# PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape recorded interview conducted by Miss Marjorie Taylor for the Oral History Office on May 2, 1973.

George R. Cline, born October 12, 1882, had passed his 90th birthday at the time of this interview at his home in Chandlerville, Illinois on May 2, 1973. He died a few weeks after reaching the age of 91 in December 1973.

A native of Cass County where he spent his entire life, he was one of seven children of Telford Cline who had come to Illinois from South Carolina and Mary Edwards Cline whose father had been an immigrant from England. Because George Cline grew up on a farm and attended rural schools, agriculture was a most important interest throughout his long life.

His wife, Pearl Garner, was a former schoolteacher and descended from the Reverend James Garner, a Methodist circuit rider who had moved to Cass County, Illinois in 1830.

In addition to his success in farming, Mr. Cline also made contributions to the political and social life of Cass County. As a township supervisor during the Depression, he was responsible not only for the welfare programs in his township but committee assignments of the county board. Later he was in charge of the storage bins which were erected by the federal government as a part of the A.S.C. program. He also served as school director and as a member of the local cemetery board. He worked as a clerk in elections for 70 years which is probably the record for Cass County if not the state. Active in Farm Bureau, Mr. Cline served as manager of that organization's baseball team.

Mr. and Mrs. Cline had no children of their own but maintained a close relationship with their nieces and nephews. George Cline contributed much to Cass County.

Readers of the 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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GEORGE CLINE
May 2, 1973
Chandlerville, Illinois
Marjorie Taylor, Interviewer

Q. Begin by giving your name, your birthday and place of birth.

A. I am George R. Cline. I was born October 12, 1882 on a farm east of Philadelphia in Philadelphia Township, Cass County, Illinois.

Q. I wish you'd begin telling about your earliest experience in public service.

A. Well, I was born a Democrat. My birthday being the 12th of October, the election was in November and I clerked my first election when I was 21 years old. I'm probably the oldest judge or clerk of elections in Cass County. I've served off and on and nearly continuously and I'm now 90. I served last fall and this spring at the township election.

Q. I think that might be a record for the state, even.

A. That's what Bill Neff said.

Q. What responsibilities did you take next?

A. Oh, precinct committeeman. Well, I started in early life as a precinct committeeman and carried that along. I changed locations into another township. I still followed the same old story and they put me on a wonderful job that I served about twenty-five years, as school director.

Q. Where was that?

A. At Oregon school in the east end of the county. In 1936, when the Depression was bad, we had an older supervisor. The relief was turned over to the supervisor to take charge of, he resigned and asked if I'd take his place. And I was appointed in 1936.

Q. Which township was that?

A. Panther Creek Township. I served there until 1949. Then I had work that really pertained to agriculture. When your father [John H. Taylor, Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) Office] came over and said they were having some trouble and wanted some help. They wanted me to help them about a week or such a matter and I told them I would. They started to build those bins for the county, particularly for the corn during the Depression. The Depression was about over, but they still had to take care of the corn.

Well, before that, Seth McClintick wanted to know if I'd help him start the bins. I said, "I don't know anything about bins." "Well," he says, "you can read a blueprint." I said, "Yes, I can read a blueprint but

I never used steel. It was always wood." He said, "Well, will you stay and help us start?" And I said, "Yes, I will."

So I thought I had things pretty well under hand and I told my wife I was bringing my tools home that night. Well, your father and Bill Stiltz and Ewall Gerdes met me at the gate at Philadelphia where I was working, said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm going to Ashland to help the boys, give them a lift. They're stuck up there. It's not my job but I'm going up because I'm about ready to quit anyway." They said, "You just think you are." And I said, "What's the matter?" "Well," they said, "we've got to have a county bin supervisor." "Well," I said, "I don't want a steady job." They said, "You can work it the way you want to." "Well," I said, "I'll study on it until I get back from Ashland."

They went with me to Ashland and got the boys started, came back and I said, "Well, I'll see my doctor tonight and if he says it won't hurt me, I'll try it for six weeks." I stayed eight years.

Q. What were the dates on that?

A. Dates? From 1949. . . well, eight years from 1949. I went in August, 1949 and eight years ending in November, the 6th.

Q. That was quite a few bins to watch over, wasn't it?

A. Well, I built all of them. We built all the bins. I'm the architect and I didn't know anything about it, I told them; but they was very nice to me, very nice. They never did cross me in anything.

Q. I'm sure they appreciated what you were doing.

A. I know they did. I know they did.

Q. Do you think that this farm program saved agriculture from complete chaos and bankruptcy?

A. If it hadn't been for shutting off the money at the banks, with Roosevelt at the time, there wouldn't have been any farms. Little fellow was going, your folks were going, my folks were going.

Q. It was a bad time.

A. We had land, but we didn't have any money. Money was unknown; we had plenty of everything, food--was plentiful. There was plenty of food everywhere, but at that time we hadn't gotten into this condition where nobody raises food. Everybody raised some food, but when they went to buy anything, they didn't have money to buy it with. At that time I was feeding baby beeves until the Depression come. I give that over the television one time for your father. I was raising baby beeves and I was

doing fine. And when the work stopped, my baby beef price went to pieces. I had to just really quit for a couple of years.

The market got so bad that one day I went to the house after I'd loaded the cattle out for Chicago, I was afraid to go myself. The trucks went out, my brother Ray had some cattle went at the same time, and I went to the house. My wife said, "Well, how much are you going to lose?" I said, "I don't know, but I'll show you in a minute what I've got to have to break even."

Q. Did you break even?

A. I figured it all up and left it laying on the dining room table. I says, "Don't take it off." A big piece of paper. She said, "Well, I'm afraid to take it off." (laughs) They went that day and then, the next day, it was on the market. The next day we got the mail and the money was in there. Would you believe it? I had a profit of $1.81--for six months feeding cattle.

Q. You had fun feeding them and that was it.

A. That's all I done, I had to use the cattle. That was not counting any investment on the money. That was just the feed. The money invested wasn't counted. A dollar and eighty-one cents for working.

Q. Well now, how did your crops like corn and wheat pay at that time?

A. During the Depression, it got as low as 13¢ a bushel, corn did. And I shipped hogs to St. Louis for $2.90 a hundred. And it took 40¢ to pay the commission and yardage and travel. I got 2¢ a half a pound.

Q. Well now, you couldn't come out on that.

A. About six dollars and something apiece. (laughter)

Q. Did the taxes go down at that time?

A. No, they didn't go down, but they wasn't paid. Now, while on the board of supervisors, taxes wasn't paid, and they was delinquent, and scandalous. They finally come back and some of them--we got some tax money back from people that paid their taxes. Well, we didn't distribute it. We paid the fine. We distributed the taxes, but the fines--for the interest on that money, we kept in the general fund. That was what built the wing on the west side of the courthouse. I was chairman of the committee and that was built out of the interest off of taxes.

Now, our good friend--best friend in the world I ever had was R.C. Taylor, and his son Robert, we were very good friends. He grew up kind of under my wing, you know. So he said, "George, I never knew you to do but one

bad thing." I said, "What was that?" He said, "You went along and built that wing on the courthouse with the taxpayers' money, and not a vote." I said, "Robert, I'm awful glad you mentioned that. You haven't got a dime in that. You've paid your taxes. That was all paid by poor folks that couldn't pay their taxes." That's true.

Q. A good way to use up that money.

A. It was used for that.

Q. And it was space that was needed.

A. Sure, it was needed. Need more, they ought to have built one on the other side of the same kind.

Q. When did you become a supervisor?

A. 1936.

Q. What were your duties as supervisor at that time?

A. Well, the duty of a supervisor as far as the county was concerned, you had charge of everything in the poor relief, the roads, and everything in your township. But you was on the board of supervisors , which consisted of thirteen men, eleven men, and they was appointed in committees, on the road and bridge committees and courthouse and jail; each bunch had a duty to do. I've always said they was so generous with me and I didn't know why it was. I was on four committees one year. I didn't know it until I was on and I told them no more of that! Because that wasn't fair to the rest of them, but--it wasn't fair to me either.

Q. How much per day did you get for your services in 1936?

A. $2.50 a day.

Q. Did you get any mileage?

A. You got mileage, yes, you got mileage. Five cents a mile, one way.

Q. Really, just two and a half cents a mile, then.

A. Yes, that's what it was.

Q. How often did the board of supervisors meet?

A. They met as a board every three months. That was their regular meetings, every three months. Of course, the committees had to get together when they had to have materials, things like that. They had to take care of that.

Q. What committees did you serve on?

A. Road and bridge, courthouse and jail, legislative. . . and appointing and elections. I was on most of them at a time. And I was chairman of the finance committee, too, forgot that.

