

This is Jeanne Temple and this is February 21, 1983, and I'm going to interview my mother, Florence E. Ewer. Mother, will you give us your birthday?

I was born March 2, 1899.

I want to ask you some questions now about how it was when you were a little girl. Your grandparents always lived with you, didn't they?

Yes.

And what were their names?

Jacob and Amanda Acre.

They lived with you until they were both gone, didn't they?

Yes.

Grandpa was always a farmer until 1913, '16, somewhere in there but he did not own a farm?

No. We moved from farm to farm usually in March. It seems as though it was always when the weather was bad. I remember moving one time. I was carrying my cat in my lap and feeling so bad to think that we had to leave our old neighbors and go into a new community. That was when we moved over on the Stone place in Duplain Township.

When we were looking at the map of Bingham Township, some of the moves there weren't so many miles but Duplain would of been a big move.

Yes, took all day, seemed to, with the horses and buggies and wagons that we had to bring things with.

I remember you telling about one house that you lived in. We went over there and took a picture of the site. How terribly inconvenient it must of been for your mother because there weren't--

There was three rooms in the whole house. As I remember, it was a long kitchen and then on the west side of it was not too large of a living room. On the south side of that was kind of a long bedroom. I remember Grandpa and Grandma had their bed set up in the living room and Mother and Dad and we kids had our beds in the long bedroom.

Then the living room was also the dining room and the kitchen and everything wasn't it?

No. Our kitchen was the dining room. It had the dining room with it but Grandpa's bedroom was really our living room. We were only there a year until we moved.

We'll get into school things later but while we are talking about it, moving, do you remember the place you lived when Aunt Agnes was born?

I'll never forget the day she was born because my father was an expert rifleman and at that time they had around the country what they called "bear shoots" and they had this Fanny Bear that was rather a tame bear. The men would all gather around with their rifles and they had this target that they shot at and the one that made the best target took the bear home to keep her until the next shoot. It seems as though my father was always winning her and bringing her home. He had a big post set in the ground and then she had a long chain and she had a collar on. Then he built her a house to live in. The day my youngest sister was born--

Now, that would have been March?

26, 1905.

It was in March and my father was helping another man make maple syrup. Fanny Bear got loose. Mother was in bed with the new baby that day and I remember Fanny came up on the porch. My brother, my sister, and I stood in the window and we were just laughing and dancing around having a lot of fun. She was sticking her nose on the window, sniffing around, and our neighbor north of us happened to see her get loose. He knew he had better come down and we didn't know Grandpa was there but Grandpa happened to be in the barn. He went out to the

barn and got him and Grandpa came in the house and got a plate of honey. Fanny Bear took it and walked on her hind legs and held that plate of honey and walked over while they got her collar on and got her tied up again. My mother said afterward she was so frightened.

I suppose, you kids that was--

The kids thought that was just a big dog out there, playing around because we never went near Fanny. We were warned never to go near her but my father, he had her there one winter and he would make her a very nice house to live in, something like a big dog house, but if she wasn't ready to hibernate, she would tear it all to pieces. It didn't make any difference how many beautiful nails he put in those boards. If she could get her toe nails in, she would tear it all to pieces, but when it came time for her to hibernate, then she went in and curled up and went to sleep.

One time, Mother, it seems to me that I remember you saying, that Grandpa had Fanny Bear but another meaner one.

He had a mean one called, Topsyie, and he had her in a cage that was quite small. As I think about it now, it sounds kind of cruel to me but it had iron bars on the front. We used to feed bears ear corn and I remember chickens would go up and stick their heads through those bars to get the corn and Topsyie would grab them by the head.

Then you had chicken that night for supper.

Yes. I remember my brother went out and grabbed it by the hind legs and pulled so we had chicken.

Right here we're interrupting the bear stories but we didn't discuss, as we got into this, your brother. What was his name?

Arthur. He was the oldest.

His birthday, as I remember, was July 12th and that would make him [born in] 1895. Aunt Isabell was older sister and her birthday was January 15, 1897. I thought we would get that recorded. One of the stories I remember you telling too was about when you moved to one of those places. That must of been the one where you lived north of Jumpers--actually the Jumpers still live in Bingham Township--and how you and Uncle Art got away from Grandma and--

Well, we were unloading the wagon, or the men were, and my brother discovered this fish spear on the wagon. At that time, that country, it was big deep ditches and my brother knew where this ditch was about ½ a mile north of where we were unloading. So he said, "Well, Florence, let's go fishing." So away we went down to this big crick and along it and my folks didn't know where we were. I remember at that time it was rather dangerous country because there was so many snakes and so many rattlesnakes around there. We eventually got home. We had a fish or two but I remember my dad being so angry because we just took off in that strange country.

I know I've heard you tell about walking to school in the morning, in the early spring I suppose it would be, and the snakes would be out sunning themselves and you would just walk on around them.

It was nothing to see a rattlesnake in the road. We thought nothing of it. If we could find something to hit it with, we did, but we just grew up with them. I guess that is why I have never been afraid of snakes.

They say that Michigan one, massasauka, isn't as dangerous as the western ones but still, at that time, it would have been.

At that time when the men made hay, they always put it up in little cocks, what they called haycocks and let it dry and cure. I can remember my father telling me about pitching them up on the wagon and having a snake under it because they would crawl under to get out from the sun and where it was cool.

Now let's [talk about] something close to my heart. [Jeanne was a rural school teacher.] Do you remember the name of your first school or first teacher or anything like that?

I went to the Krepps School. I started when I was seven and we walked 2 ½ miles to go to school.

Was she a young lady, probably? I mean, it wasn't a man teacher.

No. It was a lady teacher [Ella Eaton].

You had a lady teacher that lived over by Aunt Isabell-- You told me that you were seven when you started school. You probably could read.

No. I could not read.

I thought you said my grandpa taught you.

