Marie South Williams Memoir

Volume III

Q: Well, you must have mixed emotions then about Carterville. You said it was a happy time. Yet you had this going on all the time too.

A: Well it didn't last, only about three years.

Q: About three years.

A: Yes. And then Birger killed the mayor of some little town over there, just called him to the front door and shot him down, you know, and that's what they hung him for.

Q: Yes.

A: But do you know he fixed up some kind of a truck and made it into a—well, it was just like they had in the war. He had somebody to fix it that way and he could drive that and just shoot out of that and . . .

Q: Yes, an armored truck.

A: Yes, it was an armored truck. And it wasn't really in the army but he had one made.

Q: Did he live at Shady Rest, his headquarters, is that where he lived?

A: Yes. That was awful.

Q: Yes. I read about the bombing also of . . .

A: Well, we went down—Frank's brother lived down in Harrisburg. And that happened on Saturday night. And we went down on Sunday morning. And of course we drove right by Shady Rest. And we saw it burning. And we stopped, you know. You never just feared everything. And we stopped there. And we stopped there and walked right out and walked around, you know, and looked down into the basement where it was roaring. And didn't realize that there was dead people down there. They'd killed them and throwed them down in there and then burned the place.

Q: But you didn't know it at the time.

A: Oh no. We didn't know it.

Q: Who all was in there?

A: It was about two or three days till it all cooled down and they found them.

Q: Yes.

A: It was awful and . . .

Q: Either Betty told me or you told me that you taught the Birger children in school.

A: Not the Birgers, the . . .

Q: The Shelton children.

A: Shelton—Lulu.

Q: Oh, it was only one Shelton.

A: One Shelton girl. One of the boys—and I can't remember his name—his father was killed out there at Colp, shot down on the street. See, they figured the school—now he was white. They wouldn't allow the colored ones to come in but he was sent into school and his father was killed because—they always said because he had switched from the Sheltons over to the Birgers to buy the bootleg.

Q: Oh. What was Lulu Shelton like?

A: Just as cute a little girl as you ever saw. And calm and still and reserved and dark, had real dark hair, just a perfect little girl. I felt so sorry for her, but she turned out to be a regular gun moll.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yes, she did. See, there's never but one of those Shelton boys that ever turned out to be anything but a bootleg and a gambler and a

murderer.

Q: Do you have any idea why?

A: And he was a farmer over around on the east side someplace—I don't remember, way up in some county up in there. They used to call it the county. You know, the Birgers took the—now I can't think of the man's name. He was a state police. They took him out and killed him, shot him in the field up in White County because he had known when the Birgers stole something and knew they made a big raid. And then another thing, what they did—his wife taught school. I knew her. And . . .

Q: Raids on what? What were the raids on?

A: Well, stores and things that they robbed?

Q: In Carterville?

A: No, not in Carterville.

Q: In St. Louis?

A: It was farther over in the county.

Q: I see.

A: Farther south. I don't remember just which place it was. They took—and this police, he knew about the different things but he never told on them. Now I'm sure they thought he would tell. And of course they took his wife out too. She was going to have a baby.

Q: Oh dear.

A: And they killed her and throwed her down in an old mine. And they had to go down in there and get her out. And they took him and killed him up in White County.

Q: I see.

A: They said they shot him first and it didn't kill him. And they wanted to take him out of Williamson County. And so they drove—that White County is up towards, well, it's on its way to East St. Louis, where the Shelton's finally moved, you know.

Q: They moved out of Williamson County eventually.

A: Yes, they moved out of Williamson County. But they was back in every once in a while, you know. And Carl Shelton was the nicest looking boy you ever saw.

Q: Now that was the one that became a farmer.

A: No, he never—no, he was murdered. And so was Bernie and so was the other one. I can't remember his name right now.

Q: In one of these books they said that Charlie Birger would take groceries to the poor people and throw coins to the school children.

A: He did. He did. They said he was just as fair and nice and pleasant a man. I've seen him several times but I didn't know him. But the Birgers. . .

Q: You didn't ever talk to him.

A: I never talked to him. No, I never talked to him. But Frank went to see him hung.

Q: Was that a big doing?

A: Oh it was a big affair, yes.

Q: Was he tried in Williamson County?

A: Yes, a trial.

Q: And there was a large crowd at the hanging.

A: Yes. He was hung at some other county, they tried him at some other

county.

Q: But he was hung in . . .

A: I think he was hung—that book will tell you.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, it will tell you.

Q: But there was a big crowd.

A: They used to have, yes, there was a big crowd. Frank said he walked up just as brave as could be and I think his wife and all, they all knew that he was going to be hung. They wasn't there.

Q: They also, in these books, mentioned gambling on bulldog fights and cock fights.

A: Yes they did.

Q: Did you ever see . . .

A: No. No, I never saw them. That was over at Shady Rest that they did all that.

Q: Oh, it was all done right at the headquarters at Shady Rest.

A: Yes. Yes it was. They even hired planes to fly over places and bomb them, you know, just like a war. It was just like a war.

Q: Yes.

A: And then that thing in Herrin, that was awful.

Q: What was that?

A: The miners come in from Chicago. Or, they wasn't miners. They was just people that needed a job. And—now, I wouldn't have never dared, when I taught school in Herrin to ever even talk about that. If you sided in with the scabs, no telling. They'd have probably burned our house if we'd have done that. Those people from Chicago—somebody went up there and recruited them to come down here and take these jobs. But they didn't tell about the trouble. They brought them down to Herrin in a strip mines where they had fired the . . .

Q: Were these whites or blacks?

A: They were white. And the fellows who come down was whites.

Q: But there were not enough people in the area to fill those jobs, right?

A: No. Well, people wouldn't take a scab job.

Q: Yes. Well, describe a scab job.

A: Well, the miners was union.

Q: Yes.

A: And they struck for higher wages.

Q: Yes.

A: And then they wouldn't work for what they offered them. So they went up to Chicago and got these fellows all to come down. And some of them was well educated fellows. And they just shot them down in the street.

Q: Just shot them down in the street.

A: Well, they made them crawl out to the . . .

Q: I thought those were blacks that they made . . .

A: No, they wasn't blacks.

Q: They were white.

A: They was white people.

Q: That they made crawl out to the cemetery.

A: Yes. They was from Chicago.

Q: I see.

A: And they killed them, twenty-nine of them. And the fellow that was the head of the mines, he had a wooden leg. Then—I don't know if you ever saw what they called a peg leg.

Q: Yes, I have.

A: Well, he had a peg leg. It's not just a wooden leg. It's something that they keep the knee on if it's off at the knee and you just peg along, you know, it's wired on or it's strapped on some way or other.

Q: Yes.

A: And he told them he couldn't walk any farther and they just shot him right there, right in the street and left him lay.

Q: Oh.

A: I wasn't teaching then in the school there. I was teaching in Carterville when that happened. But then that evening after Frank got home from—all the mines quit, you know, they went to help the union men, you know. But Frank never carried a gun. And he said he just stood back and didn't do anything, only just watched. And he come home and the next day then we went over there to this mine and saw it burning. They'd burned all their—they lived in cars off of railroad tracks, you know, oh, just like a boxcar only it was—they had changed it into a living quarters.

Q: The company had.

A: Yes, the company had.

Q: This was for single men.

A: Yes, just single men. And they burned all their cook stuff and their sleeping cars and everything that was at this mine. And there was great big gallons of . . .

Q: Now who did the burning? Was this the scab labor?

A: No, the men that was union.

Q: I see.

A: Like Frank.

Q: Yes, right.

A: But he didn't. He said he never touched nothing. But one of our neighbors did. And we was worried for him because we thought they might pick him up but they never did. They didn't punish them. Nobody was ever hung or anything for—if they tried them, they tried them in a group, you know. They never did charge him for anything.

Q: Did any of this affect Frank's relationship with the men?

A: No. No, it didn't. He stuck with the union.

Q: Yes.

A: But later on he turned out to not—they wouldn't let him belong to the union. You see, the Peabody Coal Company wouldn't let you belong—when he come here, they wouldn't let him belong to the union. He had to be a company man. But it never affected him any. It never did affect his job in any way.

Q: He did his work and kept his . . .

A: But there, you'd see great big gallons of peaches and pears and green

beans and everything burning. They'd pop open, you know, and hams and . . .

Q: Yes.

A: They let the union miners take a lot of the stuff. Then they got tired of handing it out, I guess, and then just burned it. And they had a great big—when we was there, there was a great . . .

Q: Why would they burn all the cars with the food in it?

A: To get rid of them so they wouldn't have no place to stay if they tried to bring in somebody else.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: See, they might have tried to bring in some more . . .

Q: In other words they just left the food in there. The food just happened to be in there and they burned it up.

A: Oh, it just happened to be in there.

Q: Yes, right.

A: And then they'd just burn them all, burn everything.

Q: So that no scab labor would have any place to live when they arrived.

A: Then they couldn't come back to do anything.

Q: I see. You mentioned at one time—and I've read it in the paper in that article, your experience with Charles Lindberg.

A: Yes. He was a nice fellow, calm, quiet.

Q: Yes.

A: Tall and blond and thin. And that plane he had that I used to sit in wasn't the Spirit of St. Louis, you know.

Q: No.

A: It was just a little old thing that he had that—it was all open. It could just rain in it, you know, and he'd drive it into the cattle shed, you know, where they fed the cattle out there on that farm right south of town.

Q: Was that Runt Bishop's farm?

A: No. It was some people by the name of Pendleton that had a farm down there. And, see, they had the cows. He used to laugh about how you had to walk careful on account of the cow manure, you know.

Q: One of the articles said that he used to come in and sit down over at Runt Bishop's and . . .

A: And drink home brew. Yes, he did. And she'd pop corn. The girls never drank root beer. Frank made some root beer. One time I made some, not root beer, home brew. I made root beer and it blew up.

Q: Oh my. Your kitchen must have been a mess.

A: It was up here, after I moved up here.

Q: Oh I see.

A: And it was in the basement that we had rented, just a furnished apartment. It was in the basement and I said, "Frank, my root beer is blowing up. And he, "Yes, let it blow up." I said, "Well, you go and get it out." He said, "Well, I wouldn't." He said, "That glass will just be all over everything." And when it got through blowing up, it was just all over the basement, root beer and we had the awfullest time to scrub it up. It was terrible.

Q: Well, did you get to know Lingberg through Runt Bishop? Is that how you knew him?

A: Yes. That's how we got to know him. Frank wouldn't ride with him.

Q: Did you?

A: No.

Q: Did anybody go up with him?

A: Yes. Some of the boys did.

Q: He was delivering mail at that time.

A: He was delivering mail and Runt was the postmaster.

Q: Yes, right.

A: In later years—I showed you his picture . . .

Q: Yes.

A: . . . we used to go visit him in Washington, D. C.

Q: How often did Lindberg come?

A: Well, it would be a couple of times a week. I know we used to see him about that much. And—oh, you know when anybody would come to town it was something new and different, you know, and especially in an airplane. But we didn't think he was too special, you know. But one of the girls didn't date him, she dated the other boy that come with him one time. And then after he got to be so noted she could have kicked herself for not having a date with Lindberg.

Q: Well, he did stay around town then, overnight and things like that.