Q. That's an important one! (laughter) How long did this continue when people couldn't pay their taxes?

A. Well, I think it was probably in the early 1940's, they begin to get back on their feet.

Q. Was there much property sold for taxes?

A. No, no that was one thing--everybody stood for not selling any land. Every person, nearly, had overreached with his credit. Nearly everybody, and as soon as the land began to show a little advance, well, I just jot down--the best land sold for around $100, the best land.

Q. How much were eggs a dozen?

A. Eggs? Six cents.

Q. And you'd have those, I guess. And everybody had a garden.

A. Everybody had a garden.

Q. Wasn't there a project--in Beardstown, for example--where people who were on relief could have a garden?

A. Could have a garden. They laid out a piece of land there where they could have a garden, but when they brought the surplus commodities in, they didn't want to raise a garden very bad.

Q. Let's hear about the surplus commodities.

A. Well, everybody was raising the same, just like they did at any time. But it wasn't worth anything, and the government would buy up pork and beef and cheese and eggs and milk. They had potatoes, oranges, lemons, grapefruit--greatest thing you ever saw. I want to tell you a little story on this.

I had a German family lived next to me and they had never known what it was to be poor. That was, their folks had earlier, but they hadn't. They had a nice farm that joined mine and they were the nicest people you ever saw, but I was taking care of relief,and I'd heard that so much. So I was down to the warehouse one day, and I said, "What have you got right nice?" "Oh," he said, "we've got everything." "Well," I said, "I want some potatoes, I want some oranges, and I want some grapefruit."

He said, "All right, just go back here." And we went back and we picked out half a dozen nice potatoes, oh, they was big ones, and we picked out some grapefruit, a half a dozen, and a half a dozen oranges. He said, "Now, George, what are you going to do with that?" I told him I had this family that complained about the poor--spending so much money on them. I'm gonna show them what we're giving them. And I took it over there and give it to them. And they just marveled; they couldn't understand how in the world--they couldn't buy anything like that! And you couldn't. Because the merchants bought cheaper food. That good, nice stuff, there was no market for it.

Q. Who was in charge of the warehouse, do you remember?

A. No, I don't remember.

Q. That was in Beardstown, wasn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. Did people go to the warehouse or would they bring it to Chandlerville?

A. They just distributed to every township and the schools, the school lunch, they distributed to them too, all the time; but every so often, they had a date at some central place and you went there with your baskets and go-carts and wheelbarrows, and some come in good cars.

Q. Did they have to be certified by the supervisor before they were eligible?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What were the requirements for certification?

A. Well, anybody that was--now, in Panther Creek Township, we think it's one of the finest townships in the world, and it is, I'll say that. It's no better than where I lived in the Sangamon Valley but you just couldn't beat it, and I had forty families on relief. A good township, and they'd come, say, "Is there any work I can do?" And I said, "I wouldn't know where to find it. There's work to do, but nobody's got any money to pay you. And they're just not doing any work." And I was always so proud, as soon as work did start, I didn't have a family left, of those forty.

Q. What percentage of the total population was that? How many families in the township?

A. Well, I imagine that was about 25 per cent of them.

Q. That was high, wasn't it?

A. Yes, it was high. It was high.

Q. Besides the food, would you also pay rent for them?

A. I never did pay very much rent. Most of them had homes of their own and then couldn't live!

Q. Did you pay the taxes?

A. No, no we never did pay any taxes. We paid medicine. We saw that they had food and they had fuel and they had a light, if there was electricity. There wasn't too much electricity in them days, in 1936 either. Wasn't out in the country at all and didn't everybody have it in town.

Q. That was prior to REA [Rural Electrification Administration]?

A. Yes, that was prior to REA. Because REA come in our country up there and your land down in the bottom was ahead of it. Yours must have come around in 1936, 1937, along there sometime.

Q. Around 1931, I think.

A. Is it? Well, I knew it was along there sometime, but REA come in after I come to town. I come here in 1944, and it come the next year.

Q. When you lived in the country you never had electricity?

A. No, never had electricity. I was the one that got the electricity through for them but. . .

Q. That's another service you contributed. (laughter) Now, would you give orders to the grocery store, or how was that done?

A. We wrote out an order, and they come, and give it to them. They took it to the grocery store and they presented that order to the groceryman. He took it and at the end of the month, he'd file the ticket with what they'd gotten and got the order back to us. He signed that order and the other people had to sign it, too, when they turned it over to him. Then he signed it and then he sent the ticket with that, explaining what it was, just an ordinary grocery bill, and he filed a claim then for this money, which was sworn to.

Q. Did the township bear the expense of that or did the county, or what was the source of the money, the money that paid the groceryman?

A. That come from the township, if you could take care of it in the township without--didn't have any relief. But when you got to forty, then the state come in and put up a big part of it.

Q. Was there a specific amount of money for each person, or how did you determine the amount?

A. No, they filed an application for relief and they told how many they had in the family, the girls and the boys and their age, and older people if they had some. See, we had the old age pension--was all they had then, didn't have welfare. That's what we went by. They filled that out and we. . .

Q. But there was a top figure you couldn't go over.

A. Oh yes, there was a top figure on rents and food and things like that.

Q. How much for food a month--for a person?

A. I don't remember just what it was, it was very little.

Q. A figure I saw one time for old age pension was nine dollars a month.

A. Well, I think that was higher than what we had to pay. I don't think we had that much.

Q. And they would get surplus commodities in addition to that?

A. They got surplus commodities in addition.

Q. They got flour and cornmeal and things like that with the commodities?

A. Oh yes, yes.

Q. How did you determine eligibility for WPA [Works Progress Administration] employment?

A. Anybody that was able. . . to work was supposed to go on WPA, and when they went on WPA, they got that week's groceries and then they was supposed to earn that on WPA to do it, to take care of them. That's the way that was run. But they got $1.50 a day, you know; they got a lot of money.

Q. $44.50 a month, wasn't it?

A. I believe something like that.

Q. And could they work steadily?

A. Oh no, no,no! That was the trouble. That was the bad part of it. They would--you'd have a--well, when they was putting the water tower up here, they needed a lot of help for a few days and they come down and we put all the WPA we could get on. We thought it was gonna last a little bit. Well, it lasted three or four days. We didn't save a thing because

they was out of food before they got started. They had to have extra food when they was working. (laughter) It was a detriment to us, but it helped them.

Q. Did it discourage the people about taking a job when they knew that they wouldn't get much time?

A. Oh, they fussed among their selves a good deal. The supervisors had a bad time. They would lay out a project--the state would help to get a project laid out. Say they built one out here on the--six or seven miles from Chandlerville, which we had out, nearly out, home and they'd bring some Ashland boys and Newmanville boys in there. Well, these resented it, but when we sent these to Newmanville, that was all right. (laughs) But it was expensive, we had to haul them. That way, you transferred them so far, transported them thataway. You'd have to haul them, have a closed-up truck, no heat in it, with a top on. They'd freeze in there, going to work. Oh, it was a terrible time!

Q. And then, of course, when people don't eat properly, they're sick. Was there lots of sickness?

A. I think I took out all the appendixes and tonsils there was in Panther Creek Township. (laughter)

Q. Well, where did you send them for that?

A. Dr. Zelle at Springfield and Dr. Athey at Beardstown were my two favorite doctors. Now, you could go where you wanted to, but I always kind of coached them along that line.

Q. What would the doctors charge for an appendectomy or a tonsillectomy?

A. I think it was $25 per tonsil and $50 for an appendix.

Q. And how much did the hospital charge a day?

A. Oh, that wasn't bad. I don't remember, it wasn't. . .

Q. Two and a half, maybe?

A. I don't recall just what it was.

Q. Then you had local doctors here then too, didn't you, for bad colds?

A. Yes, we had some of the finest doctors in the world and some of them wanted to live off the relief.

Q. Who were the doctors practicing here at that time?

A. Dr. Boone and Dr. Franklin.

Q. Dr. Eversole wasn't around then?

A. He never practiced any relief. If somebody wanted medicine, he'd give it to them, but I never give him an order for relief. Of course, then we had Doctor. . . oh, there was an old doctor at Ashland.

Q. Dr. Taylor?

A. No. No. Dr. Taylor never--he was out then--he was getting out.

Q. Dr. Lind?

A. Lind! Lind! Doc Lind. And then that doctor that was in Virginia went to Springfield, used to be in the old Mann Hotel down there. I don't recall his name anymore, I forget names.

Q. Dr. Meyer?

A. No, no. He was a young doctor, turned out to be a good doctor, a grand doctor. . . Uh, Lando!

Q. Dr. Lando. Yes.

A. Why didn't you speak up?

Q. I guess he still practices in Springfield, doesn't he?

A. Yes, yes. . . Now, we had some doctors, you go in there and have a toothache, they'd give you a lot of medicine. But Lando and Franklin, they were my tops, and Dr. Athey and Dr. Zelle were the surgeons.