My grandma taught my brother and my older sister to read but she gave up on me because she said I wouldn't sit still and listen. I could not read a word when I went to school because at that time I was not interested. When my brother and sister started, after a few days, the teacher put them in second grade because they could read and they could write.

Probably knew their numbers and figures.

Yes.

What is another school? You went to the Serviss School, I know. That would of been south of Jumper's.

Yes. That was the Krepps School, not Serviss School. That was what we called the Krepps School. The next school I went to was the Cramer School. I spent several years at the Cramer School because I was—well, it wouldn't of been several years either--because I was between eight or nine when we moved over to the Stone place. We changed schools. I started school and walked that 2 ½ miles and then they turned around and put us in the Cramer district. That was only about a mile.

Yes. I notice, when I work on some of my plotting out of schools and districts, that some districts were so close together and then on the other side the kids would have at least a mile or a mile and three quarters to walk.

It was nothing to walk two miles to school.

They aren't supposed to be set up that way but I guess our school districts--some of them weren't planned out. They just grew. Do you remember some of the things you took in your lunch pail? I'm sure you didn't take sacks like our kids because you didn't have them.

No. I think they were little lard pails we carried. We always had a sandwich or a cookie. We didn't have too big of a variety of things in those days, maybe not even a sandwich, maybe just bread and butter is what we had.

Did Grandma make her own bread?

Yes. She always made her own bread. We usually had same kind of fruit. Sometimes maybe we would have a dish of fruit in our pail.

As you think back, apple trees were quite common, weren't they?

At that time we had a real old-fashioned orchard and Grandpa would pick the apples and make a pit. I don't know just how he did it. He kinda dug a hole in the ground, not too deep, and lined it with straw and then they put these apples in there. They covered it with more straw and then they covered it very thick with horse manure. Of course, the horse manure was hot, and then it was covered with more straw. You would leave those apples. We probably wouldn't get into them until Christmas time. They would make a hole in the side and get in there and get those apples and there is a flavor to those apples that no one ever knows until they have eaten some of them.

Did he pit potatoes or carrots?

I can't remember.

Do you remember that most of the houses had a cellar even if it was only a Michigan one?

Yes.

Nowadays, with a furnace, stuff doesn't keep, but with a Michigan cellar, I remember up home, ours kept.

I can't remember whether we had a cellar there on the old Walters place or not but I can remember that pit of apples and setting around in the evening and eating those apples.

Did your dad and mother--and of course your grand folks were there to help too--did they butcher regularly like in the fall a pig or a beef or--.

Yes. We always had cows and pigs. We never butchered beef 'cause no one seemed to know anything about how to keep beef. It wasn't until second World War before people began to can beef.

Because you had the small pressure cookers and beef has to be boiled so long, doesn't it?

Really, when I first started canning beef, I didn't have a pressure cooker. We used a regular clothes boiler. I had a copper clothes boiler and we had the cook stove. You took both lids off and got a good fire underneath it. Then you put your beef in there and you canned. At that time we had the rubber on the cans and sealed them up tight and then you boiled it for three hours. I remember sitting up till one or two o'clock at night waiting to get the last boiling off before I went to bed.

With pork, it can be fried down and sealed with lard or you'd make it into sausage.

Mostly, that I can remember, we had an old big pork barrel and we did use some of the pork fresh as long as it was cold. Most of it was salted down in that pork barrel in a real heavy brine. That is the way it kept all winter long. I can remember going down to the basement for my mother and fishing around in that mess and getting a piece of pork and I hated salted pork with a passion.

Did you kind of freshen it?

Mother would slice off and put it in a frying pan and put some water on it and let it boil up a little bit and pour that off and maybe do that once or twice. Quite often they would make a batter and dip it in and fry it. I liked the batter but I didn't like the meat.

As you remember, every season is different, but what would have been something you would have had for breakfast, we'll say on a school day?

We always had lots of potatoes. I think we had potatoes three times a day without fail, although sometimes mother would make pancakes and we always had maple syrup. When the hens were laying, we'd have lots of cooked eggs; either pancakes or syrup. I dearly loved warmed up potatoes. To this day, I love warmed up potatoes.

If they weren't so fattening, we would have them three times a day because I love them too. Then supper, at night when you were all home, would be homemade.

Usually at supper time is when we would have the hot boiled potatoes and mother would make milk gravy.

And some of that fried pork also?

Yes.

You often said though that Grandpa, different times, I suppose in the winter when the work wasn't heavy, hunted a lot.

Yes. That was more when I was smaller. He hunted and there was lots of rabbits then. In the wintertime he would shoot these rabbits and bring them home and gut them up and hang them up in the woodshed where they froze. He would thaw them out and dress them out and mother would cook them till they fell off the bone. Then she would chop it and it was just like head cheese. It had sage and pepper and salt in it. [She would] put it in tins and let it harden and then you would slice it off and eat it and that was good. I can remember, when I was little, getting so tired of rabbit. We had it for dinner. I would say, "Have I got to eat that again?" And fish, he loved to fish. We did have, especially in the spring over there south of St. Johns, the pike would come up Stoney Crick when the water came up. I can remember my father going down there and shooting a big pike from the bridge and bringing it home. I don't know whether

they must have come up to spawn or whether they just got up there in high water and couldn't get back or what happened to them but--

You spoke about the apples, that they would be on almost every farm. Did you going berrying like in the woods for blackberries and things like we have?

No. I don't remember. When we moved over in Duplain Township on the Stone farm, then back of the Stone woods was a cut-off woods at that time that had been lumbered off. The black caps came in there and Mother and I would go there with pails and just fill them with wild black caps. I don't know how many quarts she canned of these wild black caps.

Mother, was that lady's name, Miss Eaton?

Yes.

You know how things come to you.

When we were talking about blackberries, I think of Miss Eaton. Ella Eaton was the first teacher I had.

You moved to the Stone place. Now we're talking a place that is south of Rochester Colony on Harmon Rd. half a mile and then east. That road now is really nonexistent. There is a trail in from the east. About what year was that? Can we fasten that down a little more firmly?

