

Interview with Amelia Horstman
Interviewer: Clem Horstman
May 1979

Q: Please go ahead and say your name and your age, and that's where we'll start.

A: My name is Amelia Horstman. I was born in 1915, February 23, 1915 in a large family ---

Q: Were you born at home?

A: Yes, I was born at home. An old country doctor delivered me. Out there were a couple of miles away, and the doctor was right there in a little old office. So, I was born at home, and I was the oldest in a family of five. And I went to school when I was about seven.

Q: So that would be 1922, then, when you started school, or in thereabouts, when you went up here to St. Phillips?

A: Probably. I might have been older than that. I've got a picture here, 1927, I imagine I was in about the second or third grade then. So, I don't even remember when I started school, but I remember my mother was sick a lot, and I was sick a lot, and only went to school seven years until I graduated, the highest in my class.

Q: But if you only went to school seven years, how did you get through the eighth grade?

A: I went to school, I got pneumonia, and was out September, October, I don't know what year that was.

Q: But that wasn't the first year?

A: No, it was in about the fifth grade, I think. And then at the end, I made it, passed my tests, and went on to the next grade. Then when I graduated, we had to go to Mt. Vernon to pass our tests. The nuns were --- at our school. We had to go to Mt. Vernon, the parents took us down there, and we had to take the public-school tests. I can say they were pretty hard.

Q: That was another thing I wanted to know. Was this a Catholic school?

A: Yes. And I've still got my grade papers, I could show them to you. I've still got my papers with the grades on them, I'm very proud of that. I told the nuns here at the school --- And I wasn't out of school very long when my mother became very ill, and she was on her deathbed a long time, I had to take care of her. That was during the Depression time.

Q: So, let's see, if you started then, let's say, in 1922 or 1923, seven full years of school ---

A: I think I might have graduated around 1929.

Q: OK. So that would work then ---

A: Right. 1929. Because my mother had her first surgery in 1930. And they had to remove several of her vertebrae in her back.

Q: What did she have?

A: She had deterioration of the spine, --- of the spine, and in 1934 she died. And I was eighteen at the time. That was rough. --- and in those four years between that, when Mom was in bed, I was looking after children at home, and to help them make ends meet I would help mother and father at home ---

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Q: So really, from the time that you graduated, you really, everything got pretty rough?

A: Yes, it did.

Q: Was it OK before that? I mean, was it ---

A: Well, we were always, we had a rough row to go ---

Q: Right, but I mean, things were stable before ---

A: Yes, years ago we didn't even used to have ---

Q: Yes, but I mean, your life was pretty stable until she ---

A: Until Mom got sicker.

Q: She got sick, and then you started having doctors' bills ---

A: Yes, it took a lot of money to pay her doctor's bill, we had to call in extra doctors. It was hard to pay for the way the doctors --- which you couldn't spare, and you had --- to pay our bills and stuff. If it hadn't been for my neighbors and relatives and friends who really helped us out, we would have lost the place. When Mom died, we owed more on our farm ---

Q: Now what year did she die?

A: In '34. April seventh. And it was up to me then to help raise the children, and pay, and get out of debt, and we did, we paid. And our old family doctor was Dr. Heniger, and he had a --- And we thought that we were very fortunate, that we got to keep on to our house.

Q: But you didn't go past the eighth grade, though? In formal education?

A: No.

Q: There wasn't no way, being the oldest in the family ---

A: No, there was no way I could do it.

Q: OK. Now, for instance, then, how did your day run, for instance, after your mother died?

A: --- I got up at four o'clock, five o'clock, got milk, ---

Q: It's kind of interesting, now, cause you're the oldest, and the boys didn't come along to ---

A: --- and when we were done milking, and then my sister --- and we'd come along and cook breakfast, and so we didn't have to do the stuff that --- So, I told them, OK, I said, I'll trade you. I'll be glad to go out and milk, I don't care, I like anything, I like work, period. So, they traded me, and they weren't even half through milking, and I'd be setting there. And --- how do you do this, and Amelia, how do you do that this and how do you do that? The next morning, I didn't have no worries, at all, I got to fix breakfast and they done the milking. [?]

Q: What time was that?

A: After Mom died.

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Q: I mean, what time in the morning, though?

A: Well, we always milked with a lantern, it was always dark, you know what time it's dark, it's four or five o'clock, because my brother was still in school when Mom died, and he had to pick me up, a mile off the road, which is dirt road, and we had no sled, it was about ten furlongs. We had to walk a whole mile, out to the end of the road, we had to go back out to the road again in the morning, and again in the afternoon to put your empty milk cans in and bring them in, so, you know, you had your cans cleaned up nice and everything, so that ---

Q: Was this still when you were pinching every little penny?

