built a large building. They used to have Community Theatre down there. People from Wichita used to come over to it. I said -- I -- my daughter was in one of the plays, and I helped take tickets one night, and half of Wichita Clinic was over there.

A. But see,

Q1. That's the --

A. -- people used to come here all the time for things, and -- oh, there were two other dress shops in town. There was -- oh, one of the members of our class -- they had a -- oh, the bowling alley -- the kind where you use the little tiny balls -- and he -- he and someone else had that for about a year, but he was only here for a year. And

there were just a lot of -- a lot of other things in town. Like I said, there were about five drug stores downtown then, and two of them had jukeboxes where we could dance, and they had a photography studio downtown, and there were just -- so much -- there's nothing down there now. (Laughs)

Q1. So, you know, it strikes me that drug stores were very different --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- in those days than they are now.

A. Soda fountains. They had soda fountains, all of them.

Q1. It was a social gathering place.

A. Grant's Drugstore had a marble counter, and they had copper mugs for root beer, and it was the only one that was like that. But, you know, they were all different, but --

Q1. But it wasn't like a tiny Wal-Mart -- a place where you could get a prescription filled?

A. Oh, you could get prescriptions filled, yeah, but it was mostly, I think -- well, one of them where we -- where we danced, they had three daughters, two twins, that were beautiful girls, and they were a year ahead of me in school, and very popular -- cheerleaders and so on. And so they always had a crowd there. And it was just different than it is now. Then we -- refinery -- we worked down there. We'd have

lunch downtown some place, and sometimes we'd eat at Cooper's Drugstore because Bill Cooper was also in one of the classes, and other times, why, we'd go to Lehr's. But, I don't know, there was always -- you always knew where you could find somebody in the evenings, too, because you --

Q1. You walked everywhere? Did you, or --

A. Most of the time. If I was going to stay over and go to the show at night, I had to stay in town. I couldn't -- I didn't have gas to drive back and forth.

Q1. So -- but you drove in, or did one of your parents drive you in?

A. No. Mother let me have her car to drive. (Laughs) But with gas rationing, I needed my gas to go back and forth to work.

Q1. Tell me what rationing was like. What do you remember about that?

A. Well, the year after the war, I went to Colorado with a couple of my friends, and their dad had a Dodge and Plymouth garage downtown, and he got retreads for her -- made sure she had those on the car, so we could go. It was -- it was different, because you couldn't just take off for Wichita, or anywhere, you know. Oh, and then Nina June and I used to ride the bus to El Dorado, and then walk to the swimming pool over there, because we didn't have a swimming pool then.

Q1. So -- and so did you have to plan more because you knew gasoline was

rationed, and were there things you didn't do that you would have done?

A. Well --

Q1. Did you feel like you were sacrificing, or --?

A. Not really.

Q1. -- did it feel like you were helping with the war?

A. (Laughs) Not really. We had a good time, so it -- it -- like I said, we couldn't go to Wichita whenever we felt like it, but it just -- and then like taking the bus over to El Dorado to go swimming -- but it was a simpler life then. Let's put it that way.

Q1. Mm-hmm. And did -- you had the doodlebug -- doodle -- doodle -- what did you call that? A doodle --

A. I called it a doodlebug, but I don't know what it -- I don't know what it was. It was a little, like, just one car or something.

Q1. Did it ride -- but it went --

A. On the rails, yeah, on the rails, uh-huh.

Q1. Okay.

A. And I don't know what you call it, that's what I called it.

Q1. Did other people call it that, too, or that was your own nickname

for it?

A. Well, Nina and I did. (Laughs)

Q1. Oh.

A. But I don't know -- that's about all I can tell you. (Laughs)

Q1. What do you wish kids growing up in Augusta today could have from the old days?

A. I think -- I think they have too much now, and, uh, they have too many electronic things, and they don't get out and do things like the kids used to.