A: Oh yes. Yes, he'd stay. There was another man in Carterville that was very interested in airplanes. And later on Mr. Simpson bought a plane, that lived in Carterville. He had the Ford agency for automobiles. And he bought a plane, but it wasn't much bigger than Lindberg's little, what he had. You just stepped up in it. And there wasn't no door or anything there to shut. And he'd just run that in

that cow barn, there was just three sides to the thing. And he'd just run the engine in, you know, so it wouldn't rain.

Q: Right.

A: Then he'd cover it up and one of the boys would take him back to Runt's and we'd all go back there and Runt had made home brew and they'd drink that. It was kind of weak.

Q: How did you make home brew?

A: Well, it was with yeast. I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I never made it, I don't know. I made root beer and it blew up. The kids laugh now about, "Grandma, did you use too much of something?" I says, "Well, it was the yeast that made it blow up."

Q: Oh really?

A: Yes.

Q: I've never made anything like that. Some of our neighbors did while I was growing up and I . . .

A: It tasted good. We'd put sugar in it. It worked. Like, you know, you used to set yeast in a little bit of flour and water, you know, and mix it up. And it would swell up big, you know. And Frank's mother used to sell yeast. She made yeast to sell.

Q: Oh she did? How did she make the yeast?

A: Cornmeal and then she had something that you made it rise with but I don't know. But I never will forget how she took a sheet and laid it in on the parlor floor where she didn't use, where the organ was and the settee and you know, all those things and spread the sheet out on the clean sheet, and she'd have it all laid out there to dry. And it was mixed with cornmeal. She must have had some kind of yeast or something and mixed it with—I don't know what she mixed in with it. And, you know, she just sold it for ten cents a cup.

Q: I see.

A: It was ten cents.

Q: It was dried yeast.

A: It was dry.

Q: It wasn't in blocks or anything.

A: No, no, it was just crumbly. The cornmeal would make it crumble. And then you'd take a little bit of that and set it with your water and flour and sugar and let it rise and that would make enough for, oh, a lot of loaves of bread.

Q: Sure, sure, that would be an awful lot.

A: She used to bake bread and sell it too, anything. See, they had nine children.

Q: Wow. That's a lot.

A: I hope I'm talking plain enough.

Q: Yes, you are. It's coming out fine. What did you do for your social life in Carterville when you and Frank lived there?

A: Oh, we went to parties and Sunday School and church and they'd have all kinds of parties and went to every dance in the country, drove to all the different towns around, you know, little towns where they'd have a big dance. We'd go, oh, a whole bunch of us together, took our own bunch with us, you know. Herrin was close and they had big bands in all the time. You know, all the big bands came to Herrin. It was a big place then.

Q: Well, did they have a big community center that . . .

A: Yes, they've got a big—they always had a great big—I don't know

what—there was some lodge that had a great big place there. But I don't remember what the name of it was, but we used to go over there all the time. Then there was a place at Marion that we used to dance, a country club. They had a little lake around, you know, and it was built out between Carterville and Marion. And then Cereal Springs, that was a place where they had a big nice hotel that you could eat. They had springs there, you know, a place to go and swim and things like that.

Q: Yes.

A: Oh, we traveled a lot through the summer when Frank wouldn't be working.

Q: How many days a year did he work usually?

A: Well, generally they struck along in April and unless he went to some other town and worked he wouldn't have any work until September.

Q: If he went to some other town, what would he do?

A: Well, I'll tell you where we went, up to Flint, Michigan to the automobile factory. And he'd go early in April, go up there with a big bunch from Carterville and get jobs there, they would. And then . . .

Q: Would you go with him?

A: No, because I was teaching school.

Q: In the summertime?

A: Yes, and I'd teach till June.

Q: I see.

A: And Betty Lou would be in school and then we would drive up to Michigan, Flint, Michigan. And he'd have an apartment rented, poor as anything you ever saw. We'd stay up there then until fall when school would start.

Q: After Labor Day?

A: After Labor Day it generally started. We wouldn't know it but several times we took trips, take two weeks off and go through Canada and cross over into Canada on a ferry, you know, take our car and have a kitchen thing, kind of like a trunk on the back of the car, an old Ford. And have everything that we could cook in, you know, and take a trip through Canada.

Q: Did you camp in tents?

A: Had a tent and would cook all of our meals. We couldn't afford to buy all of it, you know. And get that done and come in to Niagara Falls maybe and go on down into New York and Pennsylvania and around, you know, and see everything and Washington, D. C. and George Washington's home and make a trip through there. And then maybe another time we'd go into the New England states when we'd come back. And generally when we got home—of course my school would start and Betty Lou's would. And maybe by the time we got there, why, they'd say, "Well, Monday the mine's would start," you know. So he'd get back to his job. One of our neighbors always took care of our house for us, you know.

Q: How many summers did Frank go up to Flint, Michigan, for work?

A: Well I know three.

Q: What did he do the other summers?

A: Well they didn't strike every summer.

Q: They didn't strike every summer.

A: They might work one or two days a week, enough to give you enough to eat, you know. And we owned our own house and didn't owe anything on it. And of course I taught school and had some money saved.

Q: When did you finish paying off your house?

A: It didn't take us very long and we paid half of it on the house when we bought it. And the other half—I thought, "Oh my lands,"—I think about six hundred and fifty dollars was left. I thought, "Oh, what in the world will we ever do to pay all of that?" That sounded like a million to me. And finally, the first thing we knew, we had it paid.

Then in the rounds we lost the five thousand then you know and what we had in the bank. But later on, in three years we got it back when the banks opened again. We signed a waiver that we wouldn't try to get it until, you know . . .

Q: They'd recovered.

A: . . . till they could pay it.

Q: Was there any community organization that helped families when they were out of work in Carterville?

A: The miners paid a little something, you know, the miners' union would pay. You got a little bit. I don't remember how much it was but it would be just—did you read in the paper where this mine down here is going to open up down the line?

Q: Yes.

A: That's going to be a good thing for Springfield. There will be quite a few fellows who will get a job down there.

Q: I'm sure they surely will, yes. But there was nothing in Carterville, for instance, like St. John's bread line or anything like that?

A: Oh no.

Q: They didn't have any . . .

A: No.

Q: It was either done through the unions or the churches probably.

A: Yes. Churches, I imagine, did. I know we kept ourselves pretty well above water but did you ever have a hard time, Liz?

Q: During the Depression? I didn't. Friends of ours did.

A: I wondered if you had ever lived through anything like that that bothered you.

Q: I have memories of it but our family was fortunate enough to be—we didn't have a lot, but we had enough to live on.

A: Well, I guess we had enough to live like anybody else. All of our friends was in the same—but now it looks like we was awfully poor. But I guess we wasn't, you know, too bad. You know, it couldn't have been too bad if I was teaching school and Frank was working all the time. And we wasn't no big spenders. Of course I dressed better than I should have, I guess, because I bought a fur coat one time and the school board didn't like it.

Q: How much did you pay for the fur coat, do you remember?

A: Six hundred and fifty dollars.

Q: Oh? Why would the school board object?

A: Why did they object to, and wouldn't let us have our hair cut?

Q: Well the fur coat seems even stranger.

A: It did to me too.

Q: Yes.

A: No, they thought, "If she buys a fur coat and lives with her husband, let her husband take care of her. And let some poor young girl take her job."

Q: I see.

A: And the school board didn't want to do that because they knew I was too good of a teacher to turn loose. Now that's not bragging on myself.

Q: No, it's just the truth.

A: The truth.

Q: A fact.

A: And they knew it.

Q: We talked about this a little bit back, but we digressed—what other things did the school board require you to do?

A: Well, you couldn't have drank. Of course at that time there were an awful lot of people who drank.

Q: Yes.

A: Of course you know, I've never drank. I never had it in me.

Q: You couldn't smoke either when—that would have been . . .

A: Well, I never wanted to smoke.

Q: But if a teacher did, it would have . . .

A: Oh, they wouldn't have allowed that at all. If anybody would have seen a teacher smoke, they would have reported it right away to the school board, the parents would. And if they ever saw them go in a saloon or anything—you know, women didn't go in saloons then. There wasn't any—the only thing, they called them speakeasies where you bought bootleg stuff to drink. And men went in. But no woman better ever go in. They didn't even want us to wear lipstick or anything or rouge. You know, at that time everybody was wearing lipstick and rouge and having bobbed hair.

Q: Teachers couldn't do that.

A: What would these girls do now? And then you had to have your dresses so long. You know, you couldn't—and then they never wore slacks or anything like that. You had to be a kind of an ideal person.

Q: An example.

A: An example for children, which is right.

Q: It is right.

A: It is right.

Q: Did you have tenure?

A: No. No, we didn't have tenure. No, we never heard of the word even. They never even . . .

Q: How do you feel about tenure?

A: Well, sometimes I think it might be all right and other times—you know, there's bound to be some of those teachers—now, there's one that they try every once in a while, you know, high school.

Q: Yes, I know who you mean.

A: I don't know her.

Q: I don't know her either.

A: But I hear about her. And there must be something wrong with her. She must do something bad.

Q: Yes.

A: Now that's the way I feel about it. They say she swears all the time which is a very bad example, I think, for children.

Q: I do too.

A: No matter if they're high school kids. They don't need to swear or hear the—you know, if they love a teacher and think they're an ideal person I wouldn't want to set that example. I wouldn't think of swearing in front of a person.

Q: So you have mixed emotions about tenure in teaching?

A: Yes. I think—sometimes I think it's—now there's some of the teachers over at Betty Lou's school—she don't criticize them, but I do, the way they dress. They wear old slacks and old sweat shirts and they don't look no more like a teacher ought to look than what in the world. Of course Betty Lou always looks good, she dresses nice. But I wouldn't—I think there ought to be a dress code, really I do.

Q: Yes, of some sort.

A: Yes, of some sort. Not to wear such clothes as I see them over there. And if they make that kind of a salary, they've got enough money they could dress to look like something. And be an example for children. You can't teach people to look like a slouch and try to teach them to be neat and dressed up and . . .

Q: In other words, if you want them to be neat in your schoolwork, they have to be neat in their person.

A: Yes, you'd have to be neat all around.

End of Side Two, Tape Four

Q: Well, we've talked very little about Frank, Marie, and I'd like to talk about his early life a little bit.

A: Yes.

Q: Before you met him, tell me a little bit about his family.

A: Well, I could tell his mother's name.

Q: His mother and father and possibly what his father did and how many were in the family and that sort of thing.

A: Well, his mother's name was Clara Millhous to begin with. And they were Pennsylvania Dutch just like my background was. And his father was named Henry Williams and they were from Tennessee. And there's a little bit of Indian mixed back someplace.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. I don't know just exactly about it because it was before my time, you know. Now Frank was light, real light, had red hair. And red whiskers in . . .

Q: Oh really?

A: Yes. When his whiskers would come out, they'd be red. He had red curly hair. But some of the brothers and sisters were darker. They had black, coal black hair.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did he have?

A: Well there was nine of them.

Q: That was a big family.

A: Yes. And Mr. Williams worked in the mines. But in their early life he farmed.

Q: In that area?

A: In that area. I knew Mr. Williamson's mother, but I didn't know Mrs. Williamson's mother. But I knew her father, Jacob Millhous. And he was in the Civil War. And I think I told you about him and how he and another fellow that was in the Civil War and they was both shot.

Q: Right. You told me that story on an earlier tape.

A: Yes. That was her father. That was Jacob Millhous. And he lived in my time. But they moved off of the farm. They bought a house in town and moved into town and Mr. Williams started to work at the mines when Frank was in the third grade.