Well, I think I was in between eight and nine years old.

So that would be--

Around 1907 or '08

So that would make Aunt Agnes around 3 or 4.

Yes. She was just small because she started her school at the Little Brick.

When you moved on this, what's called the Stone place or the Stone farm, Grandpa was still farming and your grandparents were still living with you. Now you became acquainted with the people where you have lived your whole life really, with the family. I just happened to think of something. At this time or before, did you see, occasionally, other relatives like Grandpa's family or some of Grandma's family. I know it was hard to go back and forth with distances but did you see some of--

Yes. I can remember my Grandpa and Grandma Acre. Two sisters married two brothers and at one time Grandma Acre's sister lived in the Colony here and the old house stood right where J. D. Washburn's corn bins are now, his drying bins. There was an old big house stood there and I can remember coming over here with my grandparents and visiting them but it is just such a vague memory. I can just barely remember being there and that's about all.

I heard you talk about Uncle Emmett Longcor who married Grandpa's sister, Estelle. I remember them vaguely as a little girl myself but when you were little did you sometimes--I know you thought an awful lot of Uncle Emmett--did you see him when he was younger and your uncle?

They used to drive up here from Wheeler. He had a real nice pair of driving horses and they had what we call a democrat wagon then and I can remember when we were on the Stone place of Uncle Emmett and Aunt Estelle driving up here from Wheeler.

That was a long drive. They would of stayed over.

Yes. Uncle Emmett had a sister that lived in Shephardsville and I remember going over there with him to visit her and I remember going into their home. It was kinda a real old-fashion home and it was in back of where the Shephardsville School is. The old house is gone now and the reason I remember it was because we stayed and ate with them. This old lady had a big stew and it had pork and cabbage and all those good things in it. I never forgot it because I just loved that boiled dinner. It was a regular boiled dinner.

This lady would of been Uncle Emmett's sister. I wonder what her married name was. Do you recall? I imagine I could check that out. What about Grandma's two sisters Aunt Liz and Aunt Mate. They were older but--

They were older. When we lived on the Stone place, even my mother's mother, Grandma Isabell [Wheeler] Mundell, and I remember they came from Fowler to Shephardsville up to the depot and walked out to the Stone place.

I don't suppose that it was too far but it must be two miles from the depot or three.

I remember my folks taking them back on the horse and buggy but that was quite something for them to come out and walk out to our place.

Now that is Grandma Mundell.

Aunt Rose and, I think, Aunt Liz was with them. I can't remember.

Aunt Liz, I guess. I've always thought that she and Uncle Elmer [H. Buck] always lived in St. Johns 'cause he worked for the railroad. Maybe he didn't but they could of come out that way once in a while. How did Aunt Mate and Uncle John [Frank] in their younger days come? Do you remember seeing her when she was--.

My Aunt Mate and Uncle Frank, her husband, lived on a farm not too far from us when we lived south of St. Johns but I don't know the actual place where they lived. They visited us real often and we visited them. They had one son that was my age then and they had a pair of twin girls and I can remember going there. One thing I can remember when I was little and we lived over south of St. Johns, no one ever went camping then but my father took the old wagon and made a round top with canvas on it like a prairie schooner--

Like a covered wagon?

Yes, and we put straw on the bottom of it and made beds and we had a team of horses. We came from south St. Johns and we came over which is the Harmon farm now and went in back there and camped along the river. There was other people came with us but I can't remember them. I don't know how they cooked. I can't remember that. I was too little to pay any attention but fishing was out of the world then. We just thought that was wonderful to go camping. That's the first camping trip I ever took.

I presume it was because it was harder to get away and it took longer and you didn't have any instant food.

No. Everything you had to carry along with you at that time. I remember sitting on the front seat with my dad. I was just watching the horses plodding down the road and it was crawl along at a snail's pace because you can't trot a horse with a wagon and a load. We just thought that was beautiful.

If Grandpa had any milk cows, he would of had to arrange with somebody--

Grandpa always lived with us.

You think he didn't come with you on the trip?

No. He didn't. Grandpa and Grandma didn't come with us on the trip. There was always someone at home. There is some memories like that that I have that are really wonderful when you stop to think about the country and how it is now, how you get in your car and zip way up two or three hundred miles.

And don't enjoy yourself when you get there.

I remember my grandfather always had kept bees and that is what we always had on the table, was a plate of honey. It was comb honey. It wasn't strained honey. It was comb honey but we always had honey on the table.

I know, when you spoke about enticing Fanny Bear back, Grandpa had a plate of honey right there. Do you remember any tricks that you kids used to play or mischief you used to get into? I know you and Uncle Art was great buddies.

I never liked to stay in the house and I never liked to do the housework. My older sister didn't like to go outdoors so I was always outdoors tagging my dad around and my brother and we would go fishing. Everywhere he went I would tag along behind, trapping and hunting, and he taught me how to shoot a gun. I always told my mother that I wished I had been a boy.

I can see that, Mother, in all the things you've done but yet you do such nice sewing. You made us girls clothes.

I know, but I had to.

But you learned it somewhere.

I know, if you have to do anything and you know you have to, you can set your mind to it.

But your grandma did that for you when you were little.

Oh yes. Mother couldn't sew at all. She was left-handed. I can remember my father played the violin and my grandfather played the violin, the old-fashion dance music, and Mother played the organ or a banjo. When I was little, they used to have house dances. Somebody would say, "Come to our house and we'll have a dance tonight." No one had carpets much like they do have now. If they did, they would roll them up and get the bare floor and then they would play and people would dance. I can remember Mother would take us little kids and put us in on the bed and cover us up and we would go to sleep.

Wasn't it true or at least I heard everyone talk about the fact that Jack Barnes, who had been sheriff of our county years ago, played with them didn't he.

Yes. He played with Mother and Dad.