Q1. Okay. Gosh -- (Interviewer 2) what was it like growing up during the depression, you know? What -- you know, we talked about rationing and all that, but what was that --

A. Well, we didn't have a problem because we had chickens, and turkeys, and eggs, and milk, cows, and everything, and uh, Dad always had a big garden, so we didn't -- really wasn't a problem for us.

Q1. How about people who lived in town?

A. Well, I know my aunt -- her husband had been laid off at the refinery, and she said they -- they would have starved if it hadn't have been for the folks, because they always took them in food, but I don't know whether everybody else had that much of a problem or not. The

neighbors out there always shared if they had different things in the garden, so it really, you know -- and the boys across the road would help Dad put up hay, and things, and he'd give them meat and things like that for --

Q1. So you were fairly young when that -- you weren't even 10 years old, probably, when that was going on.

A. Hmm-mm.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) And what about the Dust Bowl years? Was -- I mean, did your dad's crops suffer during --

A. Well, he didn't really plant except for garden. I mean, he worked in the oil field, and we -- we had the cows, and things, but we just had a -- you know -- just --

Q1. Pasture?

A. Yeah. It wasn't commercial or anything, what he had. And as far as the Dust Bowl here, we really weren't affected that bad. Now, my grandparents out around Russell were, but we weren't here.

Q1. Hmm. (Interviewer 2) You had relatives in Russell?

A. Hmm?

Q1. You have relatives in Russell?

A. Did. They're -- I think most of them -- dead now.

Q1. Yeah. My wife's from there.

A. Oh, really?

Q1. We were just back for Prairiesta, which is their --

A. My neighbor is from there, and she went to that.

Q1. Yeah. I saw her, yeah. (Laughs)

A. But -- actually, my grandparents lived halfway between Bunker Hill and Russell, and then they moved into Bunker Hill from the farm when they got older.

Q1. Okay. They were farmers as well?

A. Yeah. Uh, their younger son took over the farm when they moved in to town then, but -- yeah, and the Dust Bowl -- they put up wet sheets and things and put up the windows and doors to -- I know we were out there one time when -- but we didn't have it like that here.

Q1. The thing about Augusta, there's -- you know, the highway goes right through town, and it sort of divides the town.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Was it like that back then? Was it as noticeable? I mean, it almost seems like two towns here, now. Was that the case --?

A. About Twelfth Street, the town ended then, and that's about as far

as it went north. And I don't know whether you would remember where the refinery was, or --

Q1. (Interviewer 1) Where was it?

A. Well, you know where the Air Museum is down there now? That was refinery, and we shipped aviation fuel, and road oil, and asphalt that went to, you know, some of the aircraft, or airports, and things, to -- shipped a lot of aviation fuel.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) So El Dorado had a refinery, and you had a refinery also back then?

A. Yeah. Ours was larger at the time. I think we did -- we did more of the aviation fuel and things like that than what El Dorado did, I think, but that's been a few years.

Q1. So it wasn't that big of a deal to have a highway running through town back then?

A. Not really, didn't seem like it.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) It's always been, though, in that exact same place?

A. Mm-hmm, and the highway south of town goes on Walnut Street, now, and it used to go through State on down -- went through the center part of town, then back around the refinery. But --

Q1. So the -- where you grew up -- the -- the -- country -- because you

said -- you referred to yourself as country, not farm, I think. Where you grew up, would that now be in the city limits of Augusta?

A. No, it's three and a half miles southeast of town.

Q1. Oh, southeast, okay.

A. Mm-hmm, about a mile and a half south, and a mile and a half east, and there's nothing there that was there when I was there. Even the oil field -- the roads up - to it -- have grown over.

Q1. Hmm. Now, what was it like -- now, was it your -- who worked on the oil lease? Was it your dad?

A. My dad did.

Q1. Your dad did? So you were very close to the refinery, so what was that like?

A. He was hired -- he was hired in about 1916, I think, to work in the oil field, but to play ball. He played in the 1913 World Series, and he threw such a hard fast ball, he hurt his arm, and, you know, they didn't have therapy and things then like they have now, and he couldn't play in the Major League anymore, and they farmed him out. Well, then when he got married, he was traveling everywhere, and they wanted to be in one place, and so he had an offer to come here. And they used to have ball teams -- the refinery did, the oil company, and -- but he worked as a pumper in the oil field, and then played

ball, but he was actually hired for -- as a ball player.

