Preface

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Kay MacLean for the Oral History Office, Sangamon State University in May, 1973. LaDonna Monge transcribed the tape and Barb Dewhurst edited the transcript.

Jeanette Sayre was born on a farm near Petersburg, Illinois, October 1, 1912. Mrs. Sayre recounts life on the farm, homemade foods, home entertainment and even well witching. She talks candidly about her marriage, divorce, and children. She has remained very active working with volunteer groups and for the Lincoln Memorial Gardens.

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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Jeanette Sayre, May 16, 1973, Petersburg, Illinois.

Kay MacLean, Interviewer.

Q. With Jeanette Sayre. We're at her home near Petersburg, Illinois. This is May 16, 1973. I was looking at your birthdate.

A. No, that's a long way back.

Q. Do you want to tell us about your life?

A. Well, I'm perfectly willing to tell about my rather I would say colorless life, in a sense. Nothing dramatic. Never saved anyone or done all these, you know. Never been in the news, particularly. Actually, you ask where I was born. I was born on this farm, not in this house. My parents were--one was a native of Petersburg. My mother came from Petersburg, and my father came from Pleasant Plains. My father had come down here on this farm as a--before he was married, and operated it for his father. And they lived at that time on the--in the house that was then in existence at the back on the west edge on the present farm. It's now been taken down. It's not there, but that's where I was born. At that time the doctor came to the home and you were--so I started in the little old house that isn't there anymore. Later, in 1914, my parents built this house here, and moved from the back of the farm to this area, and at the time my father said that the neighbors all thought that he was just a young individual that was really out of his mind, and he didn't really know why he did come up to this end of the farm to build the road--to build the house because the main thoroughfare to Petersburg at that point went past the other old house, and this was a seldom used road.

Q. The road was here though?

A. There was a road here because in the geographical survey everything is on the square, and this is the next square. So he just moved to this one. He felt that the location was a little better for improvement, the drainage and whatnot. So he came up here, and there was also good water. I think those folks that lived in towns do not appreciate the fact that many times a rural house is located after the water is located. And so there was good water here and so they built the house here. Now, since that time, since 1914, the road which the other house was on, has been closed up, and is now just a field road down part way. So thankfully they chose this end of the place. I was raised here and went to a one-room school which is just a mile from here, and that was the time of course that you walked to school. There were no busses, and the school, the Farmer's Point School, which has been restored, and is now open for the public to

observe as a one-room country school. All schools at that time in Illinois were . . . the restoration has been done by the husband of one of the teachers, Musette Courtwright Brunnen, and Mr. Brunnen has restored it as a memorial in a sense to his wife, to the school board, at the time, and to the period of educational systems as it existed then.

Q. Now where is this school?

A. It's just a mile south and east of this house. It's the Tallula junction and then you go east to the first road that goes to the south, and it's down a little spur road. It too used to be on the thoroughfare and now it's on a dead-end road. But it's a one-room, brick structure. Now the dates of that I would have to look up, but it goes back eighteen something or other. Mr. Graham's--part of his family, taught there. Farmer's Point was then the center of both the educational system, it was the polling place, and my recollections are the one-room school. You had a teacher with eight grades to teach, and my first year--I can recall not having any brothers or sisters--I thought going to school and being with children was just out of this world. You know, this was a wonderful experience except some of them were so big. Because at noontime, we would go out to play and there was always Annie Over or Run Sheep Run or something that had much physical activity and at that point, many of the eighth graders were eighteen or so in age, and they were grown men and women in size, and as a first grader, those were the largest people, and when we ran I had the sensation of stampeding all around me. But then the school dwindled in size, and when I was in the eighth grade, there were only five students in the school, and that's when Mrs. Brunnen--who was then Musette Courtwright--taught there, and so she was my teacher the seventh and eighth grades.

I would say at that educational system at that point, many of the rural school teachers graduated out of high school and went right into the teaching profession with all eight grades to teach. Musette was especially good. She was one of those born teachers plus the fact that she had had one year at Illinois--what is now Illinois State, but was Normal at Bloomington at that point. So she had both inborn qualities as well as more training than a lot of them. And so I would say that in my seventh and eighth grade I probably covered the last four grades in the eighth grade system because there had--there was an examination that you wrote both at the seventh grade and the eighth grade level. And so she--it really amounted to--she tutored her three eighth graders to get us through. I can remember yet, sitting on the well platform out in the yard trying awfully hard to think, to think about parts of speech, and taking a sentence apart and doing all that little diagramming business, when it was Spring and there were outdoor things that you would so much rather have been doing. But that was basically I think where I got my present interest in a nature study, and things of this kind. I think it really relates to Musette's training.

Q. How's that?

A. Well, the fact that you were in the middle of it.

Q. You were outdoors when you were studying?

A. You were outdoors when we were studying and also when there were five youngsters in school recesses, you couldn't even have a decent ball game. So you walked up and down the woods, and dug into old stumps and found nests of snake eggs and this kind of thing. And Musette would be patient with us and it was time to take up school, but if we were in the middle of studying, watching something why she would allow this. So I think basically she started a pretty sound foundation on an appreciation of nature, living on a farm of course, you had some of this.

Well, back to--after the grade school experience, there was the process of going to Petersburg to high school, and transportation was not furnished and the roads were not paved, and so it meant that my freshman year, I lived with my grandmother who lived in Petersburg, and stayed with her. Coming home on the weekends and going back, and at that time the roads, I think, seldom do young people today appreciate the surfacing of roads. But in order to get to town this hard road was in the process of being built. So there had been some grading, and in the spring it was so muddy. I can recall one spring that another one of the neighbor girls would walk over here from about a mile away; she too stayed in town with her grandparents. Then my father would hitch up the regular field work horses to a big wagon, and we would go to the bottom of the hill which is about a mile away. In the process the mud was so deep that it was really hard work for horses. I mean it was really a process of getting there. Then there was a better road from the State park in. So then we walked a half a mile with our clothes for the week. To the caretaker's house down at the State park and they in turn took a car and took us on to town. So now this was a Monday morning performance and we came home the same way on Friday night.

So my first year was living in town, getting there the best you can. Then my sophomore and junior years and senior years were perfectly marvelous, because another neighbor had an automobile and we drove to town. She was old enough to drive the first year and then I could assist the second two years. So this was a real exciting experience during sleet storms, and there was the little caravan of people coming from this area, and much sliding and slipping, and if you got in the ditch, someone else picked you out, and eventually you arrived a . . .

Q. There are a lot of hills between here and Petersburg. Aren't there?

A. Yes, there are hills, and very sleetly hills, very slick. So, and at that point, you were kind of a part, more a part of the commuting area of the community than you had been when you lived in town. Following high school, I went to college, one year at MacMurray in Jacksonville. It was my first year away from home, and I suppose I would have starved to death, no matter where I lived at that point. But I thought I would never make the year out because you admit, I possibly was homesick. I didn't recognize it as such. I was simply hungry because a family table in a rural area was family style. And you ate more than one helping than what you asked for.

Q. Oh.

A. The boarding school type of situation. There was a portion for eight girls at a table and you got your portion and that was it. And I thought I would just never make it. Keep body and soul together, but I did. I got fat on (laughs) . . .

Q. Did you have any chance to eat in between?

A. Yes.

Q. There were restrictions on you?

A. No, there were no restrictions and my roommate and I decided that these were Depression years, and every penny, you did not go uptown and eat, because every penny was hard to come by. And my roommate was a minister's daughter from Petersburg, and we were equally hard-pressed, and so we skenived and thought of the things that we could buy. The greatest economic return. I mean the greatest return for the economy situation. And we arrived at the stage of deciding that by going to town and pooling our money, we would buy the large boxes. Now by large I mean they were about eighteen inches long and twelve inches wide and six deep of dried prunes. Prunes now, of course, come in a paper box, but the box of prunes weighed 25 pounds, and by buying a box of prunes, or apricots, or dried apples, but primarily prunes and apricots seemed to be more tasty. Apples didn't have much and by doing this, we kept body and soul together, and got fat as pigs. So that was my freshman year.

I really didn't care for the--I guess I was undisciplined, I have always been perhaps, and that was the beginning of it. I didn't like the seniors telling me to wash their hose, and hold the doors and so on. So I disliked MacMurray. Now I think it was, I was disliking the weaning away from home. That was the food problem, and I think I disliked being regimented to be told to do something because you had a green ribbon around your neck, which all freshmen did. Just to be told as a group, you know, "Out of my way, scum."

Q. Oh.

A. So, I decided the best thing to do was to transfer out of there as quick as I could. So I went to University of Illinois, and there you were quickly lost on the campus, and I loved it--and there's my telephone.

Q. Okay, I'll turn it off. Okay, your phone rang and you left the University of Illinois to answer it. Now let's go back.

A. So now we'll go back to the good old University of Illinois campus. During Depression years, no one had any money so everybody was equal. Nobody needed any money as a result. It's really quite amazing. If no one has it, no one needs it. While I was at the University of Illinois, I did so-called light housekeeping with three other girls

that I learned to know. We lived together for three years, and there was usually the fourth person with us, and the fourth one there never seemed to settle in quite permanently. But the three of us did light housekeeping together, which said that when you went to school, you went with a ham and a jar of lard, and canned tomatoes and peaches and so forth. Anything that you could pack in, and this was a part of your living situation. One of the girls lived down at Christman, Illinois, which was only fifty miles away. So we could go to her house on weekends and do the laundry, and get the eggs that we would need for the week, and cottage cheese, and fresh milk, and all this. So Mildred, Mildred Reed who came from Fairfield, Illinois, and I came with the staple supplies, and Martha Brothers, who came from Christman, furnished the more fresh produce. And, of course, anytime anyone came from home to visit, there was a carload of the next group of groceries.

Q. Oh.

A. So this is how we managed. Then we were at the University of Illinois at the time that the--the bank Moratorium went on. And there was no money. Just, you know, it's an amazing feeling that when the bank closes, and I don't mean a bank, I mean all banks closed, the store doesn't have any money. The people don't have any money, but you still get along, and a . . .

Q. How?

A. Well, there were a few nickles and dimes in pockets, and you simply pooled and helped each other as much as you could. The store wrote credit, and knowing that you would come through when you could. And most people were just as trustworthy and I don't think the stores lost too much. But things like a streetcar, for instance, you didn't ride it anymore you walked, because there was a token cost. And so this was a real, at the time, I think our parents were terribly concerned. They felt that we were stranded someplace with no money. And there was no way for them to get anything to us, because to send you a check meant nothing. It was just a pretty piece of paper. And back on campus things went right along, and really there it was kind of fun. Everybody was in the same tight shoe and nobody squeaked. You know, so it was just. That was the Moratorium.

Well, anyway we graduated out of University of Illinois, and so my roommate, we were all three of us in the school of home economics. And so my roommate was a good chemistry person, and she became a dietican, and I became a teacher because I couldn't hack the chemistry very well. That just kind of floored me. Fifteen hours of chemistry were great struggles and I got through, but I never intended to do anything with it after I once got through it. And so I came back then and taught high school at Athens, Illinois, which is just again back in the home community. It's just to the east of Petersburg about eight miles.

Q. Due east?

A. It's a small world community, and I enjoyed it very much. Back there at the University of Illinois, there's always a boy that gets kind of involved in your world. And so he found himself teaching agriculture at Greenview, and he did that one year. Decided it wasn't his thing. So he went back and got his master's at the University of Illinois, and after I had taught for three years and he had his master's we got married. And so now really at this point, I think I should go back and say that I was in this community through high school, and I knew it as a rural community as home, but I was [in] the high school and underage. And your perspective is different. Then when you leave a community for college, you really, you lose track of people and events, really. And so I was gone from this community from high school years on.

Q. Oh.

A. After we were married the moving started, and he, my husband, got his doctorate from Harvard. So our first move was to Boston where we lived for two years. And in that time he got his doctorate, and I spent a great deal of time--no money, newlyweds right out of the Depression had no money. So you walked around Boston and went to the free concerts and enjoyed every bit of it, and dug in the old book stores, and spent a lot of time down in the stacks of Widener Library digging out things for his papers that he had to write and so on. And cashing the--those were the times that you, you know, when the paycheck first came in, of the month, you went to the store and bought milk. And paid the deposit on the bottles, because you knew at the end of the month, you were going to have to cash the bottles to get the loaf of bread that you needed. Very peculiar built-in savings, but in other words, the money was few and far between.

We lived in a student housing and it was kind of a novel experience, in that it was apartments that had been built--the apartments had been built by the president of Harvard, President Elliott. He felt that graduate students were newly married and they were there working very hard, but they were not having the regular home experiences that would be required of them to establish a strong family relationship. So, President Elliott solved it by having this long row of apartments, two stories, and in the basement there was a furnace for every apartment. So that you look down the row and you could see about twenty small furnaces. One for the downstairs apartment and sitting immediately to the side of it for the upstairs apartment.

And it was quite an experience, because I'd always lived in a south cold area, and you could always run to the barn with a nice bucket of fresh cobs. So a fire was never any problem to start, but we moved to Boston and you burned hard coal. And there was no kindling except you bought kindling by the bag full at your grocery store. And money was hard to come by so you skimped on the kindling and the furnace was very small, but it still was oversized for the heating area because you only had three rooms, and one furnace. So you were always trying to throttle the furnace down. You see, or you were just wasting your fuel and you had to get your own fuel. So it was a process of every morning

all those twenty furnaces would have gone out in the night. And so you had these young graduate students starting fires with next to no kindling with hard coal. Now this gets to be, if you've never tried it, you don't realize it, it gets to be probably one of the most frustrating things that they had ever had to cope with.

Q. Does it just not catch?

A. It doesn't catch. Hard coal is--it takes a high kindling point. And if you had a bed of coals then it burns slowly and it's wonderful, but you see for the size furnace and the heating area you had to keep it cut down anyway.

Q. So you didn't end up with any coals?

A. No, never had any coals and they were always out. And all these graduate students down there with their large words, but they all said the same thing. Including--it just happened that we had a ministerial student above us and to one side of us. And it was most interesting that the ministers were just as good at kicking the furnace as anybody else. (laughs) But this was at--Harvard in Boston [Massachusetts] and was an interesting experience, and so then . . .

Q. What was your husband's degree?

A. He got a Doctorate in Agricultural Economics.

Q. Oh.

A. And it was--he too was an Ag student.

Q. Oh.

A. And count the coming from a farm background on the eastern part of the State. And so, following the Harvard experience, then he got his mas[ter's] . . . or doctorate and he worked then with the Department of Agriculture. And so the first employment was in Atlanta, Georgia. So with one Chevy [Chevrolet] that had toured Maine and had hit a rock, rather a major sized rock, in Maine, and it was all out of line and made a peculiar squeally noise, but with the one rug that we owned and all our possessions in this squealing Chevy . . .

Q. You sound like the Oakies.

A. The Oakies moved to Atlanta, Georgia (laughs) and then we rented an apartment for a while, and then we shared a house with a couple and then we finally went into another house; right across the street from Georgia Tech. And we learned to go to football games the easy way. Knowing which doors you went in. And so Atlanta, Georgia, we were there for five years. Now during this time, my husband traveled with the Department of Agriculture in all the Southern, the Southeastern states. And there not being any children and not too much to do in an apartment, I traveled with him most of the time. While he was

working all day, I would go out in the community. So I got to know the Southeast partially.

And then after Atlanta, came the war years. And he went into the navy, asking for the largest craft. You know the navy is a very diplomatic thing. They give you a choice of service. The choice of the size of vessel that you want to serve on. And so he decided that a battleship would probably be the best protected. And then he went on down the line. I think he even chose aircraft carrier first and then battleship and so on. But he drew a duty on P. T. boats. So then after the P. T. boats were drawn, we went back to Boston for communication school. So we were in Boston the second time, in the navy. And then following that he went overseas and I moved back to Illinois. Now this is just a series of moves from here on. I lived in Illinois and my first youngster was born here at home, here in Springfield, while he was . . .

Q. Springfield?

A. No, I lived with my parents here.

Q. On the farm?

A. In that house, yes. And so the youngster was a year old before Jerry came back from service. Then we moved to Starkville, Mississippi. There we were for a little while, and then we moved to Stoneville, Mississippi. Now Starkville is the hill area of Mississippi on the eastern edge.

Q. Oh.

A. And he was with the Department of Agriculture with the university there. Then we moved to the delta section, which was Stoneville and a very different area. It's the section that's under water now. And then from there he moved to Washington. Now at that time there was no housing in Washington. So the family and I moved back here to Illinois while he went to Washington to find a place to live, and eventually we moved to Washington. And then we moved back to Mississippi and the second boy was born.

Q. And where were you there?

A. Then at that point, we were at Leland. And so then we moved to Scott, Mississippi. Now these are all Mississippi stops in the delta. And at that point he was then, he had become a cotton specialist having never seen cotton. I'd like to tell the story on myself as well as him because when we first went from the move from Boston to Atlanta, neither of us, midwestern agriculture people, had never seen a cotton plant. We had heard that the cotton industry was in economic trouble. We had heard that the South was a little bit slow in developing seed, products and strains.