Q: I see.

A: And I started to school with him at that time. I mean I was already

in school but he started in at that time.

Q: Yes.

A: And Mrs. Williams kept boarders. They was building a big bridge between Carbondale and De Soto. And she took in boarders and helped out with the family.

Q: People who were working on the bridge.

A: Yes. And they had a couple of extra bedrooms because some of the girls, and one of the boys was married at that time. Let's see, there was . . .

Q: She had a real house—full.

A: She did. It was a big house. And it had been added to, the kitchen and the dining room and the washroom where they took baths and where she washed and everything, that was built on new. And it made quite a big house. And Bertie and Melvin and Jess and, let's see—and Alta, they were all married. There was four of them married before they came to town.

Q: I see.

A: Then they had Frank and Zula and Maggie and Roy yet at home, and one little boy died when he was nine months old. And then Frank and I went to school together. And I don't know that I liked him any more special than anybody else that went to school. And I never had a date with him till I was nineteen years old.

Q: How long did Frank's parents live?

A: Mrs. Williams had a stroke when Bettie Lou was four years old. And Mr. Williams lived with some people that was relation. They moved in the house with him because that was a big house and kept house for him till he got sick. And then they closed up the house and divided up the things and closed up the house. And he started to live with the children. And everybody would take him, all of the family would take him and keep him till he got tired of them and then he would go on to the next one.

Q: Take turns.

A: Yes, they'd take turns. But we let him decide when he wanted to change. And then when he really got real sick, why, we hired a person. And that person went along with him to take care of him.

Q: I see.

A: Because I was teaching school and the others had families, you know, and some of them didn't have any children. But the ones that did have—the lady went right along with him and took care of him. We paid her extra, you know.

Q: What kind of pay did you have to pay for that kind of service at that time, do you remember?

A: I don't remember just what we paid. But it wasn't too much. You know, nothing at that time was too expensive. But I know at times all of us paid our part. We all paid equal part. But that was a good way to have him taken care of, you know.

Q: Sure, everybody was happy with that arrangement.

A: Yes. Yes, everybody was happy with it. And of course this lady just went right along with him wherever he decided to go, even to the ones that didn't have any children and wasn't working. But it was equal, you know, that we all did the same thing.

Q: Yes. Earlier we talked about Frank going to Michigan to work when the mines struck in the summertime.

A: Yes.

Q: How did he find out about a job in Flint, Michigan? How did he become aware of those jobs?

A: Somebody drifted up there and called back and told the rest of them that they was hiring and then . . .

Q: Just by word of mouth mostly.

A: Yes, just by word of mouth. And a bunch of them would go, maybe four or five in a car would go up and if they didn't get a job at Flint, they would at Detroit in the car business, you know.

Q: I see.

A: Frank got one in Flint, and then we'd go up there when our school was out. Betty Lou was in school then. She was eight when we first went. And my school would be—well, her school too, would be out in June. And then we'd drive up there. I drove all the way up to Flint. And I'd never been there, but I found the way. You know then you were self sufficient, you know.

Q: This was in the mid-1920's.

A: Yes. In the mid-1920's and we'd stay till fall and then several times we drove through, went to Detroit and across the river at Detroit on a ferry and would go over into Canada and travel through Canada and took a tent and camped. And we cooked and once our next door neighbor came up and went with us through Canada, rode with us. And she helped cook and we slept in the car, Betty Lou and Vina. And I would sleep in the car. And Frank would sleep in the tent. And one time we made the mistake of camping on Lake Ontario. It was warm and nice through the day. And that night, oh, it was cold. And Frank nearly froze. And early in the morning he crawled in the car. And we was all in the car. We couldn't turn over. (laughter) And the next morning we packed up everything and took off and got over farther, over towards a city someplace and camped. Then we put out our tent and camped and cooked our breakfast. That was nearly noon by the time we did that. It was the next meal that we was supposed to have. Then we come back down through Niagara Falls and . . . over to New York and then we went to Washington, D. C. and Gettysburg and the battlefields all around, you know, and all the things. At that time when she was with us, we came to Pennsylvania and visited a cousin that I had there. And he just died this past winter. And they came last year to see us. And we had such a good time. And his name was David Barnhart and I had never seen him but four or five times in my life. And we just loved his wife and the daughters. One of the daughters came from up in Michigan to be with the mother and father and the other sister. And we had such a good time last year.

Q: You covered a lot of miles in that car.

A: Yes, we did.

Q: Did you ever have much trouble with the car?

A: No. Never had much . . .

Q: It ran like a top.

A: Yes. It was a Ford, a Ford Model T.

Q: How fast were you going?

A: Oh, I guess forty miles.

Q: Forty miles an hour.

A: Yes. But we took enough time so we'd get home in time for us to start to school. We had no assurance that Frank would have a job. We knew he'd have a job but if they'd started because he was face boss, he was a company man. Of course after we got home, well, the thing that we did after we was in Pennsylvania, we visited those people and then we came into Ohio and I visited the house that my father was born in.

Q: That was nice.

A: Yes. And met a lot of the cousins that we never had seen, or I had never seen. And of course my father was killed when I was eight years old and my mother at one time had gone back with my father to visit the folks. But I was little and they didn't take me. I stayed with my grandmother, with the grandmother that I lived with.

Q: Grandmother South, yes.

A: Yes. And my grandfather was still living then.

Q: In amongst the papers you gave me there were several describing the terrible tornado in 1925 that leveled De Soto and other towns.

A: Yes, there was 800 killed.

Q: What did you hear about that and what happened and just tell me what you . . .

A: I was teaching school then and I showed you the picture of the bunch of the seventh and eighth and ninth grades that I taught. And at that time . . .

Q: And this was in Carterville.

A: That was in Carterville, fourteen miles away. But it was a terrible storm and we got under our seats. I got under my desk and the children all got under their seats. And it got so bad and it commenced to break out some of our windows, why, I asked them to pray. And one little boy, just with a real loud voice, he commenced to pray, "Now I lay me down to sleep." That's the only prayer I expect he knew. Well we all just joined in then with his prayer. And we said it all the way through, and we said it twice. And by that time the wind had passed on and it didn't break any more windows out and we was up on the second floor in an old brick building. And it seemed like all at once after we had said the second prayer to go to sleep by . . . and we all got up out of the—and then we said the Lord's Prayer. We was so glad we was all saved. And a lot of them knew the Lord's Prayer. But he didn't start that. He just said, "Now I lay me down to sleep," and we went through it twice.

Q: It probably averted some panic I would think.

A: It did. Nobody cried, not a child cried.

Q: Did you have any warning of it, Marie? Was there any kind of . . .

A: No, not a thing.

Q: You didn't have at that time.

A: No, no warning ever. All at once it just hit. And we were in a grove. Our school. We had two schools there, three schools, three school buildings. And it was all in the city park. They called it the city park. And it was, oh I don't know how many acres of ground. And it was big oak trees that had been there for years. Well a lot of them were just flat, you know.

Q: Just uprooted.

A: Yes. Yes, they were just uprooted.

Q: How much damage was there in Carterville?

A: Not too much, only just trees and fences and garages and things like that. It didn't do too much damage, no houses blown down. But, oh roofs, it took a lot of roofs off and blew chimneys down. It was a lot of damage too, if you just happened to think about the repairs that would have to be made.

Q: But nothing in comparison to De Soto?

A: Oh no. Oh no. De Soto just blew away, you know, and killed all those people. But most of the men in De Soto was in the mines. They were working over at Bush. And then there was a mine there north of De Soto that the men were in. And it killed a lot of old men, men that wasn't able to work, you know. And of course a lot of children. That was the worst thing. I don't think I showed you this. (tape stopped)

A: . . . looked at it. Those are the twins that was—one was hurt, but their brother was killed. And . . .

Q: This was when the school was hit in . . .

A: Yes, in De Soto. And both of those boys are living yet. And some people just come down and took children and people to their own homes. Some very rich fellow come down from St. Louis and took those twins and those clothes wasn't theirs. They outfitted them and the whole family and dozens of families, they just outfitted them with new clothes. And he took them up to St. Louis. They'd never been to anything any bigger than De Soto, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: And he buried their brother, you know, bought the casket and everything.

Q: Were their parents killed?

A: No. They were very poor people.

Q: I see.

A: And just on Thanksgiving Day one of their sisters died. She was an older sister. They was the babies at that time.

Q: When did you find out about your grandmother?

A: When I got home. We dismissed school right away.

Q: Yes. What time of day was this?

A: This was about three o'clock in the afternoon. And they dismissed school and everybody went home to see what happened to their own house. And we just had a new roof put on our house and it didn't do too much damage to it. It blew down a few trees. It blew a fence down. And it blew our garage down. And I hadn't no more than got in the house and the druggist called, Jay Vik called and told me that, "Marie, De Soto has just blown away." Well, the miners come home. They found it out right away at the mines. Frank got in and we loaded up the neighbors that we had, that we could take, you know, as many as we could take. And Frank's father was there visiting at our house. And of course Mrs. Williams was dead at that time. And we had him and we took Vena and Dave Dickey and we went—of course we had to go through—we couldn't go on the road because they blocked the roads. And we went to Carbondale and we met a cousin of mine and he rode our running board and took us into De Soto because they had the roads guarded. And unless you had some relatives there you couldn't get in. They wouldn't let you in because they called the state guards right away.

Q: Were looting.

A: They'd loot. And then the Red Cross hadn't got there yet. They come in and helped pick up. And they backed a train in from Carbondale, just a—they was baggage cars. And as they picked them up dead, they'd—they stopped at the depot and—it makes me have cold chills.

Q: Yes.

A: And they'd pick up the dead and the dying and all that.

Q: Well, your grandmother . . .

A: My grandmother—if she'd have stayed at home and gone into her

cellar, you know.

Q: Upground cellar.

A: Upground cellar—because it was built up it might have blown the top off, but the walls was, I think, four bricks thick. And then concreted inside, plastered concrete all over. That just held up. But she had gone up to her daughter-in-law's, my uncle's wife. And his daughter and their baby was there. Well, his wife (my Aunt Em) and Lucille, my cousin, and her baby was all killed. And Grandma was thrown underneath the roof, a roof that had come off the house. And she would just—her whole face—she had holed it up. It just took stiches after stiches like that to her face. And she didn't have any broken bones. But Aunt Em was just beat up to pieces. A two-by-four had run through her middle.

Q: What did they do about medical help?

A: Well, they called in everything that they could get. But the trouble was they wasn't too many towns that was missed. And they sent to St. Louis for ambulances and all around, Anna and all those other towns around.

Q: Was the community pretty good about pitching in and . . .

A: Oh yes. People all over the world sent things to them.

Q: What about the black towns around there?

A: Well, they was hurt, yes. But I don't know—we was too busy taking care of our own.

Q: Well, I was just wondering if maybe one or another, if the towns helped one another.

A: Maybe. I imagine they did.

Q: If there was any evidence of that that you remember?

A: I imagine that they did help each other.

Q: Was the Red Cross . . .

A: The Red Cross moved right in. They set up tents and kitchens and churches, all kinds of organizations sent stoves and sewing machines and everything that, beds and everything. We took in just as many as we could. And our neighbors set up a kitchen and served—I quit school for two weeks until we got them all buried and got them all located. Our neighbors and the whole town—and we didn't have a garage because it had blown the garage down. Our house was full, it was piled up with clothes and stoves and everything in the world that people would need. They moved in chairs and beds and we had them on porches and on our neighbors' porches. And the churches set up kitchens for them. And they fed all of our folks.

