

PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Mary Ann Dillon for the Oral History Office on April 24, 1974. Kathryn Back transcribed the tape and Rosalyn Bone edited the transcript. John Keith reviewed the transcript.

John Keith was born near Walshville, Illinois, on April 6, 1894. His memoir tells the story of a west central Illinois farmer. It presents methods of farming and remembrances of farm life first on his father's farm, then through a period of renting his own farm, and finally to operating the farm he bought.

Readers of this oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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John Keith, April 24, 1974, Taylor Springs, Illinois.
Mary Ann Dillon, Interviewer.

Q: Okay, now you said you were born in 1894?

A. 1894. On the farm in Montgomery County in Grisham Township, if you wanted to put the details.

Q. How many children were there in your family?

A. Well, there was seven children in my family and I was the fifth child. My older sister I never saw; she died as an infant. Then I have three sisters older than I and then I have two brothers younger than I.

Q. Can you remember when you were a child?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Can you? What was it like then?

A. In what way do you mean, in what line there?

Q. Like, your father farmed, didn't he?

A. Oh yes.

Q. So did the kids have to help with the farming?

A. Oh yes. I went to the field with my father since I was five years old.

Q. What did you do?

A. I was just with him more so and all. He had a heart condition. At that time, a two-horse plow was as big a plow as we had, see. But we always took four horses to the field and he would have the two horses at the end of the field and then he'd plow with the other two till they'd get warm, see, and hot, and have to stop and rest them. Well, he'd just unhook that pair, you know, and then hook the other pair up and then he'd go on, you see, and just reversed his team.

But he had a heart condition, which sometimes he would just faint away for maybe ten minutes up to thirty minutes or more. Just fade away, see. And I was with him, or we'd camp—a mile and a half away from home is where our farming ground was in Shoal Creek bottom. You know where Long Bridge is, west of Panama?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, we farmed just north of that about a mile, is where we farmed in the bottom there. So we'd take our dinner, you know, and we'd camp with our

team and wagon there where we fed our horses and stuff there, at noon, see. And then we'd have their water and our dinner and stuff with us.

Now, when Father would have one of these attacks--of course, I played around there, you know, around the wagon and out in the field and stuff, down around, you know, just messing around as any kid would--and then if he had one of these attacks, now, that would happen anywhere in the field, maybe at the far end of the field, middle of the field . . .

Q. Well, how often did it happen?

A. Oh, sometimes he'd maybe even go a week, wouldn't have one. Another time, maybe it'd happen once or twice or so a day. So when he'd have one of these spells--he generally always could feel them coming on and he'd stop his team and sit down. Well, I was a kid and whenever he done that, I was to take the water jug, you see, and go out. I'd bathe his hands and wet his handkerchief and put it over his forehead, you know, and then take his straw hat and hold it up so the sun wouldn't shine in his face, you see, until he'd come to, you know. When he came to, he'd sit there on the furrow there, you know, on the ground there. In just a little bit, you know, he'd get up and start plowing again.

And I never got much schooling. I'm not blaming nobody, as far as that's concerned. I started to school after the corn was shucked. I quite when we had to start to farm in the spring. I never went a full term of school in my life; I never did go a full term. I just went in between times, you know.

Q. Oh yes. A lot of people did that, I think, didn't they? Farm boys. That must have been what everybody did.

A. Yes, that's right. My schooling never did much for me. As far as schooling is concerned, I'm a poor scholar.

Q. You are? Didn't matter, did it?

A. Yes, pretty much so. I see the effects of it a lot. As I went down through life, history, I've seen the effects of it, just an awful lot, just an awful lot.

Q. How do you think it would have been different if you had gone through school all the way?

A. Well, at least, you know, I could have been a better speller. I'm an awful poor speller. Very, very poor, just very poor. And then I catch it a lot in pronouncing words, and things of that kind bother me an awful lot. A lot of that is my own fault for, you know, a person, if they had been determined, could have gotten that for themselves. You wouldn't have had to went to school for that if you had been determined. But I never was determined to do that, so consequently I'm lost there. Oh, you know, there's so many different methods and stuff in how to pronounce words and stuff of that nature, you know, that I'm just lost.

Q. What did the older boys do then? They were all working in other fields?

A. Well, they were younger; see, I was the oldest boy of the family. I had three sisters older than I and then I was the older boy and then the other two brothers were younger than me. Of course then they got the benefit of school. They went on to school while I was with Father. I grew up that way and I don't know whether that was the cause of it or not, but Father and I was always much closer to each other than he was or them with him, of the other children.

Q. Because you worked together.

A. I was always with him, see, I was always with him.

Q. Did the older girls go all the way through school?

A. Yes, and I had two sisters who taught. See, at that time back then, after you passed the eighth grade test, you know, then you could get a teacher's certificate and I had two sisters who taught school.

Q. Did they leave home then, to go teach?

A. Well no, as a general thing, they taught rural schools not too far from home. They boarded, you know. (cuckoo clock cuckoo's) During the winter, they boarded out and then come home over the weekends, see, in some cases. Then in some cases, they were close enough to home where they could come home, you see, right along.

Q. What kind of livestock did you have?

A. Mostly just cattle and hogs back in that time, and not too big in number then. (clock chimes) Father never was a feeder when I was at home.

Q. Did you milk cows?

A. We milked a few cows, yes, and most of that was milk and then we, oh, in my earlier time when I was small yet, that's before we had a separator. We just had it in crocks, you know; you've seen these gallon crocks, you know. Well, we had it in crocks that-a-way, you know, and had a basement. We'd put these crocks in there, you know, and then Mother churned just about every day. Where there was eight and ten of us in the family there--besides our own family with six of us kids and Father and Mother, then most of the time there was two other elderly people in our home. I never can remember in my home when there wasn't an elderly person being cared for in our home.

Q. Who were they?

A. My grandmother. There was three aged persons in their ninetieth year died in my father's home, that he took care of. While my mother, now, she died earlier; she died in her sixtieth year, she died earlier.

Q. That's nice how they used to keep their parents.

A. Then Father was married then the second time. His second wife only lived, I think it was three or four years, just a short while. Then she passed away, and then Father was alone from then on then . . .

Q. You raised corn and oats?

A. Corn and oats and wheat was our crops, that is, our main crops, you see. And that was about the basics. Then, of course, we had timothy hay for our horse feed, and then for cattle feed in the winter, we fed some hay to them. But cattle feed, a lot of that was oat straw and fodder. Those two for cattle mostly. Well, Father didn't feed anything for market at that time; he just brought his breeding cattle through, you see, and raised the calves, you see.

Q. How did you make fodder?

A. We cut this corn, cornstalks, when it was just past. . . . Well, let's put it this way. Just as the shuck starts to dry a little on the maturity, while the leaf is still green yet on the stalk, we cut this corn by hand with a corn knife and shocked it up in shocks. Did you ever see a corn shock?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, we'd cut this in shocks, you see, and shock it up, and then we'd shuck that corn off in the wintertime, don't you see, and haul this here cornstalk with the fodder stuff on it and feed that to the cattle.