And so I still recall the time that we first were going down there and we got into Georgia and there was some cotton growing along side the

road, in a field. So we decided since this was going to be cotton country, we'd ought to get a close look at this. So we got out and we looked at the cotton plant and it had this beautiful big creamy white blossom on it, and the plant right next to it had a pink blossom on it. And being, you know, with a doctorate in agricultural economics, it was the decision not just his, but I chimed in just as good, that really the first thing that should be done would be to get some good seed developed so that it was a pure strain. This business of having a field with white blooms and pink blooms, that's just mixed seed, you know, it's not really pure bred stuff. And so we went on down the road and then about six months later, it crept through our feeble brains that a cotton plant, when the bloom first comes out is creamy white, and after fertilization, the first day, it's slightly pink and the second day it's bright pink. So it was simply a normal process for a cotton plant to do. So we learned to sort of bite out tongue and not expose our great ignorance.

Q. But you exposed your ignorance?

A. No, only to ourselves. Only to ourselves. But when you sort of listened and figured out, we both realized that was, you know, we were the stupid ones. But over a period of time then he became a cotton specialist, from not knowing the pink from the white blooms. (laughs) And then we landed down--back to where we were on this last move was Scott, Mississippi, which was, I mean this was again an interesting experience in that Scott is a company town. Now I had lived, always lived an individual, and now you found yourself living in a company town. The store was owned by the company, the hospitals were owned by the company, the drugstore's owned by the company, the doctor's paid by the company, the houses are owned by the company, and when you work for the company you take the house that is assigned you. And when you are no longer working there or forced to retire, you have to move out of the house because the company owns it. It was a very agreeable situation, but it was a very different experience than being an individual homeowned situation. You were a part of the company. You were company property.

Q. What did the town look like?

A. It was a very pleasant businesslike town.

Q. It wasn't just one house right after the other like in the coal areas?

A. No. No, it's not that because the houses had been built one by one as the needs were. Now they were not planned, but the carpenter that built this house would do his thing, and then maybe next year another carpenter would be called in off of the place. Now there were thirteen thousand acres in this plantation. It was divided up into nine different units, and each unit had its own store, but then you came together in this, in Scott as the main center. The offices were there. Now this company was really owned by, and this was again, a far off ownership in that during World War I the English cotton mills were having trouble getting cotton for their spinning mills. So the fine spinners and

doublers, which was the name of the cotton concern, thought, "Well now we'll just play it real smart. We can't get this cotton from Egypt that we've been using, we'll go over to America. They raise a lot of cotton, and we'll just buy us some cotton land," which they did. And then even the English made mistakes because they found that America raises a short staple cotton, and their mills would only handle long staple cotton. So it didn't work out to their mill advantage, but it became a long term investment for them. So this company was owned by the English concern, and once a year they would send a committee over for observing their investment. So you really were a company, a piece of property, in a sense, and this was kind of different.

And I guess to this, I didn't adapt very well, and one of our--one of my problems was that I could not become a name, and so this is a part of my lack of regimentation. It showed up back in college and now I can see it, you see. At the time I wasn't seeing it, and I could not see my two boys becoming Dr. Sayre's sons. I felt that they should be people, and they weren't becoming people, and so along over the period of time, my husband had kind of developed in one direction and I had developed in another. And so from Scott it was a mutually agreeable situation that we divided the household, and he stayed in Scott and went on to, oh he's been president of the cotton castle, and he now lives in Greenwoood, and is in charge of a cotton compress and exporting company.

And the boys and I moved back to Springfield. The youngest one was four and the older one was then in third grade. You see the older one started school in Mississippi, and the fact that he had seen a book before and that he knew the front from the back and he could tell when the pictures were upside down. They put him in the second grade, and Richard had some problems in school because of the motor skills that had not developed. Academically he got along all right, but motor skillwise, Richard had some problems. And so in Springfield, he had the adjustment of, well he never did--the writing was a problem. And he really didn't solve it until he got into the typing situation, but anyway that's beside the point. So the boys then and I grew up. We wanted to come back near homebase with parents. I felt the need for consulting in case of emergencies, but I did not feel that it was fair to the boys to be raised with grandparents, and most of all, I did not feel it was fair for grandparents to have to raise a second brood. So we lived in Springfield which is eighteen miles away. And on weekends we drove back and forth to visit with grandfather and grandmother if that was, I mean if there wasn't a Koury League game or something going on.

Q. Koury League?

A. Baseball for the kids.

Q. Like Little League?

A. Little League only Koury League takes them younger.

Q. Oh.

A. And then if they're good, they go on to Little League and so on.

Q. I see.

A. And so that was why, I mean I moved back to Springfield. Now we lived there until the boys graduated out of high school, and at that point my parents were beginning to need some assistance healthwise and physically, a physical assistance. My dad had had a real bad heart attack, oh fifteen years back that was solving his problem. Mother had a major stroke and wore out with the hospital and the nursing home, and both of my parents had the feeling that they did not want to just become vegetables.

Q. Yes.

A. They didn't want to just stay alive for staying alive. They wanted to be at home if they could and live as much as they could. And so with the kids through college or through high school and both kind of away, this seemed like the logical move for me. Excuse me. (clears throat) And so I moved back here to this house. And became a practical nurse for about six months.

Q. For both of your . . .

A. For mother.

Q. Just your mother.

A. And then she passed away and again I made the move because I felt that with Daddy--Mother was going to go first because of her condition. It just couldn't have gone on for just too terribly long, and I felt that with his heart condition, he could not have lived here by himself, and so that I felt that he probably would be here for another couple years. But when she died he just quit trying and in six months he was gone too. But by that time I had made the move and so I am back home. Now do you want to cut that for a while and we'll . . .

Q. I think we better because we're just about out of tape too, and we can rest a minute.

END OF SIDE ONE

Q. Mrs. Sayre, can you tell me about your father's family and your mother's family. You said that your father was farming this farm, but he had come from Pleasant Plains. This farm belonged to his father and he had come from Pleasant Plains.

A. Well, does it make any difference which one? Is it all right to go to my father's first? Well, he was one of five boys. There were no girls in the family. They were a farm family living just east of Pleasant Plains, and had lived on that farm which was great-grandfather's

farm. It is now one of the Centennial farms so-called that has been picked out in the State, because it's still being farmed by the same family.

Q. Who has it now?

A. A Scott Irwin lives in the house on the site and it's actually being farmed by his son John Irwin. So John lives just east and this is all east of Pleasant Plains.

Q. Oh.

A. Now at the time, my grandfather's name was Harry Irwin, and the family was all centered in that area from great-grandfather on down. There's a small cemetery just east of Clayville called the Irwin Cemetery, and this is where great-grandfather and his parents, and brothers and sisters were mostly buried. So this was the center of the Irwin tribe shall we call it.

Q. Is the great-grandfather that you refer to the first Irwin to come to Illinois?

A. I would have to look that up in the . . .

Q. But it is the family you're talking about?

A. Yes, yes, great-grandfather, I think he came in around 1830 something. But I would have to check though.

Q. He settled on that land?

A. Right.

Q. The land by Pleasant Plains is the land that he first had when he first came to Illinois?

A. That's right.

Q. And the family still lives there? And your father was raised there?

A. Yes, my father was raised there, but as is natural with families or in nature as the brood matures it disperses. So grandfather lived there and the oldest boy was told in those days--boys do not choose--they were told that he would become a lawyer. So he was sent to Ann Arbor. Graduated as a lawyer and settled back into Springfield. There he served as county judge in 1933 to 1935, along in there. His family still lives in Springfield, his daughter. So this was the dispersal of the oldest son. The next son--there was land purchased in Iowa and Uncle Clyde was sent to Iowa to farm that farm.

Q. Who had purchased that land?

A. Grandpa, Grandpa Irwin.

Q. His father?

A. His father had purchased it, and it was a more or less a coalition between the father, Grandfather Irwin and the wife's father--his name was Boynton--and so since they were members of--the two households were combined. They went to Iowa and was there three or four years. I really am a little hazy on how long they lived there. But that was a little far away and the farm was a little hard to manage, and there was another farm available near Edinburg, Illinois. So Aunt Dell and Uncle Clyde rented a box car.

Q. A train box car?

A. A train box car and put their horses in one end with the implements and the household goods and the two children on the other end, and they moved back from Iowa in that.

Q. Right on the train. Just got off on the siding.

A. That's right. (laughs) They rolled in and they had the cat, the dogs, the horses, the implements, everything.

Q. Was that common?

A. Yes, I think so. I think it--because how else could you take as good of care of your livestock. Now of course he sold out most his livestock, but his horses which were the--I mean it was like bringing a tractor, you didn't do away with your horses. That was his source of power. I don't remember about the old cow and the hogs and stuff. I don't think they came. But the horses and the implements, and this was the way of moving the whole thing. Instead of a truckload why you were sensible. So they moved back. Now this was a dispersal that returned but went to Edinburg. Daddy was the next one, and--in line--and there was this farm here that Grandfather owned. That was 320 acres which really came to him through my Grandmother Irwin because her family, the Potters lived in this area, and which was a part of her inheritance. She really inherited the place from her parents. And so Daddy was sent down here to farm this one. The youngest of the two boys stayed at home and still farmed in Pleasant Plains.

Q. Now what were their names?

A. All right, Scott Irwin is the one that lives in the house that I mentioned. He is there. Then the youngest one, George Irwin, lived adjacent to him. The house just west of the Scott Irwin house, but during Depression years, Uncle George became disillusioned and dissatisfied with the area. Sold his farm and moved to southern Illinois on another farm. Primarily interested in livestock production.

Q. What county is that in or what town?

A. It's near Salem. Iuka is the name of the town. I-U-K-A. Isn't that a funny name? Iuka. And because he was really primarily interested

at that point in livestock the land in the Pleasant Plains area is really more productive. It's more of a grain base type farming, the broken area Uncle Scott had acquired in the trading.

Q. Broken area?

A. Pasture land. The rolling land. The pasture land.

Q. That's the livestock land?

A. That's right. That's right. And so this then explains why my dad was in Menard County. This was a part of my grandmother's inheritance. It was then in my grandfather's name, of course, and this was a way setting your son into a business, and farming was the business of the whole family.

Q. Oh.

A. From both, I mean both my Grandmother Irwin's people and my Grandfather Irwin's people.

Q. Oh.

A. So that's why Daddy was here. Now my mother's people were basically farm people from her mother's side. They always lived north of Petersburg. Mother's people were--her mother's folks were kind of an interesting group of folks in that they had a great deal of musical ability in their household. It was not trained, just in them. It just had to come out. Now this is my mother's mother's people that I'm not talking about. This was the Watkins, Sam Watkins family. Well to begin with Peter McCue, which was a racehorse, and Grandfather's boys loved racehorses, but Grandfather was determined that they would not become the depraved followers of the racehorse, the music. These things in those days were apt to pull your boys into the bad channels. And so he moved and selected a living site north of Petersburg which was quite a ways from town--eight miles--and you didn't do this easily by horseback, you see. So this kept his family in the rural wholesome setting.

Q. They had lived in Petersburg?

A. No.

Q. They lived nearer to Petersburg.

A. Petersburg--I'm saying north of Petersburg because that would have been their base. This is where they came from. Now my great-grandmother--his wife--I knew because she lived to be quite elderly and did not die until I was up in high school. So I did know my great-grandmother, and knew things from her and things that she recalled as a youngster. But my mother's--now this is my mother's people, from her mother's side, and they were the musicians.

Q. Let's back up and talk about what you remember from your great-grandmother.

A. Great-grandmother? Great-grandmother Watkins, Mary Watkins, she was raised in that same general area. She came into this area as one of the pioneer people. One of the things that she talked about that always made such an impression and we were talking about wind a while ago in this area. She didn't like wind and as an older woman, she would complain about, "Oh, I wish that wind would quit blowing." And one day I said, "Grandmother" or "Great-grandmother, why does the wind bother you?" She said, "Oh, I disliked it as a child, because when my family moved here we broke the prairie out of the prairie sod, and the men all had to do this part of the work with the breaking plow." This was a hand walking plow effect with a team of oxen and the man physically holding the plow into the ground. Do you know a walking plow?

Q. Yes. I know it.

A. And this is real physical exercise and so . . .

Q. Did you ever see a walking plow?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Are they large?

A. No.

Q. The effort comes from holding it into the ground?

A. Into the ground. Yes. Because of the tough roots, the point of the plow has a tendency to want to ride up out of the ground, and the man has to keep it pointed down so that as the team of horses or oxen pull it through, it stays into the ground instead of riding on top of the ground. You see the course of least resistance was for it to float on top. And, but anyway the men in Great-grandmother's family did this. The boys were charged with breaking the clods up with a hoe. Now this is in preparation of planting.

Q. They followed the man with the plow?

A. Right, chopping the clods. Then Great-grandmother as a nine year old youngster, girl, she was charged with her sisters in dropping the corn by hand. Now this is the family enterprise; the men breaking it up, the boys chopping the clods, and the girls dropping the corn. She didn't like the wind because working on the prairie, the wind would blow so hard that the long skirts would beat across the back of her legs until they actually bled. Now you can see this was the chapping, the wind drying plus the cold and just the plain tattering effect of the skirt against the legs. But this was the planting of corn.

Now she also would tell of things, their food habits, and she raised her family. Now this is as a grown woman. The thing that the children loved most--there were eight of them, she had eight children--it was

called thickened milk. Now this sounds perfectly terrible, but I have eaten her product and I've eaten my grandmother's product and it was delicious. It was the fesh milked product. The animal heat was still in the milk. You sent the boys to the barn for the first bucket of milk, and they brought it back. This is whole warm milk. It goes into the kettle over the fireplace fire. The big kettle. Then in the meantime she has taken flour with a little salt in it, moistened it slightely and rubbed it in her hands so that there is a variation of texture within this flour. Some is still fine, some is middle fine, and some is kind of knobbly like a round noodle. And you roll this in your hands. Then as soon as the boys would come in with their fresh milk, you put it into the big kettle and stirred this thickening in it. And this was the supper dish for the whole family, thickened milk. And it was served with cream if you preferred, nutmeg, or allspice.

Q. How thick did it get?

A. It was a consistency much like you would say a chowder today. If you would eat a normal chowder. And it was not pasty and it cooked slowly and it was excellent in flavor. Now you can't make it today with pasteurized milk. At least I can't . . .

Q. You have to have your own cow.

A. You have to have, because I have tried it with modern milk, pasteurized, and it's just the flatest, ickiest, stuff imaginable. But with this--also I think you would have to consider the ruggedness, the hard work, the coldness of the outdoor climate and the children, but a big kettle of thickened milk was the evening supper. She made hominy regularly.

Q. Do you know how she . . .

A. Grandmother Sayre made hominy. I make hominy just because it's a curious thing to do.

Q. How do you do it?

A. To begin you have--you have the best hominy product if you have white corn.

Q. Oh. What kind of corn would you buy today, to make it with? You know what kind of seed, corn would you get to make the . . .

A. Well, believe it or not there was a man came to Lincoln Memorial Garden a couple of years ago and said that he had some hominy seed, and I thought he was just really . . .

Q. It sounds like he was putting you on.

A. Yes. Putting me on for sure. I said, "Oh sure, sure. I always plant hominy seed." And he said, "No, I mean hominy seed." So he sent me some and I had some on the back porch. I'll show you here because I'm going to

plant some as soon as I can get a spot to put it in out there. It is a flat wide kerneled white corn that has a thinner husk on it. I don't mean the shuck, I mean the husk on the kernel.

Q. Yes.

A. And it's a flat wide kernel, and on the corn that he gave me for hominy seed, it was an eight-rowed corn. Now this is a fewer number of rows of kernels.

Q. Clear around the whole cob, it's only got eight rows?

A. On the length, yes, yes.

Q. Clear around?

A. Clear around, yes. You know, of course, that corn exists on the ear in pairs. There's always an even number. So you have either eight row or ten row corn, and it is the number of rows--if you break the ear straight across so that you have a disk, then you can count the rows. Well you start with the hominy corn, and it preferably should be white. You can make it out of yellow, but white's best. Then you boil it in lye water, and this loosens the husk, and this all--you can stir it and you can tell that the husk is coming off the individual kernel, and what you're doing is taking the jacket off of the bundle of starch which the corn is, and then after you boil this in the lye water--it takes about a half an hour to an hour depending on if you soaked it and so on.

Q. Soaked it?

A. I mean if you soaked the corn a little bit ahead of time you don't have to cook it as long.

Q. In plain water or in the lye water?

A. No, in the lye water. Then you rinse it, and you rinse it, and you rinse it. Washing off this husk, and at the bottom of every grain there's a little black kind of an eye like on the kernel, and you're careful to wash this off, and this is hominy then when you're through with much rinsing to remove the lye.

Q. Okay. Now let's back up a little bit all right. How did your grandmothers do it? In the house, outside the house?

A. In a big old black kettle out over a fire.

Q. Outside?

A. Outside.

Q. And where'd they get the lye?

A. All right you would make your own lye.

Q. From . . .

A. Early. My great-grandmother would have made her own lye. My grandmother would have bought it in a Lewis lye can . . .

Q. Oh.

A. . . . and lye is extracted from wood ashes, and the wood ash is put in a hopper, water is carefully poured over it, in measured quantity. You don't just pour water over it, but you measure and let it filter through these wood ashes.