Q: How long did it take for the town to get back to normal?

A: Oh . . . it took years.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, really, to build back. But they commenced to build right away. But it took—one day there was thirty-seven funerals going on at the same time.

Q: Oh my.

A: In that little town. Yes, people would go from one funeral to another, you know. The people was there and the preachers, the ministers. And it didn't make any difference if it was a Catholic or a Protestant minister, they held funerals. They'd come in from other towns. See, now Du Quoin wasn't hurt. Elkville was hurt some. That's the surrounding towns. Murphysboro was just blown away. Carbondale was damaged but they operated. That's where they took all of the dead because the railroad went into that town, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: And they called in undertakers from all over. And of course they didn't have half enough places for them to bury them, you know. They didn't want to bury them on places that the family didn't want them to be. And then the state police helped and they dug graves. And they finally called in a section of soldiers. I don't know where they were from, and they dug graves. Murphysboro was just blown off, just like De Soto. It was in the same line. Then Bush and Hurst was nearly blown

all away too. And West Frankfort was hurt bad. See, those towns couldn't help because they had their own people. But they just came from St. Louis and East St. Louis and Belleville and all the towns around, you know. There were so many towns that came.

Q: Where did the funds . . .

End of Side One, Tape Five

A: They had people stationed on the roads as they come in, as they let them in. They just let so many people in at a time. They took up collections. They got thousands of dollars that way. And of course churches all over the country sent—if they didn't send money they sent—maybe they'd send twenty-five beds or fifty stoves. The Seventh Day Adventist sent enough machines in, sewing machines, for people after they got their tents to live in—why, they commenced to send in things like beds and chairs and tables and things like that. The Seventh Day Adventist Church sent in enough for all of De Soto to have a machine if they sewed. And then people made their own clothes. You know, you did't buy very many ready-made dresses.

Q: That's right.

A: And that was a help. My brother's trousers, with his Masonic lodge—he had an address on his card, you know. His house was blown away and his baby was killed. She had him in his arms. A woman had come over there to stay in the house because she thought their house was more solid than what theirs was, she was killed. And she was holding her baby. The baby wasn't killed. A fire out of the stove must have got coal on the top of the baby's head. And she's never—she's living yet and she's never got a hair up there on her head. A place about like that (gestures) and she just combs the whole back of her hair back like that.

Q: But you don't know how much federal funding they got or state . . .

A: No, I don't know how much . . .

Q: Did they get federal funding? Did they get . . .

A: Oh yes. Yes, they did. Yes, they got federal funding. But they got a lot of money, from everywhere.

Q: From all over the country.

A: Yes, my brother's pants blowed over in Indiana. And those people found them in their yard.

Q: Oh really?

A: That's right. And they sent a letter to Ben and asked what size they wore, you know, and my you never saw the like of things that they gathered up in Indiana and sent to him.

Q: Where was this in Indiana?

A: I don't remember the name of the town but it was a little town, not a very big town.

Q: Isn't it amazing?

A: Yes, it's amazing. It was scary and funny too. I just got a letter, a Christmas letter, from my cousin and he's lost his wife. And he runs a barber and a beauty shop. And I'm the oldest one that's living. Well, I'm the only one and he's the only one in his family. And wrote me a letter and asked me to come and live out there.

Q: Oh my. That was nice.

A: I would think it was nice though for him to offer.

Q: Oh sure.

A: It made you feel real good.

Q: Sure, it makes you feel like you're wanted.

A: Yes. And I wouldn't have to do a thing. All you'd have to do is sit and watch tv, which wasn't too . . .

Q: Not much incentive.

A: No, not much incentive for me.

Q: Right.

A: And he was searching around in Grandma's place, where Grandma's house had been and Grandma had a—we called it a switch—I don't know. It was a braid.

Q: Yes. My grandmother wore a switch.

A: Yes. Well, they called it a switch. And I used to slip it out and wear it to school and it didn't no more match my hair than nothing in the world, a great big thick braid that—and then I bow ribbon across the back, you know, that great big thick. And everybody knew I didn't have that much hair, you know. Well, he was digging around in there and he come to that switch. He found it.

Q: Yes.

A: And he didn't dig all the way down. He thought it was another dead person. And he screamed and took on. He had been in the cyclone there at De Soto in the school. And he run home to hunt his dog, his little dog, Bruff, where the little dog, Bruff, lived. But his mother and sister and baby was laying there dead. He got there and found them.

Q: Oh dear.

A: But this was later, maybe a week or so later, digging there to see what he could find. And he thought he found somebody dead. And he just nearly had a nervous breakdown. But later we got so that we could laugh about it. But we thought, honestly, we thought he was going to lose his mind, it shook him so, because he had gone through so much.

Q: So much already.

A: So he left there. He had a sister in Peoria—her husband was running a drugstore. And she took him in and sent him to high school. See, he was in high school. And then—then later on he took TB [tuberculosis] and the Lutheran people sent him to Wheat Ridge in Denver. It's a TB sanitarium. Of course now it isn't. But he sure sticks—not long ago he had a three-day hernia operation. And I called him after I got the letter and I said, "Where did you go?" And he said, "Why, I went to the Lutheran hospital." He said, "I wouldn't go to any other one." He

said, "Whenever I've got any money to give, the Lutheran people get it because they took care of me when . . .

(tape stopped)

Q: Did you have any kind of a fire department during the tornado or were there many fires?

A: Lots of fires. Lots of fires. They just used buckets of water a lot of times.

Q: Just on an assembly line bucket . . .

A: Yes.

Q: They didn't have any kind of fire wagons or anything like that.

A: Oh no. Not then, no, not then. They do now. And all the streets are named and numbered and it's built in. Now so many people have built back. Some never built back. Some was burned to death in their stores. That was a terrible thing. A man that run the store—he and his wife run the store. It was a two-story brick building. And they sold gasoline and coal oil for people's stoves. And that caught afire and they still—he was still living. Now they never heard her. But he begged them to try and get him out, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: And there was people that heard him. And they just didn't do anything, only just throwing bricks, trying to dig down and find him, you know. But pretty soon the fire got so hot they couldn't . . .

Q: Do any more.

A: . . . do any more and he had to burn up. And she was burned too. She may have been dead by the time, you know. She might have been dead right away. But that was the pityfulest thing. And my uncle and my grandmother—of course Grandma wasn't there. She got too old to get up and, you know, go to the store. And my uncle had a big store. Of course Grandma owned half of it then.

Q: Right.

A: But he handled everything. Men's suits and shoes and all that stuff, women's clothes, dry goods, just yard stuff. Vegetables and meat and a bank, had a bank in the store.

Q: Everything.

A: Everything. And he went in the vault when he heard the roar—he went into the vault and the store was all there and everything. And when he stepped out, he stepped out in open air when he opened the bank door.

Q: Everything was gone.

A: Everything was gone. And then it caught afire. And it burned. But he built back.

Q: How long did your Grandmother South survive after all that?

A: Fifteen years. She come to my house and lived till they got a house built. Red Cross built all their houses back.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. You know, if they didn't have anything left. And my mother had two houses. She owned two houses. But they rebuilt the one house, but the rental house that she had to rent, they wouldn't build it back, just the ones that—now if you owned rental houses, now like he owned twelve or fifteen rental houses, they wouldn't build a one of them back. He had to replace all of them, unless they had insurance.

Q: Otherwise they only rebuilt the ones that individuals lived in.

A: Yes.

Q: I see. Well, that was quite an effort on the part of the Red Cross.

A: Yes. It was. And they built good houses. They're standing now.

Q: Well, that's good.

A: Yes.

Q: During the early 1930's, I suppose in 1932 is when you lost your savings?

A: Yes.

Q: And Frank seemed to think there was a job here in Springfield that he could find.

A: Well, he didn't think. He knew. A fellow, Louis Walden—his kids had gone to school with me. He had three children and they had all gone to school with me. And when he was the superintendent of the mines down there. And I knew Mary's wife real well. And of course, you know, whenever you teach somebody's children, you get pretty well acquainted with them.

Q: Sure.

A: And he knew that the mines were all closed down there. And he come up here and got a job with Peabody so he got to be superintendent of several mines here, [No.] 59 and 57 and 53 and a whole bunch of them.

Q: So he contacted Frank.

A: So he called Frank and the very day that he called Frank—he called Frank first, somebody else called him and said they was going to open up one of those mines. And, oh, I cried and begged him and pled with him to take that down there, you know, because I still had my school.

Q: So he thought that the mines were going to open up down there too.

A: Well, they called him and told him they would. They did. But they didn't stay open long.

Q: I see.

A: They didn't stay open long at all. But he come up here, the best

thing that ever happened to us. But it used to make me sick to come up here. I stayed down there and taught school two more years.

Q: Two more years. Where did you stay when you came up here to visit?

A: He had a place where he boarded. And I could stay there and I did. And I started to go with her in the summer when I first would come up to visit. I'd go to the West Side Church with her. And that's how I come to go to the West Side. Then when they built this one down here, well I started to come down here, when it was Gingham Gardens. Did you ever remember Gingham Gardens?

Q: I remember.

A: And they give us fifteen hundred dollars, knocked it off of the new building, you know. And that helped out. And they just redone, kind of cleared out, didn't do Frank a bit of good to go there. He kept watching where the cigarette butts had burned holes in the floor and where the bar was, you know. He couldn't think of anything else, I don't think, only where the bar was and where the orchestra played, you know. He said he didn't like to go over there at all.

Q: It was a big dance hall, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was a big dance hall. Yes, they cut it up and made it into Sunday School rooms. I went there and help Scaife's—they were the flower people, you know. Mrs. Scaife and Mr. Scaife and their boys and me cleaned out that upstairs. We stayed upstairs and throwed out the beds.

Q: Was that built around the buildings down here now?

A: Yes.

Q: I didn't realize that. The yellow brick church right down here?

A: Yes, right down here, sure.

Q: They just bricked on the outside of the old Gingham Gardens then.

A: Yes, what was there. And we stayed upstairs and cleaned out the beds

and all the bedclothes and all that stuff. It's a wonder we didn't get hydrophobia or something, I don't know. But we didn't. Throwed them out the windows. And then there was a crew on the ground that burned them.

Q: I didn't know that they had beds and stuff up there.

A: Well, they did.

Q: I guess that's why . . .

A: It was so notorious.

Q: I guess it was pretty notorious.

A: Yes, it was. And it disturbed this whole neighborhood.

Q: When did you buy this property, you and Frank? How did that happen?

A: Through West Side Church. I had to have something to do. I taught some in a school. What is the name of that school? It was a girls' school, can you think of it?

Q: Betty Stewart?

A: Betty Stewart.

Q: You taught at Betty Stewart?

A: Yes. Finished somebody's term there. Well, I didn't like it very much.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know why. It was different from what I was used to, I guess.

And it wasn't people that I knew or, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: And I hadn't been here long enough to even like the town. And I thought, well we'd go back home. I had left my house furnished down there. So finally we moved up here in that first year we were here. And over on Fifth Street. Proska's lived over on Fifth right across the street, Betty Proska. Did you . . .

Q: Wasn't she a dancing teacher?