Q. And they, they would go to Springfield or Beardstown?

A. Yes. Oh, we'd have one want to go to Jacksonville sometimes, but that was all right.

Q. They had a choice about where they were going, then?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you have any program for immunization? Did you say that children must go get the smallpox vaccination and things of that kind?

A. No, no.

Q. Just down to the bare necessities.

A. The bare necessities.

Q. What about clothing?

A. If they needed clothing, we got the clothing. Oh, we'd have--now, you take families. . . . I noticed it so much--everybody has a lot of pride and I had a schoolteacher we had here. She come to me one day and said, "I wish we could have just a little better pair of shoes for one of my girls that's gonna graduate." And I said, "You can have them." And she went and got them for her, but everything else was just ordinary.

They had that sewing room in Beardstown, and they had some wonderful dresses--for younger people; and the old ladies, too. They had plenty of them.

Q. And they had a canning place down there, too, didn't they?

A. That was just a failure.

Q. Really? Tell me about that. What went wrong?

A. Well, it just didn't have the food to can one thing, and the next one, they didn't have enough of it to have anybody that would learn it, learn how to handle it.

Q. So that was not satisfactory.

A. It was just a blank. I never did get any of that.

Q. People didn't go in there and just can their own from their own gardens?

A. Oh no, they was big containers. Steam heat, you know.

Q. Was any of that ever sent to the country schools?

A. None of it ever went out, ever I knew of at all. It was just a failure.

Q. What did the Depression do to people and their feelings?

A. Well, I don't know. It looked like they didn't have any feelings, that's the way to tell it.

Q. They were just pushed down so hard?

A. They were just pushed down so hard. It took it out of just a lot of good people. But they come back. There was another thing I always thought so much about. The World War come on right after that, you know. When it come on--of course it was over in 1945--but every boy that ever went out of one of those homes, passed.

Q. He'd been fed properly.

A. He'd been fed, that's what I've always thought.

Q. That's a very interesting point.

A. That's something I've always been proud of.

Q. Was there any effort to educate these people about food?

A. Oh yes. We didn't, but they tried--the state tried to send people in and they'd try to teach them how to cook and things like that. But you can't do it. Cook's a cook or else there isn't.

Q. You mean you're just born a cook?

A. That's right. No, if you're not born a cook, you can learn it. Can't you, Margaret? She wasn't born a cook, neither was Pearl.

Q. Were you the teacher?

A. No, I wasn't the teacher. Pearl's mother was a wonderful cook, but she'd never done it. When we were first married--the first time we moved to the place down there, had everything new and she cooked potatoes and didn't know you had to burn that skillet off before you put potatoes in it. (laughter)

Q. That took care of it, that time.

A. Yes, that took care of it. Potatoes wasn't good, but the skillet was all right.

Q. Then, did people resent the ones that got the free commodities? Do you think the people who were just barely making it on their own--were they resentful?

A. We got the same class of people now we had then. We got what we call kickers on all occasions, but you just let them kick, that's all you could do. They resented it, some of them; some of them thought they ought not to have it. Thought they ought to have it and I'd just slip out one of them blanks, "Sign it." They didn't want to do that, they didn't want to go on relief, but they didn't want the other fellow on either.

Q. We never understand any other person's problems.

A. You don't, you don't. Now, there's one thing I never turned down. I might turn down a lot of things, but I never did turn down medicine because I wasn't a doctor, and I probably turned some of them loose on medicine. I maybe lost some money, but I never hated that part of it because I wasn't to blame for nobody getting sick.

Q. You didn't dare take a chance.

A. I didn't dare take a chance.

Q. About how much would it take to keep those forty families during a month's time? About how much money would be expended for that?

A. Oh, eight or nine hundred dollars, you know, something like that, I think.

Q. A month.

A. A month. That was the great part of it, after you made your tax levy to the limit, they made up the rest of it. But they was so picayunish about it. You had to keep awful good books.

Q. That's what I wondered about. Tell me about your bookkeeping.

A. Well, bookkeeping was no trouble for me. They never audited my books and I always wondered why and after six years, they audited the books. And I was off fifty cents according to what they said. Of course I resented it. I said I was not off. The boy that said I was off was a political clown. He'd got his job politically. But the boy doing the auditing, he said it was washed out like it should be.

I had a family that had to have a pair of shoes, and you know they wasn't paying very much because they sold--got three dollars for the shoes. And I bought them of Charlie Amant and he was good. He never tried to hold us up on anything; he went along as nice as he could. And in the figure, when I had to--showed three dollars on the order and the three dollars was on the claim and I put it in my book, three dollars. The check was made out for three dollars. But in making them two aughts, I left a little dash in there and they read it three dollars and fifty cents and they give Charlie three dollars and fifty cents. Well, my books didn't balance and I went back and I went through and I found it. I went into the bank, I wouldn't say a thing to him about it because he'd been so good, and I give him fifty cents and told them to charge that to an error. That big boss kicked on it, but we made him like it.

Q. Well, I think you more than did your part that time. Now, was it contrary to regulations to allow people to have such things as white shoes?

A. They never asked for them. I don't know.

Q. I heard about a big fracas about that one time, somebody getting white shoes.

A. If a kid was going to graduation and they wanted white shoes, they'd a got them with me. That's the way that would have been.

Q. Did you have an office in town or did they come to your house?

A. Oh, they come to the house there for a long time, but I had the office down here. See, they sold the old Oregon Church out there. The county owned it. They used it for a voting place and then, when we got the township organization, we voted down here. They was gonna sell that church down there and they had a house down here they took for taxes, and I asked them to trade with me and let me have this for the voting place and I would fix this up. And we have got the nicest voting place in the world down there. Kept it up. Haven't we, Margaret? Got a good place.

Q. And you used that for your office, then?

A. As my office.

Q. Did you have regular office hours?

A. No, twice a month. Every two weeks. If they wanted anything, they'd call me and if I had to come in I could, you know.

Q. That's when you still lived in the country?

A. Yes. Yes, that's when I still lived in the country, but I had the office here. I always had an office there. I always carried this stuff with me. I always had it with me. Pearl didn't like for them to come in there, she said. Oh, some of them--oh, I had a little trouble with Dr. Lind once and she didn't like that. Had another one come that was going to have me take care of his father-in-law and he wasn't in the township. I won't tell you about either of them but we settled them.

Q. They wanted to make their own rules?

A. They made their own rules.

Q. Did you ever do anything about repairing roofs if the house would leak or anything like that?

A. No, I never had anything like that to do. I never had an occasion to. If it was necessary, it would have been done, though.

Q. Did you buy school books?

A. No. No, the school law is the directors buy school books.

Q. The directors buy the school books?

A. They have to buy school books. We learned that right off the bat.

Q. Were most people satisfied with what you did?

A. I think so. I never--I don't think I had any enemies when I got through. I've had a lot of them come to me and tell me since then they've got along good and said things like, "I don't know what we'd done."

Q. Did these people come when they first needed help or would they wait until the situation got desperate?

A. Well, I say the people then were just like they are today. Some thought they were going to have to have relief, they'd be right after it before they got ready for it. And then when they signed up for an application it wouldn't come out right. But most of them--I'll tell you, I thought we had just the finest people in the world, most of them. We had a lady right across here, one of my good friends now. Ruth Davis. She was the hardest gal to get along with in the world and I sat her down and we got along in good shape. They just had all kinds of trouble. But what caused all the trouble--now this is only my opinion--[it] started girls [thinking] like Catherine Nelson, the finest woman in the world; Mollie Meade; Mollie McQuire and Jo Crum, they didn't know what it was to want anything. They had never seen hard times. And they come to see these poor people, [that had] lived that way all their lives, their fathers and mothers lived that way and you'd lived that way and I'd lived that way but it wasn't good enough for them. And they overdone the thing. And that's the reason they had to throw it back into the supervisor, somebody that knew. That's what throws back onto us folks.

Q. Oh, it started out with the Relief Office in Beardstown then, didn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. And that went along and that didn't work so they referred it all back to the township.

A. The township. Every township take care of its own.

Q. And you were the caseworker.

A. I was the case worker on that. I was supervisor--took care of it.

Q. Is it still that way?

A. Yes. We don't have no relief now. The reason we don'thave relief is that we have social security. There's no old age pensions anymore, hardly. It's all social security.

Q. Well, old age pensions supplement social security when necessary now, doesn't it?

A. Not old age pension, public welfare.

Q. Old age assistance?

A. Old age assistance.

Q. Well, this was such a terrible blow because it was something we had never faced before in the country. We didn't know what to do.

A. Well, let's pray to God we never face another one.

Q. You sometimes read that people starved during the Depression. Do you think that's really true?

A. No, there's no occasion for it. There was no occasion for that. But we have bad cases. We've got cases that are third and fourth generation--third generation that are still on relief and there's no occasion for it. But we're too easy.