A: Every penny. And in the summertime we had berries, and we went to town, and we took berries every other day, to sell --- we'd pick on Monday, sell on Tuesday, we'd pick on Wednesday, sell Thursday, and that's when we'd run --- berries, five cents a box, a dollar a crate, and at that time there was twenty-four boxes in a crate. Not those sixteen boxes like they have now -- twenty-four boxes in a crate.

Q: And you sold that?

A: Yes, a dollar a crate. I've still got the --- boxes ---

Q: What's the old story you used to tell me about the thirteen acres of tomatoes that you raised?

A: That's what you call true, that we brought tomatoes down here, and tried to take them down to the store. Dad built a great big extra bed around on the wagon, he took the hay-wagon and built an extra thing around. The baskets were about, they were like these banana baskets. They were a little bit more narrow ---

Q: -- narrow at the bottom and ---

A: They held more than a peck. They was a high basket. And then you'd haul them here down to --- and they had a man down there that graded them, and if they found one that was bad in there, you got a cheaper price for them. My Dad can tell you, he can tell you now, that they'd take a quarter a bushel. Or fifteen cents a bushel. A lot of years we didn't make anything on it, the money that came in every year, that helped to pay the bills.

Q: So, it was kind of a delay, you invested and then later on you got your money back out of it then. You really had to have it to pay the bills ---

A: --- And then we used to take our own corn to the corn mill, and have it ground, and make corn meal out of it, and bring it back home, and make corn bread, corn cakes, and all that kind of stuff. For the pancakes we used corn, we called them corn cakes. --- places you'd wait for it, and they'd grind your own corn, and take it back home, it's the same way down at the store, we brought our wheat down there, and then got flour back.

Q: Your talking about corn meal now, that kind of reminds me. Didn't during the war, didn't they have certain ways, you weren't allowed to use sugar during the war, you weren't allowed to use ---

A: You were rationed.

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Q: To what you could get?

A: And the people thought it was terrible. We didn't mind it so; we'd done without stuff all our lives, so that didn't really hurt us.

Q: Yeah. It was nothing new to you. Did you ever see any booklets on how to make certain things, or --?

A: --- still got one, I showed it to somebody the other day, gas ration stamps.

Q: Yes, but special cookbooks that they sent around on how to cook --- you didn't really need any of that stuff, did you?

A: No, I didn't need any of that. Heck, no, I was ready to have another Depression, cause I know how to do without. We could do without before and we can do without again. Yes, we were a lot better off than a lot of people. And I remember so well there was a lot of times when we couldn't even, we just couldn't afford to buy anything. We'd just go to town and --- on goods, sometimes, to make ten dollars on a trip. And then we'd --- and take along --- We had no insurance, no social security, and, like Medicaid. And hospital bills, and so on, you paid --- Now I'd dress chickens for people, for a nickel. I'd dress a chicken, and then they'd bring me ---

Q: What do you mean by dressing a chicken?

A: They'd want them dressed.

Q: You'd kill them? And strip them?

A: No, I'd kill them and ---

Q: You'd kill them and strip all the feathers off ---

A: Yeah, and I'd dress them, take the insides out ---

Q: And cut them open?

A: Yeah, open, but I didn't cut them up. And then I had one old lady that was pretty well off (I won't mention her name, I could still do it), she'd bring ---

Q: Oh, go ahead, it doesn't matter.

A: She'd bring the scales out to the car and weigh it --- and a lot of times you'd only get fifty cents for a chicken. Then we had them, and sold them dressed, and alive. We had two --- and an old Model T car that had roll seats in the side, and we had one customer that had an old bulldog that used to come out and bark at them chickens and get them all wound up. And the man was so mad at him, as soon as he saw him, and he told him he'd take a shotgun out ---

Q: So, you raised chickens.

A: Yes.

Q: And pigs, and you had cattle -- did you have beef cattle?

A: No, we didn't have beef cattle, we had just milk cattle. --- and the rest were ---

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Q: And you had a mule.

A: Yes.

Q: And what did you have left then after everything stabilized, and you had all your debts paid off, and everything stabilized, did you have ---

A: ---

Q: Were you married then?

A: No.

Q: So, you were still paying bills?

A: That's for sure, I didn't get married until I was twenty-eight.