Q. You have so much water. It's like a recipe.

A. It's like a recipe.

Q. Okay.

A. And depending on the quality of the wood ashes, and the kind, but this is a--but you pour the water through and catch the filtered liquid that comes through the wood ash, and you repeat this, pouring it through again.

Q. The same water?

A. The same water and by doing this, you concentrate . . .

Q. Oh.

A. . . . the lye. You keep soaking more lye out of the wood ashes, and then when it becomes strong enough--I do not know this part of it because I've never made it, but they always said that when it was strong enough to float an egg, it was strong enough to be used for soap making or lye making, I mean or hominy making. It was then lye.

Q. Oh.

A. And I suppose you can get--other people had other methods of testing the lye. But Grandmother made hominy. They of course, lived--a main stay was the meal that they took their corn to the mill, and had it ground for cornmeal, and mush was a main stay for a supper meal, and this is simply water with a cornmeal stirred in and cooked slowly until it's really thoroughly cooked. It's not a starchy pasty product. It's well cooked and you eat it hot with butter or brown sugar. This was another evening meal. And then, of course, you mold this and use it for fried mush for other meals if you care to.

Q. Make a batch big enough to keep it. How did you--what did you mold it in?

A. I really don't know what Grandmother used, but my mother always used, I mean we made mush always too, and it was usually a flat bread pan type shape. Something that's flat and then you could cut it into slices.

Sometimes you molded it in a crock, but this has a round bottom and gave you an irregular shaped piece which was not considered quite as desirable as a square cut.

Q. Oh.

A. A mush was commonly used with here--one of the things when we lived in the South, I met of course, hominy grits for the first time, and it's kind of interesting in the comparison--now most of our forefathers came through the southern upper tier of states--Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia. I mean this is the--and so cornmeal was important, but we never were far enough south for hominy grits that you find in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi.

Q. Oh.

A. Phone again. [Telephone rings]

Q. Okay. Let's go back to the hominy making. You were telling me that your grandmother made it outdoors.

A. My great-grandmother.

Q. Your grand--great-grandmother.

A. My great-grandmother would have made it outdoors.

Q. And that was your great-grandmother Watkins?

A. Watkins, great-grandmother Watkins.

Q. Did your grandmother make it? What was her name?

A. My grandmother was Nettie, of Jeanette, hence my Jeanette, Watkins Thompson. When she was married she moved into Petersburg, and processes change when you move into town from the rural area. Also the fact that there was a little time span here. So I do not recall that my grandmother Thompson ever made hominy that I knew of.

Q. When would she have moved to Petersburg? Do you have any idea?

A. At the time that she was married, and oh, I don't remember. I will look this up for you if you want.

Q. Okay.

A. I do not know.

Q. Okay. So she came from the farm, moved to Petersburg.

A. Right, and married an--I'm off of the hominy story now.

Q. That's okay. We'll get back to it.

A. Let's go back to the hominy just a little bit because--and finish that one up because actually the process that my great-grandmother would have used would have been in an outdoor situation because of the heat and the problems of rinsing the lye off. Now when you're working with lye water you have to have a good disposal system of some kind. So she would have done it outside near a water supply. Like near the spring or someplace that you could let the lye water get away because this is bad for the skin and so on. Kills plants and whatnot. So she would have done it because the problem of lye--hominy making is a water supply. Now when Grandmother Sayre--now this was my husband's people--she made hominy in the house on--and I have been there when she did it. At that point she was using a coal stove, and she boiled the hominy on the coal stove. Now we're getting the picture that my great-grandmother used a big old black kettle over a bond fire for long cooking and water supply. Now my mother's generation--which was my husband's mother--made it on a coal stove, and in her home, and in her kitchen when she was doing this the water was pumped with a handpump in the sink at the corner of the kitchen.

Q. A wooden sink?

A. No, this was a--her's was not a wooden sink. This was a later one. It was an enameled sink.

Q. Oh.

A. But a kind not built in. There was no covers around it. It was just a sink that hung on the wall with a handpump at the end. And so she would boil it on the coal stove and rinse it in the sink with the hand-pump.

Q. Oh.

A. Now I made hominy a year ago. Cooking it on an electric stove, a little bit hard put for a cooking utensil, because the lye does very well in an old iron kettle, but you do not use it in aluminum or you would not use it in my stainless steel. So I had to find a granite kettle, and I used a granite cooker which I had.

Q. Where did you--did you just have it?

A. Well, yes, I had it. It well, what it was, my turkey roasting pan which is a granite pan. It's a large flat pan and I cooked on the electric stove. So we've gone from the bonfire to the electric stove and the water situation in my case, I have good well water at the sink. So I simply put it in the sink and it went down the drain, and cleaned all the pipes as the lye went down, and that was my--and it was a much simpler process. But the product is the same.

Q. How long did you cook it and how much did you make?

A. Oh, I have to get my recipe. I think I cooked it as I recall about a hour. And I made--I must have had two gallons at least of it when I

was finished. And now my Grandmother Sayre--my husband's mother--liked to make hominy in the winter when she could put it outside and freeze it because this causes it to expand and it becomes fluffier.

Q. Oh.

A. Because when it's been soaked you see and it's full of moisture and when it freezes it's like the soil. It opens up and has little sort of little fissures in it and it makes it puffy.

Q. Yes.

A. And a . . .

Q. So otherwise is it flat like the kernel of the corn?

A. It's a little soggy, a little soggy. No, it's fat, it's fat.

Q. Oh, yes, because . . .

A. It would just soak up and get fat, but it's solid fat. Then when it freezes it has kind of expanded . . . .

Q. More like popcorn and sort of fluffy.

A. Just a little, just a little. Right, right.

Q. Okay.

A. And I accomplished the same thing by putting it in the deep freeze.

Q. Oh my. (laughs)

A. And that's how I stored it instead of canning it. Now in the old times--going back to my great-grandmother Watkins, she would have put it possibly into large stone jars, and just kept it cold and she would use it out, you see. Enough volume, I mean she would use it as fast as it needed to be, or she might have dried it. Now when my mother used hominy, we were apt to buy it from the grocery store in the dried form, and then all you had to do was soak it overnight, and you had it ready. But by my process of putting it in the deep freeze I accomplished two things; I did the fluffing that Grandmother Sayre would have advocated and I preserved it that way, and so when I want hominy, I just go to the freezer and get it. So it's the same product but pretty different procedure.

Q. It sure is.

A. Now what else in the food department?

Q. Let's see. Yes, you were talking about meals and you said that a mush would be an evening meal.

A. Yes.

Q. And now how was hominy used in the diet?

A. Probably more as a potato substitute. You would use--put the hominy in a skillet and brown it with a little bit of the meatfryings or butter, but preferably meatfryings for flavor, and you would use it in place of potato.

Q. Yes.

A. Usually it was used maybe with a noon meal when potatoes--if your supply was not ample, and at that point, remember that a household was a self-sufficient unit. And if you had a poor potato year, you could see--you had a tendency to ration your potato supply over the year, and so you would stretch the potato situation by using an alternate hominy or fried mush for breakfast, instead of having fried potatoes for your meal with breakfast you would have fried mush, and this tended to give both variety as well as give you a year's planning on food.

Q. Oh.

A. Now I think one of the things, while we're talking about food in my early remembrances here. For instance, when I was growing up, you needed extra help on the farm, and so you had the hired man. Now the hired man was not a day laborer, but he lived in your house, and he was hired by the month. He slept in one of the bedrooms which was from the family standpoint kind of off limits. I mean, that was his room. It was in your house, but it was his room. And you didn't disturb this. You respected his rights and privileges of having a room to hisself. And he ate with the family, and he was there for breakfast, and he was there for lunch, and he was there for supper. He was a part of your household, and because of this, family food--now when I mention fried potatoes for breakfast and mush, it sounds pretty heavy, but at that point the men got up at 5:00 and went to the barn and curried the horses, fed the horses, harnessed the horses, milked the cows, cleaned the necessary cleaning that had--the daily cleaning. It wasn't a major barn cleaning. It was just the daily routine. Watered the stock in the wintertime. Broke the ice so that they could drink, and they were back in the house at 6:00 having done some hard work already, and sometimes as much as an hour and a half to two hours work.

Q. Oh.

A. Before breakfast. So they came in expecting a good hardy substantial meal. And so the wife had in the meantime had gotten up and had probably cooked rolled oats.

Q. Rolled oats. Where were they rolled? What was the source of the rolled oats?

A. They would have come from the store prepared in that form, and Quaker, Mr. Quaker, the box with the man with the hat was in a part of the household as I remember. And the fried eggs, possibly ham, and potato, or hominy, or mush would have with coffee. This would have been

the breakfast meal. Then the men in turn went back out and were back in at 11:00 to 11:30 for a noon meal.

Q. Now this breakfast was about . . .

A. About six.

Q. 6:00 to 6:30.

A. 6:00 to 6:30 depending on the household and depending on the season of the year. I'm thinking the regular long work times of either planting, or tilling, or harvest year time.

Q. Okay.

A. And then many times after the harvest your hired man may move away. He may go to his home, or visit, or travel around a bit, and it was an agreeable situation that he would come back again in the spring to start spring tilling again. So the hired man was a part of the household.

Q. Oh.

A. Now I'm going back one more generation. For instance with my father, he had a very warm feeling toward the hired man of that household, and with a family with five boys, and a hired man to feed, and the man and the wife, there was also a hired girl in the house. So there were two hired persons that were members of the house and my grandfather Irwin apparently was a very matter-of-fact down to earth, hard working no nonsense kind of a person. At least this is the picture that I get from my dad. I knew Grandfather just as Grandpa, and to me he was not this--I mean he was just a friendly big fat jovial man that gave me a pony, and I didn't know what to do with a pony but I knew I should like it because he gave it to me. (laughs) I learned a great deal from the pony. But anyway, because of his matter-of-factness, the hired man in the household supplied the fun, that the family really needed, and it was Tom O'Brien who lived in the house . . .

Q. How perfect.

A. . . . that taught them all the songs, and they would sing, and he taught them all the riddles, and told them all the stories that Grandfather wouldn't take the time to do.

Q. Oh.

A. That these were trivial things, but Tom O'Brien would go to town, to Springfield on Saturday night and come back with a sack full of lemon drops, and to my father and I'm sure to the rest of the family, Tom was a very important member of their household. And he was simply the hired man. So this was a part of the family unit. Now Lizzie Logue was another one of the girls that was one of the hired girls that lived with the family and practically raised the children. Now this was not the

English system of the live-in governess. It was simply the hired girl. But she was a part of the house and Lizzie Logue was just as much a sister to the family, in a sense, as Tom was a foster father.

Q. Yes.

A. And so this period of live-in hired assistance to the household, I think really a lot of times there was a mixing of cultures and experiences and backgrounds that gave the household a little better balance than they might have had by way of experiences with just the two parents.

Q. Oh. That's interesting.

A. And this was a time now when there was no television. There was no radio, but this was the exchange with another part of the culture of the world.

Q. Yes, were these people like Tom O'Brien, you know, I think of, you know, an Irish immigrant?

A. Yes.

Q. Was he?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. He was not born in the United States.

A. Now I don't, oh, I hate to be quoted as this. I think that he came over as a young boy.

Q. Oh.

A. And settle and later I know that he did marry and settle in the community as an older person.

Q. I think we'd better quit, and we're out of tape I think.

END OF TAPE ONE

Q. You were talking about the part that your father's hired man, Tom O'Brien played in his life. You want to go on from there?

A. All right. This is just a feeling that I have and it's based on nothing except I feel that a family needs and an individual needs a certain form of amusement, levity, fun, play. That furnished perhaps over-furnished today with television and so on, but even at those times when my father was a young person, they worked long hours. They had to be in the field in the morning by six o'clock and they would walk behind the walking plow all day with a short noon hour just enough to go for

food, and this got to be very grim work, and without the levity and the song and the fun that Tom O'Brien supplied, I think that the household, maybe not my other uncles, but I feel that my father would have been a very unhappy young man growing up. But out of this--Tom's singing--my dad developed, I don't say all Tom's singing, another thing was supplied in the one-room school at that time that my father was in school every Friday was speech day. And now Jess Irwin was a teacher that my dad went to school to at the Clayville School, which is right back of Clayville Tavern just to the south. The school is not there now, but it was a one-room country school where all of the five boys got their eighth grade training, and on Friday Jess Irwin required that everybody have a memory selection to present to the school, and this was the poetry learning.

Q. Oh.

A. And some I'm sure it was pretty deadly. But to my father . . .

Q. That the boy stood on the burning deck thing.

A. This kind of thing is right. (laughs) And some--Daddy would tell these long stories about how there was one rather large timid not too academic individual that always said the little pieces doing the thumb and finger together because he was bashful and didn't like to look at the people while he said this little, a little rhyme. A very nursery rhyme thing. But out of this, my dad developed a real backlog really of memorized poetry and he had the knack of memorizing. I guess it was the musical ear, I don't know what.

But he could be going down the road in an automobile at seventy years old, and see something that kind of attracted his attention and a piece of Tennyson would come out, or Longfellow something, or a Bryant something. I mean, poetry was to him a way of appreciating and expressing something that he would like to say himself, but couldn't. But and he could just--the vision of Sir Longfellow he would go on for hours, and as a child I thought, "Oh, will he ever quit," you know. But this was I really feel a carryover from both Tom O'Brien, appreciation at an early age of little doggeral verses followed by the speech days which he learned to do this, and then he continued this always. Always memorizing. He would read something and go to the field, and I'm sure he talked to the horses as he plowed corn, and because he would come back here and check a passage that he was missing. And so there was a rhythm of something that he appreciated, and I really think Tom O'Brien was basically--the hired man, really got this instilled.

Q. Yes. You know any of the songs that he taught him? Did your father sing any of those? Were they songs that you ever heard any where else?

A. Oh, yes. Oh Rhodie, oh Rhodie, the gold gray goose is dead." "Go tell Aunt Rhodie."

Q. Okay. Yes.

A. And he has told me others, and I am embarrassed I can't tell you.

Q. Well, maybe you'll think of some, later. I just wondered if they were Irish songs or if they were . . . .

A. No, more folk songs. Not particularly Irish, American folk.

Q. American folk.

A. But from this Daddy went ahead and would just go on with this.

Q. Sure.

A. As he grew he--Grandmother Irwin thought that the only form of culture that she wanted to bring to her house was all the boys had to play the piano. You know, there was a time that the piano was a cultural symbol, and any household that had any form of upbringing, they had a piano. Well Grandmother didn't have any girls so she had to teach her boys, and I guess it was a rather painful thing to most of them, but with Daddy, it took. Now he had my grandfather's hands which meant the fingers were very stalky square fingers, and Daddy had some problem of staying on one key because they had a tendency to be wider than one key, but even when he was in his eighties he would sit down and play some of the pieces that he had taken, learned when he was about seven and eight and nine [years old] when Grandmother was insisting that he take piano lessons. Now he had a good ear for music and this is why he had this ability. He had some trouble with his lessons as he told us because he didn't like to read the notes (laughter) and the teacher would give him a piece to play, and he would struggle with it. It was just terrible, and then he would by hook and crook get her to play either the whole thing or part or phrases of it, and the minute he heard it, then he could follow the notes and it was all right. He had a good sense of rhythm, but he just didn't like to read the notes, but as soon as she did it, it was his piece. And this is why I think it's the poetry ear and this music ear that helped him retain both the poetry and the music pieces, clear on until he was very, very along in years. When he was in high school he had a good singing voice and so he sang in all the quartets and did all this kind of thing, and he graduated from University--from the high school in Springfield which at that point was almost like a university in that very few people went to high school. And he went into Springfield, and lived with people and graduated out of high school and did the solo part as a graduation exercise and so on. So he had a very untrained but a very listenable voice. But I still think that a lot of this went back to Tom O'Brien . . .

Q. Oh.

A. . . . because none of the rest of the boys disliked music, he just happened to have a little bit more ear. And this was brought out.

Now with my mother's people--the entertainment angle of the family--they did not happen to have to depend on the hired help. They had the music in the family. Now the great-grandmother Watkins, that I spoke of, her

husband played the violin only it wasn't called the violin. It was the fiddle. And the boys all grew up liking music and each could express themselves someway. When I was in high school, I can recall some of these sessions and these were then older people. They were all in their sixties and seventies, and if anybody had a birthday or an anniversary or any other excuse, the whole group of Watkins folks would convene at someone's house. Pot luck. And, but that wasn't the purpose of coming. The purpose of coming was to have an evening with music.

Now my Grandmother Thompson could not read a word or a note of music, but she could play any, any piece that you would hum for her, just chording and kind of tinkle through it the first time and then it was hers. Her oldest--it wasn't her older sister but another sister had the same ability. So the two of them in this evening of music would sit down at the piano, first one playing the treble and one the base. And then they'd alternate and everybody just chording and going great guns. And one of the brothers played the fiddle, as his father did, and it wasn't bad listening. It was--he had a nice soft touch with it. It wasn't sawing raspy music. It was pretty good. One of the brothers, Uncle Edgar Watkins, had it in his feet and so he did the jigs, and all the dances that once in a while he just feel called upon this, and he would take the floor and he would do something. Then another brother, Uncle Walter Watkins, had none of the tone sense, but he had a good sense of rhythm so he played spoons or rattled bones.