Q. Is it that or are they just not competent people?

A. Well. . . partly that. When one's right smart. . . I guess you're right.

Q. There's some people who just can't do for themselves.

A. That's right. And you know there's people who can't handle money.

Q. Well now, at this time, the relief days, people were never given cash. They were always given orders, am I right?

A. Orders, orders. Yes.

Q. Then how could they buy a postage stamp?

A. Well, I don't know. They didn't have to write as far as we were concerned.

Q. No cash for anything.

A. Nothing.

Q. And if anybody had an automobile, where did that put him?

A. Well, if he had any use for that automobile, all right. If he didn't have, he didn't have it.

Q. Was he expected to sell his car to buy groceries or did you allow him to keep it?

A. I never had trouble with that. Never had any trouble about it.

Now, there's one thing about it. You take some of the people, so many, some of them had a hog or two. Some had an old sow and pigs and some of them had to sell them but I wouldn't do that. I said keep them for meat. Beats setting them afoot. I never made a person sell anything. Now, that's a fact. If they could make it without being helped, they didn't get it, but to make them sell the last thing they had to get food, I wouldn't do it.

Q. How many would you turn down, what percentage?

A. Oh, I don't suppose two percent.

Q. When you once turned them down, did they ever come back?

A. Not many of them ever come back. We just had a different class of people than what we have in the cities, and things thataway.

Q. Well, it was strictly a rural area?

A. Yes, it's strictly rural.

Q. With just part of it from Chandlerville?

A. You're right. It had to be sickness or else they just didn't bother too much, when they could make it. They were just about as proud as we were, see; they didn't like it.

Q. Well, do you think it was handled properly, that the rules and regulations were what they should have been, or should they have been. . .

A. No. That's all right. I don't know how they would have made it any better. I think they done a wonderful job. That's what I think about it.

Q. I was especially interested when you spoke about the health which appeared that they'd had proper food.

A. Yes. They had good food.

Q. What happened if somebody went out and did a day's work? Would you take him off, reduce his food order or what happened then?

A. Be tickled to death if they could get a day's work. They could buy stamps then or whatever they wanted to with it. No, I wouldn't do that. It was little enough when they worked some.

Q. Well, if it would be less than nine dollars a month per person for food.

A. Yes. Yes, it was less than that.

Q. Well, it's quite a comparison from now.

A. Nine dollars won't buy much, will it? Still, I hear them talk about a man and his wife can't live on two hundred dollars a week. (laughs)

Q. Well, at first--this Depression time--there wasn't much possibility of any luxury.

A. There wasn't any luxuries. That's right.

Q. No bottles of Coke.

A. No. Never saw that like it is now. That's in the grocery list now. The only thing we had to watch was cigarettes. They would try to put cigarettes on once in a while. Maybe a merchant would do it. He'd be nice about it and we'd catch up with it.

Q. What would you do if you got a bill for cigarettes?

A. I just didn't pay it.

Q. Then the grocery man had to take the brunt of it himself?

A. Yes, he had to take it himself. They'd probably take it out of the next order--go as beans. (laughter)

Q. Called a can of peas?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, in general, then, you feel this was a very satisfactory way to handle a bad situation.

A. I don't know how they could have improved on it because it was undoubtably a bad situation. Because I'll tell you, it was harder for me to keep my farm, pay the taxes and the upkeep, than it was to pay for it when I bought it. That's how bad it was.

Q. And of course you were paying your taxes which helped feed the others, shared with the others.

A. Yes, sure. Sure.

Q. How long was the farming so bad?

A. Well, they had about four or five years of it that was bad.

Q. What dates would you give on that?

A. I'd say from. . . 1933 to 1938. Because the first year they built the bins was in 1937. Corn wasn't worth anything. They'd go them a loan on somebody, on the corn, you know, and that's gotten them by.

Q. How much did they loan? What was the loan per bushel at that time?

A. Oh, it wasn't much because corn wasn't worth much. (laughts)

Q. Thirty-five or forty cents, maybe?

A. I'd imagine that would be the limit. I don't recall just what it was.

Q. And then the farmers could have resources. They could hire labor?

A. Yes, they could hire some help, then.

Q. Is that what they did or did the labor go out and try to find factory jobs?

A. Well, there wasn't--there wasn't any factory jobs. I was in Chicago in 1932, 1933, 1934 and everything was boarded up. About 1935, they begin to loosen up a little bit. Them people fed--they'd eat--my baby beeves wasn't eating anything. (pause) That was a terrible time.

Q. Was there much stealing?

A. Around in our territory not, but there was in a lot of places. Larger places, but it didn't happen here.

Q. Would they steal food or would they steal other things that they could sell?

A. Well, steal a hog or chickens or something like they could sell.

Q. Of course, they could kill a chicken.

A. In Chandlerville, we had some boys that got down to the Peanut farm.

Q. For stealing food?

A. Stealing chickens.

Q. Did you help do that?

A. No, I didn't have nothing to do with that. I never had any of it. It was over on this side. No, I never had any trouble about stealing.

Q. Were these relief families who would steal or someone who was just too proud to get on relief?

A. Somebody who didn't want to work. Not on relief, it wasn't a relief person who stole. He's out if he does, you know.

Q. If anyone was convicted, then, they were not eligible?

A. He wasn't eligible for anything.

Q. Indefinitely or for a limited period of time?

A. Well, never in it when we got back. They general landed out at Vandalia and the time they got away from there, they got back on something else.

Q. Did people who wanted men to work for them ever come to you to recommend somebody?

A. I never had a man ever come to me that wanted any help because he didn't have any money to buy it with. Why, I had a nephew. You know him, Lois' brother, Virgil down here and he come over, says, "Uncle George, it's Christmas and I ain't got any money. You got any work to do?" "Well," I says, "yes, I've got plenty of work to do but I'm adoing it." "Well," he said, "I'd just like to have a couple of dollars." Well, I said, "I'll tell you what to do. You come over and help me on Saturdays for a few days and I'll give you a couple of dollars." And I said, "I wouldn't give you over fifty cents a day because that's the going wage." He said, "That'll just tickle me to death," and he worked four Saturdays.

END OF SIDE ONE

Q. Then you can start talking about when you first began to farm.

A. I don't know where to start. What do you want to know?

Q. Well, what chores did you do as a boy on the farm?

A. Well, I've had chores ever since I started to school. I walked a mile and a quarter to school. We always had wood to carry in. You always saw that wood box was full all the time and--that was your fuel. We finally burned coal in the heating stove and then that was the end. You had pigs to feed and you had feed to carry around, you had to see about the chickens, pick up the eggs and things thataway. That was my job as a boy at home.

Q. You don't remember when you started.

A. No, I don't. I've always done it ever since I can remember. And I was the oldest of the family and I always helped my mother wash dishes and things thataway because that was my job, too.

Q. Did she use homemade soap?

A. Yes, ma'am, and I've helped her make many a kettle of that.

Q. Tell us about that. I want to know how you made it.

A. Well, as I remember it, we saved all the--we had plenty of lard, we killed plenty of hogs, had plenty of lard and you'd sell lard. When you'd come back, them jars would be just taken out of there and left to clean up. We'd clean all that lard and save all that and all your meat grease and that was all saved and put in a can until you got maybe two five-gallon cans of it. Then get your water, put some water in the kettle and build a good fire under it, put your grease in. When it got all warm, you put in the lye and you cooked it. I don't know how long because I didn't do that part. I helped do the firing. Cooked it down to a certain place. You cut that out in big squares. See, about half the size of one of them and that's what our bar of soap would be.

Q. Would you cook it in an iron kettle?

A. Iron kettle outside, always.

Q. Outside?

A. Yes.

Q. How many times a year would you make soap?

A. It would just depend on how much grease you had to use. Everything was used up.

Q. Where did you get the lye?

A. Oh, we'd buy it at the grocery store. They had it in grocery stores in them days. Lewis Lye. Never saw any other kind.

Q. Was that all the soap you had?

A. Outside of maybe a bar of toilet soap or tar soap.

Q. Oh, you'd have tar soap to wash yourself?

A. And the toilet soap. We always had something like that. It was very sparingly used, too.

Q. (laughs) How much would it cost a bar? Would you have any idea?

A. I don't have any idea. Ten cents was the limit on any of that stuff then.

Q. Well, what else did you help your mother do? Did you help with the washing?

A? No, I never washed any.

Q. How did she wash?

A. She had a machine.

Q. Oh, she did?

A. I've helped her turn that thing, yes. The one with the big handle over on top.

Q. Well, that was pretty early for that, wasn't it?

A. Well, she always had a machine ever since I can remember.

Q. She was a progressive homemaker?

A. Well, she had enough kids to need the washing machine.

Q. When did you start to work in the field?

A. When I was eleven years old.

Q. What kind of a chore was that?

A. Well, the first thing I ever done in the field was to drive a stalk cutter. They cut stalks and they were the roughest thing anybody ever rode. That would kill a man, but a boy could take it.