A: Yes. And she had a preschool in her basement for little kids. And I used to teach for her some, when she wanted to go someplace. And the next year after we moved up here. And one Sunday I went to the West Side—well, I went every Sunday. And I met a woman by the name of Skols. And she had this store here and she lived back here in this part. And come to find out, Frank's father and mother was raised right here the other night at that party. I met the father and mother of Frank Owens and how happy we were to see each other. I didn't know them. They must have moved before. Well, they went to school here with all the kids that I knew around here or the young people that I knew. And they lived right back here next to Wrights, close here. And we had such a good talk with Frank's father and his aunt, you know, that lived here.

Q: Yes.

A: And I don't know—I just met this woman, this Mrs. Skols and she had three boys and she wanted to go over to Champaign and put those boys in school. They had gone two years here—all of them had gone two years to junior high school.

Q: This was already an established grocery store at the time.

A: Yes, it was a grocery store, that's right. And she said, "Come over to my place this afternoon." That was on a Sunday. And, "I want you to take my store." And I said, "Well, I don't know anything about stores." I said, "My grandmother had always run a store and my mother had worked in one. But I didn't know the process." She said, "That don't make any difference. You come out and take over." And I said, "Well, I will if I can get Frank to do it." Well, I talked to Frank and I told him I wasn't happy and I was going to go back home and I was going to go back and teach school and all that kind of silly stuff. I wasn't, but I was trying to make him think I was. So he said, "Okay," he'd come. Well, we come out here and it was the tenth day of August.

Q: Oh dear.

A: And it was hot. I thought I'd die. No fans, no nothing, you know.

Q: Yes. What year was this?

A: In 1936. And she said, "Well, you just move out here and pay me $45 a month for it and pay me $600 for what I've got in the store. "Well," I said, "I know we can do that." And Frank said, well if I wanted to. Well, Betty Lou thought she was just—it was terrible. She thought . . .

(tape stopped)

Q: You were just talking about how Betty Lou thought it was a disgrace to come and live in a grocery store.

A: Yes. I got her picture out here in the rounds when she was maid of honor. You know, boy, she thought—oh, she wouldn't let anybody, any date to come and pick her up. They had to come to the porch there and come in another door, you know. They wouldn't come in—and it got so that the bunch that she ran around with in high school, they was tickled to death to come in the store. They'd just come in and eat and have the best time, drink soda and eat ice cream and eat Popcicles and little cakes and . . . and enjoyed it more than anything.

Q: You lost all of your savings and had to make this move. But you obviously were . . .

A: We still had . . .

Q: . . . were able to recoup pretty fast.

A: Yes, we had a little bit of money.

Q: You had . . .

A: Some besides. But that five thousand [dollars], you don't know how big that was to us.

Q: Oh, I'm sure it was.

A: We had saved five thousand dollars and we should have—really, we should have had a house or something out of it, you know. But the fellow that was in charge of it, I think he got more houses than anybody else.

Q: What was the total cost of the store when you bought it at that time and the house?

A: We didn't buy it then. We paid forty-five dollars a month till Mrs. Skols came back in April. Well, she kept coming back every once in a while from over there. She run a little store over there and lived in the store, just like she did here.

Q: Yes.

A: And those three boys was in school. See, the oldest one had two years and the next two had had two years but the oldest one helped in the store, I guess, until she got ready to move over there to put them in school. She was handicapped because her husband was supposed to have drown. Well, they never found his body. He left his car on the bank of the river and all of his clothes and just disappeared, is what happened.

Q: Yes.

A: But she never would acknowledge to it.

Q: Yes. That happened a lot during the Depression.

A: Yes. She stuck to it that he—but her mother made her get some kind of a paper that if she accumulated anything in her lifetime he couldn't come back and get it. She was smarter than Mrs. Skoles was or she wanted to make it secure for her.

Q: When did you eventually buy the store then?

A: Well, she was killed. She come back to have her teeth worked on. And she was just out here and picked up—we had bought her some potatoe chips to sell in her store from the fellow that was over here that made them. And she had that big bunch of stuff in the car that we had bought for her. And she crossed at Third and Mason I think it was up there.

That night after she had got her teeth fixed she drove on that track and the train hit her. And about seven-thirty in the evening the telephone rang and Frank answered and it was a priest at St. John's and he told Frank, he said, "There's a lady by the name of Skoles that they've brought here. But," he says, "nobody knows her." And said, "But she had your name in her purse." Well, they asked us to come in and identify her. Well, we went right away. And that was the worst drive through town that—you know, it was terrible.

Q: Well, sure it was.

A: It was just awful. And I wondered what in the world we'd do with those boys. Well we went up there and Frank went in and looked at her. I wouldn't go in. I went in but I didn't go in where she was. And he identified her. And she didn't have no folks here or anybody. But of course she was. They didn't know to find friends out here because everybody knew her. But Frank had to identify her. Well then we had to call those boys.

Q: Oh boy.

A: And that was the awfullest thing. And they got over here and they didn't know what to do. So we had to help them out and we had to furnish some of the money to, you know, to get started on it. And we just kept—after she was buried they went back to school and run the little store until the end of the year. But, you know, they couldn't have managed, even the three of them couldn't have managed to take care of it because sometimes all three of them needed to be in school.

Q: Right, right.

A: And they couldn't hire anybody because they didn't make enough money, they didn't have the money. So we just kept advancing them one hundred dollars here and one hundred dollars there and fifty dollars and so on. And, well, it just got so much on us that we was just robbing ourselves to keep them in school. And until they found out they could get a loan from somebody—I don't know, I guess some loan like they have now, I don't know, and keep them all there because the one was going to graduate. And as soon as he graduated—he was a civil engineer and he had a job promised him right away. Well, he could take care of the other two then. But they wanted to sell the building and the place.

End of Side Two, Tape Five

A: I'm sure going to miss you.

Q: Well, I'll miss you too, Marie. You were telling me that you had a story about Frank's mother that you wanted to tell.

A: Yes. She wasn't a midwife but she actually acquired that later on. It sounds like she was anyhow. A doctor, one doctor in the community—now, and that means all out in the country, you know, all around. And people would say, well they wanted Aunt Clara to come, they wanted Aunt Clara to be there when one of the babies were born. And so she would go with the doctor. He'd come by with the horse and buggy. Later on he came in a car when the cars got to be plentiful, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: And he'd get her, and they'd go and deliver a baby or if a child was sick, she'd be there and he'd tell her how much medicine to give them and so on and she'd go back at different times to help. Maybe they'd have a horse and buggy or a car later on. And between Frank and Roy, the two last boys that was born, and her children was—she had nine children and they was two years apart, all of them. Between Frank and Roy she helped the doctor deliver or she delivered them, twenty-six babies.

Q: My heavens.

A: Now can you imagine, now in that two years in the whole community around there was twenty-six babies born. And we always laughed about one lady. She lived just across the alley from her. And they were very poor people and they had one baby right after another. And Mrs. Williams would always say, "Well I know this lady is going to have another baby because she came over the other day and said, "Now, Aunt Clara, I'm going to pay you for that last baby you helped deliver." She said then she knew that she was going to have another one. (laughter) And she never did pay anything you know. And, oh, they might give her a little money or they might give her something that they had or something they raised or something like that. It wasn't very much. And she never charged a penny for anything.

Q: Was she the only midwife in the area?

A: Yes. She was the only one. And they didn't call her a midwife. They just said they wanted Aunt Clara Williams to be there and she'd be there. Well Mr. Williams wasn't very happy about it. He thought it shortened her life. She died when she was fifty-two. She had a stroke.

And of course it may have. I don't know if it did shorten her life. But he was always against it, said they imposed on her. But she didn't feel that way. She said if she hadn't have gone she'd have felt like if one of them died, maybe it would have been because she didn't help. And we do know that she did save several women's lives because so many times they flooded, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: And she knew how to—she knew that ice, how to stop it.

Q: Stop the bleeding.

A: Yes. She sure did.

Q: And she'd often do it without the doctor.

A: Without the doctor being there. And she could detect it whenever—even if the lady didn't know that she was flooding, she'd be getting more pale and like she was going to go to sleep or something. And she'd tell the doctor if the doctor was there that they was going to have to start to work right away quick to stop that. And lots of people felt they owed their life or their baby's life to her, you know. And I think it was a very interesting thing and a very wonderful thing that she did it and no pay or no, didn't care if they thanked her or not. And it was an awful good thing for a lady to do, I think.

Q: Oh, it certainly was. When you were teaching down in Carterville you mentioned—well, we talked about the Depression and Frank having to change jobs. But you also mentioned that while you were teaching you were paid in script down there.

A: That's right. And it was at a discount.

Q: Okay, how did that work?

A: Well it didn't work very well. The stores wouldn't take it. Some stores would take it with a 10 percent discount. And that meant that 10 percent was taken off of the value of your script. And of course we didn't like it. But there wasn't any banks open. But finally the Carterville bank got open. And still we lost $5,000 in the building and loan. We didn't get a penny on that. But we still had some money in the bank. But we had to sign a three-year—well, I don't know, what

would you call it?

Q: Agreement?

A: An agreement of some kind. We had to sign a paper that we wouldn't demand our pay, our money out of the bank and leave it there three years. It wasn't much but we didn't have much left. But we had some. And we signed. And my mother had her money there. But before the three years were up they paid her back hers because she was an old lady. And they thought maybe she needed it more so than what we would because we were younger people then and could work and make it, you know.

Q: That bank eventually survived.

A: Oh it survived. And it's still going. But it was the only bank open in the county, in Williamson County. Even Marion, the county seat, Herrin and all the other towns around was closed. Johnston City was closed. And that way. They established themselves and our next door neighbor was president of the bank. And I always felt a little hurt at him because he didn't tell us—he knew the bank was going to have to close and he never told us. And I went down there just a day or two before and put my salary that I'd, my check you know, in my bank account. But Frank got paid that evening before the bank closed the next morning and he just went down and had—now he didn't have any idea the bank was going to close. But he had a friend that needed help. He had—his car had broke down over in Herrin and he called Frank to come over and help him get his car fixed. So Frank just went down to the bank and got his check cashed and just took it all out because he didn't know how much that man would need, you know, to have his car fixed. So we had that. And that was a two-weeks pay.

Q: You don't remember what that was.

A: I don't know what the amount was.

Q: You don't remember that amount.

A: No.

Q: We also talked about, at the end of the last tape, about your purchasing the store here in Springfield. And I didn't mean to be nosey, but I think it's interesting, the amount of money you paid for it.

A: How much did . . .

Q: Fifteen thousand.

A: Fifteen thousand.

Q: And you paid forty-five dollars a month and whatever . . .

A: Rent.

Q: And whatever the young men borrowed from you also was added on to the payment of that.

A: Yes.

Q: The store must have brought you a fair income.

A: It did. We was the only store out here in this whole area. And even though a lot of people from other towns like Curran and New Berlin and Chatham, they'd go maybe to a big store downtown here to trade, well, maybe they'd forget something. Oh, maybe they needed a can of pineapple or a loaf of bread or a quart of milk or maybe they'd buy some ham or porkchops or something. I cut so many porkchops. I wish I had a quarter for every one I've ever cut. I nearly wore that poor little block out that's in the kitchen there. We used to have a man come through the country with a saw. And he'd start sawing that top off, you know, you dug down into it with a cleaver you know.

Q: Into what?

A: Into the wood.

Q: I see.

A: And it would make it hollow like, you know.

Q: I see.

A: Uneven.

Q: I see.