Q. Oh, did you chop it up?

A. No, I didn't chop it up. That was before they had choppers. Nobody had silos yet at that time, back there. There wasn't a silo in that part of the country; maybe in some sections, but there wasn't in that part of the country.

Q. How many acres did you have?

A. Well, Pa's farm, he only had 110 acres. Then we rented most all of our farming ground, see. That was pasture land there; that was in wooded pasture land. Then we farmed out and paid one-third rent on a grain ranch, you see, for corn and oats and wheat at that time. We give one-third of that rent, you see, to the landlord in that section there.

Q. How did your father do the farming before you got old enough to help him?

A. He did it alone. But along about the time I was five he first had this heart attack; [that] taken place, don't you see. And then in the wintertime, about all we bought . . . There'd be maybe a month's time or more there we'd never go to town. Maybe we wouldn't go to town over two or three times during the winter.

Q. What town did you got to?

A. Sorento was our main trading town. Our old hens didn't lay very much in the wintertime; we didn't have the feed. We just fed them the corn feed. There wasn't no commercial feed like they have today.

Q. You fed them ground up corn?

A. No, not ground corn, whole corn. They had the whole corn, you see. And

of course, then, no supplement or nothing with it, just the corn, and then we'd feed them maybe some wheat, you know, along with the corn and stuff of that kind. But they didn't lay much when you did that, you know. We had eggs enough maybe for our own use and that, but all of our eating was in the basement. We had to take a wagon box full of potatoes and store in there for eating and seed the next spring, see. And then when we picked the apples, why, we took that down there. And then during the canning season, there were blackberries and all what not, the garden stuff and all; canned that and the walls all around the basement was full of canned fruit.

Q. Did she use glass jars to can?

A. Yes.

Q. Some people, I've heard, used tin cans. Aunt Amy told me her mother used tin cans and then sealed it with wax. I'd never heard of that before.

A. Yes, yes, that was used some and not only the tin cans, but then there was a jar, a clay jar made . . . oh, there was halves and there was gallons. They had a rim on the top of them and you put it in that jar, just like the same material as crock, and that rim around there, and then you filled that with sealing wax, see. After you put that lid on, then you filled that little crevice with sealing wax all around, see. Then you cut that sealing wax to take it out, you know, when you wanted to open it up.

And as a general thing then, why, we'd take and bury out in the garden. We'd dig a basin out in the garden and line it with straw, and then we'd put maybe ten or twelve bushel of potatoes, pile them up on there. Then we'd cover that with straw. Then we'd throw about that much dirt over the top of that. That was banked out there in the garden. We left them through the winter, now, and then towards spring we'd dig them out, you know, and we'd do the same thing with apples.

Q. And they wouldn't freeze?

A. No, not through that, they wouldn't freeze. Then sometimes on that, if it got too cold, we'd take and put a shock of fodder around over the top of that mound that we built up there, which would be up about this high, don't you see, up there. We'd put a shock of fodder on that to keep it from freezing. But about the only thing we bought in town would be sugar and coffee.

Q. Flour?

A. No, no flour, we didn't buy any flour. We went to the mill twice a year and we traded whole wheat for flour at the mill. We'd get about enough to last six months at a time, see, of flour, and we'd take that home and store that flour.

Q. Did that come in big sacks?

A. That come in fifty and one hundred pound sacks, mostly one hundred pound sacks.

Q. Was it whole wheat flour then?

A. Yes, that was whole wheat flour. I'll tell you where there's a mill now; they still make flour at the town of Mt. Olive, Illinois. Yes, there's a mill down there that makes flour yet, for bakery flour they call it, bakery flour.

Q. So where did you store that? You didn't store that in the basement, did you?

A. No, we had that flour . . . now, we had a shelf about so wide at the head of our stairs where we went upstairs where we kids slept. It was off to one side, and that flour was stored along on that ledge on the side.

Q. Well, what about clothes and stuff like that?

A. Well, clothing we had to buy. And as a general thing in the fall of the year, why, my father and mother would go to town and they would buy our winter clothes, what they called winter clothes. Sometimes we had overshoes, but we very seldom had overshoes.

Q. What did you use?

A. Just shoes.

Q. Didn't you get wet and cold?

A. Oh yes, but that went with the deal. You dried your socks off by the old wood stove at night, you know. Burned wood in the old wood stove, you know. You dried your socks off and set them by the side of the stove there. You dried your shoes, and they got too hard, it was awful hard to get on sometimes in the morning. (laughter)

Q. But you didn't get to go to town with them when they went?

A. Very seldom. When I was a kid, if I got to go to town, that was an awful big treat. That was a big treat. They generally went to town along in December. Now, the longest month of the year when I was a kid was December, for we got to go to town on a Saturday, one Saturday before Christmas in December. And boy, it was a long time from one Saturday to the next!

Q. What did you do when you got to town?

A. Well, we spent about fifteen or twenty cents for a present for Mother.

Q. What kinds of things did you buy her, do you remember?

A. Well, I don't remember what all I got now. I remember one thing, I bought her a pickle dish one time, a little dish about so long. It was supposed to be a pickle dish and I give fifteen cents for it. I had a quarter to spend, actually, and I give fifteen cents for the dish.

Q. Then what did you do with the money you had left over?

A. Well, you know, you kept that and then when we'd go to an ice cream supper in the summertime--the churches, some of them, had an ice cream supper--and sometimes we got a quarter to spend there, you know, and we'd get us a

bottle of sody [soda] for a nickel and a dish of ice cream for a nickel. Maybe that's be all; maybe we'd have two of them before we come home, and we'd still have a nickel left, you know. (laughter) Yes, well, we didn't have money. We didn't have money, no.

Q. No, your parents didn't have money either.

A. They didn't have no money, no, they didn't have no money.

Q. Well, you really didn't need money then, did you?

A. No, no.

Q. You didn't pay taxes?

A. Well, there was a tax, yes, on the land at that time, but nothing in compared . . . oh, let's see, I don't know, I don't know that I've got any old tax receipts here since I was married.

Q. Is that all? I mean, what else would they need money for?

A. Just for clothing and, as a general thing, our clothing stuff was either ordered out of Sears and Roebuck or Montgomery Ward. Now, we used Montgomery Ward an awful lot when I was a kid at home, before I was married yet.

Q. Oh, from the catalog?

A. From the catalog.

Q. Then you would go into Sorento to get it?

A. Well, our mailing was from Walshville, and we'd go to Walshville to pick that up. See, our mailing address was Walshville, and then we'd pick it up there, don't you see, whenever it come in or if it wasn't packaged so that the mail carrier could bring it out. Now, we had a mail carrier that started in 1900 there. That was our first mail carrier in that part of the country.