Q. How many horses pulled that thing?

A. Two. Two horses. Then I plowed with a two-horse plow, twelve-inch plow. My nephew, the one that's on the farm, was down here a while back amowing the yard, a couple of years ago, and, of course, he was used to doing things a little bigger, mowing. Lisa mows the yard up there. He never mows up there. He comes down here, he says, "This is awful slow mowing." I said, "How would you like to start on forty acres with a twelve-inch mower?" Well, he said, "You'd never get done." I said, "I plowed forty acres with a twelve-inch plow." That's what we used to do.

Q. How much could you plow in a day?

A. Well, if you plowed three acres, you done an awful big day's work. But about two and a half was ordinary work for a two-horse plow.

Q. Would you change horses during the day?

A. No. No. When you were walking a plow, you didn't need to change horses. You were walking after that plow.

Q. Oh, you didn't ride?

A. No. I never rode until I was twenty-one years old, on a plow.

Q. You mean it was a walking plow?

A. Yes. Twelve-inch, two-horse walking plow. Two horses hitched to it and you followed it.

Q. Tell me about this. Do you know that old Mr. Black, that Joseph Black? Did he make plows at one time in Philadelphia? Do you know anything about that?

A. No, that's ahead of my time. That was the one that invented the tier for the binder. Yes. No, that was ahead of my time.

Q. I think during the Civil War he did something about a plow.

A. (laughs) No, I wasn't here then.

Q. You hadn't heard the story, then?

A. He was a real mechanic.

Q. Did you ever know him?

A. Yes, I knew him, but he was an old man when I knew him.

Q. I saw an ad in the paper. He had an office in Virginia, do you know where that was?

A. No, I don't.

Q. Said it was a block east of the square. Well, when would you plow, in the spring or the fall?

A. Either one. We had to plow for wheat, you plowed in the fall and you plow in the spring for corn, oats.

Q. How would you sow the wheat?

A. They drilled it with a little two-horse drill.

Q. A two-horse drill?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, how wide was it?

A. Six runners. Six rows, eight-inch rows.

Q. Well, that wasn't very big, was it?

A. No, it wasn't.

Q. What company made the machine?

A. Well, Havana made a drill called Havana grain drill. And then they had another one . . . made up at Canton, I think. I don't remember what it was. But they never got any bigger than an eight--an eight--they had the old flute drill then. Just could plow along, you know. And they only had eight holes in that, eight inches apart. But when I started, I bought a disc drill and it was seven inches apart and it had ten on them. That wasn't helping much.

Q. How much would a drill cost?

A. Well, a drill--that cost about sixty dollars, them times.

Q. Sixty?

A. That's what I think that drill cost.

Q. Did you save your own wheat seed or did you buy seed?

A. Generally, they saved their own seed wheat, cleaned it up good; but every once in a while somebody would get some good wheat and we'd all have a little wheat, you know. R.C. was strong on that. He always bought good wheat.

Q. He did.

A. Yes. He always bought good wheat and I raised it for all the tenants, that was the worst part of it.

Q. (laughs) Now, when you first started to farm for yourself, what was the year on that?

A. Eleventh day of August, 1903.

Q. And did you live down on that farm north of the church, first?

A. Yes.

Q. Farmed there first?

A. Yes.

Q. Then you went back up to. . .

A. The old home place.

Q. When did you go up there?

A. 1908. I sowed the wheat up there the fall of 1907, moved up there in the spring of 1908.

Q. That was an awful big old house, wasn't it?

A. Yes, a big house, but it was a good house. Pearl didn't want to go up there because Aunt Beckie and Aunt Alice, they were kind of particular about that house. I wouldn't tell Bert, he wanted me to go and I wouldn't tell him. One day he said, "Brother Silvest, I want to talk to you." Took me back in the back and he said, "I want to know why I can't have an answer about that place, something in the way." I told him. . . what it was. And I didn't want--him and I could get along but I didn't know if the women would get called out, and that's the way I got it. I'm going to use the word hell here.

Q. That's all right.

A. He said, "Hell fire! That's why they want you up there. I can get along with you down there, but they want Pearl up there." (laughter) When I got home, there was a pair of black horses tied up there, they'd already drove down to see her, before I got home.

Q. Now that's Aunt Beckie and Aunt Alice?

A. Aunt Beckie and Aunt Alice. And boy, they were good to her, no question about that.

Q. And how long did you live down there, then?

A. Eleven years in that place. I lived fifteen years on the bottom.

Q. Oh, you did. All together?

A. Yes, yes. Fifteen years.

Q. Can you remember a little bit about that house, how many rooms were there in it?

A. The big house up there?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes, I could tell you pretty quick. Four, five, six, seven, nine.

Q. Nine rooms?

A. Yes.

Q. Were they big rooms?

A. Yes, all big rooms.

Q. With high ceilings?

A. High ceilings? Yes, they was all high ceilings.

Q. I'm sure I've been in it but I didn't remember.

A. And had two big porches on it.

Q. I remember the porches. Maybe because I've seen pictures of it. Well, tell me some more about the equipment you used. Did you use horses or mules?

A. Horses and mules both.

Q. Did you raise your own?

A. I had to buy to start with. In the latter part, I always had my own horses. Raised them, horses and mules both. I bought a span of mules. The last span of mules I ever bought was . . . 1917. 1917 I bought a span of mules and I kept them until they died. That was my team.

Q. Everybody had his favorite team, didn't he?

A. Oh, yes. Yes.

Q. When did you get your first automobile?

A. (pause) 1916, I think. 1916.

Q. Well, now down there you were at least six miles from an elevator to deliver your grain, or the railroad for your livestock, weren't you?

A. Yes, there's where you delivered six miles but you used horses all the time. A trip every half day was all you could do.

Q. How many bushels of wheat would go into an ordinary box wagon?

A. Fifty bushel. That's what they all aimed to haul--fifty bushel. But Bob Schaad. Bob hauled forty, but you had to go along with him because he'd help you until the very last dump was taken for you.

Q. But forty was all he would handle. Was he always so big? He was a tall man, too.

A. Yes, Bob was always a big man.

Q. And then, what else did you raise for crops to sell? You had corn and wheat and hogs and cattle.

A. Oh, we had some oats. Oats, wheat and corn. Corn, wheat and oats was all we knew anything about.

Q. Well now, what was the demand for oats? Was that for oatmeal? (laughs)

A. No. That was to feed the horses. That was the best horse feed there was, was oats. You always raised oats so you'd have something for the horses.

Q. Well now, was that one of the reasons that we got the Depression, because everybody had tractors and you couldn't sell the corn?

A. No, no, it's not what--that didn't cause it, because they didn't have tractors. That was the Depression. The Depression come in the 1930's and I said to Pearl one day, I said, "This farming is getting to be pretty tough." She said, "Why don't you get a tractor? You can't get nothing out of the horses. I hate to see them hammered like we do." She was a lover of horses. I said, "Whenever I get enough money to buy one." Well, Pearl had some money and she said, "Take my money and buy you a tractor. If I never get it back, I'll have some satisfaction not seeing the horses hurt." And I bought a tractor and a pair of cultivators for the tractor, a two-row outfit, and a plow and a disc-harrow for $1350.

Q. What make was that?

A. Everything was John Deere but the tractor. It was an Oliver. They're top machines today, both of them, and you couldn't buy the plow for--you buy a plow it costs more than all of it cost then.

Q. Who did you buy it from? Who was the dealer?

A. Philadelphia Elevator. Philadelphia--I got the tractor there and the rest of it was Zorn here in Chandlerville.

Q. And what was the date on that? Do you remember that?

A. 1936.

Q. 1936? Oh, quite late, then. I thought that tractors came along a little earlier than that.

A. They did but didn't everybody have one.

Q. I see. Well now, how did you get your wheat threshed?

A. Oh, just an ordinary threshing machine.

Q. Now, did somebody come through the country? Was it a professional thresher or how was that handled?

A. Oh, yes. They had their own machines and done custom work. Very seldom you found a farmer that had any. The first farm outfit was your father and Hershal and Allie and them got that machine, they had their own. They got that after I left the bottom. But before that, we depended on Frank King and Bob Harbison and John Stucke. . .before. Jack Theivagt was still threshing when I lived on the bottom, but he quit.

Q. I've heard about him.

A. Yes, he was quite a thresher man.

Q. Well, now, did you ever stack the wheat?

A. Oh, yes, I've stacked a lot of wheat. I was a pretty decent stacker.

Q. Was that a better product when you were finished, than the threshing. . .

A. Yes, it was better product but you couldn't stack all--what we'd do, only time we'd stack would be a wet season and something like that and then we'd say that's going to sprout or something. We'd stack some so we'd be sure of having some good seed. One year we started to stack where--Bert had some good seed and Hassman--John Eilers, you remember John.