Q. Rattled bones?

A. Now this is taking a rib bone from the beef and so you have a wide surface and these are carefully cleaned and cut and polished, and then you put the flat bone between the fingers on each hand. You can have three if you're good or just two. He could use three on each. And then by rhythm you can--it's like playing a tamborine type music, and so he would beat out the rhythm, or he would take two spoons putting the bowels--letting them hang below the hand and by holding certain tension you can rattle the spoons, and it's like castanets. And so he was the rhythm section, and this evening just went on and on playing all the old pieces. Turkey in the Straw, Chicken in the Breadpan, Picking Up Dough, oh and on, and on and on. And then it just happened that the in-laws kind of fell in too.

Q. The in-laws?

A. Meaning--well I mean the next married generation. For instance, my mother's generation. Daddy played the french harp.

Q. The french harp. What's a french harp?

A. Harmonica.

Q. Okay.

A. He also played the Jew's harp. That plucky thing.

Q. You put it in your mouth and . . .

A. Yes, across your mouth and twong through it.

Q. Okay.

A. Daddy played the mandolin. Uncle Sam, Mother's brother played the banjo. One of the grandchildren, Louise Watkins, played the accordian. Mildred Juhl Davis, who was a Watkins derivative . . .

Q. (laughs) At this point they're just derivatives?

A. Yes, these are the third generations, you see, and so the names get mixed up. But she sang and it was just everybody put in their little piece.

Q. Golly.

A. And it was quite an evening's performance. Everybody did their own thing. A joining in, sitting out one or two, joining in someplace else. And one of the last groups of this kind that I recall, Mildred Juhl who--a Davis is her name now, they--she and her husband had lived in New York and they came back and a new piece, there had been a new piece that had just come out in one of the musicals that everybody in New York was humming, and everybody said, "Well what is it? What's the new piece?" They said, "Well it's just a real catchy tune. It's called the Easter Parade."

Q. Oh.

A. And so Russell hummed the Easter Parade and everybody listened and Grandmother would pick, and Aunt Nona would pick on the piano and pretty soon the Easter Parade, in about ten minutes, the family was doing a production of the Easter Parade. But now this was a family that had it within themselves. They didn't have to rely on the hired help. They were it. (laughs)

Q. Yes.

A. And they had a great deal of fun together.

Q. Where was the Watkin's family from? How long have they lived in Illinois, do you know? And where were they from before they came to Illinois? Or what was their nationality?

A. Now I'm embarrassed to say that I'm a D-A-R and I can't pool all these things out to you.

Q. Was that ever important in your family?

A. No.

Q. Where people were from or . . .

A. No, I don't think it was. It never was any, now this is why it's never been talked about.

Q. Oh.

A. They were just always here.

Q. Yes. Okay. Then that's not important.

A. And it was just a family unit and I don't know where they came from.

Q. Where did this all take place? In somebody's house?

A. Yes.

Q. These musicals. In somebody's house?

A. Yes. Whoever was having a birthday and it went from place to place. They were never at the same place. I mean, some people had a better piano and you might kind of arrange to be there rather than someplace else, but primarily I wouldn't say that it was always held there, but the most frequent place that they did convene was at one sister's, Mrs. Juhl's, who was a semi-invalid for years and years and years, and it was hard for her to go. And so many times, they would go to Aunt Hattie's because she liked to be in on the fun, but it was hard for her to go places.

Q. Oh.

A. And so many times it was there although it could have been anyplace.

Q. What day of the week would this be?

A. Oh, just any time.

Q. Any time?

A. Any time.

Q. So you go when the work was done?

A. Yes, it's usually along in the winter. Oh, it's the season that's not rurally busy.

Q. Oh.

A. Usually wintertime or early spring, but it's in the time. Although they had picnics in the summer. Same thing outdoors. It was no--it was not tied to any one day or any one place. It would come as the family felt.

Q. And how late in the evening would they last?

A. Oh, you still had to drive an old model T home. It usually broke up by 11:00 or 11:30, you know, and because it's hard to get up in the morning and milk the cow.

Q. How close together did these people live? How far apart, how far would you have to drive to get home say if it was at . . .

A. Oh, as much as fifteen miles or so . . .

Q. Oh.

A. . . . because some of the folks would come from Pleasant Plains and some of them lived north of Petersburg. But by fifteen miles would, I mean if--fifteen miles on both sides of the point would have brought them in. And most of them were relatively local. Now some of these people are still in Springfield and still producing music. Like Norm Bullard I don't know, but anyway--now he was not a part of the family, but he married into the family and certainly fitted into it.

But so much for the entertainment of that generation. The next kind of sad part is the fact that after that group dispersed, or died, there was very little music carry-over in the next generation. And I've always wondered if it was because the next step you had to take lessons. You had to be a trained musician, and somehow it was kind of looked down upon to play by ear. It's a little like phonics. Phonics goes in and out of fashion, and playing by ear was kind of like phonics. You were playing by sound not by note.

Q. Yes.

A. And it was kind of frowned upon to do this. It was considered old fashioned, outmoded, a kind of back woodsey, and it lost its freshness. Now my mother played the piano, not by ear, but she played very well, by note. Her sister played by note, but they lost the spontaneous part of the music.

Q. Did the rest of it go along with it? Were the bones still played and the . . .

A. No. That was all lost.

Q. That went too.

A. It was all lost. And it was somehow I think kind of a sad loss, because there was such exchange within the group, enjoying each other, enjoying the product of the group. It was just sheer fun, but then it got to be unsophisticated.

Q. Yes.

A. So we were a little--we didn't do it and the next generation lost it, and I don't think many of them really even know about the bones or would even know how to go about this, which is sad.

Q. That's really something terrible.

A. But I think it's the kind of thing that family units develop within themselves.

Q. Yes. Because it's definitely gone on the other side. It definitely was not in existence on the other side of your family. The family--the one family did it and the other didn't. But that's not what you're saying. Is it?

A. But that--but this isn't what I'm saying. No.

Q. I see what you are saying though.

A. What I'm saying is that at that period of time the unit had to produce its own entertainment, its own music, its own poetry and they did it by one source or another. Either from themselves out, as the Watkins did, or from outside cultures coming in as Tom O'Brien did to my father's people. But they still furnished their own set of lighter hours.

Q. Yes.

A. But then when we don't do the physical work, and we disperse because of transportation, we lose the ability. And now like with my boys when their generation came along, I've got a carry-over, I thought they had to play the piano in order to read music for the band.

Q. I see.

A. And so then we did this. Oh, we did this painless, painfully. And then we played a cornet and we played a bass--I don't know we played everything, a saxophone, the squealingest thing there ever was. And as soon as we got over age to be in the band, it was dropped because I had failed to engender the spontaneity it should have had. It should have been fun, but I was, I mean, those boys were practicing to be in a group, and then when they're no longer in a group, and really that dropped in high school. The instruments are still in the attic.

Q. Did you play anything?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. Did the other people in your generation play?

A. No.

Q. So it went from do it youself, to note to nothing.

A. To note.

Q. And then to force.

A. To force, this is right. And maybe this is not true in all families. This would be something I would be curious if you'd talk to other people with this kind of thing to know if this is the pattern. Or was it just happenstance in my experience. I was given lessons, but it certainly didn't take because I was bored with my horrible little slow struggle. You know, I wanted to hear the piece, but here I was doing ping pong and I wanted to . . .

Q. You wanted to get it out.

A. Yes, and I couldn't, it goes back to the undiscipline--unregimentation of my, I mean my lack of regimentation. I couldn't sit there and do it. So that was a fault in my personality I think. But it's interesting none of the rest of my generation have it either.

Q. Oh.

A. So, so much for amusements in the families and this. Now what else do we need to pick up here? One of the things that you had asked about was how we did things, and one of the things that--back with this family gathering. As I recall, some of those first ones, there was always much moving around of lamps because it was a coal oil lighted world. And in order to get the lamps where people could not see the music, because they weren't working from music, but so that people could see the people that were making the music. This was a part of, within this household for instance, we did not have electricity in this house actually until 1936, it was put in. When the folks built the house, they built a home plant in the house, and it had a little motor in the basement that generated its electricity. A little gasoline motor. It was stored in large batteries, which we had a whole cupboard full of batteries. So you ran the motor and charged the batteries, and then you had electricity. But it was very tricky because the batteries ran down surprisingly quickly, and so you were very conservative with the electricity. And so there was no electricity in this really until 1936 when REA came through with a more lasting supply of electricity. You could leave the lights on.

Q. You said you were conservative with it. What'd you get to use it for?

A. Reading at night. Reading and my mother had some eye weakness and if she read a great deal, she had headaches the next day. But Daddy loved to read out loud, and so I grew up hearing Daddy read out loud. The newspaper, poetry, or a H. G. Wells, The History of Mankind, or some other thing which I didn't understand why he spent all that time reading. But this was mother's communication. She would sit and do some little household task while she was listening, but not the close work. She seldom sewed much at night or things of this kind. But she would do some little--she would mend or something while Daddy read, and this was where the lights were used. For the one reader of the household. For this was . . .

Q. But when you had the musicals, like at your aunt's house . . .

A. Yes.

Q. . . . and there was the moving of the lamps. Did she have a private power plant in her basement or did she just have the coal lamp?

A. No, I mean the coal oil lamps.

Q. Yes.

A. I mean, this was before electricity.

Q. Yes, but at her house--oh, the musicals you're talking about at her house were before she could have had a plant in her basement.

A. Some of them were. Then later the city people had electricity much earlier than the country people. But I can remember some of the first ones, you just moved the lamps around so that a . . .

Q. Yes, spotlight people.

A. That's right, but then when we used to go to, for instance, when I was up in high school, Aunt Hattie, of course, would have had electricity in the town, but . . .

Q. I see.

A. . . . but we didn't have it out here until after, let's see, I graduated from high school in 1930, and the things that I'm thinking about was in there would have been prior to 1930, and we did not have electricity in the country until 1936. So there was a span of time that they were ahead of us. Six or seven years.

Q. Now, see, let's stop it for a little while. Okay?

A. Okay.

Q. There we go. (tape turned off)

A. In talking about the house itself here, there are a few things that I think might be kind of noted. At the time that this house was built, I mentioned that my father had come down here and was working this land for Grandfather Irwin. And one day he was out in the field and a carpenter stopped by and said, "I hear you are going to build a new house," and Daddy said, "Why, not me. Who's building a new house?" The carpenter explained that Grandfather Irwin had said that Emery should build a new house. Go down and see him. Well Daddy got rid of this prospective contractor and several days later a second one came out from Tallula and said, "Your dad sent me out here and told me that you were going to build a new house." Well again the same story and finally Grandfather Irwin arrived and said, "Emery, you should have a better house. Now build one." So Daddy, being the good dutiful son, got a hold of one of the contractors that had talked with him and they started. They witched the well.

Q. They witched the well?

A. They witched the well.

Q. Who did that?

A. Well, two people. There was a gentleman that dug wells and laid tiles. A Mr. John Atwood, and he also witched the water, and he came up into the stubble where Daddy said he would like to have the house in this general location. And he walked about and said, "Right here is your best spot for a well. There's a strong stream of water coming through right here." And Daddy said, "John, you know, I don't believe any of this stuff, but now you put a little staub down there if you want to, and I'm going to go down and get the neighbor lady, Mrs. James Miles," who was a very sincere, very frail, very, a very serious woman. But she also witched water or told you where to--where water was. So he went down and said, "Mrs. Miles, would you come up and help us select the place to dig a well." And she said, "Yes," she would. So she came up and walked around with her little peach stick, and finally the stick turned and she hung on, and it turned in spite of her and she said, "Right here is the place!" And surprisingly enough, right, she had not known about Mr. Atwood's being there, right under the place that her little peach switch turned, was the staub that Mr. Atwood had said, "Here is where to dig the well." So Daddy said, "Well, all right, now if you both agree, we'll dig the well there."

Q. What was Mr. . . .

A. Atwood?

Q. Atwood's method? Do you know?

A. I do not know. Daddy mentioned the peach stick that Mrs. Miles used. I do not know what Mr. Atwood's was. But they dug the well there and the well has been an excellent well, always. It's never gone dry. I always say this knocking on wood, you know. But even this last summer when everything was dry, we had an unusually dry year. The well gets down to about six foot of water and stays just six foot of water. So it was well selected, however the method.

Q. Right.

A. So after they got this done, they staked out the house and as far as I ever heard my parents discuss it, there seemed to never have been much discussion on floor plans, or anything of the nature of how the house was to look or be arranged. With one exception, it was the custom at the time to have threshing dinners for the threshing wand. Now this meant that the community joined together with one threshing rig and it took many men to haul the grain to the separator, man the separator and haul the grain to the market from the separator.

So there usually was a crew of oh, thirty possibly, maybe a smaller group or larger, depending on the size of the threshing run, but these people had to be fed at the community and so Daddy had two requirements in his floor plan. One was so that when threshers came they could come in one door to the dining room, but not through the kitchen, because he felt that this would be disconcerting to the kitchen force at the time, and there should be another door that they could go out so you did not have a traffic problem. Now why this was a big issue, I do not know, but it was something in his mind. Also, he wanted a small room with an outside entrance so that people could come and go like the hired man, and could come and get their paychecks or do their business and not have to be as a part of the household and especially in the kitchen. So the house was so arranged, and this was the only thing that was ever talked about, and as far as I know, Mother had nothing to say about floor plans. I notice always, that she read floor plans and studied them--ever since I could remember she was reading magazines looking at floor plans, so she must have had a frustrated interest in floor plans of some sort.

But anyway the house was staked out. The carpenter suited the two requirements that Daddy had about traffic patterns for threshers and office type use, and Daddy helped with the excavation of the basement, and then it became necessary to get sand, and this was one of the things that he always talked about. In order to pour the cement for the foundations, the floors, and the porch and so on. So he--that one spring in between crops, like in the evening, he would get this certain old team of horses, Old Nell and Old Johnnie. Horses had personalities, names and were family characters. And he would go to the river bed, and there was a certain outcropping of river sand which was very good, was clean, free of clay, and so he would go down in there and scoop sand on this, kind of flat bed. Sand is extremely heavy and so it couldn't be too much. And these poor old horses--he always said that those poor old horses would stand there with their heads down as though they were thinking, oh my, oh my. And he would shovel it on and then he would get up on the thing and just say, "All right, let's go." And they would. As he would describe it, they would bow their necks, meaning they really were pulling with all four feet, and they would climb up out of this river bed, had to pull it up the edge, and then bring it on up home. And it was a long hard pull for them. But he hauled sand and then--this was a labor saving and a cost saving device--and so he hauled the sand and when they got enough he helped mix the cement, so that the cement men could actually pour it and trowel it and take care of it.

So he and the hired man did a great deal of the major labor of the heavy labor in the house. The walnut in the living room--at one time some two years or so earlier Grandfather had cleared off a piece of what they called the wood lot, and there was some walnut trees in that particular section, and Daddy noticed the walnut and said, "What are you going to do with the walnut?" And Grandpa said, "Well, burn it like the rest." And Daddy said, "Well, how about me just kind of putting that to one side in case we want to build anything." So he had enough walnut, and he hauled it to Springfield to the Vredenburgh Lumberyard, and had them cut and plane and so the downstairs is furnished, finished,

in walnut from the lumber that he had saved. So here again it was kind of a planning. A blind planning perhaps, but he did have these on hand. So when the house was all finished, and a lot of the things that they did put in which at that time was very modern construction, there was running water put in the house, and an upstairs bathroom.

Q. Oh.

A. And this was also a complicated plumbing situation of which a neighborhood farmer, Mr. Keetch Bone, from over at Rock Creek did the plumbing. And there, you see, in this particular area--now the well that we mentioned in digging furnished drinking water which is high in--well it's really lime deposit and so it's so-called hard water. And for cleansing, it's very difficult especially at that time when you used only soap, there were no detergents, and it curdled instead of cleansed. And so it was necessary to have a cistern and soft water--cistern or soft water for washing purposes, but you can't trust cistern water for drinking because of the run-off in the gutters and whatnot. So there was the two water system to be put through one pump . . .

Q. Oh.

A. . . . and so this while it sounds very--well unnecessary, it was a very complicated process and at that point, the house took on kind of unusualness because of the plumbing feet of Mr. Bone. The second thing that made the construction a little bit different was the fact that they built an electric system into the house, and it was a gasoline engine, a Lalley plant, and the gasoline engine charged the batteries, and the batteries then in turn furnished the electricity for the house. And it was, it was a good innovation. It was better than the settling things, it seemed a little safer than those. But it wasn't altogether satisfactory and very frequently we were using poor lamps because the batteries weren't charged, which had to be done all the time. So, in the total cost of the house, Daddy figured it with the cost of labor and materials, the house cost approximately $3,000 to $3,500.

Q. This house?

A. In 1914. And at that time the house had four bedrooms upstairs, and a bath and a sewing room so actually there were four large rooms and two small rooms upstairs, and downstairs the living room, front hall, dining room, large kitchen, and in the back there were two small rooms.