A: And he'd come with this saw and it clamped down even and then it couldn't get out of the groove you know and he'd saw that off and make it just as smooth and nice. And it was flat, completely flat. Well, maybe he'd do that every spring, you know, come and saw off the top of the . . .

Q: Did you pick up your meat locally from just around here or . . .

A: Yes we did. We picked it up. There was a Springfield place downtown called the Monroe Market and they sold to us wholesale. And it was back in an alley downtown. They had a store in the front but the meat market, the wholesale meat market and the freezer, a great big room that was the freezer, and all their wholesale meat was sold from back there. And we got so, though, we bought us a grinder and ground our own hamburger. And of course we'd buy a half a side of beef and they'd cut it up for us down there and then we'd make our own hamburger.

Q: Who helped you in the store here?

A: I had lots of help. I generally had three people that would help before Frank had a heart attack.

Q: During those months in the Depression how much did you pay the help that you had in the store? Do you remember?

A: No, I don't remember just how much we did pay. But it wasn't no great amount, you know. And people were happy to get the work. They'd speak ahead, "Well, now if so-and-so stops and don't want to work anymore, be sure and remember me," they'd say.

Q: Yes.

A: And many of these people out in here, they paid every two weeks. And I think I told you about . . .

Q: They paid you every two weeks or they were paid . . .

A: They paid us every two weeks for their groceries.

Q: I see. In other words, you sold on credit.

A: But we sold on credit. Of course later on we quit the credit business when times got better. But many of them bought everything that they ate right out of our store.

Q: You mentioned, I believe, one time that you also sold feed in your store.

A: We sold chicken feed. During the World War II they had chicken feed in 100-pound sacks made with cloth that would make dresses. Do you remember that?

Q: I just barely remember that.

A: Yes. They were pretty sacks in calico or percale or something and people picked out the chicken feed they liked the sack best, you know, so they could make a dress out of it. Or they'd buy two sacks at a time if they were large people. And during the World War II you traveled on a gas ticket. You know, you could't buy all the gasoline that you'd need. Well, people didn't travel. We didn't rent our rooms. So we just put in a couple of the rooms with the chicken feed. Well, times got a little bit better and I got smart and sold some chicken feed from the front porch and later on I bought straw and hay. People couldn't buy that unless you'd go out in the country. And the farmers were so busy working the fields trying to raise enough wheat and corn and stuff for us to eat, for us to eat. And all of the hay and the straw I could buy I bought and had it put on the front porch. And one evening Frank come home and he said, "Now, you're going to have to stop that. I can't stand to come home and the whole front porch is covered with straw and hay." So I had to put that out in one of the other rooms, you know, until we got so that we rented them out more.

Q: What else did you sell that was unusual that you wouldn't see in the stores today?

A: Well, shotgun shells and rifle shells and I used to sell yeast. There was big blocks, I'd buy big blocks like that of yeast and cut off and sell a dime's worth at a time, just put it in wax paper, you know. And I don't want to get mixed up with Mrs. William's occupation. But she made yeast.

Q: Oh you mentioned that one time.

A: Did I mention it?

Q: Yes, you mentioned it and how she might . . .

A: Well I didn't know—that made me think of it.

Q: You also mentioned one time—well, I'm getting ahead of myself now a little bit. How much land did you get when you bought this store around you?

A: An acre. I've still got it, only the nine hundred square feet that the state bought.

Q: And that you didn't like.

A: And I didn't like it. I sure didn't. Frank Owens tried to help me and he did all that he could. But he wasn't a strong enough politician, I guess, to keep them from taking it. And then he advised me, he said, "Well, you're going to have to get a lawyer." And I got two lawyers. And they couldn't stop it either, but they stopped them from taking some that the state wanted to claim. And that man didn't own it that they—he give them a leeway to go through. He deeded them.

Q: This was when they were widening the road out here?

A: Widening the road, yes. Well, they wanted to make a five-lane the year before last. And it wasn't last summer. But it was the summer before. And that man, of course, was dead at that time. And his name was never on any property around here that he ever owned it. And we went down, our lawyers did—well, of course Frank did too, to begin with. They tried to do that a long time ago when we first got this place. And of course it wasn't on the, in the state, not the State House, but the county courthouse. It wasn't listed there at all. And how the state would ever believe anything like that—they had a piece of paper that that fellow had written out.

Q: That's strange.

A: But that fellow never owned any ground around here.

Q: How much did they pay you for the ground, the nine hundred feet?

A: They paid me ten thousand dollars. But they offered me two thousand, five hundred. And these lawyers . . .

Q: That was the initial offer, was two thousand, five hundred?

A: Yes. That's what they offered me. And Frank Owens says, "Well, that's not enough." He was still down at the bank. He says, "That's not enough." And he says, "Don't take it." And I says, "Well, I didn't intend to." And then I got Mr. McGarry was the lawyer and the fellow that was with him, I can't think of his name right now, the other fellow. And he just stuck with them until they offered him ten thousand dollars. Then he didn't charge much for it. He charged just one hundred dollars for his part because . . .

Q: That was generous.

A: Well, because Kevin worked for him several summers when he was going to law school. Kevin had come home from Ann Arbor and would go right into the—well, and when Kevin was going to the U of I [University of Illinois] he worked for the man in the city business that went to Quinton. I don't remember his name right now. And I asked Kevin the last time he was home what he thought about him. And he said he was one of the nicest fellows he had ever worked for. He's one that is in prison now.

Q: Is that Orville Hodge or . . .

A: No, it wasn't Orville Hodge. It was with the man right now, Bonansinga.

Q: Paul Bonansinga.

A: It was with Paul Bonansinga's man that he had out at the lake, out at the . . .

Q: I see.

A: . . . water, out at the water place. And I used to run out there at noon and pick Kevin up because his mother was in school. He would be out there before her school would be out. I'd run out there and get him

and rush him in here and have a lunch ready for him. And he'd eat lunch and I'd take him back. He didn't have a car then you know.

Q: Right, I see.

A: And he painted and he did everything out there. And he said that fellow was one of the nicest fellows he ever worked for in his life.

Q: You don't remember the fellow's . . .

A: The one that's in jail right now. I don't know what his name . . .

Q: I can't think of his name either.

A: I can't think of his name.

Q: When you bought the motel, or the store, was the motel here or did you and Frank build that?

A: No. There were six rooms out there and they looked like they were octagon shape. They looked like those little chicken houses, like, that they used to have, you know. It was octagon, eight sides to them.

Q: That's why you called it the Octo-Motel.

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: What were they used for before you turned it into a motel?

A: It was a motel.

Q: It was a motel then too.

A: Yes. And she just charged fifty cents a night for them. There wasn't any motels around.

Q: That's right.

A: There weren't any.

Q: Occasionally you'd see little buildings like these and . . .

A: Yes. And she charged fifty cents. Well, when we came we charged a dollar because we put some furniture in, more than a bed, you know. And there wasn't any water out there. We had two wells here. We didn't have any city water or we didn't have any gas. We had to have an electric stove and we had just bought a new gas stove where we were. And we lived over on Fifth Street then and we lived there a year. And I had to sell that new gas stove. And the lady that we bought from, she left her old electric stove.

Q: Did you have bathroom facilities?

A: We had a toilet in here and no lavoratory, just the toilet, that's all we had. But they had a shower down in the basement. And we let the people come in from the motel and take a shower down there. But there wasn't any toilet down there and it was just outdoor toilets then. And we used outdoor water, out in the yard we had water out there. But we did have a toilet here. And there was a little, oh, a little sewer that run across some lots back here. I don't know where it entered or what it entered in, maybe some kind of a sewer or a septic tank or something. And right away then we built a bathhouse and had a middle room and on one side—I've still got the building out there—one side was for ladies and the other side for the men. And in the middle we had a stove that made heat and the heat could go across up in the top, you know, across and then a long room in the back where we washed. We moved our washer and dryer out there.

Q: I see. Your dryer?

A: Yes, we had a dryer.

Q: What was that like? I didn't know they had them then.

A: Well, it was an old dryer. It dried clothes with electricity.

Q: I see.

A: And a man down the street here by the name of Grady worked for the state and when W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration] came in, when Franklin Roosevelt put that in, he got busy and went to Washington. And

put in his bid for the W.P.A. here, to bring us gas and water. Well, they did. We got it. And that's how we got water and gas. And he burned to death, Mr. Grady did, over on Sixth Street. His furnace blew up.

Q: Oh dear.

A: He moved out of this neighborhood. He bought a big nice two-story house there and it's on Sixth Street and it's about in the area across where we are now here and I'm sure they'll see my directions on here. (chuckles)

Q: You usually come through pretty clearly in description though.

A: And on the outside was a big garage. Well, they had their heating plant out there. And I don't know what happened, but it blew up. And the water scalded him. And he lived ten days after he scalded.

Q: But after his efforts to bring sewer and water out here, that Jerome started to build.

A: Yes. There had never been a house out there until then.

Q: What was all this area like?

A: It was farmland.

Q: It was all farmland. How far north was it farmland?

A: Up past Rice over on that side there was a big O'Donnels or MacDonalds. There was a big white two-story house.

Q: That was O'Connell's.

A: O'Connell's. Well, everything along here and all back here, all from Wright's house back here—there's a big two-story house on Urban and, from that house—that was the only house that was back up in there—and from there on way out on to New Berlin, I guess, was farmland, you know, all farmland.

Q: With the exception of the skating rink, Moonlight Gardens.

A: Yes, Moonlight Gardens was there. But all of that was farmland.

Q: All around it.

A: Yes, all around it. And all the way across the street, it was nothing over there, you know.

Q: Did any public transportation come out this far?

A: No. No, there wasn't anything. There was a—yes, well that was public.

Q: A train.

A: Well, it wasn't a train, it was the—what did they call it?

Q: Interurban?

A: Interurban. It was like a train but it was not an engine, you know.

Q: Yes, it was electric.

A: It was electric. And there was a stop right out here on the other side of the railroad track. And you could ride into town for a nickel.

Q: Where did Betty Lou go to grade school and high school?

A: Well, she had finished grade school and had one year of high school . . .

Q: I see.

A: . . . when we come out here. And then she went to the high school right . . .

Q: Springfield High School.

A: Springfield, yes.

Q: You had to take her back and forth to school then.

A: Oh yes. Yes, we had to take her back and forth. And then she rode her bicycle a lot because all the kids out in here rode their bicycles to school. And then when it got bad weather, why, we'd take her.

Q: You mentioned one time that you had a robbery in your store.

A: Yes. Frank was shot. A boy by the name of—I think I told you his name before. I believe at some place along the line I told you.

Q: You may have mentioned it.

A: Yes. And he had traded with us and had been in the store the night before. He come in quite often and he lived across the railroad tracks, not close here but when you went down to Route 4 and went way down Route 4, he lived way down there. And he come in quite a—he was twenty-one. And we were very friendly with him and we thought he was a pretty nice boy, you know, and he'd come in and talk. You know, people then—they needed neighbors and needed people to talk to, you know. People was more friendly, I think, and this was kind of an outpost, you know, where kids hung out and ate ice cream and eat little cakes and pies and all that kind of stuff, you know. And then we'd give them—you hear some of the older ones that's out here now, they'll always say how generous Frank was. He'd give them weiners. They'd buy a loaf of bread maybe and they'd go across over there in that vacant field and build them a fire and toast weiners, you know, and fix them a sandwich and maybe buy some marshmallows or Frank would give them to them. And they always said he was so generous with them, you know, he was always—and he'd go over once in a while to see that they put the fire out and all that. Sometimes we just would give them a party out here in the back yard. And along the line someplace we've got pictures of great big bunches of kids.