Q1. And -- and he was a ball player for the refinery's ball team?

A. No, for Sinclair.

Q1. Sinclair.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. So what was the refinery he worked for? I thought that was Sinclair.

A. It started out -- no. It started out as White Eagle, and then it went to Socony-Vacuum, and then the Mobil Oil.

Q1. Okay. And as a pumpman, what did he do? What tasks -- work tasks --

A. Connected the wells to pump and disconnected them when the time -- it's -- they had a great big wheel, a huge one, and they hooked the lines onto those that went out to the wells to pump, and then when it -- they'd pump so long, they were to be disconnected, and they had to pump so long, and then rest so long.

Q1. I see.

A. But they had different -- different lines from different fields.

Q1. And then was -- during, like, a workday when he was doing these things, was he going from pump to pump? Did he do a lot of inspection?

A. Yeah, they did that, too. Uh-huh.

Q1. Did he work by himself, or did they have team pairs?

A. No, they usually had one, and they took different shifts. I mean, he wasn't the only pumper, but they -- they took different shifts.

Q1. So when he was -- when he was out at the pumps, he was pretty much the sole -- the only one there at that time?

A. Yeah.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) Did anything remain of your old house?

A. No.

Q1. It's all gone?

A. There's nothing. The windmill was still out there for a long time, and then last time I drove out there, it was gone, too. And, like I said, all the oil field houses -- everything's gone.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) Hmm.

A. The -- new houses built out there.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) Oh; is that right?

A. Yeah.

Q1. Wow. But there's no foundation, or --

A. No, there's nothing.

Q1. Wow. (Interviewer 1) Do you remember when it -- I mean, you know, was it torn down? Did it burn down? Fall down?

A. Torn down.

Q1. Okay.

A. And, like I said, the windmill remained for a long time, and then it was gone, too, and it - uh --

Q1. So now, growing up out in the country -- when -- before high school, and before you came into town --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. -- what did you do for fun then? As a kid, what do you remember about that?

A. Well, uh, they played baseball, and uh, my dad helped them with that. And then the kids across the road, their dad built - uh, fixed where we could high jump and do things like this, and us girls sometimes would walk up in the field and pick wildflowers, and, you know, our mailbox was a quarter of a mile down the road. We'd walk down and get the mail, and, you know, just things like that.

Q1. But you did have neighbors, so you had other kids to play with?

A. Yeah, there were several oil field houses over there. The one I was born in is like that one up in El Dorado at the museum. They called

it a shotgun house, you know, straight through.

Q1. Because you could shoot a shotgun from the front door through the back door? Is that --

A. Straight -- straight through, and -- and the farm boss, as they called him, well, he was the man in charge out there. Now, he had a larger house, but they had four children, too, and they built -- they built on to the house, also, too.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) So the oil company built the house? The oil company built the house?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Okay, so --

A. It was boom town then, if you've looked at any of the pictures, and there were still quite a bit of oil field, even when I went to high school. I mean, it wasn't like it was earlier, but there were still quite a bit.

Q1. On par with El Dorado -- El Dorado was a big oil boom town back in the 30s.

A. Yeah, Augusta -- Augusta and down by Gordon, south of town, you know, where that -- well, it used to be between here and Douglass, but they moved the highway, so it's kind of off-center now, and -- but down that way, there were -- the Empire Company, I think, down there -- City

Service -- but there were a lot of -- a lot of wells and things that --

Q1. How did that impact life in Augusta? How did it impact the city, and, you know, the kind of people that lived here, and that sort of thing -- having oil underneath your feet?

A. Well, it's what paid the bills. (Laughs.)

Q1. Yeah.

A. They always had jobs when a lot of other people didn't.

Q1. (Interviewer 1) Were you aware of that at the time?