Q. Oh, before that you had to go into town to get it?

A. Before that you went to town and got your mail.

Q. How far away from town did they live?

A. We lived four miles from Walshville.

Q. Four miles. Well, that wasn't very far.

A. No, but that took a long time to go. If you walked or if you went by horseback or if you went in the buggy, it took quite a little bit to go. And when you walked, it took quite a little bit, which I walked it a lot of times.

Q. Did you go to church?

A. Yes. Now, when we was right little, we didn't. But after we got bigger,

now, I drove the big wagon and team many and a many a time to go to church—that was the old farm wagon, it was a high-wheeled wagon—and picked up along the road, you see, and by the time we got in to the Walshville church, why, we had a wagonload. Picked up people along the road, you know.

Q. What kind of social life did you have? Did you ever see friends? I mean, did people come over and visit you?

A. Your social area was about from four to six miles surrounding you, that was your social area. They met at the schoolhouse; the schoolhouse was the meeting place, see. Your school district was principally the community center for that community. The schoolhouse was the community center for that district. And that's about all you knew, in that district.

Q. When did you get together?

A. Not too often, no. We had no radio; you had nothing of that kind, you know. No telephone, and you amused yourself otherwise, see.

Q. Doing what?

A. I can't tell you what all our time was consumed in. I don't know.

Q. Seems like, from other people I've talked to, it was consumed with work.

A. Mostly, that's what it was. Most of the year, from the time you was out and with the crew, why, we worked at it. We worked muscular work. When night come and you got your supper, you was ready to plop in bed. You'd just go to bed, and people at that age, if they were fifty years old, they were old. They were aged at fifty.

Q. And you worked seven days a week?

A. Not necessarily all the time. As a general thing, my father never approved of working much on Sunday. Now, about all his Sunday work that he would have us do was the odd and end chores which failed to get picked up during the week; it would be just more or less just light chores and stuff of that kind. But as far as actually routine daily work and all, that day was counted off as a general thing. We did occasionally in extreme times.

But you can take back, now, before I was married, in there. The two-horse team mostly, see. If you got ten acres of ground or eight acres of ground, I would say, planted in a week's time, you had a good week's work. That's a week's work which, see, a man at that time, then, oh, if he put in thirty, thirty-five acres of corn, he was a pretty good-sized farmer. See, if he put in maybe twenty, twenty-five acres of oats, maybe have the same amount of wheat, why, in a one-man operation in the crude way in which we done it, he had to work every day. Just about whether it was sunshine or raining, he had to work about every day.

Q. Did you use fertilizer at all?

A. No fertilizer at the beginning. I begin to use a little fertilizer when I was married. See, I was married in 1916, and begin to use a little bit of fertilizer then, just starting a little bit. But most of the older people at

that time thought this fertilizer was a death trap to our farms.

Q. Why?

A. They thought it was going to kill the life of the farm, see.

Q. You mean commercial fertilizer?

A. Commercial fertilizer. Of course it was a different fertilizer than they have got today, too, you know, and they were fearful of it. They was afraid of it, see.

Q. Well, did they spread manure on the fields?

A. Yes, that was principally their fertilization, was their fertilizers, see. That was from the barnyard and that was all done by hand. You forked it on the wagon and forked it off the wagon when you got to the field, scattered it. That was all done by hand labor.

Q. On your corn planter, how many rows of corn could it plant?

A. Two rows at a time. Now, I have seen a one-row planter, but then mostly two-rows.

Q. Did it have a wire or did somebody have to trip it?

A. Now, I went to sleep more than one time sitting on the front of the planter, jerking the planter. They had what they called a hill drop. When this horse put the left foot up here, well, you pulled it here. When he pulled the right foot up there, you pulled it to the right. You watched the horse then and every time the horse stepped, you went back and forth with that. And that was a tiresome job, you see, when you was about six or seven years old. (laughter)

Q. Yes, that would get pretty boring, wouldn't it?

A. Yes. That was what they called a hill drop. Then just a little later on there, they got then the wire with the button on it. You probably have seen some of that, maybe, I don't know. Maybe your grandpa had that around there, yet. Maybe he had some of that laying around there yet when you grew up, I don't know.

Q. Yes, that might be.

A. But it was the button trip, you know, on there. And then I've plowed with what they call the double shovel. That was a little plow with five small shovels on it that you hooked one horse to. You'd go up one side of the row of corn to the end of the field and come back down the other side. Each round made one row of corn, you plowed one row of corn.

Q. That would take a long time, wouldn't it?

A. So that was pretty fast going, you know. (laughter) But now, the year that I was married then, why, I had bought a gang plow. That was a four-horse plow with two fourteen-inch plows on it, you see. I started farming

with the gang plow. But Father never did have any riding tools, up until I started for myself, he never had riding tools.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Christmas. Did you celebrate Christmas?

A. Yes.

Q. How did you celebrate it?

A. We'd go out in the timber and get us a cedar tree, a wild cedar tree, and then for decoration, we'd string popcorn and cranberries.

Q. You grew your popcorn, didn't you?

A. We grew our corn and we'd string that, don't you see, and put strings of popcorn around on it, you know. And then what few presents we got—it was very few—but then what we got, why, they was nice. Excuse me just a minute. (He leaves the room and returns.) Now, there is a present that I got when I was a little boy about four or five years old. And just a little bit longer than that, about when the first automobiles come out, why, then I got a little automobile. Now, that was another Christmas present. I was a little older when I got that one.

Q. Those are really nice, aren't they? And you've kept them. That's amazing you've kept them all this time. This is a strange thing; this is a black guy on here. That's very unusual, wasn't it?

A. That was, at that time.

Q. It says Africa?

A. I don't know. I imagine it could have been, and I don't know where, whether it was made in Japan . . .

Q. It says it was made in Germany. With an ostrich. That's really unusual!

A. And that had a spring on it, and it run at one time. He would walk, see; I could wind him up and he would walk.

Q. It had a little bank. Oh, I see. (laughs) That's really something! So did you used to get one present each?

A. Just one present, that's all we'd get, yes. And then, of course, we had popcorn and we always had candy for Christmas. They'd get candy for Christmas, and if we got an orange, it was just, oh, that was something extra. But apples, we had apples continuously all winter long. We had all the apples that we kids would want to eat.

Q. Did your mother cook anything special then?

A. Yes, she'd generally make a special dinner of some kind, you know. I can't remember just offhand now what it would be, but as a general thing, why, we'd have pie or something like that, which we didn't have pie very often at that time back there.

Q. You didn't have very many desserts, did you?

A. No, no.

Q. Didn't usually eat dessert.

A. They didn't have too much dessert at that time. Now, we'd raise Yankee beans and we'd store them, dried beans, don't you see. And then they'd have their canned beans and we had vegetables and we had potatoes and Mother baked bread twice a week, and we had homebaked bread.