What did he play, do you know?

He played the banjo. I'm sure he played a banjo.

I know I can remember Grandpa's fiddle because he had it until he died. Did you have an organ sometimes at home or never or what?

No. When we lived over there north of the Jumper place my father--I think he must of gone to a sale somewhere and brought this organ home. Boy, that was the highlight of our life when Mother sat down and played that organ because she was a natural-born musician. She used to tell me that she played the organ in the church in Fowler and I said "Mother, you couldn't read notes." "No, but I just played it." That was handed down to my younger sister. When Agnes was little and she couldn't reach the pedals to pump the old organ, I'd stand there and pump it and she would play. She could just play about everything.

She really could, but you play by ear some too. You know that.

Oh yes. I amuse myself that's all. I still have my father's violin. I remember his coming home one day--he had some old friend that lived out south of us and he had this violin. He said this old man gave it to him and he said it's about 100 years old, this violin of his. I was just a little youngster and I have that violin now so I figure it's crowding 200 years old.

You don't know what happened to your grandfather's violin?

No. Grandfather made violins. My father did too. I gave one of my old violins to Agnes once when she was over because one of her granddaughters thought she wanted to play the violin. I don't know if that's the one that Wendell has now or not. I'm not sure.

Both of Karen's girls do play the violin so it's kind of come down in the family a little bit. After you moved to the Stone farm--

We were there five years.

It's now in an era before I was born but I've heard so much and I know where the places are and it seems quite real to me. You went to the Little Brick School. Do you remember your first teacher there?

I think it was Jenny Hudson was my first teacher there and then I had Walter Colby and then I had Hugh Watson.

Was Hugh your teacher when were in the eighth?

Graduated from the eighth grade.

I've heard you tell the story that, in spite of the fact that you said you didn't learn very well at home, you had finished the eighth grade by the age of twelve which is unusually early and your dad said that was too young to sit at home. Of course, they couldn't afford to send you to high school and so you took it again.

I went back again and I think sometimes, when I think about it now, Dad wanted me to walk with my little sister more than anything. I wasn't too interested. I thought it was a kind of a waste of time.

He was right in thinking that would have been quite young to just stay at home and do whatever was required of you at home. I'm trying to add quickly and I'm not. When you were twelve, it was 1911. About what year then did Grandpa take over the Colony store? How old were you? Can we fasten it in that way?

I was probably around sixteen; 1915 or '16 when he came to the Colony and ran the store and I helped him in the store.

Then you moved from the Stone farm to a little house that was where?

Right across kitty-corner from the old Colony store.

So it set on the east side?

Yes, the east side. It sat up quite close to the road. The house had a very small front yard.

How big a house was it?

There was a kitchen, a dining room, a living room, and a bedroom downstairs and upstairs was two bedrooms.

At this time Aunt Isabell had gone into town to work her way through high school, right?

She went to Lansing when we were on the Stone place and worked and lived with a blind family and then went through the ninth and tenth grade. Then she came back to St. Johns and we were over in the Colony then in the store. She boarded with some people up there in St. Johns and went to County Normal.

I know. I wish we could of gotten all that story from her because, apparently, you didn't have to have completed four years of high school.

No, just ninth and tenth grade, and then could go to County Normal and then you could get a certificate to teach so long before you got it renewed.

I know where Uncle Art was during the war but Uncle Art was older yet. Was he living at home with you?

No. He went to Lansing and got a job in a factory over there. He didn't know anything about factory work and so he went down somewhere and got a set of "mics."

Micrometers.

He learned how to use them and went into this factory and told them he knew all about that and he got a good job.

He must have been very young.

Yes. He was and there was quite a few of the young fellows left around here. Orin Acre went at the same time and got a job. I believe it was Olds but I'm not sure.

I know Dad--I don't know if you knew him then or not--he went to Cleveland to work.

Yes. He went to Cleveland and stayed down there for a year and got work. Most of the young men were kind of migrating from here around to different places to find work.

It was maybe a bit early as I recall. Sociologists wouldn't say that people were leaving the farm and yet they were, weren't they, right then? They were leaving the farm.

Oh yes. The young men were leaving the farm because there was nothing here for them.

And it was getting increasingly hard to make a living for a family just running a farm and moving around. I remember as a child when we had a certain number of farms over there at the Rowell [School] that were rented. Even then I thought that those kids were poor. You sort of knew when they came in that they were a poor family. When Grandpa came to the store, you said that they had a delivery route. What would you call it?

A grocery wagon is what they called them. Five days a week he was gone with that grocery wagon and he had regular routes in different directions.

This was with a horse?

A team of horses. He had a real nice team of heavy horses because his wagon was heavy and they would be gone all day and he bought eggs and butter from the farmers or traded, whatever. I can remember once about getting a crock of butter that we had to set

outdoors. Butter wasn't always what it was cracked up to be then. I can remember, when he came home, he would have so many crates of eggs and that was the only job I hated. We went through them to get out the cracked eggs and that's what we usually ate at home, was cracked eggs.

Was there a wholesaler or somebody? I was thinking there was a place in St. Johns.

O.P. Dewitt furnished us with groceries here in the Colony. You know, one thing I remember--it tickles me now--that we sold gasoline here. We had a pump and a gallon container and if someone come and wanted 5 gallons, why then I had to pump it into that gallon jug and pour it into the car five times. I can distinctly remember a man coming and getting some gasoline once. I was in the store all day while my dad was on the wagon and I got it all ready and he paid me and he said, "You know, I could of got that cheaper in town." I said, "Why didn't you then?" I was kind of mad. My father bawled me out. He said. "You don't talk to customers that way."

Side 2.

Mother, we were talking about the store and you were telling about the gasoline. Why don't you tell the story about the plug tobacco?

Tobacco came then in a long, narrow cake. I guess it was about a 1/2" thick. It was real gooey-looking stuff and people would come in and buy one plug, or two plugs, or three plugs. We had a machine that you put it in with a big handle, a big knife on it, and you brought it down, cut off a chunk of tobacco.