A. No, not really.

Q1. As you got older?

A. But -- just things I'd heard since then, but it -- I don't know. It's more of a bedroom community anymore.

Q1. Mm-hmm. So how did you meet your husband?

A. Well, my neighbor down the road, he was spending the night with him, and I had a girlfriend spending the night with me that the other boy dated, and so he wanted to know if I'd go with my husband on a blind date. And we had a few dates, and then he got married to a girl in Douglass. And we came back from service, they were getting a divorce, and ran into him again with the same boy, so he'd asked me to go out, and I said, well, no, I didn't go with married men, and

he said "Well, I'm getting a divorce." And eventually, I started dating him, so --

Q1. So were you married in Augusta in a church?

A. Methodist Church.

Q1. Methodist Church?

A. Mm-hmm. The old Methodist Church.

Q1. And --

A. And that's where Nina June was married, also.

Q1. Oh.

A. She was my attendant, and I was hers, (laughs) but --

Q1. And then you raised -- do you have children?

A. I had four children. I have one left.

Q1. Oh, my goodness.

A. My daughter works at the Gazette.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Okay, so -- but lived in Augusta all your life?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. (Interviewer 2) Mm-hmm. It's a good town. (Interviewer 1) Are there any other family memories, or school memories, or anything you

were thinking that you might like to tell us that we haven't touched yet? I don't even know what time it is, Steve; do you?

A. I don't know anything that --

Q1. 2:20? Well, I wouldn't want to, you know, not ask you something that you wanted to share with us.

A. (Laughs) I can't think of anything right now.

Q1. Uh-huh. Okay.

A. It was a lot simpler time than it is now, I think.

We had one black in our school, and I think he was in Nina June's class.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. He ended up being a pro-football player, and then after he retired from that, he went to work for the city of Los Angeles, and I can't remember what -- what his title was there. I know he sent me a letter one time on letterhead stationary with his name on it, but he was -- the football team wanted to elect him as captain, and the school wouldn't let them, so they all said, well, they were quitting football, so they let him be captain and -- because all the kids were going to quit football. And anyway, that was one of the things about him. (Laughs)

Q1. Did -- so did he -- I would think that would be kind of difficult

during that time period for -- do you know how he came to live in Augusta with his family? Was his dad working the oil fields or --?

A. No, I think he -- I've got a sheet over there I'll give you about it. I can't remember what all it was now. But anyway, he did quite well for himself. They came back to one reunion, and they sat off -- they were all dressed up. He had on a white suit, and she had on a white dress, and they were really dressed up, and they sat off by themselves. And I don't know whether you remember when Davey Cohen used to have a discount store in Wichita? The first one that was in Wichita?

Q1. Who? What? Who? What?

A. Davey Cohen. Well, anyway, he says, "Well, I had enough of this." He went over, and asked her to dance. And the jitterbug, that was his thing when he was younger, so he -- they got out there in the middle of the floor, and everyone sat around and watched them dance, so after that --

Q1. He and his wife, or --

A. He and the -- the black girl. The boy's wife.

Q1. Oh, okay. Okay.

A. And so then everybody -- they came over and visited then with everybody. Everybody got -- and I heard from him quite a bit after

that. Nina and both have had letters from him. He died, I think, about a year or so ago from cancer.

Q1. So he figured out a way to get over the awkwardness by dancing?

A. Well, if you'd have known Davey that was. (Laughs)

Q1. That was his name; Davey?

A. Davey Cohan, yeah. He was a Jew.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. He was Jewish, but he wasn't a Jew. Let's put it that way.

Q1. Jewish African American, huh? Did he have a lot -- sounds like he had a lot of friends in high school if the whole football team stood up for him.

A. Well, Davey was the Jew.

Q1. Oh, oh, oh, we're talking about two different boys now?

A. Yeah.

Q1. Okay.

A. I think he did. I didn't really know him in high school. I got acquainted with him after that, but I -- I didn't know him in high school.

Q1. So now, which one are we talking about?