Q. Did she make cheese?

A. Yes, we had the homemade cheese out of our milk and stuff, homemade butter out of the milk and stuff there, you see.

Q. She made jelly?

A. Jelly, we had jelly. Father always come in the blackberrytime and like that for blackberry jellies or in the fall, you know, for apples and stuff, made apple jelly and blackberry jelly and grape jelly and all that, you know. He'd buy sugar by the hundred pounds and make up the jellies and stuff. Then we had that, you see, and then, not every year but part of the years, we have raised a patch of cane and then have our molasses, sorghum made out of the cane, don't you see.

Q. How did you make that?

A. Well, we grew this cane and then we'd what they call strip it. We'd knock all those leaves off down to the bare stalk, see, and then we'd cut that. And then they had what they call the cane mill. They pressed the juice out of this stalk and then they cooked this juice.

Q. Oh, you'd take it to some place else?

A. Yes, they had a regular mill, a sorghum mill, see, and they had a big drum there to squeeze this juice out and they had a team of horses hooked onto this drum that went around and around, you know, just like we pressed hay at that time; a hay baler, why, worked on the same order. And they pressed this juice out, see. Then they cooked this juice over a fire, you see, to cook the water out of this and to cook it down to where it made molasses. And that was our sorghum, sorghum molasses.

Q. What did you use sorghum for?

A. That was one of our sweets, desserts, like sorghum on our bread and then every once in a while through the winter, you know, we'd shell some corn--we generally had white corn and yellow corn, you know, and we generally used white corn for hominy--and we'd shell up a bunch of corn and we'd take that and have that ground for corn meal. And then we'd have another bunch of it shelled and we'd take that out and we'd make hominy, cook it outside.

See, we done that with lye, now, you skinned that hull off of that corn with lye. When we made that lye, we'd save the wood ashes. We had what we called an ash hopper. We had boards fixed up and cut in a V shape this way, you know, and we'd throw our ashes in that during all the summer and then as

it rained on that ashes, you know, the water would go down through that and that would make a lye water. And we saved that lye water down there. It would come out the trough in the bottom of that ash hopper we called it. We'd save that there lye and that's what we used when we boiled that.

We'd take the big butchering kettle and put this corn--had as much as a bushel or a bushel and a half of corn to skin up at one time, you know--and then we'd put that in this big kettle and then put this water on it and then this here lye. We'd put a certain amount of lye in it--depends on how big a batch we was making--to skin this. Then we'd heat that up till we got this corn pretty well skinned, you know. Then we'd wash that lye out of the corn. We'd take that through several washings. We had these here big tubs that we. . . . (tape ends abruptly)

END OF SIDE ONE

A. . . . through several waters, we'd wash that out. Then we'd take that and put it in cloth sacks and hang it over the clothesline to dry.

Q. The corn is all swollen up then?

A. The corn is swollen up to a certain extent, you see. Then we got that outside husk off of it and then we'd put it over the clothesline, you see, and then we'd stir that. Just anytime any of us would go by the clothesline, we'd stir that corn all up. We'd have maybe three or four of these--they'd be flour sacks, you see--these big flour sacks, and we'd stir that up, you know, and keep that corn around until we got it dry. Then when we got that corn dry, we'd store that away. Well, whenever we wanted hominy then through the winter, we'd just get some of that dry corn and put it in our pot, you know, and cook it up, put a piece of fat meat or something in that and you'd have to really stand again, you see. So you lived practically on what you raised. You done very little trading at town. Now like today, you know, why shoot, we don't. . . . Where is there a milk cow in the country?

Q. Yes, nobody has them anymore.

A. No, you don't have them. (cuckoo clock cuckoos) That's just the trend.

Q. Yes, that's really different.

A. Then after we was married, (clock chimes) then we took on just a little bit different life at that time; that is, what I mean, we stepped up in a little different method of farming, see. I farmed with four horses continuously, you see, take my four-horse team. I had my gang plow and I had a harrow and had my corn planter and had a disc, a seven-foot disc, and a wheat binder. And that was practically our farm equipment, the tools, you see.

Q. Where did you get the money to start farming?

A. I borrowed the money; I started farming with five hundred dollars. When I started out to farming, I borrowed five hundred dollars and it took me an awful long time to get that all paid back.

Q. You were still living at home when you got married?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. Where did you meet your wife?

A. I met her at a party in the local community near home.

Q. And you had been working with your father all this time?

A. Yes.

Q. So you didn't have any money at all of your own, did you?

A. Oh no, I didn't have no money.

Q. How old were you?

A. I was 22 when I was married. No, I didn't have any money. Father gave me a horse when I was 21, and I had our first colt the second spring. Topsy was just a young mare that I had first, and then my first foal was just about a week older than our first boy. We was married a little over a year; we was married in March and our first baby was born the 23rd of April the following year. So we started out with that. And Mother give us two dozen hens when we was first married. And I had bought a horse on time before we were married, so I had a team. Well, then I borrowed two horses for the first year when I farmed. I borrowed a pair of mules; broke a pair of mules for the use of them, don't you see, the first year I was married. That give me four horses, you see, and that's the way I started out.

Q. Where did you start out?

A. I started out there at Walshville.

Q. Did you rent your land?

A. I rented 140 acres of land out there just at the edge of Walshville, just at the southwest corner of town. We lived on that place fourteen years.

Q. And that had a house and everything all ready?

A. Yes, the house there and the improvements and stuff was all there. There's where we started out to farming, there. And from there, then, we moved up into Butler Grove Township in 1930.

Q. Why did you move up here?

A. That's a different story again. There was an elevator right close to where I lived there, between my place and town, and the manager of the elevator and I were just awful good friends. And I worked there a good deal, worked there besides farming. I've farmed all hours of the night and I've worked there all hours of the night, like unloading grain, and we used to have flour and sack-feed shipped in, you know, and I'd unload it at night after farming all day and all. Then after supper, I'd go up there and I'd work till, oh, one or two o'clock in the morning, unloading feed, you know, in the elevator, and then go home and sleep for a couple or three hours and then go farming again, see. That's the way we done that to make a living.

He and I were good friends and I kept telling him, I said, "I'm going to quit. I'm not agoing to come. You get somebody else." Well, then he'd get in a pinch or something and here he'd come, you know. I didn't have the heart to say no and it was getting the best of me. I was in too much dirt there, and at that time at the elevator, you worked in an awful lot of dirt, much more so than they do now. Well, you done it in a crude way. You done it with a scoop shovel and you had to get in there at that time. It was bothering my lungs. I'd go home a lot of nights after working in that dust up there all day and have a dust chill and go to bed without any supper and swear I wouldn't go back. Then I'd get up the next morning and go back to work. Listen, there was two little boys at that time there that had to be fed, about that big, and I had to take care of them. So I'd go back to work. So I told him I was going to leave, I was going to move out of the country if he didn't quit hiring me.