Q. Which John? Kansas John?

A. Kansas John. Worked for me. He come up there and there's where I got acquainted with him. He was working for Hassman and come up and helped me stack and he was just the grandest help in the world.

Q. His wife died just recently, didn't she?

A. Just recently, yes.

Q. Well now, could you stack wheat while it was wet or did you have to. . .

A. Yes, you didn't have to have it dry. That was the nice part of it.

Q. Now, when you stacked wheat, how was that? You turned the heads in?

A. In, yes.

Q. And how long would it be before you could thresh it after it had been stacked?

A. Oh, it had to go through a sweat. It got wet.

Q. Oh, it did.

A. It sweat and got wet and then dried out just as pretty as you ever saw.

Q. How long would that take?

A. Oh, it's take anyhow six weeks. Yes. Well, you threshed--if you stacked it, you threshed it in the fall after you got done. After everything else was done. Maybe after you'd sowed--just in time to get the seed, what was seed, for wheat.

Q. There wasn't a big opportunity to buy grain from--like these seed corn people, Van Horn and those people--there were no companies like that then?

A. No, I picked my own seed on the first years and then Ainsworth started in Mason City and we all bought seed, most of us down there, bought seed from them for several years.

Q. Were they related to Vic?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. Well now, was that just corn seed, or did you buy oats and wheat seed there, too?

A. Well, no. I don't know where they'd get a start of it. Now, Lannes Fielden went through his field down here, in his winter flat wheat, and he just picked out a bunch of heads, all them nice ones, and he had four or five bushel of seed picked out thataway. He furnished that seed there in the bottom one time for almost everybody, the second year. The first year he put about five acres of it out, had seeds, and then next year everybody had seed.

Q. Is that Nellie Kirchner's father?

A. Yes.

Q. Well then, how many horses would the average farm have on it at that time?

A. Well, when I was running both farms, I had twenty-seven.

Q. Oh, dear. (laughter) And they all had names?

A. Oh, yes. All of them had names, Now, there was some young horses in that bunch that you didn't work.

Q. Did you keep them in the barn or did they run outside?

A. No, they all went in the barn. Them work horses all had to be... stalled--everyone had his stall. His harness hanging up behind him. That collar made to fit him and that's the collar that went on him.

Q. Well now, who made the collar?

A. I don't know who made them but they bought them of a harness maker. Had harness shops, you know, where this harness was all made. John Cherry owned one for years here. Old Mr. Neal used to have a place down there where Mrs. Dick Kern lives and that's where he lived. That's the Neal home.

Q. Did you measure the horse to have the collar fit or how was that done?

A. Yes, that's what they called a nineteen inch collar, twenty inch collar.

Q. Oh, I never heard about that.

A. Yes, that's what they went by, the measurement. I've got one in there yet.

Q. Well now, how did you take care of the harness?

A. Well, that was very easy. If you took care of them, you hung them up good and took care of them and every year you'd give them a coat of oil.

Q. What kind of oil?

A. What we called Neat's foot oil. It's made out of joints and hooves of cattle, that was, and it turned out to be one of the good oils and that's what you used every time. It got so later that harness shops--you'd take a set of harness in there and they'd repair them all over and then they'd oil them and you'd come out, you had a set like new. Well, for years, I never done that; I always fixed my own harness.

Q. Would that oil be heated?

A. It was put on warm.

Q. Just slightly warm?

A. What they done they called dipping it. They would have a big vat and they put water in there. Get that water warm and the oil on top of it would be warm just so it wouldn't burn, you know. They'd drop these harness down in there and that hot oil. When it went in the water, water would go in. That hot oil will boil the water out and it opens the pores someway or another, I don't know how, but it's better.

Q. Then the harness would last longer?

A. Last longer, yes.

Q. Well, now, you had work horses and then did you have special horses to ride and to drive to the buggies, perhaps?

A. Yes, I had a horse that --didn't do anything else but ride her. That was all, but Pearl always had a horse to drive that was never worked. That horse never was worked, neither one of them.

Q. Weren't they usually smaller horses?

A. Yes, they were smaller horses.

Q. What kind of vehicle did you ride in when you'd go to town?

A. Well, we had a buggy or. . . I had the nicest rigs around me. I had a roller bearing runabout, rubber tired. Pearl had rubber mounted harness. That was Pearl's outfit I got her. That was a trimmer. (laughter)

Q. What ever happened to it?

A. Well, it just finally wore out. But they went by the wayside when they got the car, that's the way that was. Pearl used it for a year, but then quit.

Q. Women knew how to harness and unharness horses then, too, didn't they?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. I believe I can hitch one up yet.

A. Pearl could carry a horse better than anybody I ever saw. She'd clean one up.

Q. Well now, a buggy would have a top, wouldn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. A folding top?

A. Yes.

Q. Not always?

A. No, they had different buggies. Now, my runabout had no top on it, at all. It was just open rig. Then they had what they called a storm wagon, the top was solid on them.

Q. I remember those. Mail carriers used those for years.

A. Yes, your dad had one, didn't he?

Q. I think so.

A. That's what I was thinking.

Q. And then they had spring wagons?

A. Yes, everybody had one of them.

Q. Now what were they used for?

A. To go to town. Like a pickup truck is used now. Same thing. It ain't big enough to take a wagon--if was too big for a buggy and not big enough for a wagon, you'd use a spring wagon.

Q. And they usually had two horses hitched to them?

A. Yes, and that's what you generally took to town when you wanted to buy your groceries. You didn't go to town everyday like you do now. You brought things home in bunches.

Q. So you took the spring wagon?

A. The spring wagon went then.

Q. How much sugar would you buy at a time?

A. Well, I always bought a barrel of sugar every year.

Q. A barrel! Now, how many pounds is that?

A. Well... . three hundred and something.

Q. Oh. Then how about flour?

A. I always took that to the mill, got it at the mill.

Q. You traded wheat for flour.

A. Wheat for flour.

Q. Well now, what kind of deal did they give you on that? Pound for pound?

A. No. . . very near it. They give you the flour and they took the brans and the midlings. That's the way to tell it. You got whatever flour there was in it.

Q. How often would you do that?

A. You done that every year when you raised your wheat.

Q. Times have changed. (laughs)

A. Has changed. When John Eiler was working for me during World War II, I had to get me flour out of the mill. I had that big house and one room upstairs, I had a world of flour in it. And I was up at John's working one day and they'd been buying a little of everything. You know, you couldn't buy flour because everything was fixed and he said, "I don't know what I'd give for a mess of biscuits made out of good flour." So after dinner I says to the missus, I says, "I'm coming back tomorrow. Now you get ready to bake John some biscuits for dinner because I'm going to bring you a sack of flour. Don't tell him." And he come in, she had--she was a good cook--and she had a big mess of biscuits there, a big pan full of them. Now he looked at them, he says, "Where in the hell did they come from?" (laughter)

Q. That was World War I, wasn't it?

A. Yes. Two, two.

Q. World War II?

A. Yes. No, that was World War I. World War I, yes, one. Yes, that was World War I. Yes, that was inthe twenties, in nineteen-eighteen, sixteen, seventeen, World War I.

Q. Well, he was a big man. He probably could have eaten a lot of biscuits.

A. He was a real worker. He was a good man.

Q. Well now, how did you store your potatoes?

A. Buried them out in the garden somewhere.

Q. Buried them?

A. Dug a hole in there and put some straw in or hay. We generally used timothy hay. Put that down in the bottom and put your potatoes in there and put a few apples in on top of them, next spring you'd dig them out--a few turnips--and you'd have everything you wanted.

Q. You didn't never put them in a barrel, then?

A. No, I put cabbage that way but not potatoes. Potatoes would freeze if you put them in the ground in a barrel.

Q. Oh, they would?

A. Yes, you'd have to cover them up good.

Q. It doesn't hurt cabbage to freeze, then?

A. No. No, that's all right.

Q. And then you had your own chickens and eggs and you killed a hog now and then?

A. Yes, every little while.

Q. How did you make your sausage?

A. Oh, that's easy.

Q. Well, tell me about it.

A. Well, when you trimmed your meat--you made your hams and your bacons and your shoulders and cut them down--you had a lot of lean meat. We never used, talk about whole-hog sausage, we didn't have that. We put the fat into lard and put the lean into sausage. We had good sausage. All you done was to take--well, I got my dad's old recipe in there someplace yet, how to make that sausage. For a two hundred fifty pound hog, it took so much of salt and so much salt-peter and so much pepper and sage. I think it's six, three and one is what I believe it was, to a hog. It made good sausage. Well, I'd make sausage for all them folks down there, when I lived there.