A. The black --

Q1. The black kid?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Okay.

A. Yeah, Davey was always a friend, so -- and he started the first - you know, to have a group that didn't go to college -- we had quite an extraordinary class. Dick Scholfield was a member of our class, and Davey, like I said, started the first discount store that was in Wichita, and Daryl Thompson had a trucking firm, and uh, they all ended up practically millionaires.

Q1. Really made something of themselves.

A. Yeah, and I started to think who else -- there are others in that group, but I can't think -- I can't think who they are now, so -- but it was an unusual group, really.

Q1. Mm-hmm. Sounds like it.

A. And then, we had, like, Devere Brown, and he was a professor at Norman, Oklahoma, but uh, when he was in service, he'd been taught Japanese, and was getting ready to go over. They thought they were going to invade Japan, and then the war ended. Well, he has been to Japan and uh, to China, and taught language over there, and he's written a book, and I don't know what all, but, anyway, he was -- he was a

farm boy. One of his books is entitled "The Farm Boy".

Q1. Mm-hmm.

A. But -- and then we had another one that was a POW in Germany, and he had been kind of a -- cut up all through school, and then after he'd been that, he decided he was going to do something with his life, and he went back to school, and got his education. And, he was professor -- I think he taught at WSU for a while, and then at Pennsylvania, and uh, I don't know where else. He had -- when he died, his wife sent me a deal out of the paper, and it was practically a full page written about him.

Q1. Oh.

A. And it was Howard Hamilton, and --

Q1. What about the women in your class? I mean, there -- women were a lot more limited at that time --

A. Very limited.

Q1. -- to make a reputation for themselves.

A. Well, of course, Madelyn. (Laughs)

Q1. Yes, yes, Madelyn. Yes.

A. And I think she'd top the list. (Laughs) I can't --

Q1. She raised herself an amazing grandson.

A. Well, she did. I can't -- can't think right now in the women. I can't -- can't -- can't remember what -- but they didn't have the opportunities then that the men -- the men came back from war, a lot of the women lost their jobs, and it was different.

Q1. Yeah, I bet that was hard.

A. But -- and if you were pregnant then, you couldn't work. That was another thing, because I had to quit when I was pregnant, and uh, I don't know -- there just -- it's just a different world now than what it was. Well, even a few years later, I was working over at Coleman Company in personnel department over there, and so my husband came back from overseas, and I was pregnant again, and they didn't want me to quit, but I was getting car sick every time going back and forth, so --

Q1. You kind of had to for that reason.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q1. Very interesting.

A. But it's just -- you can see how times have changed.

Q1. Yeah. Well, what, I mean -- you don't -- you may not have an answer for this question. If you don't, that's okay, but it just occurred to me. Is there something from -- from back, you know, in those early

days that you really wish were still here? Is there something that is better today in Augusta in -- and, you know -- or from then that you don't miss? Does that make sense even; that question?

A. Well, I don't know. I think that --

Q1. In what ways has Augusta changed for the better, I guess, and --

A. I don't know that it has.

Q1. Uh-huh.

A. Because people used to, like I said, it's more or less a bedroom community now, and people don't really support it the way they used to.

Q1. Do they know each other as well as they used to?

A. No, and there are more people here now. I think they said nine thousand and some on the last census, but I don't know with -- well, see, my grandson, he's going to college, but I said he -- they don't do things like we used to do -- to get out and go, like, to the Blue Moon and places, and we saw name bands, I mean, it was, you know, it was something to go see those people, and uh, they don't have the opportunities to do this, and they don't dance, and things, like we used to. (Coughs)

Q1. Mm-hmm. I suppose the closest equivalent would be the concerts. Kids go to concerts now, I suppose. Where's he going to college?

A. At Emporia.

Q1. Oh, great. Well, Steve, I think we've -

Q2. -- covered the life.

Q1. I believe we have.

A. I don't know that you've - had at anything.

Q1. Did you want to shoot any of the --?

Q2. Yes.

[END]

[Photo follows.]