I had an awful good landlord. I only had one contract with him; when I moved on the place we had a contract and it was never renewed. He said, "We don't need no contract. That one is good," he says, "all the way through." He said, "Whenever you get ready to move, why, you tell me in plenty of time so I can get a renter and if I'm dissatisfied with you, I'll tell you in plenty of time for you to get you another place."

Q. How much rent did you have to pay?

A. I paid him sixty dollars a year cash rent besides the third of all the grain we had, you see. So I told him along in June that I was going to leave and he said, "Do you have a place?" I said, "No, I don't." That's all he said. So time went on, you know, and I didn't find no place right away. In fact, I was busy working, I didn't get out and look too much. So it went on until along in September and I said, "How come there's never been anybody here to look at this place, [to see] about renting it? Don't nobody want to rent it?" He said, "It ain't for rent yet." I said, "What do you mean it ain't for rent?" I said, "I told you that I was leaving." He said, "Do you have a place?" and I said no. He said, "This place ain't to rent until you rent you a place." He said, "Then when you get you a place rented, then you come and tell me you've rented you a place. And then," he says, "I'll rent this one." He said, "I won't rent this place until you get you a place rented." There ain't very many'd do that.

Q. No. He's really nice.

A. Oh, he was an awful nice fellow. So I was out looking for a place and I landed in Butler at the Farmer's Store down there about five o'clock one evening.

Q. In the buggy?

A. In horse and buggy, yes. And your great-grandpa Moray Ward was down there at the store. So I was asking him about a place and he said, "Yes, I've got one." And that was up there where Clarence did live, you know, that's where Stewart lives now. Laurent lived there at that time. So he said, "Yes, they're going to leave, and," he said, "I've got a place for rent." So I said, "Well, let's drive out that-a-way.

So he got in the buggy with me and we drove out past the place, and it seems

though, he and Laurents had had a little disagreement some way, and he said, "I don't want to drive in." I said, "That's all right." So we just drove around the road around, you know, and kind of looked at it. So when we got back to Butler, why, he said, "Well, do you want it or not?" And I said, "I don't know whether I want it or not." I said, "I don't want it yet till I walk over it. I want to go over the place." I said, "We can walk over the land, now." I said, "Other than the house, why, you can tell me what the house is if you don't want to bother them." And I said, "That'll be okay." But I said, "Other than that, I want to walk over the place." So the next morning I went back and got him and we went out and we walked over the place. So I rented the place from him, you see.

Q. What year was that?

A. That was in 1930.

Q. Oh, and he died in 1932.

A. Yes, yes.

Q. What was he like?

A. He was a real nice gentleman. He was a quick-tempered man, but he was a real nice gentleman. I just thought a lot of Mr. Ward. He was just really nice, I thought. So we moved in. I went up there and sowed wheat and I stayed at Lency's at the time when I sowed wheat up there. Didn't know a soul up there, you know.

Q. He was really fine, wasn't he? He must have been a good neighbor.

A. Yes, yes. And I thought when I was sowing wheat up there, I thought, "Oh, what"--up here in a strange community and everything--"what did I do that for," you know. (laughter) So anyhow, things went on, you know.

Q. How much a month did you have to pay to my grandfather?

A. You know, I don't remember what that was now.

Q. How many acres was it?

A. There was not quite 120, 119 or 118. It was odd acres on account of the road went through there, you know. I forget but there was a hundred and some odd acres.

Q. What did your wife think of that?

A. She liked it there.

Q. Did she? Did she want to move though?

A. Well, no, she hesitated on leaving the community where we was acquainted and everything.

Q. Yes. Her parents were back there?

A. Well, no, her parents were gone long before that time, yes. She was raised practically by her brothers and sisters. Her father died quite a number of years before. I never seen either one, her father or mother, either one; I never saw either one of them.

But going back there on this other then, why, we moved up there in the spring of 1930 and started in to farming there, you know. So then the Depression hit, you know. That was during that rough depression there. So the first year there, when it come to shucking corn time, why, Mr. Ward came out when I was shucking down there and he said, "John," he says, "I'll sell you my rent corn." And I said, "Well, I'd like to buy it." After I got married, I had started to feeding a little. I imagined that I wanted to feed cattle and I had started to kind of dabbling in feeding a few head of cattle, twenty-five or thirty head a year or something like that at first. So, I was wanting to feed a few cattle. So I says, "Well, if I can get the money." See, nobody had any money at that time. I sold wheat that year for 35¢ a bushel.

And corn then. . . . He said, "I'll tell you what I want." He said, "I want 15¢ a bushel for this corn, and you take one load of it to Butler and weigh it, and then you can govern your other loads by that weight there," and he said, "and you won't have to take but one load to Butler to weigh and then," he said, "just keep track of the loads and pay me for that." But he said, "I want the money."

Well, I come to Hillsboro here, you know, and went to both banks to borrow \$150 for I figured there was something like maybe a thousand bushels of corn, maybe a little less or so. Anyhow, I was trying to borrow \$150 and I went home without the money. They wouldn't loan me any money, see.

Q. Did you talk to Mr. Fisher?

A. Yes, I talked to Mr. Fisher, went home without the money. Well, I couldn't buy the corn. So, I hauled his corn to Butler, and I think he finally wound up with about eleven cents a bushel he got for his corn down there. Eleven cents a bushel. That was the price. And I got 35¢ a bushel for the wheat that year, so you see how that paid out big money you know.

Q. Yes. (laughter)

A. Yes, and I sold hogs that same year. I sold hogs for \$3.50 a hundred. That was the way things turned out, and I sold one Jersey cow and she brought me \$11.00 clear money on the market.

Q. Eleven dollars? My goodness!

A. She weighed about eight hundred pounds. She was a small Jersey cow, you know, but I don't know, she brought something like three cents, something like that. (laughter) Boy, and then the expenses on her down there, you know. And I went down to the yards one day and I had a big sow, she weighed around six, seven hundred pounds, and I asked the commission man down there . . .

Q. Was that in St. Louis?

A. In St. Louis. I said, "Should I send that sow down here to market?" He said, "Unless you got some money to finish paying the expense on it, you better

just keep her at home."

Q. My goodness! It must have really been bad.

A. And I traded her to a man. I told him, I said, "If you give me a week's work"—and I gave him his dinner besides—"if you work for me a week, I'll let you have that sow for butchering." And that's what I sold the sow for, a week's work. (laughter) This hired man there helped me.

Q. Isn't that terrible! What year was that?

A. That was in 1932, 1931 or 1932, around in there.

Q. Oh, that's just terrible! When you moved up here—I want to get back to that—how did you move? Did you have furniture? How did you move?

A. Yes. We moved by horses, horses and wagon. I had five teams, five wagons of furniture and stuff that we moved up the day we moved.