Did you wrap it?

We wrapped it up or put it in a sack or something. I don't remember what we did with it or else the man put it in his pocket. I can't remember. They carried them in their pocket. Another form of tobacco we had was what they called, "fine-cut," burley, light and dark burley. You had to reach in with your fingers and lift that stuff up and weigh out so much of it. It was kind of a dampish, fine-cut tobacco. I can't remember whether they smoked it or chewed it. They did something with it.

What were some of the things that you remembered that you had in the store that would be staple groceries?

Of course, groceries. We never kept fresh meat. We had no refrigeration or anything like that. I think we had slab bacon. I can remember that but that's about all the meat. Salmon at that time was real cheap and the people bought lots of salmon to eat and eggs. Everybody bought eggs to eat and we had some dry goods. I think we kept some stockings and a little bit of yard goods but not too much, but overalls and boots, and things like that. We had a candy counter that we had real nice candy. Other than that, sugar came in a big barrel and you just reached down in there with a scoop and measured out so many pounds of sugar, both brown and white. Crackers came in a barrel. I remember picking up a barrel of crackers and carrying it the whole length of store because they're so light. They were 9¢ a pound or 3 pounds for a quarter. You got a great big sack, old-fashioned, round crackers.

I suppose you had some things like soda or baking powder—

all those spices and things like that.

What about cheese?

We always had a big round of cheese under a cover of some kind and then you just sliced off a chunk of cheese and weighed it out. I forgot about that.

Some of that might've been made here.

Yes. It was made here in the Colony at the old cheese factory.

Did you remember if you had dried fruit, like raisins?

I don't particularly remember about the raisins. I'm sure we had them. If they came in boxes or not, I don't remember. I remember an old man that lived here in the Colony, old Mr. Hayner. He loved to come down and set in the store, practically all day. He'd go home in time for dinner. We had an old big barber chair in the store. In the middle of the day there wasn't

much going on. I used to get so disgusted because I wanted to sleep in that chair and old Mr. Hayner, he'd come down and he'd get in it and sit there.

Why a barber chair?

They used to cut hair there. There was no barber shop around here anywhere. My father used to cut hair once in a while. This old barber chair was very comfortable. I could get up in that and lean back and go sleep. Then this Mr. Hayner, he loved to play checkers. He always wanted me to play checkers with him. He always beat me about every time. Once in a while I'd beat but I figured he let me to keep me coming.

You had a cast iron stove or sheet metal stove in the winter?

Yeah, a big stove in the back. Then we had some kind of lights and I can't remember if whether they were carbide lights or what in the store, overhead lights.

I presume early they would have been kerosene lamps, wouldn't they?

Yeah, but they were gone when we were there. I don't know what it was. They were overhead lights but I can't remember what they were because in the evening every man, I think for miles around, gathered in the store at night. That was always the place where the men all went and talked and smoked and told their stories and had good times.

How late did you stay open?

Oh, probably till 10 or 11 o'clock. People got up and went home, were tired.

I thought that would have been long for Grandpa after he'd been out all day on the road.

It didn't make a difference. That was just custom. Everybody came to the store in the evening--men. The women didn't come.

I've known from some things in the past that people were allowed to charge their groceries and pay up.

Yes. I was supposed to charge them and once a week, come in and pay their bill. I know when my father left the store, we had a lot of unpaid bills that we never got. Of course, the money was very scarce then and—

It was hard to-- I suppose they didn't really, by what we've talked that you carried in the store, they certainly didn't live very high.

No. Most everyone had a good garden and their own chickens. Some of them had a few chickens. Well, you ate just what you had. If we got to go into a town on a Saturday evening, we just thought that was something to go to town on Saturday night.

As far back as you can remember, there was an RFD, a rural free delivery. We had a mail service then and so then.

But we didn't have any telephones then. Very seldom did anyone have a telephone.

So the mail was really quite important to get a card from somebody. You were telling me that where you lived when you came to the Colony. Then you said you lived in another house now. Which one was that?

There was a house that sat right east of where Grandpa Kaufman's(?) house is. There was a house there, a fairly good-sized, 2-story house. I remember it had a porch practically all the way around it. We lived there for about a year when we first moved here. Then Dad got a chance to rent the house that was right across the road from the store and so we could be closer to the store because there was, even back then, we were always worried for somebody breaking in. Dad used to bring the money home with him at night. Then we finally moved down to this little place across from the store. I remember hearing my dad get up one night. He heard something going on across the road. We always had two dogs and they began to bark. If there was anyone over there, why they got away but he was so sure someone was over there trying to break in the store.

You never lost anything by robbery that you ever—

No.

I suppose it happened then like it does now.

When I moved to the Colony here, before I started going to the Methodist church here, and one of the reasons we started going there was, when we were over on the Stone place, when we were little youngsters, Mary and Esther Pearl came over there to visit us when they heard we'd moved over there. We played and played around and had a good time and then they invited us to come to church. That was the way I got to the Methodist church here in the Colony.

I know we've got some pictures. One of them, especially. It was at a shower for someone?

Yes. I can't remember now just who it was it. It was at the Hazel place which is across from Park Watson's.

For Vera Taylor?

It might've been for Vera Taylor because I did go to Vera Taylor's, I guess three, four times, started taking music lessons. Then she got married and went away. That picture you're talking about was taken in that front yard. Josephine Holmes lived here in the Colony where you live now and she taught our Sunday School class. She had a very beautiful voice and used to sing in the choir and then she married Ed[ward G. Hulse] and moved to St. Johns.

Do you remember some of the people that were in your Sunday School class at different times?

Oh yes. At that time there were so many girls, they divided the girls and boys up. The girls were up in the corner, you know where the piano is now, where it use to set... We had two seats up there that usually was full of girls. The young boys had the back two on the other side. We used to kind of laugh because we sat there and watched the boys and I suppose the boys watched the girls. I said, at that time, "that's how I picked out my husband."