Q. What were they used for?

A. The two small rooms. One was the little office effect and we called it the den. The telephone was in there and it had an outside entrance off of the back porch, and the second small room was called the washroom. So that when the men came in from the barn and the field, they came in and went to the washroom to hang up their field clothes, and there was a washbasin and this was their--just a general utility room for people use, not for laundry use.

Q. Oh.

A. And then of course the full-sized basement. And so this was the house construction, and I think the cost is a little bit interesting. There'd been very few changes made in the house since then. But one change when my parents got along in years and after Daddy--Daddy had a major heart attack as I mentioned before, and at that time the doctor told him he would never be able to go up and down stairs again. He'd never be able to drive an automobile again, and he had just purchased a new car, and this made him really pretty sick. And so it--he kind of went by the rules and got along fine and wore out that car and two others. But there was a time that he felt that there might be a need for a downstairs bedroom. So the back porch was taken off--on the northwest corner--and a downstairs bedroom was built there. And just so that it was for convenience of older years. And there was a minor change made in the downstairs hall and a half bath put in.

Q. So there were two porches then? Two back porches.

A. There were two back porches.

Q. Oh.

A. One for family use and entrance to the kitchen and the other for the outside entrance for hired help primarily.

Q. Yes.

A. And then we have a large front porch which nobody in the world ever uses.

Q. They're pretty typical? On a farm?

A. I think it was typical of that period. You mean the front porch being typical?

Q. The front porch on a house was typical I think. I mean . . .

A. Yes, yes, I think it was.

Q. . . . houses had front porches. But the lack of use . . .

A. Yes, I believe. In fact I've lived here for four years now. I've had two people come to the front door. One was a young high school boy that didn't--was a little ill at ease and didn't quite know where to knock. And so he came to the front door very formally, having walked around the house to do this. The other was just recently; two little boys had a flat tire on a bicycle on their way from Springfield to New Salem park, and they came to the front door. So immediately, I know that they are a . . .

Q. It's got to be somebody from town. (laughs)

A. Right. But so much for the house. I just thought it might be kind of interesting to know.

Q. You mentioned the kitchen force at harvesting, threshing time.

A. Yes.

Q. Who was the kitchen force?

A. Well, the lady of the house would share labor and assistance with other households just as the men were sharing labor. And usually it was your immediate friends in the neighborhood. Two or three women, your immediate neighbors. All those that you normally traded the greatest amount of help, maybe the men would trade with them. I mean, you always had certain ones that you exchanged services more frequently, and so the women, this was the same thing and usually there were, oh, three or four women and five or six children that accumulated in the kitchen, and this was the kitchen force.

Q. You hear about these people, usually older people from farms talk about; we had enough food to feed a threshing crew.

A. Right.

Q. What kind of food did you feed a threshing crew? What kind of food, you know?

A. What kind of food? Well, it was really substantial work food. Basically lots of potatoes, lots of mashed potatoes. Usually two kinds of meat. We'll say ham was a standard as a rule, or chicken could be interchanged with it, and then you would have a beef of some kind. Meat loaf, beef roast, something of this kind. Some people might have pork chops. Now the problem, of course, in the kitchen was variety because if you had a threshing crew that ate with you for ten days straight, you didn't want to come up with the same menu everyday.

Q. Yes.

A. And so these would be--you would have two meats of some selection. This usually fell in the summers.

END OF SIDE ONE

Q. Mrs. Sayre, the last time that we talked to you, you mentioned that your grandfather had given you a horse. You said that you really didn't know what to do with him, but he taught you a lot about life, or you learned a lot from him or something. Would you like to expand on that a little bit?

A. Well, really what I meant by that, this was a pony and a pony is a very headstrong, strong-willed, a determined little beasty. And being an only child, I had spent a great deal of my time with grown-ups, and I suppose they managed me, and I was unaware of this. I had never learned to manage people myself, and I learned from the pony how to deal with a personality, and he had a personality. It was centered around the feed trough and a water trough. Very determined and you learned to maneuver, and to a certain extent I think it was the first place that I ever learned to really stand my ground a little and be determined in my way, too. My dad kept telling me, "Well, you've got to make him do what you want him to do." And by disposition I did not like to hit things. I mean, to hit a pony was some--I liked this pony, and this was somehow something that was very distasteful, but you learned in order to assert yourself, and to a--there was a conflict of personalities. Maybe not personalities, maybe it's just will, maybe there weren't personalities of person and a horse, but this is what I meant, that I learned that you did have to reach a conclusion yourself, and perhaps take strong measures to assert yourself to the point to accomplishing this thing, and that's what I meant when I said I learned something from the pony.

Q. Okay. Thank you. What did you do when you were a child? Did you have friends around in the neighborhood, or did you play by yourself, what kind of games did you play, and how did you spend your days, and what'd you do for fun, and did you have responsibilities you had to carry out? That's a lot, but just, you know.

A. It--as I look back at it really I don't--I never thought of spending my days some way. I guess I probably worried my mother to death in that being an only child, there were no playmates within easy range. This is one of the problems of living in the rural community. You do not have exchange with people of your own age unless they're in your own household. In a urban situation, lines are closer and everybody on the block in a sense is a community family . . .

Q. Yes.

A. . . . in the rural area this is not true. It became a major situation for parents to take you to someone's house to play and then to be returned, and transportation then was not as easy as it is now with automobiles and so there was very little exchange with community playmates. This was one of the reasons the school experience was a very happy situation. You were with people your own age. Really for the first time with any continuing relationship, and so on.

Q. Yes.

A. So as a small child, I would say that I worried my mother to death. I had a swing out of the kitchen window in an old apple tree, and I can recall--really when you say what did I do, I can't really recall anything that I did by way of play, except, "Look Mother, Look," and

and Mother saying, "Yes," and then I either was swinging high or I was twisting the rope and twirling or some stupid child thing. But when I recall it, I can remember many times saying, "Look Mother, watch now," and I guess this was a matter of needing playmates. And Mother out the window would say, "Yes, I'm watching. Oh, that's good." And so this is how my early childhood was spent.

Q. You mean up until the time you went to school probably or even after?

A. Even after. I would say up until well, probably twelve years old. Something of this kind. The event of the day in those, even up to twelve, would be helping your parents with--it was always my duty to go to the garden and get the vegetables and get them cleaned, and then they were turned over to--for the preparation to Mother. Then the next event of the day was to wait for the men to come in from the field. This was activity in the household and we went to the barn to meet them. This was mealtime. This was when your dad came and if there was any news or happening he knew about it. So this was the big event. Nighttimes, I really can't remember what we did at night. Everybody was tired and went to bed, I guess.

Then in high school times, or that is by twelve, one of the--again one of the major I would say things that shaped my early living was 4-H work because this was quite important. I started out sewing and because at that time there were few agricultural projects that girls took part in, not as much as the programs now, but the girls did the cooking, the sewing, and the room improvement projects. Those were the major ones. And I started out in 4-H work and this was the big event for the summer. So really the school year, you were looking to the schoolroom for your social contacts, and then the 4-H in the summer was your world. And it was in 4-H work that I went first through the sewing situation and then it became difficult to find leaders. And so I became a leader of the 4-H club when really I was one of the youngsters in the--I was just an older member in the club is what it amounted to.

Q. But you had the responsibilities for teaching the others.

A. Yes, and helping. Now mother was the leader and I was an assistant leader . . .

Q. Oh.

A. . . . for a couple years, and then it sort of reversed. I took the major role of organizing and carrying the meetings, and she was kind of around for counsel. And there are other mothers in the same capacity. So it meant teaching the youngsters and helping them with their--everybody in 4-H work at that point had to present a talk and be on the program, and at the time it seemed like such a horror for the individual that was having to do this. Then at the planning stage it seemed like such a chore to get everybody lined up to do it. It would have been so much simpler to tell them, "Do it youself." But as you look back now this was basic, excellent training for youngsters that had had no public speaking . . .

Q. Yes.

A. . . . and it was a way of really developing people, and in leading this, I think I developed, I'm sure, more than I would have if I had just been doing things.

Q. Yes.

A. Then mother at that stage was doing judging. There are always those eternal contests in 4-H work at that point. And so mother would go and judge, and I would go and more or less watch and listen. And through this I think I began to learn a little of the evaluating processes. Not just doing the evaluating. Then when I was a senior in high school, there was a contest that was offered by a mail order house through the 4-H work. A mail order house, excuse me, in Chicago. Chicago mail order house, and it was offered through the club in demonstrating, and in order to go into this contest you started in your county. And one of the neighbor women, Mrs. Carl Kirby thought that this would be something worth trying for, in the county. She was a county 4-H person, and a person that read a great deal and knew about these things. So she organized the county situation and you started out with individual demonstrations. The two winners of the individual demonstrations became a county team. Then the county team went to the district. The district then to Champaign for the state thing. And then the winner in the state went to the International Livestock Show in Chicago, which is the kind of the end of the competition year in 4-H work as well as other livestock areas. But that's where the agricultural projects go, they still do, for their final evaluation and top placements.

Well all 4-H went into this same pattern including this demonstration contest, and so Nancy Grosball--a girl from the county--and myself went through it and won the national contest, and the award was a trip to Europe, to be planned. Now the company, the mail order company gave the fund to the state leader who was Mary McKee at the time on the state extension staff at Champaign, and she planned the trip. Mrs. Kirby the county leader and the two girls, Nancy and myself, were to take this trip. We were gone a little better than a month. It's terrible I've forgotten just how long. It was better than a month. And for both Nancy and myself it was the first time that we had scarcely been--well we had been to Chicago, but other than that we were definitely the first time out of the county.

And so we went to Chicago and we had the experience of broadcasting from WLS which was the, the station at that time for agricultural people, and then we went on to New York and were met--well first we went to Washington, and there we were met by national 4-H leaders, and we saw Washington. And then we went on to New York and were met by representatives of the mail order house, and from there we took, went by boat--the Leviathan, which was the big boat at that time, the Queen Mary would make it look mighty small, by this time. So this was a real experience for two little girls that had never been out of the county. Being frightened the first time on the boat, but

we came back on the same boat, and we devised various methods of accomplishing on the trip home things that we couldn't accomplish the first time. The boat, of course, was divided into three classes. Tourist class, first class, and a . . .

Q. Super duper.

A. Yes, deluxe. You couldn't go--we were traveling tourists, of course, because the idea was to take the fund that we won and make it stretch as far as we could. So coming back we had already known the timings that gates were closed. So when we came back on the boat we saw the whole ship, including the swimming pool in the deluxe class before they closed gates. Anyway, so this was a trip that we visited a home--now this was a trip that was well planned by Miss McKee because she had done a great deal of homework at the extension level, and many of the people had traveled and knew, and had contacts in the European area. We visited for instance, a private home in Holland. Spending the evening there which was a real different experience than just walking through a town or museum. We visited--well the Liberty textile sales situation in London, which was quite an experience. We went to the diamond--well, they're the polishers--the diamond cutter school in Amsterdam. Of course, all the museums--not all, but it seemed like we'd been to them all. (laughs) And so this was one of the first kind of, stretching it out that the world was a little bit larger than the immediate community. And then, following this of course, I came back and went to college.

Nancy, the young--was younger and still had two years in high school. So because of the difference in age, and dispositions, Nancy saw a very different side of the trip than I did. I think I was well a little bit more--I don't know, hum-drum, I guess--routine in the things that I observed. Nancy saw all the funny things, but between the two of us, I think that we both kind of compared notes and got a good deal out of the trip. So, this was 4-H and then you came back and you were still a leader in 4-H after that, and went to national, oh not national congress, but to the state convention in Chicago, three different times I believe it was. So this was--I would say, I owe a great deal to 4-H as the broadening out the experience of a great, bigger world, and seeing people at different--in a different light. And so, 4-H did a great deal for me.

Q. What differences, or what difference did you see between Europe and the United States? What did you expect it to be and what did it prove to be?

A. I really don't think that I expected anything. It was the--really this was one of the pities, I guess, of winning something before you were prepared for going. Now we, Mrs. Kirby and Miss McKee tried to get us to read and prepare before hand, but very frankly I think youngsters of that same age today would have more expectations, maybe more--maybe they would go with more stereotypes in their minds. I didn't really expect anything particularly. I was just ready to accept anything.

So foods and everything were just a real novel experience, and as far as being--looking for anything, things like, well the art works and things of this kind. We spent two whole days in the Louvre, but that, of course, didn't begin--and as far as the history is concerned, there were things that you came home realizing how much you had missed in your history courses, because there were such questions and gaps in things.

You would go--again in France, you would go to all of these castles, the Tuileries Gardens, seeing where Louis and Marie Antoinette lived, and you began to be very aware of how little you knew about these people, and you were--I came home, and I still have this, and I have difficulty not being embarrassed when I travel, because I feel it's such a degrading thing for people to come and look at you and not even know anything about you, and I sometimes feel that when I travel this is what I'm doing. You go to see a country and you don't know anything about the country. You don't speak the language and I almost get to the point of thinking I better stay home because there's something about the thing that, it's just wrong.

And I think I felt this again when I--one of the major experiences in that first trip we did go to over Oberammergau and it was the year of the Passion Play. It's given only every ten years and this--we happened to be on the right year, and it was such a new experience to me to see Old Testament and New Testament really being woven together, and it was one of the things that in my Sunday School experience I went regularly, but there were a lot of little individual stories and I never had been clever enough on my own to weave them together as a whole picture. The Passion Play did that for me.

But I always wanted--I kept afterwards thinking--I want to see it again because is it really as great a production as I felt it was at first. So three years ago I went back to the Passion Play again just to see it. To see what it was, and I will have to say that I was just as impressed with it as an adult as I had been with [it] as a high school youngster.

But the thing that I think the whole--back to your original question, this whole business of what did I expect. I didn't expect anything, therefore it all was just a fresh new experience to me. Now when--this last trip when I went back to, this time to the Scandinavian countries and down to the Passion Play. I found in my own mind, I was expecting certain things in certain countries. And I don't think I went with as healthy an attitude as I went when I was younger because the other time I was just a sponge soaking up feelings I think.

Q. Yes, yes.

A. So, so much for 4-H, but the thing that I wanted to kind of say that really one of the things that we talked about here, was the college period and how I happened to decide on home economics and the U. of I. [University of Illinois]. Well the 4-H and the extension centering in this was really what shaped that up.

Q. Yes.

A. So 4-H was important, both in seeing other people through the trip, working with people, learning to deal with people, picking up what the pony had taught me, I guess, a little bit as well as a more or less deciding the field that I wanted to work in when I taught. So 4-H was the major thing.

Q. I have three questions about that 4-H experience. First of all, do you know the name of the Chicago mail order house? Or was it the . . .

A. It was the Chicago mail order house at that time, and now it is the, oh, I've forgotten, it has changed names.

Q. What year was that when you were there?

A. In 1930.

Q. Between the wars then? And what was your project that you did, and how old were you? Well you had graduated from high school so . . .

A. I had just graduated from high school and the project was not a project in the sense of a sewing or foods project. It was a demonstration on selecting your wardrobe, and the accessories that went with it, and it was worked out around a pattern of different occasions, selecting a dress, and we used dresses that the 4-H youngsters had made for these things. Some Nancy had made, I had made one and then some of the other people had made them. And then we chose shoes and accessories, belts and all this rigamarole, and this was a presentation, and it was definitely team deal. And it was, I think, one of the amazing experiences.

The first time that we put on--we did this twice in the contest--and the first time it just went off fine, just like clock work, no problems. Everything was all right. Nancy talked well on her feet and I could--we didn't really have memorized parts, but you knew what was coming next, and kind of, it had been routinized enough because you had gone through it enough. But the second day I don't recall what we had done before or why, but I can still remember this very shattering experience of just going alone, everything was fine, and suddenly there was not one thought or one reaction in your mind. You were really drawing a complete blank, and when you say you draw a blank, if you've never really experienced it, you don't know how blank it can be.

And I hesitated for a minute and Nancy could see that something was kind of wrong, and she handed me something and said, "Now you know this might be an interesting . . ." I don't really recall the words she said, but she led me right back in to what my thought was and everything was fine. I was not frightened. It was not something--I don't know just what it was, anyway I drew a blank period, and later in the thing, Nancy had a similar situation, but this was where team work and the judges saw this. They knew exactly what was happening, and they saw that it was a team situation and this is one of the reason that I think we--I'm not recommending drawing blanks, but I think in this particular case it helped.

Q. Both of you were cool enough that you could leave the other out of it without becoming terrified.

A. So, so much for the--and it was a demonstration project in answer to your question.

Q. Okay, let's see. Oh, did you help plant the garden? You mentioned bringing in the vegetables. Did you help with the gardening?

A. As a child? Oh, yes. It was a family project, Father on the heavy end of the hoe, and Mother supervising and helping planting, where to put what, and oh, definitely, it was a family project. I always got to cover the beans and things like that. Mother dropped them and I got to cover them. So it was a big project.