Q. How long did it take to get up there?

A. Well, we left down there around, oh, seven o'clock in the morning and we got up there about one, something like that. And when we got up there, your aunt Ethel, Clarence's wife—you remember her, or rather of me speaking of her, you know—and she had dinner for us when we got there. I'd been up there the day before and said we were moving the next day, and she had dinner for us when we got up there, which I appreciated. You know, we did think a lot of Ethel. I thought an awful lot of Ethel, but don't ask me anything about Clarence.

Q. (laughs) You didn't think too much of him, right? I didn't know him.

A. You ever remember seeing him?

Q. No, I never did know him.

A. See, they went to Arizona before you were big enough, I think, to remember.

Q. Did our family have anything to do with him?

A. Yes, they passed, they passed.

Q. Did they? I didn't know why I never did know him.

A. Yes, they passed all right.

Q. Well, Uncle Lency and Aunt Ella must have been good neighbors.

A. Oh, they was good, they was awful nice, yes.

Q. So then your wife liked it after she got up here.

A. Oh yes, we both just loved it after we got up there. After the first six months, then we began to get kind of acquainted with the people around there, you know, and all.

Q. What month was it you moved up?

A. We moved there in March, the 4th of March that we got there.

Q. Yes, cold, wasn't it?

A. Well, not--at that time the day was nice, far as that's concerned, yes. But then that same year, then--it turned off nice and I even sowed oats in March that year. It was either the 28th or 29th of March that same year, we got a big snow, and it drifted the Ware Grove Road shut and I went up there to help them scoop out--there was a body shipped in here from somewhere else to be buried at the Grove--and I went up there to help them scoop out that draw there right at the foot of the hill, coming west down there. That always drifted shut in there, you know, so there's where I met a lot of the people around Butler Grove, there's where I really went to getting acquainted; where I met so many different ones around there. There was your Grandpa Moray and Dent, and Shaw Combs was in there then, and Hodge and, oh, I can't remember all and all who was there, but just a lot of them. Hop Turner. Just a lot of the community around there, don't you see, was there helping scoop that out, you know. Well, I met them and got acquainted with them.

Q. And Ware, what was his name? Lived right across the hill from us.

A. George.

Q. George Ware, yes. Was he down there then?

A. Well, I don't remember him abeing right there. See, George at that time was retired. He wasn't too active yet at that time. He was more or less retired before I moved up there. But he was a mighty nice man; I always thought an awful lot of George. He was just an awful nice fellow.

Q. Yes, they were nice people.

A. No, and then after we went through the Depression, then, you see, why . . .

Q. How did the Depression affect you?

A. Well, I couldn't have paid 25¢ on the dollar that I owed when I went out of the Depression. Well, there was just no money existing, there was just nobody had any. And the way I made a living there during the Depression [was] I butchered in the wintertime for the neighbors around there. I'd have them bring their hogs in there, and then I'd butcher them and cut them up and render the lard, and some of them, I made the sausage. If they wanted it made, I made the sausage. I done a complete job and then when I'd get through, then I'd take it back to them. I don't know, I think it's something like two and a half or three dollars I charged a hog, for butchering the whole thing up.

Q. That was a whole day's work.

A. Oh, it was more than that. I just made a job out of it. See, I had my brother-in-law in Butler, he helped me. And we'd butcher one day and hang up, you see, and cool out, and then pack it; then the next day you'd cut up

and render the lard, you see, and make sausage and stuff out of that. It would take two, and some days we didn't get done in two, it'd take maybe three days to finish up a job, you know. And we'd just rotate around there. At one time, there where Stewart lives in there, I had thirty-some-odd cans of lard down there that I hadn't got out to deliver yet. We were just busy butchering all the time and I hadn't delivered it. I had that whole basement just full of hogs (laughter) and stuff stored away there ready to deliver out, don't you see. But that's the way I made a living there during about three winters there. That's the way I went through the winter in there.

Q. I always thought everybody did their own butchering.

A. Well, there was a lot of them did. Now, Moray and I, we changed butchering when we butchered for our own meat, you see; we butchered our own meat. And Moray and I, as long as Moray butchered there, I helped him butcher pretty near all the time. And that was always a two or sometimes three-day job over there. For Moray generally butchered from seven to eight, you know, hogs; he butchered quite a bunch. We'd have a whole washtub full of sausage and stuff like that, you know. That's when your first grandmother was still living yet, you know. That was some trying times. That was some good old times back in there.

Q. Did you go to church then?

A. Not regular, no. I didn't go regularly then.

Q. Did your wife?

A. No, she didn't go regular either at that time. We just weren't too regular church attendants at that time; we went occasionally, but then it just wasn't just a regular thing at the time, not as much as it was in later years. Oh, in those trying times, when we was araising a family and coming up in there, all we knew was hard work. And Sunday come, it was more a relax and a rest day, you know, and things of that kind. So, we just sort of drifted from church to a certain extent. Just, as I say, we went occasionally along to different things.

Q. So you rented those three years from my grandfather?

A. No, I lived there about six years. Then after he died--he died in 1932? I was thinking I only rented from Clarence two years, but I guess I rented from him three years. Your uncle Clarence, see, after your great-grandfather passed away, then he got the place, see. Clarence was willed that place and Lency was willed the one that he lives on. Clarence got that place where I lived on there.

Q. Where was Clarence living then?

A. He was living over there where the Rainmakers Camp, where they tore that house down.

Q. What was he doing over there?

A. He owned that little place over there at that time. He had bought that little place in there and he was living over there.

Q. I wondered why he wasn't living on his place.

A. Well, he lived in the little house that stood south of it. Do you remember when it stood there?

Q. No.

A. Well, there was a little square house stood south of where Stewart now lives, back there in that little lot there, and he lived there when I first moved up in there. But your aunt Ethel, I always did think an awful lot of her, but I don't know, Clarence and me, we didn't see down the same road, as some would say.

Q. So then you rented from Clarence from then on?

A. I rented from Clarence then until the spring of 1936 and then I moved back there where I'd sold out from. I moved back there in 1936 and lived there till . . .

Q. Did you rent that?

A. When I first went, the first year I rented it.

Q. Who owned **that**?

A. Bullington owned it at that time when I went back there, and then I bought the place where the house was, see. Well then, he had this other eighty [acres] then down the road from that, what was known as the Costello Eighty. So then I told him when I bought that place there then, I said, "Well, if I ever get this one paid for, then I'd like to have first option on that other eighty if you ever take a notion to sell it." He said, well, he'd give it to me. So he did that and then I bought the other eighty from him then in 1940. I bought it from him.