Q: That was fun.

A: That was fun and it was fun for us.

Q: Sure. But this young man who robbed you.

A: Well he came in the store one night and he said he waited until somebody got out of the store. It was a customer, you know. Because we stayed open till ten. We opened at six o'clock in the morning and stayed open until ten o'clock at night.

Q: That was a long day.

A: It was awful. Sometimes people would call up. They had forgot to get milk for their babies and we'd tell them, "Well, come on over and we'll get up and sell it too you." Or maybe just hand it out the back door and tell them to pay tomorrow, we'd say. We was more trusting than they would be now.

Q: This was six days a week I assume.

A: Seven.

Q: Seven days a week.

A: Yes. On Sunday we'd stay open until one o'clock in the morning. I went to church one Sunday and Frank went the next.

Q: Yes.

A: And—oh, then we'd open up if they knocked on the door. And this boy come in the store that night. It was about nine o'clock. It was the eighteenth of March and they was having the—we was watching very hard, watching the TV. They had . . .

Q: Not the television.

A: No, not television.

Q: You were listening to the radio.

A: Radio, yes, we was listening to the radio. And it was the "Sweet Sixteen," they called the ballgame then, over at the U of I. We was watching that. And we took a turn about, see, we always let the help go home at six o'clock. Then we took over. And we was listening to the

radio and my mother was here. And Betty Lou and the two kids, no, we was looking at TV because Betty Lou and Sherry and Kevin was here.

Q: This must have been later on then.

A: It was later, yes. It was after Frank had had his heart attack.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: And I had just been in the store and waited on somebody. Betty Lou had been in the store and waited on somebody. Well, it was Frank's time. And Frank went in to wait on this boy and he walked in with the gun in his hand. And he said to Frank, "Frank, I'm going to hold you up." He didn't have a mask on or anything. And Frank said, "The hell you are." And he says, "You're just kidding," he told the boy after he said, "The hell you are." And Frank was pretty rough with him, you know, if he thought they was going to be smart aleck, you know. And he had that gun, Frank thought it was just, maybe it wasn't a real gun, you know, just . . . and he pointed it at Frank. And Frank said, "Well, don't point that at me. What's wrong with you?" And he said, "I mean, I'm going to hold you up." And Frank said, "Well, you're not." And pretty soon Frank looked at him and he decided he really meant it. So he opened the cash register and pulled out some bills and just scattered them across the counter like that. And that boy dropped the gun, just in his hand he held it, but he put it down to gather it up. And Frank hit him with a glass of canned milk. It was dry milk. And it was glass. And it cut him pretty bad, cut this fellow in the head. And he dropped his gun. Well, he hollered for us to bring the shotgun in. Well Betty Lou put the kids in the clothes closet and we couldn't find the—we didn't keep them loaded, the gun loaded on account of the kids, you know. We were afraid to have it loaded. She couldn't find it so she picked up a chair and carried it in and I followed her and we gave Frank the chair and we commenced—he had got then up towards the door, this boy had. And Frank took the chair and knocked him down. And we kept throwing—we kept on the top salad dressing and canned cheese, like pineapple cheese in little glasses and all that.

Q: Yes.

A: We commenced to throw stuff at him. And we broke the mirror. We had a mirror up there in the store so we could see people, who they were and so on. And we broke that, smashed it all over that boy and by the time we saw that he was down, why, we didn't throw anything else. And Frank had that chair set down over him and said he was going to jump onto him and get the gun away, because he still had the gun. So he shot Frank a blow. He just shot Frank, he was kind of down over him. It went in right here.

Q: Right at the top of his hairline.

A: Yes. And skirted the skull. That is, it went under the skin.

Q: Under the skin on top of the skull.

A: Yes. And come out five inches back here. This was a little hole here but back there it was about that big.

Q: My gosh.

A: It just tore the hole well they had to shave his head. And Betty Lou knew, he's a psychiatrist now, a doctor that she had been to. And he lived here pretty close, and she run to the phone and she called him. We thought Frank was dead. And I run across the street and got a Mr. Walker that run a garage over there. And he didn't have any gun but he picked up a ball bat that some kid had left, a ball bat in there. And he saw that boy stumbling out and he had a car with a driver in it. That boy was forty-five years old, or the man was forty-five years old that was back there. And they got away. And we called an ambulance. And we called Dr. Martini. Dr. Martini met Frank at the hospital. And that other doctor went with him. That's the people that's . . .

(Tape stopped)

Q: We were talking about Frank going to the hospital.

A: Yes. Well, he went to the hospital and, oh, they had an awful time cleaning that out. They had to run something through, all through that because they was afraid he'd have blood poisoning or something. And we had the awfullest mess.

Q: I was wondering why you couldn't have thrown something other than mayonnaise and cheese. It didn't help you clean it up any.

A: Oh, it was awful, and the blood, oh, the stain was on the floor.

Q: Oh, I'll bet so.

A: And we had had new floor laid.

Q: Yes. What happened to the young man?

A: Ten years and that other fellow, ten years in the penitentiary.

Q: Do you remember the year that this happened, Marie?

A: No I don't remember the year, but I've got—someplace I've got . . .

Q: It must have been in the 1950's sometime, was it? In the 1950's?

A: I imagine so.

Q: It's not that important.

A: Well I'll tell you, Kevin's thirty-two. I can't think right now. But I've got the papers that told all about us throwing the mayonnaise and the cheese and how this fellow with the baseball bat chased the car and . . .

Q: You can laugh at it now.

A: Well, we laughed afterwards. But I thought Frank was dead.

Q: I'm sure you did.

A: Because he just laid there just like he was dead. And the blood was gushing out of his head. You know, any . . .

Q: Any head wound bleeds.

A: Any head wound bleeds terrible. It was awful.

Q: Terrible.

A: And the kids would come in the store after he got home and they'd

say, "Could we see Mr. Williams?" And I'd say, "No you can't see him. He's in bed. We have to keep him still." "Well, we won't make much noise." And Frank would hear them. And he'd say, "Let them in, let them in." They'd come in and shake hands with Frank and say, "We sure are glad to shake hands with you, Frank. We like to shake hands with people that fights people with guns," they'd say to him, you know. And Frank would say, "Well, don't you ever try it." But Frank told this fellow afterwards—his mother came out—they picked him up—they picked him up in the depot. He'd been to some doctor who didn't know what was wrong, where Frank had cut him with the glass, you know, and they stopped the blood and had him all pasted up with bandages, you know, and all. And whoever the doctor was, Dr. Bonnie, I believe it was, they had that all dried up, you know, or pasted up so it wouldn't bleed. He was at the depot, going to catch a train, go someplace, you know, get out of town. They arrested him and arrested the other fellow and had a trial. But before the trial, his mother, this boy's mother came in and tried to get Frank—if she'd pay him a sum of money—I don't remember what she offered, but she offered to pay him if he wouldn't testify and Frank said no. He said, "When I was twenty-one years old I knew a whole lot better than to ever try to hold anybody up. I had better sense and I was taught better." And she come back two or three times and tried to talk Frank out of it.

Q: How long did you operate the store, Marie?

A: Thirty-eight years.

Q: Thirty-eight. When you were working in the store Frank was working in the mine.

A: Yes.

Q: In Peabody #Ten.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any memory of the mine wars and . . .

A: Oh yes.

Q: . . . and the difficulties? Tell me what you know about it and Frank's experiences with it.

A: Well, one time we'd been down to Taylorville to see—it was on a Sunday and Betty Lou—I think my mother was here at the time and Betty Lou and Frank and I went down to see some people that we knew because they came up. There was a big bunch that came up to Taylorville to work in the mines when we came here because all of the southern Illinois mines closed.

End of Side One, Tape Six

A: Well, we was coming on a Sunday, coming from southern Illinois. Well, it wasn't southern Illinois, it was Taylorville, south of here. And we'd been down there and seeing some friends who had came up to work down there when we came up here so they were old neighbors of ours. And we got down on Sixth Street and there was an awful big crowd there. They had had a WPA, was it WPA, I believe they called it the WPA parade. That was another organization, not the one that was in charge here at the time. But they was trying to put the other people out, you know, the other organization. And we got there and we had stopped because people was in front of our car and everything. And we could just move a foot or two at a time. We was trying to get through so we could turn off and right in front of—I think it was the Leland Hotel, I'm not sure, where the crowd was. And somebody shot a policeman. And he died. And his name was Williams. I don't know if you remember that or not.

Q: No, I don't remember that. Do you remember what year that was?

A: Well, it was—no, it had to be before 1936 because we didn't live out here, we lived up on North . . .

Q: Between 1935 and 1936.

A: It must have been.

Q: Who were the two warring factions?

A: It was the—let's see, what—one was the PMA . . .

Q: Progressive Mine Workers.

A: Yes.

Q: And the other was the United Mine Workers.

A: And the other was the United Mine Workers. But Frank didn't belong to either one because he was a company man.

Q: Yes. He was an electrician for Peabody Coal Company. And you couldn't be either one at that time. And they killed that fellow and then they shot another fellow and he fell on our car but he didn't die. I don't know just where he was—and I got down in the—Frank said, "Well, let's turn off." And I said, "Why, we've not done anything. They wouldn't shoot us or do anything to us." And he always did throw that up to me afterwards because I said, "Well, let's just go on, we didn't do anything." (laughter) And he'd always say, "And you said just drive on."

Q: Right, right.

A: But that fellow fell on the front of the car and there I was down there and Frank had to drive. Everybody else got down in the back of the car, Mom and Betty Lou. They laid down in the back too. Frank had to sit up, you know, to keep the car going. Well, we got right along there by some—we turned off to the right and went to the Ninth Street and got out of that crowd. But that Williams fellow was killed. He was a policeman.

Q: Were there any other incidents that you remember?

A: Well, they shot that fellow and he fell on our car.

Q: I mean at other times.

A: Oh, at other times, yes. Frank broke his collarbone. He was out at Fifty-nine, that's another mine way out in—he was rebuilding a motor and it was way out north out there at that mine that was north of theirs. And he broke his collarbone fixing that motor. And of course he couldn't drive then after it was set. They had to put a great big collarbone thing that they had. It set on him to hold him so much. And I had to take him out there that night. He had a man that worked for him and he had to be there to tell him what to do to the motor. And I took—and they started to turn the men, the PMA men, ganged us out there on that road going into the mine. And was going to turn our car over. And me and Frank. And I begged them not to turn us over. I said, "It will kill Frank because he's got this broken collar bone." And they had set their banners right down to stop, you know to stop us. And finally I told them that God would—I was going to pray to God right then and

ask Him to do something to them. And I don't know whether that scared them or not. But anyhow they let us go on. And then I took another route out from the mine over, way over east someplace. I don't know where it was. But I got around and I'll tell you, I was afraid. And then Frank was in the car, in somebody else's car that was bringing him home. The vice president of the company had come out there to see what Frank had done for the work. And they shot his car, just shot the windows out. It didn't hit either one of them. Frank was in that car. Boy I was scared when got home and he was too. And he didn't go in anymore until they got that straightened up.

Q: Who was doing the shooting in that instance?