Q. How did you go about it? Did you plow or spade?

A. Plowed. Plowed with horses and usually got in there then with a harrow to work it down. It was a small--at that time everything had to be fenced because of the livestock and chickens, etc., had to be kept out of the garden. So a garden was always a fenced area, which presented some problems in the plowing and the maintenance of it, but it was a horse situation large enough to fence.

Q. What kind of a fence did you use?

A. Primarily a woven wire fence was the predominant thing all over the farm, except the locked fences. Horses and cattle--primarily horses--have a tendency to run into fences and injure themselves unless they see them. As you'll always notice a horse farm has, if it has a wire fence it has a white board around it. This is because the horse does not see the fence and then can cut themselves and have problems. So in general, the lot fences were board, oak and cedar board, not cedar, cyprus. And the garden was a wire fence, but chicken tight so the chickens couldn't get in.

Q. Yes. Did you have a separate perennial garden for you know the perennial kinds of fruits or vegetables or did you--like I'm thinking of asparagus and rhubarb, was that within the main garden?

A. They were in the main garden around the edges, and there was a large asparagus bed and all of this was around the edges. There was a separate area called the orchard for fruit trees, but the garden had the perennials because here again, they had to be fenced. And the strawberries, rhubarb, raspberries, asparagus, these were all in there. Now the potatoes were usually out of the garden. They took more area and there usually was a spot in the field. Someplace that you would have a couple of rows of potatoes.

Q. What about corn?

A. And corn the same way.

Q. Field corn, or did you have sweet corn?

A. Sweet corn.

Q. But you still had a separate place?

A. Yes, and that was moved around because you see, sweet corn and field corn mix. They pollinate at the same time and so the sweet corn patch had to be moved away from the other corn a little so that the patches--a patch of potatoes and a patch of corn were typical because of spacing and they vary from year to year. Sometimes maybe you would have a small amount of both potato and corn in the garden, but primarily they were moved out because you needed the space for--you planted early. You planted your lettuce and your radishes, beets, and carrots and parsnips. Those were always the first things in, and then you planted beans and peas . . .

Q. What kind of beans?

A. Bush beans first, and peas came in that first planting if you decided to have them. And then there would be bush beans and then you would come along with your tomatoes and cabbage plants which sometimes you raised and sometimes you bought at the store depending on whether--how the work was going in the spring. If everything was open you planted your own seed and you had your own little hotbed effect, but sometimes you bought your plants. And then later you planted pole beans and (pause) and then turnips in the fall. They were--sometimes you planted turnips early but as a rule July 25th [if the] weather was dry, which reminds me I didn't plant mine this year. You planted turnips for fall planting and that was the primary garden. Now occasionally there would be something that some body would decide they wanted to try. We seldom had squash and the pumpkins were raised in the field.

Q. Watermelon?

A. No watermelon in this area.

Q. Oh.

A. They simply don't do well in this black soil. Watermelons need a different kind of soil. If you had an old straw stack you occasionally planted muskmelon and watermelon, but this was usually one, or at most a two year deal, depending on the stack deterioration. You see there was a likeness, there was a great deal of humus. It held the moisture but had good drainage at the same time. The soil here is too black and too gumbo for watermelon. So that was the garden and these were things that, as I say, it varied from year to year, but generally speaking it was pretty much the pattern.

Q. Did you ever hear of the word truck patch?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you ever use it at home?

A. No. We never used this. A truck patch as a rule indicated a commercial enterprise near a city, and gardening was not commercial. I mean, you never sold your vegetables. There were truck gardeners around. Now for instance around Springfield, I have heard the term there and I heard my dad use it as a truck gardener, but this indicated a large enough vegetable operation for sale, and so we never considered our garden as a truck patch.

Q. Okay.

A. Seldom did I ever hear this term. I heard it. I knew what it meant, but not--it wasn't, it didn't seem to apply.

Q. Yes. Was your garden that you just described to me similar to your grandmother's garden or did she have differences in her garden? Was this just the traditional garden?

A. Pretty traditional. Of course, gardens always reflect the tastes of the people. If they don't like parsnips, they're not going to plant parsnips. Daddy always liked parsnips, and we always had it. I never quite understood why, but he seemed to understand it. Now my grandmother Irwin's garden was different because again the use--the demand was different because I can remember seeing her garden and she would have--it was a very large garden with very long rows and she would have, oh, twenty rows of potatoes. Potatoes just seemed to go on and on and on.

Q. Right in the garden?

A. Right in the garden, but this reflected the fact that she had a large family of five boys and a hired man, and everybody to cook for and they were close to the house for digging purposes and she supervised it. Now in our case the potatoes were away because there was a different period here, and they didn't need the supervision quite so much. But grandmother needed those potatoes where she could send a boy out to get a bucket of potatoes for this meal, and this is what I mean by supervision. She didn't send him clear to the backside of the farm someplace because he wouldn't appear in time, but he was out there where she could say, "Hurry, we need those potatoes now." And so her garden was a bigger garden, and I would say more a fundamental garden. There was very little lettuce and things of this kind.

Q. Little green?

A. Not much green.

Q. How about spinach?

A. No.

Q. Did they--where did they get that or did they even get that kind of thing?

A. They didn't eat it much. Cabbage.

Q. They didn't get wild greens out of the . . . .

A. Now they did pick wild greens. Yes. Wild greens were something different, but this was now not from my--I'm talking about the potato patch with my Grandmother Irwin.

Q. Oh.

A. Now my Grandmother Thompson from the other side, were more inclined to pick wild greens and things of this kind, and this was one of the highlights of my childhood was when grandmother would come out and we would go green hunting, and this was a big day. Once, she usually come about twice in the spring, and we would hunt greens and pick greens, and then come in and wash them and we would have cornbread and usually by then there would be new onions and greens and that was just the big event of spring. They both tasted good, but most of all it was fun doing, (laughs) I think, and she taught you how to pick greens, which ones to get.

Very, very early we would pick dandelions and lamb's-quarters. A little later, the second time as we would come out, usually the dandelion would have gotten bitter and you used less and you used--we would find wild mustard, this was the most desirable, and then you would fill in with a small amount of lamb's-quarters, some pepper grass, some dock--a curly dock--and those were the chief ones that she picked. Now there are others that I now know that you can use, but those were the ones that she--and she would more or less judge, "Now we don't want too much more of that. That's enough of that. Now let's find so and so." Now really at this point, I don't know whether Grandmother was doing this as something as a way of having an activity with me, or whether she was really feeling a balance within the green selection. I don't know. She led me to believe that there was a balance that she was trying to work out.

Q. Were the greens cooked, or were they fresh?

A. Cooked. Cooked with usually a piece of ham or something if you had it for seasoning and they were cooked very long. This was one of the things that early cooking with a coal range, you had long--that is constant low heat, and the range was there going anyway because you didn't let the fire go out. Now on a electric stove, you cook and you turn off your heat, but with the range it was continuing anyway and it was the custom that you cooked things for hours. Greens would cook for probably two hours before it was even considered that they were near done, and at that time they were pretty much mush, and the green beans were cooked always until they were limp and raggety, and cabbage, oh, when I think how we lived through the cabbage. It was cooked until it was a brown kind of a tan color, and that was cooked. I now cook cabbage not more than three minutes, five minutes and it is overcooked. And this was just a difference in the cooking, primarily I think because of the difference of the source of heat. I mean, you wouldn't keep your stove running all that time now.

Q. Except you wouldn't have needed to leave the things on that long to get it cooked. It was just a matter of taste wasn't it?

A. Yes, that's true.

Q. Did you drink the juice or the broth from the vegetables?

A. Oh, pot liquor. No, we didn't, but in the south they did. (laughs)

Q. Yes.

A. And pot liquor is something that I really never experienced until after I was married and we lived in Atlanta, Georgia. And there I worked in the out-patient department of Grady's Hospital, which was a city hospital, and I worked as a nutritionist and that was the first time that I really ran into pot liquor, and it was the custom that the children got the pot liquor and the grown-ups ate the vegetables.

Q. The kids got the better end of the deal.

A. They did, and it's a saving grace because the child took a piece of cornbread and the pot liquor soaked it up and it made it both--why it was good food and even the--they didn't feed a child pablum, they feed them pot liquor on cornbread. Well the child was getting all the good and the grown-ups was doing the best they could with what was left. (laughs) So it was really--pot liquor was something--but now really the greens that I experienced as a child were usually regulated to the point that you didn't pour off much, but it was pretty well cooked down. You didn't start them out with all that liquid. You started them out with just enough so that by the time they were through you might add a small amount of water as they cooked so that they didn't get too low. But you didn't pour off anything, and you didn't have the volume of pot liquor that some do. So I know what you mean by pot liquor.

Q. Yes, I was wondering about the nutrition, you know, that you would be losing. Let's see, you went to high school. You went to college. You met your husband while you were at the university?

A. At the University of Illinois, right.

Q. Did you have a whirlwind courtship, a long courtship . . .

A. Oh long, it went on forever. No, I met him my second year at the university. I'll take that back. It was the first year, and he was from the hometown of my roommate, and so the first year there was a blind date. The fraternity house had one of its functions, and he was a freshman. He was a year younger than I was. He was a freshman, and didn't know where to find a date for the affair, and so, of course, he went to the girl that he knew from home. She had a date that night, but her roommate didn't, and so I went on this blind date along with the roommate and her date, and then I dated him a little bit that year.

Not too much, and then the next year I went with him off and on, and then the third year, he was about the only [one] I went with. Then now you would call it going steady. At that point I don't really know what we did call it. You just didn't date anybody else. (laughs) I think that's the way you said it, and then I graduated and taught in Athens, as we said before, and he graduated a year later, and at that point we--he had come back and forth, and we still--then I taught for three years, and then we were married. So I really dated him about five years which is long enough to get acquainted I think. It wasn't a whirlwind situation. It was kind of a--I would say it was a courtship of habit. It was just kind of a habity thing.

Q. Comfortable habit?

A. Yes, and no problem of getting a date because you knew he was going to ask you, and he knew he didn't have to ask you ahead of time because you knew you were expecting him to ask you, you know, and it was kind of a too bad situation. I think courtships of a whirlwind situation maybe were better sometimes. (chuckles) A little bit on the toes.

Q. How long did you know you were going to marry him? When did you decide that or did he decide that or . . .

A. Again just kind of developed. I don't believe--I don't say that people of that period didn't plan better. Maybe I didn't plan. Maybe I was the one. But it just kind of developed. I really kind of got tired of teaching school. But that wasn't the primary thing. He was going to go to Harvard to do his doctorate and it was kind of a long way off. And it was just kind of agreed that we'd do this together and I would do what I could to help. I would--it just kind of developed. It was one of these things, and we were married here.

Q. In the house?

A. In the house, and it was just a family. When I said just a family, only about fifty people, but you know, the house was full. It was just cousins and immediate family. The two grandparents and his mother's side on the davenport and it was right in the living room. And one of the neighbor girls did the music and the church women came out from the church and served the reception--a food--and then we left after the wedding, and went to Boston and I didn't get back for another year. So it was just kind of one of those developments. And the Boston situation was most interesting and enjoyable. I loved the whole business.

Q. Yes, was the wedding in the house, the way your family got married? The way people got married in general then or church weddings or . . .

A. Lots of church weddings. I would say that a church wedding was more normal than a home wedding. I had a thing about big church weddings. I still have a thing about it, and I see it rubbing off on my boys at this point. But I just--I dreaded large church weddings because to me it

was asking for gifts. You ask everybody that you can think of.

END OF SIDE TWO

Q. Mrs. Sayre, we were talking about weddings. Were there any wedding customs in your family?

A. Well, I suppose the family really run pretty much routine as far as the social customs at the time. Now my father and mother were married in the home and at that time I think weddings had a tendency to be home weddings for them. In fact, all of my mother's people--or brothers and sisters--were married in the home and they were quite gala affairs; many flowers from the florist which in those days was really something way out . . .

Q. This was your mother's wedding?

A. This was my mother's and her sister's, in other words that generation of people. And there were sit-down breakfasts that were elaborate with place cards that you remembered, little fancies. Then--now that was my mother's generation. When it came to my generation, I think the church wedding was more usual, with a standup reception following it. This was the usual pattern and when I said that I didn't like the church wedding, certainly this is no reflection on anybody else. Maybe they simply felt more cordial toward people and maybe they felt that a church wedding was furnishing entertainment for a greater number of people, and so you had a large wedding with six and eight bridesmaids. I somehow just as a personal feeling didn't care for this and so my wedding was in the home. And the immediate family--the people that I felt were really interested in this as an event and me as a person and my husband's people the same thing. He had a large family, but they were not as close a group and it was the part of his family that he felt was really interested in him and they came. So it was the home wedding.

Now I think maybe I've planted the wrong situation with my two boys, but I see it coming through with them. The youngest one has been married now for three years and it was a very small wedding. I think she would perhaps have been prepared for a larger wedding, but he felt that it was a form of--well it was a little bit ostentatious to have a big wedding. He thought it was a poor use of funds, he thought that it was making a big show when he didn't feel that this should be a show that this should be something very personal. Now this was his--and I think that Stephanie agreed with this, but I feel that he had a little influence in it, and I was a little embarrassed about it at the time because I hoped I hadn't influenced him unthinkingly.

Now my older boy is going to be married this September and I find the wedding patterns have really changed a great deal. They now--their friends are writing their own wedding services and they're memorizing. Now in my time, you repeated after the minister and this is kind of an awkward--you feel kind of like a blind person leading, you know, through.

Then I find now there are more and more of them that are memorizing these and they simply say their vows, which has really more meaning. I think it has a little better approach than what my generation had. I'm not sure about this writing your own vows, but if this is something that they feel about, I think this is fine. Now I don't--Rich is about to write his, I don't know, we'll wait until September the second to see. (laughs)

But, in other words I think weddings have gone the same cycle that everything else goes. From the simple home wedding that my grandparents had and then my parents, they got a little fancier and then I went--then we went through the big church wedding and now we're back to the simple ones again. So it's just kind of done the cycle. And I came through in kind of--well, just stumbling along I guess, but I just objected to the big wedding, probably because I was a product of Depression times and felt that I would rather put the funds someplace else, and that it wasn't all that entertaining for people to come really. So that was the wedding situation as far . . .

Q. Okay. How shall we proceed here, shall we go on now and talk about your children and the subsequent divorce . . .

A. All right.

Q. . . . or shall we talk about the places you lived and then the children and . . .

A. I think we've kind of done the places we've lived in that other tape I believe, and since we're doing weddings I think maybe we ought to just go ahead with weddings that don't last, meaning divorce.

Q. Okay.

A. Of course the two children, I think we've kind of covered that. They were--the oldest one was in the grandparents' home as we moved in and out of the deal. The youngest one was born in Mississippi and had not known the--we hadn't moved as much with him. When he was four--the youngest was four and the older one was six--it just was obvious that the two partners in this marriage had developed in different directions.

The war years probably had something to do with this, the living apart at the time of the first child probably had something to do with this, the personalities probably had something to do with this and I'm perfectly willing to admit that perhaps I was not very well--I've never been a very well disciplined person perhaps. I'm saying this because, I think, I was not ever quite of the disposition to not be myself in some way. And in this particular situation where we were living I found that I was--I couldn't be a person, as a person I was known as Mrs. Doctor Sayre and you were introduced as this, you were just--you were nothing and this is why I say maybe I was undisciplined. I just simply couldn't quite accept this and I saw that my two children were being put into the same situation. They were Dr. Sayre's children and Richard at seven had nothing, I mean, of course he didn't have anything as a personality, but

they never said this is Richard Sayre, this is Dr. Sayre's son and I somehow had the feeling that this was--well you saw it happening in other households too, that we were never going to be in a position of becoming our own selves.

And so this was basically a part of the divorce situation. I couldn't accept it and living in the South in Jerry's position, at a moment's notice you were supposed to have a babysitter, so that it was a free flow that you just kind of divorced yourself from your family in a sense and even at that stage--now the South at that stage was living in a pattern--now this is my interpretation of it. But to me they were living in a pattern that was set in pre-Civil war times, but they were living in the time of a different era and they expected the Negro family to be on call and they weren't. They were living their own lives. Now I was in the position of being kind of between these two periods, almost two different worlds it seemed to me and being a northerner in this situation I simply couldn't adjust.

So this is a part of my problem perhaps, but such things as on a moment's notice you would be told to get a babysitter. Okay, where did you have a babysitter? The maid's day--I mean it was her day off and besides you couldn't ask her to live at your house, she did have a family of her own, and so you found yourself down in quarters hunting anybody that could stay with the kids tonight. "Carrie, can you?" "No, I can't tonight." "Well, do you know anybody?" "Well, maybe Daisy Mae," you know. You were running all over quarters finding a babysitter for your children tonight.

Q. They called it quarters?

A. Yes. The Negro sections were called quarters, a carry-over . . .

Q. That's a throwback to . . .

A. . . . a carry-over, you see this is what I mean, the South at that--maybe they've outgrown it now, I haven't been there in the last fifteen years, but they were living with one foot in one period of time and one foot in another. Well, little by little you found that the demand on your time to grow to be a Mrs. Dr. Sayre to carry--because he was in business and he was doing something else but you had to go and represent the company in a sense. Not because of what you could offer but because you were carrying a name of a company. I found that my children were being raised with anybody that I could get to stay in the house, and most of them were simply fieldhands that were in the field all summer when you had major problems of having anybody in the house because they liked the sociability of being in the field and then all winter they would work in your home and raise your children.