Q. Then did you fry it down?

A. Yes, fried down many a time. I done that. I done most of that.

Q. Well, how did you do that?

A. Well, you take a--if I had a nice kettle outside, I'd take about forty sausage and put in that kettle and have plenty of lard in it and

take them out when they get down but you don't do that very often because maybe don't have enough to. . . you can take a couple of big pans and put them in the oven and put them in there and put some lard in them and soon cook them. You've done that, haven't you?

Q. They're almost like deep fat frying?

A. They are. They're deep fat fried, that's what they are.

Q. And they kept?

A. Yes, sure they kept.

Q. I don't believe anybody does that anymore.

A. No, no, no, no, no.

Q. And then did you ever can and put things in stone jars or did you always use glass jars all the time?

A. I never used any stone jars, myself, but at home we always had stone jars. I've seen mangled peppers--fixed up peppers, a five-gallon jar of them. I've seen kraut, a thirty gallon barrel of it. I've seen sorghum, fifteen gallons in the cellar.

Q. Did you raise sorghum on the farm?

A. Yes, they had it out there at home, we did at home, A bunch of kids could all strip it, you know, and get along fine. And apples, you'd have apples and potatoes until you couldn't rest. You never thought about after supper wanting to go down and getting [all] kind of apples to eat.

Q. Did you have to spray for the bugs?

A. No, we didn't have to too much them days.

Q. Well, actually what you were, were a self-sufficient unit?

A. Oh, we just was all that way. We was all that way. Now, I remember Eb Watkins. Do you remember Eb?

Q. No.

A. No, but your father did. He knew Eb. Eb's dead now but he worked for me several years. Eb worked for old Uncle Billy Watkins. He was a distant relative of Eb's and he had him out help picking apples one day. So they decided they'd --Uncle Billy said, "We'll put these over here where we can eat them." He'd put them that had a mark in them,

he'd put them on one side and the good solid ones on the other one. And he said--Uncle Billy would never eat a good apple during the whole year. He'd always eat some of the spoiled. . . (laughter)

Q. What did they do with the good ones, then?

A. They held them for company. (laughter)

Q. When he used stone jars, how were they sealed?

A. Wasn't sealed.

Q. What would be? Just kraut and things like that in stone jars, then?

A. In the stone jars. They put the kraut in the stone jars, just put a lid on it and a weight on it.

Q. You put lard over meat, then, too.

A. Well, yes, the meat you put lard over.

Q. Well now, such things as preserves, could they be kept in a stone jar?

A. Yes, I've seen five gallon of peach preserves. Put in a big jar that way.

Q. Well, what did you do, just go down and take a little bit as you needed it?

A. Take it as you needed it. I don't know how they kept it but you couldn't now, I don't believe. But you could them days.

Q. Well, maybe we didn't have as many insects around, I don't know.

A. Oh, no, no, no, no. We couldn't get along without insecticides now. I don't believe we could. I don't believe we'd get a stand of corn if we didn't use something with it.

Q. You're not hung up on ecology like some of these people are then?

A. Hope not.

Q. Now, tell me about the roads. What were the roads like in the winter?

A. They wasn't any. (pause) I've seen streets in Virginia, on the south side, where you didn't dare go along there with a wagon. They'd go into town there with the hind wheels of a wagon with a tongue in it and a box on to take their groceries. I've seen that on the south side of the square in Virginia.

Q. Well, what were the country roads like?

A. Well, we had a spring wagon, always had a spring wagon, but we couldn't use an ordinary double-tree on that spring wagon. We'd have to take a pair of plow double-trees, heavy double-trees, in order to get it through. You couldn't get to Chandlerville thataway or Virginia either one.

Q. Why, it'd be an all-day job to go to town to buy groceries, then, wasn't it?

A. I've pulled four horses. I used to drive--well, even back in 1903--the spring of 1903 I worked for Harry Dodds and it was a wet year and he had to tile out his basement. Got Burney Flannigan over there and Burney and I dug the ditch but we had to go in to the--the tile factory was out there where the filling station is now. You know where it used to be, you heard it if you never still remember it; but we went in there after tile and we took four horses. Harry said, "We got to take four horses, but I guess we can both drive them." I said, "Yeah, I think we can." We hitched them up and I put my lines together and I'd used--I'd put _____ with four horses all my life. So I started out and he said, "You drive four horses?" "Yes." He said, "I'm damn glad of it. If Bob Hall would see us both driving, he'd give us the devil." (laughter) Ole Bob was quite a horseman, you know.

Q. Well now, how did you drive four horses? How do you handle those extra reins, lines?

A. Well, you just tie the two lines on this side together, then you got two lines. You've just got the four lines. You can manipulate them. They'd go all right.

Q. Who ran the tile factory?

A. Charlie Paul.

Q. Did they make bricks there too, or just tile?

A. Yes, they made bricks and tile both, then. But that was bout the last bunch of brick they ever made, was that year. Because Ericson started the next year, I think, out there where--east end of town. They were ready to quit anyway. They didn't have anyplace to get the dirt was the trouble, you see.

Q. Now, that's the lake now, isn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. And where did Mr. Ericson get his dirt?

A. Well, he dug right in where he dug there. Right across the C.P. and St. L. Railroad out on Gridley Road. They dug a lot of dirt out there, didn't they?

Q. Yes. I think Frank Lyons fired it the last time they made any brick out there.

A. That right?

Q. Wasn't that pretty good clay?

A. Oh yes. They made good brick. Yes, that was good brick.

Q. In the feedlots when you were feeding cattle then, how did you water your livestock? Where did you get the water?

A. Well, it just depended. A lot of people had different ways. Now, when I fed down there at home, at the lower place, down when I was on the bottom, fed there, I fed water piped out of a spring, is where they got their water. But up home here, we pumped all the water up here.

Q. Did you have an engine to pump it or pump it by hand?

A. Oh, I never pumped any by hand up here. We started out by hand, yes. Had a windmill down at the lower place when I was down there and went up the other place and didn't have any. You had to pump it by hand and I put a gasoline engine in there and pumped that then.

Q. The windmill was a tremendous thing, wasn't it?

A. Yes, it was.

Q. In the beginning of agriculture.

A. It was. It was the most wonderful thing in the world. Well, I put one up there when I went up there and they used it for several years until--well, it was there--it went bad when John, after John went up there. John said, "What are we going to do with that windmill?" We got the electricity in then and I said, "We ain't going back to windmill. We'll fix it." I got Royal out and wired her in there and pump's there. It's still there. And we got another well, of course; it's got a submergible pump. It pumps water everywhere, fields and all.

Q. What would you say was the greatest labor-saving device? The thing that made the biggest improvement in agriculture?

A. (pause) That'd have to go back a long ways.

Q. Well, in your time.

A. Well, I believe the greatest improvement is the corn picker and the combine.

Q. You do?

A. Yes. After you've got your crop raised, you can save it so much quicker. And that was a terrible thing to have to get out and shuck corn in the wintertime.

Q. Was that the hardest job you did?

A. Well, I just wouldn't do it. I shucked four years after I started to farm but I never did shuck any more corn. I just couldn't take it.

Q. How much did you pay a bushel to get it shucked?

A. Oh, you could shuck it for a dollar a load. I've paid everything from ten cents a bushel to a dollar a load.

Q. Who were some of the people who shucked for you, do you remember?

A. Oh, goodness, no.

Q. They just came around in the fall?

A. Well, one year down there, I had four of them shucking. I had Bill Looker, you know Bill out there. He was just a boy. And I had Arthur Edwards, he was there the same fall, and I had a boy by the name of Earl Cooper, and Fred Fielden. Had four of them shucking that fall. They were all good pickers.

Q. How much did they get in a day?

A. They'd get, maybe, seventy-five bushel a day. Some of them could shuck eighty but no more.

Q. And they used a--what's this you buy--shucking peg, is that the word?

A. Yes.

Q. Did all of them use that or just some of them?

A. All of them. They all had to use something.

Q. Well now, how did they wear this? Did they put this thing on or how did they wear this corn picker?

A. It went on like this. See that little skirt that's in the center fits right in your hand right there. And here's where you pick it.

Q. And you used that to break the shucks?

A. Yes. Now, this was a hook. This is a left-handed hook, too, and you just grabbed it in the shuck and pull it. This one worked the same way like that other one. Now, there's one of the earliest shucking pegs that was made, right there.