We used to have sleigh rides when we was here in the Colony. My husband-to-be had a good team of horses and a nice sleigh and used to gather up the kids and young folks here in the Colony and go clear over to Greenbush. They'd have a special meetings over there. I remember going over there once and the snow was pert near gone and the sleigh dragged and we didn't get there. We all walked in just as he pronounced the benediction. I thought the preacher could of killed us.

We used to go to Elsie to the show or something, I can't think. Once we were coming home and right there by the old brick schoolhouse and Belford was driving. I was setting in front and we were all wrapped up in buffalo robes. He had a big fur coat on and wasn't paying attention where he was going. We tipped over in the ditch. A whole bunch of us rolled out. The boys all jumped out and got their girls back in and righted the sleigh up and got us up in the road again and nobody got hurt.

Was that where you lost that pin?

No. That was after I was married.

I remember, but that was a sleigh tipping over then, wasn't it?

No. It was the horse run away on a buggy. It was after I was married and we were getting around and getting some furniture. We had this Jim(?) horse, a real nice buggy horse. We had a democrat buggy then. We'd gone up to town and got a four-burner, Perfection oil stove to cook on and we thought that was **the** thing then, we had an oil stove. Coming home, the hold back straps broke on the harness. I don't know if you know what that means or not. Anyway, they held the buggy back so nothing bumped the horse's heels and something happened. Those hold back straps broke and it started bumping his heels and he ran away. Belford was hanging on trying to stop. Some men in the field were making hay and they saw us coming and they ran out. They had pitch forks and they got in front of the horse and got him stopped. We didn't tip over or anything, thank goodness. When I got out, why I had this beautiful pin on. It was an heirloom, a fashion pin that had been given to me. When I got home and started to take off my good clothes, my pin was gone. At that time we didn't get right in the buggy, go back and look for things. It was a week or so afterwards before I went that way again.

They'd mowed the hay and and they had raked it up. I got right out where we got to where the horse stopped and looked around there and found my pin. It had been run over but it hadn't been hurt and I still have that pin.

Going back, did you sing in the choir?

I guess I did for a while. Belford and I both sang in a choir. We had quite a few young people then. I can't remember who led it but we did have an orchestra here. You remember when we had that. I did manage to play a violin in that orchestra.

I remember that. If Grandpa left here, we figure about 1916, that would've made you 17, no 15. I get mixed up on that one. You're a year younger than the year or so on. Then he moved into St. Johns because then he went to work in a factory, didn't he?

Yes. He went to Reo. He went to what we called the Reo Service Station in Lansing where I imagine they repaired Reo trucks and cars. He never actually worked in a regular factory but he was a mechanic.

Didn't he ever work in a factory in St. Johns?

No.

How did he get back and forth to work?

On the interurban and he rented a room over there and stayed during the week and then he came back weekends.

He didn't want to move to Lansing?

Eventually, but then they lived in St. Johns. When he got this work, he thought he'd go over and try it out. I remember being over there in the place where he lived nights. I'd go over and meet him and we'd go out. I remember we went out once and ate supper and had fish. He had just a room in this rooming house where other men roomed, did the same thing. Then he got on the interurban and came home weekends.

Aunt Agnes must have graduated from the eighth grade here, didn't she?

I think so, in the Colony, I believe. I'm not sure.

We should figure that out because maybe she wouldn't have been old enough. She finished up and went to school in St. Johns, didn't she?

She didn't go only through the 9th and 10th grade, I think, in St. Johns.

Tell about where you worked in St. John's. When your dad and mother moved to St. Johns and you were still living at home, you moved to St. Johns with them.

Before they left the Colony, I'd gone out to work. I worked for a farmer and I made the whole sum of \$4 a week. We washed by hand and ironed by hand and there was no vacuum cleaners. There was no nothing! There was just a man and his wife so there it really wasn't too hard work and it was a beautiful home. For a while in St. Johns, I was the night operator in the telephone office up there.

Where was the telephone office? Can you kind of locate it for me?

You know where Clinton National Bank is? It was just east there a ways and upstairs, as far as I can remember now. They wanted a night operator and, of course, it was a switchboard. You had a cot in there where things got quiet at night you could lie down. I didn't know anything more about a switchboard than the man in the moon. In just one day they show you how. It got to be kind of fun because people would call and we'd talk at night among ourselves from around the different--. I remember one young man used to talk and talk.

Other operators?

Yes. Another operator off from town, other operators from Fowler or Ovid or somewhere. I didn't like that. I didn't stay there very long. I remember the night watchman come along, rattled the door downstairs, because everything had to be locked you know. Then I went to work in a restaurant. I did work there quite a while because I was working there when I left and came out and got married.

Do you remember how much wages were for night operator?

It wasn't much. I think I was still getting about \$4 a week when I worked in the restaurant.

Were you living at home?

Yes. I know that when I was getting my clothes together to get married, my shoes cost me \$12 and it took me three weeks of work to buy my shoes to get married in. They were high-top, French-heeled, black, pointed toes, laced clear up to the top. Took you forever to get them laced up.

What restaurant did you work at? Do you remember the name of it, or if not, about where it was?

It was on the east side, the last block south of Main St. There was a restaurant in there. Can't remember the man's name right now. I do remember that he committed suicide. He went down in the basement and hung himself.

of the restaurant?

Yes, after I left.

Do you remember what you got there by any chance.

I don't think it was over \$4 a week and never got tips. That was very great if I got a tip. I couldn't imagine what the guy was doing, you know.

You wondered if he'd done something wrong? Do you remember the kinds of food that—

Our cook up there in the restaurant was an awful good cook. I think she taught me how to fry steak the first time. She could make beautiful roasts and could bake just about everything and made just beautiful pies and cakes. About every third morning, I think it was, I had to get down there and the boss got there and we opened up so they could serve breakfast. There was another girl that worked there at the same time and we took turns going. Actually, I can't remember the hours we put in. Seems though I was there all day till suppertime was over before I went home. So you really didn't say, "I worked eight hours and got home."