I think where this really came home to me--I had one--she was a nice conscientious older person, she was about sixty-three, physically capable of doing anything and Ella worked for us, took care of Quinten when he was a small baby and did a good job, but she never would take messages on the telephone. Now if I saw her she'd tell me who called and she

never could remember the number, she would remember the name, but if I didn't see her I never got the message and I would say, "Ella write it down, I've got to know who called." Well, it took me--I was a little stupid--it took me a month to figure out Ella couldn't write.

Then I would go into the kitchen--you would come home from the store with supplies and you would have had some flour in the bin and you would get--you knew you were going to do some baking so you would get a second sack of flour, and Ella would open it immediately and I would say, "Ella, don't open those until we need to put them in." Invariably she would open them all. Then stupid me would figure out Ella can't read. How does she know which is the sugar or the flour? How does she know which is cornmeal? If you can't read it's very difficult, but these were the people that were raising my children.

Now she was a sweet old lady, but she really couldn't answer questions very well. You began to see carry-overs in "Buggerman's gonna get cha," I mean there were things that were beginning to show up in the kids. I objected to this, I just kind of wanted to feel like I was doing what I thought I had to do, which I thought was my responsibility to raise two children, and so Jerry couldn't see this, he couldn't see that we were hurting them in any way. One of the experiences; we had a man who was, well this is a long story, but there were D.P.'s in a sense. They were . . .

Q. Displaced persons?

A. . . . displaced persons. They came over the Delta and Pineland, went into Germany and there was supposedly a screening process at the military level for agricultural workers. Delta and Pineland said we will be responsible for your transportation and we want them to work for us one year. Then we hope they will stay. They brought over a boatload of people who were Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian primarily. They came into Mississippi a hot sunny open area from Latvia and Lithuania. They were perfectly miserable. They were clever people. They were smart people. They were trained people. There were doctors in the group. Dentists, professional acrobats, you name it, and they had come over and they were living in housing, field labor housing in the South doing hoe labor.

Well they did their contract. They stayed one year and puff, they were gone, all but one man. Theodore, don't even know his last name at this point. I did know. I never could pronounce it, but Theodore was his first name. It was a Polish person that had at the age of six, his country was overrun. He lost his family. He didn't know whatever happened to them, and he had survived from six on. I think from pictures of his home, he came from a real good background. I mean, it was a beautiful country, lovely horses that he showed with such pride, that this was my dad's horses. A big house, barn situation. I think that he must of come out of a background that had some beginning of security, but he didn't have it.

As a child he lived from Poland--I'm not even sure of my order of things here, but the Poles then were taken over by the Russians and he lived in

a concentration camp for a good many years. Living out of garbage cans, I mean, but he survived. He was clever to this point. As a young person, as a small kid, he could come and go I think perhaps more than adults. He figured out that the Germans had it better than the Russians, so he suddenly found himself in a German concentration camp. I don't know how he got there. He never really said. I don't think he probably remembers. Then he figured out, the British have got it better than the Germans, and so he suddenly was in a German--in a British camp. Then he figured, you know, the best job in this whole place is driving a jeep for one of those American officers, and so this clever person with no background except survival, found himself driving a jeep for an American officer who said, "Are you an agricultural worker?" He said, "I sure am. I used to hoe potatoes for my dad." "All right get on the boat and go to Mississippi," which he did.

Now he turned up to be the main person to look after my children. They lived with him, not lived with him, but he lived in the garage, just in the backyard, and so the kids spent a lot of time out there, and I noticed sometimes that they didn't--they weren't hungry at mealtime, and you begin to wonder why. Well, after kind of prying and pushing, they were eating with Theodore, and I felt this was wrong because I thought Theodore was having a hard enough problem taking care of his own needs, that maybe we should be helping him instead of him feeding my children. So I said, "Why do you eat with Theodore? What does he have that's so good? Why can't we send him something instead, or then we would trade food or something." Well, he didn't think so. I said, "What'd you have to eat?" "Well, today we had raw eggs and bacon." I said, "How does Theodore cook?" "He doesn't. We eat it raw." And raw bacon and raw eggs and they were completely intrigued. Theodore could drink a quart of milk without swallowing. He would simply open his mouth and pour the milk down and they were just, oh, this was just fabulous, you know. Can't you see a four and a six year old, a seven year old just thinking this is wonderful.

Well, these were problems, and then one night we left the children with Theodore, and I was worried when we left. He just wasn't acting quite like he usually did. And I called home and he didn't answer the phone, and I finally--after a few words with a friend's husband, I said, "You got to go home to see if everything is all right. I'm just worried about them." "Oh, you're silly. Everything's fine." "No, you've just got to go." Worry, worry, worry. So he went home, and Theodore had found the whiskey bottle and also he had found the guns--hunting guns--and he was showing the boys how to load and probably would have begun to show them how to shoot before long, and this was when Jerry happened to go home and find him.

Now these were just small things that I could not see that I could raise two children with this. Jerry was trapped in a sense in that he was in a job and he had to do it. But, by mutual consent the divorce was decided that this was the best thing to do, and so this is what I mean. I was unadaptable. I was a little bit staid in my ways, undisciplined to the point of not taking the--probably the facts that I would have had to have lived with. So anyway the divorce was decided upon.

The relatives and my parents especially, they never asked anything. They simply accepted the fact that I am home and that I was going to be here with the boys by myself, that the divorce would be granted within three months. They never questioned anything. They weren't glad. They weren't elated. They both had a great deal of respect for Jerry. There was simply an acceptance of something that to them I'm sure was embarrassing in the community. I'm sure that they had a little feeling of the Victorian period when divorce was not an acceptable thing. But they went merrily along and I fitted right in with the usual pattern. I went to church with them, and they accepted this and the kids they were glad to see, and they helped me find a house in Springfield.

They went with me to look letting me kind of make the decision. Daddy would ask a few kind of pertinent questions once in a while about what is the furnace like? Or in the house--Mother and I went to see the house that we had finally chose and they had some beautiful trees across the street, and we told them that the kitchen was so nice and had this nice--right from over the sink you can see this lovely yard and all these beautiful trees. It had two bedrooms and a nice living room, and it was nicely shaded and the trees were just lovely across the street, and it had such good view of it out of the living room window. And so I thought, and finally we kept talking about these things in the trees and he finally said, "Did you look at the foundation and are there termites in the house or are you buying trees across the street?" Well, (laughs) this was the kind of guidance that he gave us.

Now it turned out that there were no termites and the trees across the street did become Woolco's front parking lot. This is true, but by that time the children were through high school, and at that time we moved, I mean there were other things to think about besides the trees across the street. So what I'm saying here is that my parents were very supportive in a hands off kind of way, and the relatives much the same way. There never were any questions, they simply accepted that something happened. It didn't work out. We don't really know what, and there were no questions. Perhaps it would have been a healthier situation if they had questioned although they never did.

Q. Did they question you about other sort of--what might be considered personal things or was this . . .

A. No, not at all.

Q. Yes, they--you didn't get into each other's business in your family in other words.

A. No, not to that extent. Now I think this would have come perhaps between brothers and sisters, but this was a uncle, aunt, cousin relationship which you just didn't--I mean this is not something that I would have asked them and they would not have asked me. We were friends. They would support. They would do anything to help you out, but they wouldn't ask unless you volunteered, and that's the way it worked out. So that was the relation, I mean the family relationship

at the time and their reaction and as far as I can see I don't think, I mean I couldn't have asked for a better assistance than my parents gave me.

Now you might say how did this affect my world. Well, of course, a divorce affects your world. You suddenly go from a couple orientated social activity to a single girl activity, or a widow activity and one of the things--now for instance when I was in college, this was basically where this kind of--and I think it carried over into this getting adjusted after the divorce. When we were in college, there were three of us that were roommates. We looked at sororities, but we chose not to join one. For two reasons, it basically was going to be an economic strain. We already were kind of pushed to do--to go to college. But secondly, it seems so sort of superficial. A lot of the sorority activities at that time when it was Depression times. There seemed to be very little place for these superficial things that they seemed to think were important, and so between the three of us we decided that we could get everything that a sorority offered without belonging to one. And so it was a concerted effort and we pushed each other and made each other--I guess we had our own sorority is what is happened.

Martha did good typing work, and so we decided at the U. of I. [University of Illinois] of the things that she could do best, would be to work for the Illini--down at the Illini office, and so she went down and volunteered her typing and soon was on the Illini staff of the newspaper. Well, that's what sororities do for you too. They push you out into a place where you need to go. Now Mildred, she was a little bit non-conformist about most of these things and she wanted to do a lot of reading, but she did believe--she too was a 4-H background--and she believed in that so she decided that she would help with the 4-H organization on campus. And so she became kind of a power in the planning of 4-H activities, which were predominately at the beginning of the year, to take freshman in and kind of get them adjusted socially. And she would adopt some little folks that weren't adjusting very well, and Mildred would help them through. Now that was her--I would say she was more the socially aware person, not that she was wanting to be involved, but she wanted other people to be happy about it.

Q. Yes.

A. I decided that the thing for me to do was to stay in the home economics department, and there was a home economics club. And so I started out the usual routine. You first are secretary, and then president, and then projects chairman and so those were the three years. And so I was the one that wound up going down into the depressed area of Champaign with used clothes, that were donated by a church or churches, and then taking the group that came in and helping them make over the clothing so that they were usable to their children or themselves. And of course, I recruited my two roommates. (laughs) But these were the things that--and then we all decided that the thing we needed most to do was to take part in the agricultural home economics school, co-operative things, and so we were always on the dance committees and so on and so on. And you get started volunteering the first year and

soon you're doing the spade work and the first thing you know why you are doing the planning. So this was our sorority routine. Now . . .

Q. Sounds even better than a sorority.

A. . . . but the carry-over was that when I was divorced and moved back into Springfield I found that my world had changed completely, but you went back to the same routine. You couldn't stay at home and talk to the children all the time. You had to have adult contacts. I wasn't looking for mixed social contacts, but just to talk.

So I volunteered for Red Cross and soon you were head of working in the canteen and going to all the fires and making coffee for all the people, and you volunteered for church and soon you're teaching and doing a vacation Bible school, and you know, head of the high school department or something or other, and then you volunteer--then AAUW [American Association of University Women] has always been important as an interesting contact. I think they have interesting programs or did in Springfield at that time, and you found yourself president of AAUW for two terms. And then you find church, you kind of work through the things in your own church, and I believe in cooperative movements if this happens to be a strong feeling on my part, and so I find myself down at United or Church Women United it is now called, doing that presidency for a couple of years. So what I'm saying is the change in the social status after divorce simply threw me back into the same pattern that we had followed really on campus.

Q. Yes.

A. And you were finding contacts at first with a need then finally you get in so deep you don't know how you ever live through it. And then there's the P.T.A. [Parent Teachers Associations] bless its heart. P.T.A. in the grade school and with children four years apart in school, three years in age and four in school, no excuse me, two years in age and three in school, but it just meant that you were in grade school and high school forever. And then there's P.T.A. forever in high school, and P.T.A. Council and so on and so on. And then there's garden club which you were interested in and woman's club work, the whole--and the first thing you know you realize the only solution is to move. And so then I moved to Petersburg and I'm trying to play it a little wiser, but I don't--I hope that I live through next week. (laughs) I'll tell you this is the way it works . . .

Q. Yes.

A. . . . so this is when you would say, did the divorce change your life? Of course, it did. Definitely, but it isn't the end of the world and really--and I don't mean this is quite the wrong--I mean it could be interpreted in the wrong sense, but really a divorce is like a death in the family. The pattern is broken and so what I did with divorce problems is exactly the same thing that every widow does.

Q. Yes.

A. I mean, it's just--you have exactly the same choices, and it's the same thing because your household pattern is changed, and it's changed by having no longer a partnership situation.

Q. Did you ever think of remarrying? I mean did . . .

A. Frankly no. I figured that if I couldn't make a go of it once when I was younger, how could I possibly make a go of it with two children and being older.

Q. Did you ever have a chance to make your decision?

A. No, not really because you just didn't encourage. I mean to have a chance you have to encourage situations and you have to put yourself in the position of being . . .

Q. Available?

A. . . . available or interested.

Q. Yes, so you had made your decision before the occasion ever rose.

A. And you see one of the things that you do right here, when you choose AAUW and United Church Women you've made your decisions right there, because you're not in the same--the channels are different.

Q. Yes. Now there are organizations like Parents Without Partners and there are single organizations. I don't know if they are for divorced people or not.

A. Yes, they are.

Q. Were there--was there anything like that?

A. The Y [Young Women's Christian Association] has them yes, the Y has them.

Q. What was the reaction among the women in these organizations to your being divorced? Was there any or was divorce a common enough . . .

A. As far as I know--now Springfield's a large enough town that as far as I know, there was no reaction because I don't think they really knew. This was one thing, because of the children I was Jeanette Sayre, but you still carried Mrs. sometimes. Mrs. Jeanette and when you did this they realized there was not another partner--I mean there was no partner but they did not really know whether this was a divorce or a death . . .

Q. Yes.

A. . . . and being a larger place, seldom did they ask. They just accepted you for what you were, and if there was a reaction, I was unaware of it.

Q. You didn't feel the cold shoulder then?

A. No.

Q. Good.

A. No.

Q. How did your children react to the divorce? Did they understand or what were they told? What did you tell them?

A. Well, it was my real deep seated idea that they should always have respect for their Dad, and so at the time that the--when we made the move, Quinton, the four year old, was a little young to ask anyway, and Richard at seven never asked a question and this worried me a good deal because I felt it was unusual that he wouldn't have asked. They were simply told that we are going to Springfield to live and Daddy is going to stay in Mississippi. Then they were told that Daddy and I are no longer, he's your father but he's no longer my husband. Rich understood this as divorce, Quinton accepted this. Jerry had traveled a great deal. He was seldom ever home anyway. They didn't miss him in the same way that they would if he had been in the home constantly.

One thing, there had never been any major family rows. It was kind of--it probably would have been healthier if there had of been. Maybe the divorce wouldn't have been necessary if I had wheeled a heavy rolling pin, you know, this kind of thing. Maybe if I'd been told off in no uncertain terms, maybe it would have worked out, but it was a very quiet, very calm thing, and we simply left, and so the boys did not feel that there was any dissension. They didn't miss Jerry particularly because he had always been gone anyway, and they simply accepted at face value that we live here, and there seemed to be no question.

Now I think that there were--I don't believe that there ever was a reaction in Quinton, maybe by personality, maybe by age at the time of the divorce, I don't know. I think there was a delayed reaction in Rich when he was a freshman in college. Now through high school there were times that I wondered if in his--he was the first one through high school, so these were the wonders that I went through with him--that if he missed his dad, if he felt that the other boys with the father in the household had an advantage in any way.

I remember on one occasion (chuckles) I got real nervy and I asked him if he felt that the boys whose fathers were at home, if they really had opportunities that he was missing. He said, "Oh no." And I said, "You don't feel,"--and I don't remember now which one I picked out, but one of the boys whose father was around that I thought was a perfectly normal household. I said, "Do you feel,"--I don't know Joe, I don't remember, there were no friends Joe, might as well say Joe--"has anything happened in his household that you wish you had?" He said, "Oh, no. Joe wishes he could live with us." I said, "Why?" He said, "You know when his dad comes home, we all have to go to the basement and be awful quiet." And

I said, "Oh." He said, "Yes, when his dad comes home we can't play ping pong and we usually leave." So his reaction was that fathers around the house were a minus. (laughs) And this was, I felt maybe he was covering up because he felt I wanted him to say this. I don't know, and I never was sure. I never asked him anymore about it. We just went merrily on.

Now I said he had a reaction when he was a freshman in college. I think Richard went to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] his freshman year. I think to begin with, he bit off a tremendous amount. He was in deep water academically. Secondly he was changing sections of the country at which the children came out of a different academic background, and so even the language of getting together was a little bit different. I mean they just had a different background.

He felt that he had to do something for physical--all boys seem to have to have this physical growth business, you know, the strong man business--and so he went out for a rowing team. Something totally foreign. I mean, who in the Midwest goes out for crew? But he decided that would be interesting. Now where he got that idea I don't know, and he worked very hard at it, and he tried to stay on the lightweight team which said that he cut his food comsumption down to a nub. He worked very long hard hours and rowing is about as strenuous an exercise as there is, and that was his--being away from home for the first time and he went in September and didn't come home until Christmas, and then, I mean it was just the usual two breaks, I mean that break and then at the end of the year.

And all this told on him, now whether it was divorce problems, insecurity showing up at that stage, whether it was fatigue and overload, whether it was academic overload, whether it was a little bit of just freshman problems, I don't know, but Rich did very poorly in his first year. Well he did better in the first six months in his first year, and then he started going downhill, and his second year, he just wasn't making the grade, and so he came home. He stayed out of school and worked there for a while and then he came home and finished up at MacMurray because it was a school local and at that point Richard had--he had sort of just fallen apart in a sense. He had been a good student in high school and it had been a very shattering something for him not to make his grades, and it took him two years at MacMurray to get his feet on the ground and he is still working at it.