Q. And what did you pay for that place?

A. I give sixty-five dollars an acre for the first piece I bought.

Q. Where did you get the money to do that?

A. I had a life insurance policy of the wife's on which a twenty year endowment had come due, and I took it for the down payment and then took the rest off. At that time, things had turned, you see. [In] 1936, the channel turned a little bit and started up a little bit then, you know. So it went from there, starting up, and I had started afeeding a little heavier with cattle, and I had made a little bit of money on the cattle. And in two years time, why, I had the place paid for over there by using her endowment money, see, from there. So that give us the start there, you see. Then I bought this other eighty from Mr. Bullington then.

Q. Did you go back to Walshville very often?

A. Not very often, no. The first year we went, oh, several times, but not too often. It was a long drive at that time.

Q. Did your parents come up here?

A. My father was living at that time and he visited, but my mother had passed away before we left down there.

Q. Oh, she did? What was wrong with her?

A. She had a cerebral hemorrhage.

Q. Oh I see. That's one thing I was going to ask you and I forgot. When you were younger, before you were married, when you needed the doctor, what did you do?

A. You generally got on a horse and went to the doctor and notified him to come.

Q. Oh I see. But you didn't have a doctor very often, did you?

A. No, the people at that time--see, banks and hospitals wasn't thought of.

Q. They didn't have banks?

A. There was banks, but then very few people used them. That is, country people didn't use banks very often.

Q. Really? Because they didn't have any money anyway?

A. Well, they didn't have very much money and if a person had a little bit of money, he just put it down in his sock at home. He didn't bother about--it was cash money that he had, and he didn't bother about going to the bank.

Q. He never got robbed?

A. Oh no. No, nobody ever thought about robbing then, you know. And then a lot of the country in through there, now, if they wanted to borrow a few dollars or something of that kind or maybe wanted to buy forty acres or maybe more than that, they'd go to a neighbor and get the money from him, maybe borrow the money from him, to pay for it, see.

Q. Oh really? Instead of going to the bank?

A. In place of going to the bank. They didn't use a bank. They didn't use a bank. A bank was a thing out of the question with just any amount of the farmers at that time. They didn't use a bank.

Q. What kind of medicines and things did you use?

A. Home remedies mostly. Now, my great-grandmother lived with us as long as her lifetime. She died in her ninetieth year. My mother was living with my great-grandmother when they were married. Well then, they just reversed and she moved in with them. So there was an aged person in the home from the time Father and Mother were married. And back in those earlier days, why, they had home remedies which they took up. Oh, herbs and various kinds of home remedies, don't you see, that they'd mix up themselves and that sort of stuff. Like, wild roots and things, you know, they'd pick up out of the timbers and stuff. They knew what this stuff was, you know, and they'd pick that up and dry it, barks and things of that kind, then they made their medicines out of that.

Q. Yes, did they work very well?

A. Yes, people lived to be forty to fifty years old. But if you was over fifty years old when I was a little kid, you was real old.

Q. And just think, your grandmother was ninety.

A. Yes, she lived to be right on through.

Q. Was she well most of the time?

A. Yes, she had very good health. I can remember her telling stories, in that same neighborhood there in the earlier days when they wanted fresh meat and stuff that way, they'd fix a pole--they had rail fences then, what few fences they had was rail fences. Well, they'd get a deer run where a deer would come jump over this fence, you know, and they'd set a stake out here in the ground on each side of the fence about so far where this deer would light, see. They'd sharpen the end of this stick, sharp. And when this deer jumped over the fence--they'd have that thing sloping, and when this deer jumped over this fence, this sharp stick would catch this deer in the breast, here, go up through his entrails, and hang him right there on that stile.

Q. Awh! That sounds terrible, doesn't it?

A. Yes, but that's the way they got their meat. See, they'd catch them a deer, you know, have deer meat then. That was the way they got part of their meat. That's the way they fixed it, they put those poles there. And in her earlier days there . . . Now, you probably read about the Pepper Mill¹ that's down here.

Q. No.

A. Well, way back years ago in the Montgomery News, there was always a big story in there about the Pepper Mill down here. They called it the Pepper Mill; that's down there where Roy Applegate lives is where that was. They had an old grist mill down there where they ground corn meal and flour and things of that nature in there. (cuckoo clock cuckoos) So there's where my great-grandmother was raised, was around there as a girl. (clock chimes) Then she moved further, then, south after she was married. She was the mother of thirteen children.

Q. Thirteen! And she lived to be ninety years old. I wonder what she attributed her longevity to?

A. I wouldn't have any idea.

Q. Hard work probably, right?

A. Probably so.

Q. Did she do anything around the house? Did she work around the house?

¹Pepper Mill was the trade name. (J.K.)

A. Oh yes, like washing dishes and stuff. And she quilted quilts--blocks, made quilt blocks up until she passed away. She would sit in her own rocking chair--I can see her there yet today--and she'd always just a little bit of a rock that way. And she would take quilt blocks about an inch square, just the material that most people would throw in the wastebasket, she'd make quilt pieces out of them. Then she'd stitch them together. I've got some of her quilts here; I don't know whether I can lay my hands on one right now or not.

Q. Oh, that she made?

A. Oh yes. I don't remember just offhand now where I've got one of them. I don't know if I can get to one or not.

Q. What did she die from?

A. Old age principally. She got so feeble that she could hardly walk and all. She just wore out, you know, just died.

Q. Did you have to have the doctor for her very often?

A. No. Didn't doctor very often. You got pretty sick before you had a doctor. You had to try all of your home remedies and things of that kind, you know, before you even had a doctor. Then if you got sick enough that you had to have a doctor and had to have medicine given to you, you know, why, then the neighbors come in and they'd sit up during the night, you know, and sit up with people when they got really seriously sick. Oh, I've sat up many, many a night with sick people that-a-way in our community when I was younger, you know.

Q. They didn't have funeral homes then, did they?

A. No.

Q. When people died, what did they do?

A. We'd take two straight chairs, like those that be in there, and bring in a rough board and cover it with a blanket and lay the body out on that board. That would be it. And later, then, they got to where they would come and embalm in the home, see. They would come out to the home and embalm there at the home in later years. But when I can first remember, there was no embalming.

Q. They didn't even embalm them?

A. No, no. And especially, now, in the hot-weather time, if you died today, you would be put away tomorrow. Definitely tomorrow. Now in the wintertime, sometimes it was held off a little longer on account of, you know, the deterioration of the body starts immediately after death.

Q. And you just kept them in the house?

A. Yes, and then there was always, when a person would die in the home that-a-way, you know, then neighbors would come in and they'd always sit up with the corpse.

Q. Oh, they did? In the same room?

A. No, not as a general thing it wasn't in the same room. They was in an adjoining room.

Q. Oh, what was the reason for that?

A. Habit. That was the custom, that was just a custom.

Q. It wasn't anything to do with religion or anything?

A. No, that was just a custom.

Q. And did the family all stay up?

A. No no, the family would go to rest and the neighbors would come in, you know. Say there'd be—"Oh, I'll stay the night"—and maybe there'd be two or three of us stay, you know, and then tomorrow night, if it was held over for another night, it would be some other neighbors, you know, two or three would come in and stay. Then the family would go to bed.