You probably had to help do the dishes.

No. They had a woman in the kitchen that did. I had to, I think, wipe the glasses or something like that. We set the tables. I got pretty good at it. I could take the whole one-half side of that restaurant with orders and bring them back.

In those days, again, a restaurant would have had to fix almost everything from scratch.

There's nothing prepared. At this time you and Dad were engaged, were you?

Oh, yes. We'd been going together for years and then we set the wedding date for the 1st of January. My youngest sister came down with scarlet fever so I came out to his house. The snow was a clear over the fences. My dad came out by train to Shepherdsville and Jeremy Harmon and Frank, I think, went and got him with the sleighs. They had to come around through the fields to get there.

This was January 1, 1918.

Yes.

We haven't gone into to Dad's moving to the farm. We might do that later but they had been living there. Were his parents living at the farm then?

Yes. They were there then at the farm. I stayed with them. I think it was the 28th of May that Belford left for Camp Custer and he was drafted.

Did you know that at the time you were married?

We knew that he was going to probably have to be drafted but we didn't get the notice that he actually had to go-- He was down in the field, clear down to the river plowing, when the mail came and I got that card. I remember running all the way down the lane with that card and was standing there bawling and wondering what I was going to do. Then he left. I think it was the 28th of May.

Going back to your wedding day, Grandpa and Grandma Ewer were there and your dad was there. Who stood up with you?

Isabell stood up with me and Charlie Hammond stood up with Belford. Rev. Kenny and his wife were there and he married us from the Methodist Church.

Ashes didn't come over or anybody like that, or did they?

Yes. Blanche and Russell [Ash] were there and Mother Ewer had--I'd helped her prepare a real nice dinner--after the wedding had a real nice dinner for us. Arlene Ash has often told me about standing in the window and bawling cause the kids couldn't come. They thought that was awful because they couldn't go across the road---

Then the four of you lived there together and Dad farmed with his dad. I suppose you still went to church and things like that.

When he went to the army, why I stayed there and his father and I worked the farm. We couldn't get any help and we had five or six cows we were milking. I remember getting up and going to barn and helping with the milking. Father Ewer would have to go around at grain harvest time and help with the grain harvest. He'd come home and I'd have the milking all done and the chores all done and he just thought that was wonderful. He didn't see why I had to do all that. I'd been used to milking cows and it was nothing for me to go out and do it. I learned to harness horses and I learned to drive a three-horse team and I cut corn and I ran the binder. I did everything really.

That was that summer 1918 and Dad was gone. As I remember--I know you've got it down--you remember the date he was wounded in October?

The 7th, I think it was.

October 1918. When was it that you had your appendix out and was so sick? It was after that?

It was after that. It was the next year after he came home from the army that I'd had appendicitis for years.

I thought that was before Dad came home.

No. It was after he came home and we were living there alone. Then his folks moved here to the Colony and we were living there alone and I'd had appendicitis. Dr. Luton, I guess it was, said "You might just as well go to the hospital and get it out and you won't be there very long." It didn't turn out that way. I got peritonitis...

Going back to when Dad was wounded, how did you get word? How did you know?

We got a letter from him. We didn't hear and we didn't hear and didn't hear and I'd write about every week. We didn't get any word from him because-- I know he said that their mail carrier there, that whether he got wounded, but he said you could see where they'd thrown packages of mail and scattered all over. Something happened to the guy and he just threw it. We finally got a letter from him and said he'd been wounded and he was in Vichy, I think, France, used to be a big resort. They made it into a hospital and we got word. After we got that word and knew where he was, then here comes a card, which I still have, from the government saying he was wounded, "degree undetermined." If we'd a got that first...scared us to death. I got the letter from him first.

Would have scared you to death because, "degree undetermined," you wouldn't know if there'd be anything left of him? Their care and concern over letting... I think back to, particularly with Lawrence Ash, when that happened. Boy! They sent a detachment right there and there was so much care about--.

He got shot through the foot with a machine gun bullet and it went right through the joint of his big toe. He and another buddy were under fire. They found an old foxhole and they got their bodies and their heads underneath it and they got some old boards over the top of them but couldn't get their feet in so their feet were sticking up out of out of the hole. There was an old--I don't know whether he said it was a tree or something--and this German was up there with a machine gun and was shooting down at them. He felt something hit the bottom of his foot just like somebody hit it with a bat. They had to lay there all night because they didn't dare get out. When they did get to him the next morning and got him out of there, they had to cut his shoe off

because his foot had swollen and bled so. Then they got him back and he said we couldn't imagine what a feeling it was to finally get into bed with some sheets on it. He said you couldn't imagine what it was like after sleeping out under fire, muddy. Now October, it might not have been so bad then but he said they had—

He was a runner in the army. He didn't carry a gun. He was what they called, a “runner” and he carried messages from one company to another. The story was that their officer was pro-German and he took him up into this place where they were under this heavy fire. Now that was all a story that came back to Belford that he knew better. He just took him up there where they run into this intense fire. He told about seeing dogfights of airplanes in the air. The guys with guns were absolutely told to never to shoot at them because that would give their position. He remembered seeing shooting a German plane down and seeing it crash. He said a lot of the guys went over and cut buttons off the guy's coat and things but he said, “I never wanted to get that close to it.”

I guess not. I know he got back into the states.