So I've always wondered how much of that freshman decline, academically and emotionally that he went through, was just a slow reaction to divorce. I don't know. I don't think it ever showed up in Quinton. So whether there was a reaction with the boys at the time of the divorce, none.

Now they made regular trips, and this is one thing Jerry's sister and her husband went to Mississippi to visit Jerry, and when the boys were little they would come and take them down there. So they always went to Mississippi usually at Thanksgiving time and then once in the summer. So that they kept contact with their dad, and were back and forth with him at least twice a year. Then as they got older, they flew down by

themselves and so that they always--they went and the thing that would happen, they would go and, of course, they were guests, you know, and they would come home--always took a week or so to try to become plain people again because of the guest situation. I'm sure this would have happened if they would have stayed longer down there, but as far as the reaction to them at the time, none, and as far as I can tell, none, even later unless it was a part of Richard's problem in college.

Q. [What were the] financial arrangements, you didn't work. Did your husband support you in any way?

A. Jerry supported and he has been very faithful in this situation, and all through high school and through college he has supported right on through. And he still does in part.

END OF SIDE ONE

Q. We were talking about support from your husband.

A. All right. The boys are now through college and he still continues to support, not support, he still send the same--about half of the support that he always has sent and through his support it was possible to get the kids through college. I couldn't have done it. I mean, even if I had worked full-time, I couldn't have done it without this. His support now comes and it's simply divided between the boys and it's a help in supplying to Quinton's buying a house which he needs and Rich is still in graduate school which helps there, and at this point it is simply a tax help for Jerry. I have no part in it at this point. I mean, it comes through me and I pay because of alimony being tax deductible to him I pay the income tax and that's all I have to do with it at this time. So it's not regular. It's when it's possible for him and it's simply a tax situation.

Q. How about your relationship with his relatives? Have you continued to be a part of the family or has that . . .

A. With his sister, yes. With the rest of the family, I have visited them occasionally. Now his mother and father were still living. I went to see them a few times. They came to see me a couple of times because they wanted to see the boys, and this is why I would take the boys over to see Grandpa and Grandmother Sayre. We did not go regularly because, well, basically Jerry was very, very special in their minds, and I felt that it was difficult for them to be the same . . .

Q. Faithful.

A. . . . faithful to both and this was kind of putting them on the spot in a sense and so I have taken--I did take the boys over but most of the time, again the sister came with her husband and took the boys to visit Grandpa and Grandmother. This was I felt I was doing them a favor by kind of getting out of their worlds.

Q. Yes.

A. Now we still talked by phone occasionally but it wasn't a close relationship. The other relatives I have had very little opportunity to meet with them normally, and I don't go to see them, because I never felt that close with them anyway in that I never lived in the community, and when most the other relatives--I only knew them by going to visit with Grandpa and Grandmother Sayre when we were home say for a week. And that's about all I knew the relatives was just kind of a hello, a reunion kind of meeting. It wasn't a close relationship with any of them. Just because of distance and Jerry wasn't close with them either.

So I would say that now, with Jerry's sister, we've taken a couple of long trips together. Just this last--her husband has died and she is retired and she is a--she needs someplace to go and somebody to go with her and give her a little confidence that she can do it. And we did a long trip. We drove out to see Quinton and went to Washington D.C. and all down around through the Smokies and back and then this year we went down to the Gulf coast at azalea time. Not azalea it was before azaleas, it was camellia time, down in New Orleans, Avery Island, Louisiana, everyplace that had floods later. We've decided we should never--next time we're going to go to the desert and see what it does, but we have a real good relationship. I go down--she lives at Alton and we go down and shop in St. Louis occasionally and Alton and she comes up here for the week-end, so we got along just fine and . . .

Q. She's your sister.

A. She's my sister and at this case, in this time, she kind of needs somebody to be a sister to her in a sense, so this is I would say--the boys feel very close to her and she feels very dependent upon them. So I would say that it's a very normal family relationship. No string at all.

Q. You mention that you went to see your son Quinton. Do both your boys live away from Springfield?

A. Yes. Quinton, the younger, lives in New Jersey; Flemington, New Jersey, and he works in a bank there. He's married and they felt it was necessary--there were very few places to rent, and he's bought a house with six acres around it, and Quinton is just cutting multiflora roses like mad. Gardening. I talked with him the other night, and they're having a terrible struggle keeping ahead of the summer squash and the cucumbers right now. (laughs)

Q. Oh my, how wonderful.

A. And the older boy is still in school at the University of Chicago and . . .

Q. He's the one who's going to be married.

A. He's going to be married in September, and the girl that he's gone with--they've gone together now for about three years now. She's been down many weekends and I feel very well acquainted with her. I've never met her folks, they live in Albany, New York. Her father's deceased, but her mother and sister live in Albany and that is home to her. I don't know her family at all, but I know Carol and she's going to be a real good addition to the family.

Q. Was Quinton's wife from the Springfield area?

A. Yes, yes. They dated through high school, their senior year, and quite by happenstance; we never quite understood how they just happened to be on the same college campus. They just happened to see each other in the registration line. That's what they told us. And then the first year in college, I think her parents, and I know I talked with Quinton, we felt that it was just not very sensible to go from college; I mean to go into college with a high school attachment. And so they did not date their first year in college except, I think at the end of the year they went to a dance or something. They saw each other on campus and spoke once in a while and I think even wrote a few letters, surprisingly enough. But then their second year they dated frequently and their third and fourth year, I think they pretty much spent all their time together.

But in the meantime, the summertimes Quinton worked various situations. Quinton always had the idea that summers should be spent at something very different than what you do all year, and let's see the first summer what did Quinton do? I don't remember what that first year. Oh, the first year, he worked at--he came home here because grandmother was sick and he helped us here, and he helped just around the place, and he painted for a painter in Petersburg. He worked with him.

Then the next year, he went to the west coast in the forestry department and worked in a camp of well, near Mt. Hood. It was a log, not a log, well yes it was a logging camp. It was--he built roads for bringing the logs down out of the mountains. Now who he worked with, it was either forestry and logging, or logging. I don't know which it was, and he loved the west coast.

And then the next summer, he went to a well, there's another summer, anyway, one summer he spent in Mississippi. That was his first summer. He spent in Mississippi doing day labor, fieldwork, day labor. And it was a rainy summer which meant he didn't work a lot of days, and he brought an old Oldsmobile, the only used car that looked road worthy, you know, when you need a car tomorrow. There were no small cars on the used car lot at that point, and he drove it to Mississippi. Drove it back and forth to work. He drove about ten miles back and forth. He lived with his dad, and drove to work, back and forth. And he came home that summer and had paid for the gasoline. (laughs) That's all he had made because the day labor wage was low. It was a rainy season so he didn't work many days, and the gasoline was expensive, and the car used a lot of it. And he came home with many, many worries and concerns about

the future of the South, and most of all how do those people with a family of six children do it. And he was very impressed with the economic sociological problems of that particular group of people.

Then the other summer that he spent, he went to the South--this was between the junior and senior years at college. He went down hoping that he could get a job in an offshore oil drilling rig. He had a--there was a crew going out and he knew some of the kids that were on it, but school did not--his final exams fell, unhappily he drew one of the latter part of the exam schedules, and so he missed the cruise going by two days. So he wound up digging ditches for foundation bases in Tennessee, for a construction group. So Quinton's summers were different, and he enjoyed all of them because he was on his own and learning, he wanted to go into different sections.

The one thing he was not really quite--he was ready to get married, but he needed one more summer, (laughs) that was his problem, but his problem, he wanted to do a freighter one summer. He was just determined to do a freighter at sea kind of thing. He wanted this, he felt that he needed that to round his experience. But I guess that one kind of got by the board because time ran out, summers ran out.

Now Rich worked two summers in Mississippi living with his dad after college. This was between his junior, I guess between sophomore, junior, senior years, and he worked in a bank there, and no I guess it was one year later than that, anyway he worked with the computers the second year and got some good experience. In a small operation they could let him do these things, and it paid off very well for him in that it was the end to some of the work that he's done other summers. Having had some experience, you have an in. If you've never worked with a machine, they don't really want you, and so it was a very profitable summer from that standpoint.

Q. Is he in that kind of thing now?

A. Yes.

Q. In graduate school?

A. Yes. Now so much for the boys. Enough of them.

Q. Okay. How do you spend your time now?

A. How do I spend my time now? Well, let me see.

Q. I'm asking for it.

A. Yes. During the summer, this is not the importance of my world, but through the summertime is an interesting part. I've been working four days at the, I guess you'd call it the tourist trap in one sense, but it is a rather interesting museum. It's a privately owned museum of carriages and Mr. Brunk, Mr. James Brunk, who owns it started out some forty years ago just to really preserve some carriages that he

thought were interesting. It was a shame to just put them on the trash heap, and little by little it has grown until he has a tremendous collection and a well rounded collection of carriages. It's also amazing how many different types of designs, styles, engineering works that carriages had, and so when he retired from his business--what to do with all these things that he had collected, and so it was decided well why not have a little museum, and charge a small fee, maybe enough to maintain it.

And so that's what they decided to do, and then Mrs. Brunk said, "Well if people are going to come in, why can't I have a little gift operation, souvenir thing?" And this is what I mean the tourist trap part of it. I feel that the museum is worthwhile, and the other, it's amazing how many people enjoy looking at souvenirs, and so it's a form of amusement for the ladies while the men look at the carriages is how it really works out.

So four days a week I work down there. It's only a half a mile from home. The hours are wonderful. I go at ten and come home at five on these four days. I come home at noontime so that I can do the laundry of a morning, put it on the line, go to work, come home at noon, take it down. It's just I mean it's just a good arrangement. Now that ceases in the wintertime. The rest of my summer is spent mowing yard and this has been a wet season, and I mow a good deal.

Q. Do you have a riding mower?

A. I have a riding mower. I couldn't do it in--it takes about an hour and a half a week to mow the yard, and then there's usually--and that's one night after work I could do that very easily, and then there's another night after work it takes for trimming and pruning and things that kind of have to be done. Then I have a garden which takes a few hours of a morning or of a night of sometime.

Q. Vegetable or flower?

A. Both. Both. I don't really do a big flower garden thing. I like perennials and things that kind of survive on their own, and this is the thing that I enjoy most. And I try to have bulbs followed by iris, followed by poppies, followed by phlox, followed by chrysanthemums and that's my flower bed plus shrubs. I like to plant trees and I love--and this is the thing. Each spring you're always planting something else, and then that takes a little bit of watering and nursing for the first year, and evergreens are--this is a windy hill, and evergreens have been planted for protection and because I like them. They're kind of interesting, but now I need to spray for some bag worms.

So gardening and yard and then taking care of the garden food, and it's gotten to be kind of an interesting game with me to see how self-sufficient I can be with my eleven little chickens and my garden which I put in the freezer or can. And I have fruit pretty much that I can draw on like peaches, and sauce apples or transparent apples, and right now I need to go pick some blackberries and get that jelly made. And then I put things

in the freezer and this is my food supply for the winter. And I don't think you could do this with ease for a family of six, but for a family of one plus the family that comes home occasionally I just get along fine. It's kind of a game. That's one of my games I play.

Then of course, I work at the church. I teach a Sunday school class, and right now we're in the process of hopefully finding a new minister, and I'm on the pulpit committee, chairman, which says I have to find a minister, and I belong to AAUW again. Same patterns. Women's clubs, this is the kind of thing that board meetings take time, and then I--through the spring and fall which really is the time that I'm not working at Brunk's I spend at least one day at Memorial Garden in Springfield as trail guide, or working with grounds committee, and also a part of the function is to be a collector and supplier for their workshop. Now this, this is a craft shop. This says that right now I should be gathering cattails and it's a little late for it, but I should be doing this. That's why you see all those weeds that's on the back porch.

Q. What kinds of--is this Lincoln Memorial Gardens?

A. Lincoln Memorial Gardens.

Q. What kind of things do you collect?

A. For them?

Q. Yes.

A. Well of course, their craft shop works primarily with native and dried materials, and cones are an important item for their Christmas workshops. And so I pick up cones every whip stitch and clean them and get them delivered out to the garden. I usually store them here and then take them to them as they need. In other words, just kind of keep a supply going.

Q. How do you clean them?

A. Let them dry and brush them so that they're clean, and white pine I do a lot of them in the oven because if you just heat the white pine, the white pitch that's on them, which is a natural resin on them, melts just a little and glazes them, and then it's easier to handle them. Before it has been heated it's sticky, and it gets on your fingers and it's kind of a mess. But if you heat them a little, it glazes and they have kind of a sheen and a finish look in the finished product.

Q. How warm is your oven?

A. About 250 degrees.

Q. For how long? How long do you bake them?

A. You watch them and it depends a little on the size of them and the thickness. There are some that are small and the petals are kind of thin and it takes less time. Usually I'd say 15 to 20 minutes, and you have to put paper in the oven because as it heats the excess pitch will drip off, and then suddenly your rolls smell and taste like pine. So these are things that I think I traveled enough in the turpentine area and watch the dippers and the chippers slashing pine and collecting it for the turpentine, and every time I bake these things I think it smells just like turpentine camp. But the pine cones are one thing, and preparing them, and another is in the fall you collect seed pods. Right now I've been working with the seed pods off of the poppies which make nice dried arrangements. Dock is a good thing to collect.

Q. When do you collect that?

A. Well, along, it should have been done along--you kind of have to watch it, and the season changes. This year it should have been done about the first of July. That was about when it was ripe. It's when it begins to turn brown. Just begins, and then it will get more brown as it dries. If you wait till it turns brown in the field, it will shatter when you pick it. I mean, as it dries it will shatter. Cattails we collect. Water lily pods we collect. Right now I'm hunting and I found a patch just two days ago of moth mullen, which is kind of a graceful long seed pod with little, little round pods on it, and I'll show you some. It's out on the back porch. But this is the kind of thing that you collect and then sometimes I work in the craft shops out there. So Lincoln is one of my--how I spend my time.

Q. Have you ever been honored by Lincoln Memorial Gardens in any way, shape or form? Were you in on the beginning of it?

A. Yes, I was in on the beginning of it, and well no, that is wrong. I was not in on the beginning of Lincoln Memorial Gardens because it started back in 1935, and that was a long time back and I wasn't even in Springfield. I worked with Mrs. Knudson when she was still there, and back--I'd say I worked out there probably for fifteen years, and that's certainly not the beginning. I was honored in that I was president of Memorial Garden for one term, and this I think is quite an honor. And this--when I say president, I mean, this--Lincoln Memorial Garden is a project of the Garden Club of Illinois, and as chairman of the board at Lincoln Memorial Garden, you are also on the Garden Club of Illinois board, and so that in itself is kind of an interesting--I mean you get a little different concept of a garden club work. It's not just the local club putting on a show. It's a little different. So our Memorial Garden is--and I've done a lot of, oh, talks like programs, things of this kind for when there are groups.

So this is how I spend my time. There's probably some other things that I can't think of at the moment. One of the things, I play one day a week. There are two or three of us really locally that we get together one day a week and do something. We either sketch, or work in acrylics, or work with water color and so we have fun doing that. So that's my play day.

Q. Okay. Is there anything that you can think of right now that you should insert here to fill in, or do you want to wait on that and think about it and get another outline and . . .

A. Well it--any other points that in your course, or in comparing with other interviews that you're really wanting to emphasize, or dig into that I don't know about, or that you would like to go back even if we've talked about them here, and you want to underline them, I'd be glad to.

Q. I think that we've covered the really important stages in your life at least.

A. I'm just very--I'm very appreciative of a few things. One I'm very appreciative that I happened to have been placed or born into a democratic situation, and had the opportunities of public schools, which is an outgrowth of a democratic process, I think. Also, I'm very appreciative of the fact, I think, when you read of other countries and some of the problems, I'm very appreciative of the fact that I was happened to be born into a Christian community, and one that really we have so much to work with.

We are--you read of other areas. I'm very appreciative of the fact that I never happened to have had the feeling of desperation. I guess I never felt it so I don't know what the feeling is, but to have been overrun with a war situation. This has happened in the South and I think some of their problems--this was true for many countries that you see like in Germany, in France. Now the whole Far East. How thankful we should be that this never happened to happen to us. The only thing that I'm overrun with at the moment are crickets (laughs) but these are things that I sometimes think how very fortunate we are that we were, I mean that I feel that I have been fortunate to have been born into a democratic, Christian community.

In the stock that I am, and I'm very appreciative of a family in that they give you something to build on. Some sense of security. Not always as secure as you might want to be economically--but this is a minor problem--and there is a sense of belonging and a sense of background, and out of this comes this sense of responsibility. It might worry you sometimes. Are you doing your little piece to add to either your Christian or your democratic processes. But I'm thankful that at least I have the opportunity. I think there are other times that I am very aware that if these things are not happened and I had not been placed where I was, I guess. So thank you.

Q. Thank you. Did you want to smash the cricket? Where did it go?

A. She's gone. No.

Q. Thank you for spending the time talking to me these two evenings, and for being so very open and free with your answers.