A: Well that was the PMA's that did it. It was mostly foreign people. You know, they were out there in the north end. There was a lot of Italians and Polish and different kinds of people. They were all good people I think but, you know, when your job's gone, you feel pretty low. And nobody had acquired very much money from the time that we had the Depression, you know. We didn't have very much.

Q: It was still in the Depression.

A: It was right in the middle of it.

Q: Do you remember any other instances?

A: That was the worst.

Q: Those were the worst.

A: Yes, those were the two worst things that happened to us. And then a lot of people . . .

(tape stopped)

Q: We were talking about how you and Frank did not favor either side or belong to either side. And you had problems.

A: He would have lost his job if he would have favored either side. Although the WPA—what was that one that . . . the Peabody Company favored, it was the United Mine Workers. But Frank had belonged to it. He had belonged to the United Mine Workers down there.

Q: In Carterville.

A: In Carterville. But not here because this company wouldn't let him belong. Then later on they wanted to appoint him one of the bosses, one of the mine bosses. Well, he hadn't been to school for so long he had forgot a lot of the cube root and square root and then I said, "Frank, you're going to have to go back to school." And he did. He went to night school. But it was pretty hard for him. And I helped him with it all. Not that I was any smarter than he. He was smart but he had forgotten, he had got away from it, you know.

Q: Yes.

I: And I showed him everything I knew, you know, and how to do and he had to keep books along with the job. And he took the examination and he made an 85 out of it. It wasn't such a big high grade but we was pretty proud of ourselves.

Q: I would think so.

A: For getting him, after he took the examination and made eighty-five, I thought he was pretty smart to do that and be as old as he was. And he got the job. And of course it was a whole lot more money.

Q: How much more money was it? Do you know?

A: Oh, I imagine fifty dollars or something like that, no big amount, you know.

Q: It was a big amount then.

A: My lands, when we was married he was making eighty-five dollars. And I was making more than he was.

Q: How much were you making?

A: I was making $150.

Q: As a teacher?

A: Yes.

Q: That was . . .

A: That was big.

Q: You mentioned also one time that Frank developed black lung.

A: He did.

Q: When did you discover that?

A: Well after he'd had a heart attack.

Q: Oh, that was in the 1970's.

A: Yes. He had had the heart attack and he couldn't breath good. I don't breath too deep now. But they didn't say I had any black lung.

Q: No, his was from the mine.

A: His was from the mine. They said his lungs, if they could have looked at them, you know, of course they made pictures of them but it showed dark. He said they'd be as black as coal. I guess it's just black lung.

Q: Frank died in 1974.

A: Yes.

Q: And it was shortly after this you started working at the bank.

A: Yes.

Q: How did you get that job and how did all that come about?

A: Well . . .

Q: Town and Country Bank, I should say.

A: Well, we traded at the Town and Country. Frank, he could be set off pretty quick. We traded down at—let's see, what was the name? Well, I don't remember—it wasn't INB [Illinois National Bank].

Q: First National?

A: First National, I believe. Yes, I believe it was First National. And it was too far down to go, you know, from here. And I told Frank, I said, "Why don't you go down there and we live in this neighborhood and we know everybody out here, we ought to trade at a home bank close to us." He went down to Town and Country and somebody would—we had a big bunch of checks. And I don't know who it was, somebody went through them and said, "We'll take this one." And laid it off to one side. And by the time that they got through, there were a whole bunch that they wouldn't take.

Q: Yes.

A: Maybe it was personal checks or something, I don't know. But it didn't suit him because we was going to put them all in the bank anyhow. And he didn't like that. And he said, "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, I'll just take—just give them all back to me and I'll go home and get my old bankbook and go to my same bank." He held his own. Maybe I learned that from him.

Q: (chuckles) I suspect so.

A: I think you kind of get to looking like your husband . . .

Q: Yes, that's what they say.

A: . . . and you think the same and maybe that's where I got to where I wasn't afraid of anything or anybody.

Q: So he was mad at Town and Country then?

A: He was mad at Town and Country. So the next round of where we got a

big bunch of checks and we needed the money right quick, you know, and later on we went to Marine because we had a box there. And we had an awful lot of bonds that we had bought through the mines and everything. Every time we had—well, I think the mines made you buy them. I think they kind of forced it on us, some of them anyhow. But we had a lot of them and had them down in the bank box. So I just went down there one day and took them all out and come down here to Town and Country and cashed all the checks and put the money all in and I worked it all right and I didn't get mad at anybody and started to bank down there. Well, he got so he went all the time. Whoever it was that he was mad at, you know, there had been a million of them working down there at different times.

Q: Oh sure. That's right.

A: And after Frank passed away, why, this direct deposit came up. And Nan Hurelabrink was down there. And of course she and Curley had run a tavern out here. And they traded with us.

Q: Is that Curley's Lounge?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh my.

A: Yes. I never was in it in my life.

Q: I wouldn't think you would be.

A: But they traded with us. And Curley borrowed twelve sheets during the fair one time from me. Did I tell you about that?

Q: No.

A: They pinned their sheets on the beds and rented them several times, you know. They had kind of a hot lime there. I hated to loan them to them. Frank said, "Well, go ahead and loan them," because they were neighbors and they traded with us at the store and everything. And twelve sheets and twelve pillowcases, or maybe twenty-four pillowcases, I don't know. It was an awful bunch. I needed them as bad as he did. But I was washing mine. And they didn't have time to wash theirs, I guess, or too lazy or something. Of course they had a laundry over there. And he was to bring them back the next day because they was

full. And I waited two days. And he never did bring them back nor never said he was going to anymore and never come back in the store to tell anything about them. And I went over there and knocked on the door and kept knocking until somebody come to the door. And that made him mad because I wouldn't come in. And I just ate old Curley out. And I told him I wanted my sheets, dirty or clean, and I wanted them right then. And Nan was mad at Curley because he showed out with me, you know. So she just went out and got twelve sheets and the rest of the pillowcases and everything. I never did get my own sheets back. These were rented. They had rented some more. She just brought the clean ones out and gave them to me. They wasn't mine at all. So I was mad at him a long time over it.

Q: Yours were probably still on the bed.

A: Mine were still pinned on the bed I guess.

Q: Yes. Well, how did you come about your job down at the bank?

A: Well, this come up about the direct deposit and they needed some senior citizen that would understand senior citizens thoughts and ideas, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: And Nan told Frank Owens. And she said, "I know the perfect person if she'll come." And she come down here and told me about it and explained it to me, what it would be. And I said, "Well I've never worked in a bank. I don't know. My grandmother had a bank, but I never worked in it." It was a local bank in the store, you know. And then it come along when they made them be a state bank. They had to and they had to have certain things, certain kinds of vaults and everything then. But I never, only I just knew it was there and my mother worked in the store. And I said, "Well, I'll come down and talk to you." And so she told me when to come. And they had a man by the name of Vasconcelles who was . . .

Q: Head of the social security?

A: . . . head of the social security. And they wanted me and they had found a man, some man that played a lot of tennis. I don't remember what his name was. But this man gave us, this Vasconcelles, gave us two weeks' training up at the other bank, before it was fixed over you know. And they had a board room there and we worked in there and he did a lot of work on a blackboard and showed us how to do it. Well, that man

worked two days and quit. And I got Ivalea Rendleman then to be the other person.

(tape stopped)

Q: You were talking about the job and how you got it.

A: Oh, the job. Well, that's how I got it. And then Ivalea come in, Ivalea Rendleman, and took that man's place. They know his name down there at the bank. I don't remember what his name was, but I think he's still living. But I don't see him come in down there but I believe he is.

Q: What did you do in your job?

A: Well, filled out the direct deposits, all of them that came in. And now they have, oh, one comes in once in a while, you know. Not very many. But then everybody within that age, you know, that was sixty-five or sixty-two, whatever—it took sixty-two or sixty-five. And then of course there were a lot of peole that was made—even though they got money for their children that was left if their husband passed away, you know, and they got money for their children that they was on—well, it was kind of like relief you know. We made out all the—she would come one day and I'd come the next. And she'd come two days and I'd come two days. And we'd split it up, you know, the time that we needed to go in so we'd catch the high spots when the most people would come in. And especially after a person would get their checks maybe the next day would be a very busy day and they'd come in and make a direct deposit, you know. And then when we wasn't doing that, why, we helped with the bookkeeping. We did everything that they wanted us to do in the bookkeeping. We filed all the checks. And got the mail ready and run the envelopes through, you know, stamp them for them, and just different things like that.

Q: What are you doing now?

A: Well now what I'm doing now is I'm calling all of the direct depositers and ask them if everybody is being treated like they should be and do they want to buy a CD [Certificate of Deposit] or deposit their money in a new box or something like that, try to sell the bank is what we do or what I do. But she quit. She's quit now. She quit last year. She likes to play bridge and she's ailing some. She's a whole lot younger than I am. But she's got a nice little house of her own. She's an old maid. And she's got a lot of ailments. But she drives her own car and she goes a lot, you know, and she tries to entertain a lot.

Q: So at the age of ninety-one you're about to get your ten-year pin at Town and Country Bank.

A: Yes.

Q: That's quite an accomplishment.

A: Yes, I went to work the last of June or the first of July--and I don't know which it is, but I think they know down there.

Q: I'm sure.

A: And I don't know--the trouble is now, my eyesight is not too good. And I don't know if I can pass the examination to drive again. And that will come up in August, the fourteenth of August. That's my birthday. But since this one eye is not too good, I don't know if they let people with one eye . . .

Q: Oh yes.

A: Well, the doctor . . .

Q: I know people with one eye who drive.

A: Do you?

Q: Yes.

A: Well . . .

Q: Marie, you've lived a long life . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . and an interesting life.

A: Very interesting.

Q: Do you have any reflections or observations on it that you would like to . . .

A: Just marry a nice husband and stick to school. No matter what comes up or how much money you've got or if you don't have any, try to even borrow money to go to school because you never get anyplace unless you've got an education.

Q: Yes.

A: You know that.

Q: Right.

A: That's about the only thing that—I could say that: marry the right person and make up your mind that you're going to stick with him no matter what happens. Because many times I was mad enough to kick Frank. I didn't never kick him. But I wanted to several times.

Q: And probably vice versa.

A: And he did too. He used to say, "I just get so mad at Marie, I felt like I could take her out in the back yard and shoot her. But I never even once thought that I could get a divorce." (laughter) He always ended up with that and I was always glad he said that.

Q: Well, that's a nice way to end that then.

A: Yes.

Q: I have one more question to ask you. What has this oral interview experience meant to you, if anything?

A: Oh, it's made me relive my past life. You know, I've thought of things that I did, and I'll still think of things later that I should have told you that was maybe more interesting than what I've told you.

Q: It's all been pretty interesting.

A: It just comes to you. You know, if you try to think of a name and

you can't think of it right then, there's no use for you to try to think of it.

Q: That's right.

A: It just pops into your mind. The same way with Betty Lou. Betty Lou says she don't have the power that I do. If there's something that bothers me or I don't like I can blot it out of my mind. I can forget it completely. And I don't even remember it—to myself, if I wanted to remember it, I can't unless somebody reminds me that they think of the certain thing. But there's things I don't know how it comes but I can just blot it out if it's something that somebody said that hurts my feelings, I forget it. But I . . .

Q: That's a good way to be.

A: I try to do it. I try to forget it. Now Betty Lou thinks—if somebody hurts her feelings, I think it stays with her the rest of her life, you know.

End of Side Two, Tape Six