Q. Oh, that's a hand made one, maybe.

A. No, that ain't. That's the earliest shucking peg made.

Q. And they held it this way?

A. No, no, no. This way.

Q. This way?

A. This way.

Q. Oh. Just three fingers?

A. Yes.

Q. I don't think they even make those things any more, do they?

A. No, no, they don't make them. Now, I got these too--I got all three of these of Bob Garner when he was in there. I was in there one day and he said, "Make me an offer?" I said, "What'll you take for them?" He said, "I'll take any offer you'll make. I want to get rid of them." Gave him fifty cents. Well, said, "God, yes, you can have all of them for that." He had a drawer full. (laughter)

Q. Did everybody use the pegs or just a few people?

A. They had to use a peg or else use this. No, you can't get in no other way. They had pegs out of everything.

Q. Did the corn ever become diseased like it has in recent times, like those black things on the end of it?

A. Oh, I don't think so. I don't think we had any of that to bother with.

Q. How many bushels to the acre would you get?

A. Oh, if you got fifty bushel, you was doing good. If you got sixty bushel, you had a whopper.

Q. You were rich that fall?

A. Yes, you was.

Q. And how did the wheat turn out?

A. Well, they got thirty bushel, they was doing fine. Twenty-five was more like it.

Q. And oats, thought, yielded better, didn't they?

A. Yielded better. I had some oats down there once made seventy bushel but that was the biggest oats they ever raised around there, that I know of.

Q. Did you keep the oats for your own use or did you sell them?

A. Well, you had to sell some of them if you had a crop like that you wasn't looking for. But general thing, you kept most of it.

Q. Where did you take it, to the elevator?

A. When you sold it?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes, they take it. They'd buy it at the elevator.

Q. You hauled to Chandlerville, usually?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. And then Troy talked about corn shucking, he thought that was such a chore because you had to haul it so far when it was so cold.

A. Well, that was--shucking?

Q. No. Shelling.

A. Shelling. Well, that was. You see, one day--it was along in the wintertime--it thawed out a little and I hitched up some young horses and I hitched them on the road drag and it was sloppy, it was bad. I drove up to Vic's and turned around and drove in there and hit his road and turned around and he said, "That's a pretty good job." He had a drag there but he never thought about hitching onto it, I guess. I said, "I had a notion to hitch up and drag up the road after dinner. See, we'll shell some corn one of these days." He says, "By George, I believe I'll go with you." I said, "All right. We'll take a little drive. We'll just keep going." We drove right in Chandlerville with two drags and down to Billy Abbott's elevator, down where the farmers are, and drug that around there and turned around and come back. They had crossings on all them places, then; a foot, you know. We covered every one of them, six inches deep. _____ didn't like that at all, but

Billy was mayor, he liked it. He thought it was a pretty good job, having that done. We smoothed that street up. That night, begin to get cold and it froze some and the next night it froze harder than hard and we went shelling in zero weather. Your dad and I walked all the way from. . . I don't know, maybe Hershal Wilson's to town that day--one of them days behind our wagons.

Q. Your money was hard to come by?

A. It was hard to get.

Q. Yes, it was. And there'd be so many--I think forty-five or fifty wagons sometimes to a sheller, wouldn't there?

A. Yes, I've had fifty.

Q. Who ran the sheller? Who owned the sheller?

A. Bob Harbison shelled most of the time.

Q. Oh, he did?

A. Yes. He had a sheller and got most of it.

Q. And how much did you pay him a bushel for shelling, do you remember that?

A. I believe it was two cents a bushel.

Q. Did he have a steam engine?

A. Yes.

Q. Who ran his steam engine for him?

A. Arthur King.

Q. That's Dale King's father?

A. No, no. Frank was Dale's father. That's . . .

Q. Edna May's father?

A. Edna May's father. He was one of the marshalls here a long time.

Q. Oh, yes. Now, one of those men ran the corn sheller and the other ran the threshing machine?

A. Yes.

Q. And they always used big steam engines. What did they use for fuel in the steam engines?

A. Coal, coal, coal.

Q. Coal?

A. Yes.

Q. And then you'd have to haul the water?

A. Yes, they'd haul the water. Have to haul water.

Q. Make the steam. What happened to all those old steam engines? Where did they. . .

A. I just thought about that just a day or two ago, "Wonder what's become of all those old steam engines." I just as well had one of them as not.

Q. Somebody said they use them for sawmills.

A. Well, they used to use them on sawmills but they don't use them--they use gasoline on all sawmills now.

Q. Oh, do they?

A. Yes. Steam engine isn't seen--one in a hundred years. Not that long but a good many years.

Q. I remember the whistles on the steam engines.

A. So do I.

Q. Scared me to death. (laughs) How many bushels of corn could they shell in a day?

A. Oh, if you had plenty of help, probably shell five thousand bushel.

Q. Five thousand bushel!

A. Yes.

Q. In a day's time?

A. Day's time.

Q. That was tremendous, wasn't it?

A. It takes fifty wagons, fifty bushel a load.

Q. And everybody, the whole--far around as you could go, then?

A. Everybody, didn't make any difference where.

Q. Who fed all those men?

A. Wherever you was working. Now, if they done like old Mr. Gould done. . . (laughter)

Q. What did he do?

A. Old Mr. Gould--That's Remy Logue's father-in-law--he come down there and helping Remy and he said, "Where do we eat dinner?" "Well," he says, "wherever you're at." Told old man. The old man got to Uncle California Archie's right at noon. He looked, it was noon. He pulled in and eat dinner with him. Now, that's a true story. (laughter)

Q. That's a good one. (laughter) Where did this Mr. Gould live?

A. He lived in Virginia.

Q. Oh, he just came down for the day?

A. Just came down to help Remy. He could drive with a load, you know, I suppose. I think it was wheat he was hauling. (laughter)

Q. Well, did they feed him? I guess they did.

A. Oh, yes, yes, they--got him fed.

Q. They fed him and thought that was part of. . .

A. I guess Orvie isn't doing too good.

Q. Well, they've moved now, you know.

A. Where?

Q. They moved in the little house east of where he was living. He and Carroll and he's doing very well there, they say.

A. Oh, up at the little house there.

Q. Yes. A. I didn't know they moved.

Q. He thought that'd be more comfortable and he seemed quite well satisfied somebody told me, that had been there.

A. Well, that big house was a monster.

Q. Well, nobody to take care of it. Well now, that house was really two

houses put together, wasn't it? There was a house at the back and then they put those four rooms on in front.

A. I think that's right. I remember when they done that part.

Q. Oh, you do?

A. Yes, but I think that was one, back there somewhere.

Q. Two up and two down.

A. Yes. I think there was two--that's right.

Q. I've always heard that, but I didn't . . .

A. And four rooms right across the front there. They were built after the other was built.

Q. About when was that put on there, do you know?

A. Oh, I don't know. Late nineties.

Q. Well, I didn't know what the date--it was recent, then?

A. Yes.

Q. Well now, who lived there before they lived there, do you know?

A. No.

Q. That wasn't where Mr. Sewall lived, was it?

A. No, Mr. Sewall lived down where George Johnson's place was.

Q. Oh, north of Fielden?

A. Yes, north of Fielden.

Q. Did he have a house down there, a log house or a good house?

A. Well, he had the house where George Johnson lived in--that's his house--in later years but I don't know what he had on the start, he must have had a log house. Couldn't have had nothing else the first time.

Q. You know his diary, of course.

A. I got one.

Q. I do, too. I'm real proud of that. (laughs)

A. I've got one more of them left, I've got another one of them. I'll give you one.

Q. Yes. I've used that quite often. That WPA index, the one from Cass County, is supposed to be one of the best in the entire state, I've been told. Well, do you have any old papers, old records that you go back and look through sometimes?

A. Oh, once in a great while.

Q. Miss Nell Springer had some--a very early tax receipt. I think it was the thirties.

Third Person: Yes, I think it was.

Q. And taxes were just practically nothing.

A. Oh, they wasn't anything, no.

Q. Of course, they didn't give any service. Did you go to public school?

A. Yes.

Q. And who were some of your teachers? Do you remember any of those?

A. Oh, yes, I can remember. Went to. . . Jennie Rowe was my first teacher. I started to school in Sangamon County. And fifty years after we left there . . . they was having a big celebration at West Grove Schoolhouse and I picked up the Journal--State Journal--and I saw where it was. That was sixty years from 1890. That was back in . . .

Q. 1950.

A. 1940. 1940. And I said to Pearl, "We're going down there." She says, "Oh, you don't want to go." And I said, "I do." She says, "If you want to go, we'll go." I said, "We'll take Lena, too. She started to school there, too." Got here and we drove down there. The women, they left me and started around the schoolhouse somewhere. Was two women sitting on the steps over there--we got there early. I said, "I'm lost. I don't know just where I'm at." She said, "I'm Jennie Sevier. I used to be Jennie Rowe." That was my teacher. The other one said, "I'm Lena. . . " something. "I used to be Lena McLaughton." I said, "Well, I've got you hooked, you don't know me." I got the biggest hugging I ever got in my life from those gals. (laughter) But that was a wonderful thing. In the meantime, they thought Lena's brother, that was a school director, and I knew he was a school director. I went to school with him and I wrote to him. So he wrote and said they'd be looking for me.

Q. What school did you attend in Cass County?

A. Science Hill in Oregon.

Q. And who were some of those teachers?

A. Well, Lennieg Arner was one of my teachers. Josephine Craven--Josephine Horner was one of my last teachers.

END OF TAPE