Q. I wonder why they did that, or how that got started.

A. That was just a custom in them times, back in them times.

Q. And so then they didn't have vaults and all kinds of things like that.

A. I can't remember only one or two times back when I was very small, I remember once and maybe twice. They made the caskets, made it out of boards. After the person died, they made the casket.

Q. Yes, you made it at home.

A. Made it right there, right there. They just made a box, you see, and just put them in that box. And that was made out of, primarily at that time, they always tried to pick up walnut lumber. Walnut, you know, without air will last an indefinite length of time before it deteriorates in the ground if air don't hit it. That was the kind of lumber they used primarily at that time to make the casket out of, would be just walnut, you see.

Q. So they didn't line it and go through all that like they do now.

A. Just a rough board, just put the body on the rough boards.

Q. And they'd have a service at home?

A. Yes, a service at home.

Q. Then did they bury them, like, in the backyard or did they go to a cemetery?

A. No. No. I don't remember anyone ever being buried locally. There was always a cemetery since I can remember. Always a cemetery. No, those things have changed a lot since that time back then.

Q. Oh yes. Did you celebrate Easter and Thanksgiving and all that?

A. No. Thanksgiving, as a general thing, we had--now, this goes back to when I was at home yet. We kids had pigeons, and as a general thing we'd have what we called pigeon pie for Thanksgiving dinner. (laughter) That was just a family custom, you know.

Q. What was it?

A. Pigeons. We'd kill pigeons and make--well, just like you would a chicken pie, you know. The same thing.

Q. And that was for Thanksgiving?

A. That would be for Thanksgiving.

Q. Didn't have a turkey then like we do now.

A. No no, I don't remember, when I was a kid at home, I don't remember the folks ever having a turkey.

Q. What about geese?

A. Yes, we had a goose occasionally and we had maybe a duck. And a lot of times, that was more often at Christmas than it was at Thanksgiving. We raised both geese and ducks. But I draw the line there. When my wife and I was married, I said, "Now, you can raise anything but geese and ducks and you can't have geese nor ducks."

Q. Why was that?

A. Oh, I didn't like the dirty things around the place. Oh, they're awful messy around the place, and I didn't want them. (laughter) Anything but geese or ducks.

Q. You never raised sheep?

A. Not at home, but after I was married then, why, I had sheep mostly a good part of the time. I like sheep and I had sheep up until I quit the farm. Yes, I had a few sheep all the time.

Q. Are you bothered with dogs then?

A. Yes, I've had dogs get into them. I've killed dogs and I've had sheep killed by dogs, (laughs) so it all goes together when you've got sheep. (laughter) Had neighbors to get mad at me for killing their dog, but then when they was in the sheep, I couldn't help but do it.

Q. You've got to have good fences. Or do you bring them in at night?

A. I always had my sheep around the buildings at night, but even at that now, why, dogs would still get in them occasionally. Not too often, not as often as if they were away from home or like that. But I always kept my sheep around. I like sheep for two purposes that way: I just like to raise sheep, I always liked them; and then they were just an awful good

trimmer and it kept your fence rows and around the place trimmed down to where I didn't have time, I didn't think, to do it by hand, don't you see. It kept my fence rows and things like that around the place in much better shape, I think, than if I didn't have sheep. I just like them for that purpose, too.

Q. So after you moved over to that place, you had two boys then, right?

A. I had three boys, you see, when we moved over to that last place there. Frank is about six years younger than the other two boys. Now, my two older boys, Clarence and Ralph here, now, they're pretty close together; they're only about seventeen months apart. So they grew up pretty nearly as one, see. And Frank, then, he come along about six years later.

Q. Seventeen months apart, that must have been rough for your wife.

A. It was, it was real hard on her. And I've looked back over the times . . . Well, you can remember, she wasn't much bigger than your aunt Amy.

Q. Yes, she was a little bitty tiny thing.

A. Yes, and with the amount of work that she done and things of that nature, I don't know how the woman kept it up. Looking back over history now, I don't know how she did it. She did it without a complaint.

Q. She always kept a really nice house, too, didn't she?

A. Yes, she kept a nice place.

Q. I always remember that. Everybody always talked about her house, Mrs. Keith's house. I think she kept the nicest house in the neighborhood.

A. Well, I don't know about that, but she kept a nice house. And she was a good cook; she provided good eats and stuff of that kind. She was a mighty good helpmate.

Q. Did the boys help you on the farm then when they got older?

A. All three of the boys stayed with me on the farm until they were 21. They helped me until they were 21 years old, they all helped me. Well, during the Depression, now Clarence and Ralph were just beginning to get to the stage during the Depression there, you know, they was beginning to want to go here and go there, you know, which naturally would come into children at that age, you know. Things were so tight and money was so scarce it was awful hard to provide.

See, we was rationed on gas, and we had an old car at that time, an old 1935 Ford, and about the only time that I used the car would be to come to town about once a week for supplies, for eating supplies. And then the rest of the rationing of the car, the boys had that. For what little running around they got to do, they used up the rest of the gasoline ration in that form. That wasn't as much as they would have liked it. Dad was a pretty mean fellow at that time in there, you know, and all. But then, you know, after a few years of that, why, Dad got smart awful fast! (laughter) He wasn't near as bad a dad as they thought he was for a while, you know. You've been through

it, you know how it feels.

Q. Did they go through school then?

A. Frank, the youngest boy—you know Frank, don't you? Well, he started at the Ware Grove [School] when he was old enough, see. The year that we moved up here, he was six years old. He started to school in the fall after we moved up here in the spring. And of course, then they went to high school from out there, you know. But see, there was a separation there. Clarence and Ralph grew up, you might say, just together there, and then Frank was a little later on, you know, and he was about six years younger than they were.

No, at one time after we moved back over there, I had out quite an acreage of wheat there. I was trying to see if I couldn't get back on my feet. I had 150 acres of wheat sowed that year, and one day or two days out there, there was 42 [people] at dinner at our house.

Q. Forty-two? What were they doing?

A. Working.

Q. Doing what?

A. I had the threshing machine running, and I had a binder cutting oats, and shockers shocking oats behind the binder, and I had a combine going. I didn't get my wheat all cut with the binder, and I had a combine going. And there was 42 two days at dinner.

Q. And she cooked for them?

A. She cooked that with one helper, one helper. I wanted to get more help for her, she didn't want no help. That was all the help she wanted.

Q. For 42 people? Good Lord, what did she cook?

A. I can't tell you that now. I was too busy out on the other end, I don't know. And I don't know how she stood up under it.

Q. I can't imagine how you'd cook for 42 people. Because they cooked big meals then, didn't they?

A. Yes, big hearty eaters.

END OF TAPE