Came back to the states. He was in New York and into another big--it used to be a hotel. I can't remember now what they called it. He was on crutches and had pajamas and a housecoat on. He gave a guy some money to go and send us a telegram. I guess the guy pocketed his money and just forgot all about it. Then he wrote to us and I went to town and sent him a telegram. I wrote every day and every day and we'd get letters from him saying, “What is the matter with you? I don't hear a thing. Are you all dead? What's wrong?” Right up to the last day, they discovered they didn't have his name down. They didn't even know he was there. My letters were going all over, all around to these different camps, and coming back, “no one there.” No one couldn't find him. I'll tell you, what a hectic time we lived through! He finally was moved to Chicago in that big--I guess it's a naval or something there now. They were there in the hospital all winter. He was down on crutches in January when his grandmother died. He came to Findlay, Ohio, and his father and I left here and went to Findlay, Ohio. That's the first time I'd seen him since he left to go to camp. I did see him once in Camp Custer. We had a neighbor that took us down there to see them. He got home once from Camp Custer. All the time he was training down there, he got home just once.

I know you used to tell about waiting at the interurban station every week to see if he could come home.

He'd say he could come home and I'd drive the old horse and buggy up there and put it in the livery stable and go down and sit in Nick Pappas's ice cream parlor and wait until the last interurban came in. Another friend of mine would wait there. No men! Then I'd drive home in the dark and take the horse out and unharness him and put him in the barn and try it another week.

When he did get home--he was mustered out in Battle Creek--they asked him if he didn't want to sign a paper that he could go to college. The government would send him to college. He said, “yes.” He didn't see any reason why he couldn't sign that. They said a lot of the fellows just said, “I don't want to bother with anything. Just forget it. It don't mean anything to me.” After he was home--I guess you were a couple of years old--then he did make up his mind. He guessed he wanted to go back to school and we moved to East Lansing. He took an Ag course. He'd never finished his high school and in three years he finished high school and graduated from Michigan State. Then he came back to the farm and was there until he died.

I can remember a little bit of that when Dad was going to school over there. The years after Dad came back to farm and I was born in 1920 and Ruth in 1923 and then Grammy Ewer died in March 1925 and then Jim was born in 1927 and Grandpa died in 1935 and you were just really busy as a homemaker and cook and worked on the farm and canned and took care of us. After I got married in 1940, right after that, you went to work, didn't you?

It wasn't until Jim started high school that I went up to the hospital and got a job as a housekeeper. Do you remember that? I thought we didn't have much money and I thought, oh my land, I'll go up there and get some work so I can give Jim a little money to have when he's in school. We drove together. He went with me and then he'd come pick me up and we'd come home together. I couldn't do that very long and I got neuritis so bad. They didn't have anything to work with then. That winter, why you had to shake the dust mops out of the window in that cold air. They thought I was having a heart attack. I just couldn't breathe and they sent me down to Dr. Foo. He had me run up and downstairs and he did all sorts of things. He said, "No. It's just neuritis around your heart." So I had to give that up. In this cold weather, couldn't take it, but I did work hard up there. The girls told me the place had never been so clean.

After that-- must have been not too long--you worked in Owosso.

Yes. I worked in Owosso for a year or so. I worked at Redman's where everybody went. I worked there for a while and then finally left there and went to Bendix and got a real good job there. Then my father got quite ill and I left there and went to Oldsmobile and worked there for seven years. Finally, I got sick of that and came home and we raised chickens.

In 1953 though, you went to the hospital to work and stayed there until 1965 or something like that?

I was 65 years old.

So that would have been 1964.

I worked there.

11 years.

15. I've got a 10-year pin and a 5-year pin. That was 1953.

1953 is when you started.

I found those pins the other day. I don't know how that figured out.

I don't either because, when Mary was born, you were awfully sick and you wrote me a note. You said, "Gosh, you thought maybe you'd like to work up there." Before very many months you had been hired in as an aide, unless they counted that—

Mary was born up here after I had been working quite a while, hadn't I?

Oh no, no, Mother, no.

I guess I got to get those pins—

No. You were going to be up there to see her and you got real heavy cold or bronchitis or something. You were in the room right below me.

That's right.

Then you decided that you'd like to work there. What were your duties up there then?

Then you weren't in housekeeping, were you?

Oh no. I went in as an aide and at that time I was working days. I think the aides had a lot more responsibilities then than they do now because we were allowed to do so many different things now that they don't think an aide is supposed to do. We used to carry medicine, which absolutely you cannot do now, used to carry the pills or whatever. They used to send me down and disconnect the IVs. I knew how to do it. Now you have to be an RN or a practical to do things like that. It was a lot harder work then because the first thing when we went in, we had to go around and gather up all the water jugs. They were stainless steel and we had to wash them and rinse them out and fill them with fresh water and take them back. Some of us would have to go take temps and get that all done. Then up would come the breakfast. We'd serve the breakfast and gather those dishes all up and take them back to the kitchen. Then we'd have about 2 ½ hours maybe to take care of five or six patients and then—

That meant bathing and changing the bed?

The whole thing. You had to get it done. You just worked right on the run. It was nothing to go in there on Saturday and Sunday and have 10 to 15 patients. At that time they'd say, "Just don't change the beds. Just clean them up and get them fixed up as good as she

can,” but the same thing. You had to go through all that same routine. Really, it was hard work but I enjoyed it.

You worked some different shifts too? I can remember you worked nights because I’d know when I wasn’t supposed to call you.

Until Belford died, I worked days. I did work a year in the baby department and our head nurse thought I’d like it up there. She didn’t think I’d have to work so hard. “Babies are tiny” she said. “That’d be a good place for you.” So I went up there. I didn’t particularly care for the nurse we had. She wouldn’t do anything at all and wouldn’t help us out. When you walk into a nursery with 20 babies bawling and oh, there was so much to do—feeding them at that time, the formula. Every kid had a different formula and you had to give them their bottle. When they got through eating, you had to go get a bottle of water to wash their mouth out and everything like that. It was just detail after detail, little picky things. They finally told us that we couldn’t put the babies on our shoulders to burp them. We had to sit them up in the crib and do this and pat them on the back. Oh, I got so frustrated that finally I told the head nurse, “Either get me out of there or I’m going to quit.”

[end of tape]