Q: And by that time everything was ---

A: Yes, we had our bills paid, we had our barn, trees, --- my dad had remarried, --- was in the service, and we had a --- customers. Everybody was married except me.

Q: What year did you get married?

A: 1943.

Q: That's right, and then Dad went ---

A: I wouldn't take money for my education out of -- I was the one in the family that lived with --- and they had four children. I had to sleep with two of them in bed with me, they had a heater, one heating stove, and none in the room where I had them. So, I'd lay awake at night trying to keep the heat on ---. But I was so proud to be there to take care of that mother and baby. That meant so much to me. And the next year they had ---

Q: That's what we were talking about before, there was no heat, no air conditioning, and no refrigerators ---

A: --- and you'd have great big jars of sauerkraut, down in there ---

Q: What about during the war, now, you got married in 1943. Right after that Dad went into the service, so where did you go? You went back home, didn't you, and lived at home?

A: Yes, I lived at home with Dad and Mother.

Q: And that's where the oldest boy, that's where Danny was born?

A: In the hospital.

Q: Yes, in the hospital, but you were still living at home.

A: And from then on, we went in, lived upstairs, and lived in one room, where there were three rooms upstairs. Dad had two sisters that lived there, and I had two sisters that stayed there. We fixed a bed for

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them in the kitchen, and Dad and I had the one bedroom. We all had separate quarters, five people staying there, and there were three different families. We got along. I'd like to see people do that now.

Q: So that's where you lived when? After the war?

A: For several months, yeah. --- And then we moved back at home and bought this little piece of ground here and built the two-car garage which we lived in for a while. And that's where all of you were born.

Q: A two car garage, and we had seven children, and two adults ---

A: Yes, and we had only, the only thing we had was, we did have running water. We had nothing but an old heater ---

Q: Cold running water.

A: Yes. But you didn't get a cold bath, your water was warm when you got a bath. David was out here the other day, he says he still remembers standing in line waiting for his bath.

Q: You're dad-blamed right. You stood in line and got a bath in the sink.

A: Yes sir. Everybody got a bath, and nobody went to bed dirty.

Q: It wasn't always the most pleasant experience -- sitting up there in front of everybody with nothing on ---

A: Oh, but you didn't get stripped until you were ready to be washed!

Q: Didn't you work at Fendrich?

A: Yeah, I went to work there ---

Q: Now when was that?

A: I went to work in 1938.

Q: OK, that was before you were married.

A: The days were bad, I mean, you didn't work steady. The work was bad, you know, some days you'd get two days a week or so, and some weeks you'd work three. I remember real well.

Q: What were the conditions, though?

A: They were bad. We brought home -- a lot of times, we wouldn't make but twenty dollars a week.

Q: I mean, what were the working conditions ---

A: They were awful!

Q: You mean you didn't have nice employers?

A: I wish I'd never saw that place! The tobacco was terrible, I worked in the assembly room where the tobacco came in. It was all dampened down, and hot, and you had to put it on your lap. And the steam

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came up, and you had to put it in a big machine, and get the rib out of it, you know. I worked until I got married. And I didn't work after I got married. Oh, I'd picked up odds and ends, jobs in the house ---

Q: Yeah, you worked close around here then? After of course you'd moved out ---

A: Yes, I've done housework, and ---

Q: Did you live in town, when you worked in town?

A: No. The work wasn't steady, and we'd walk many a time. We'd get in there, and the machines were broken down, and I would walk all the way home from town, just to get home and to work, to work in the garden, and get things done at home. I walked up and down several times.

Q: And that was what, eight, nine, ten miles?

A: Yeah, and a lot of times we'd get a ride with somebody part of the way and we'd walk the rest. We didn't think nothing of walking three or four miles. We never rode to church. We had church services in the afternoon on Sundays all the time. All during the war years, we had church in the afternoon. And we always walked to church. A couple of times, --- someone to come over, and we'd always walk.

Q: Yeah, it was about a mile, wasn't it, one way?

A: But it's just the idea, compared with nowadays. We thought it was fun. It was satisfying to us. We had nothing else to do. I saw my first show -- the first show that I saw, I was almost twenty-six years old, and it was Shirley Temple in Bright Eyes. And I was so fidgety, I'd never seen a movie before.

Q: You didn't know how to react?

A: No, I didn't know, I was scared. I was afraid!

Q: Where did you go, into Evansville?

A: Yes, Sally and Mike and --- took us. We didn't even know how to act. People ran past with bags of popcorn, we didn't even know what they were doing.

Q: Well, did you take any change along, to ---

A: Change? We didn't know what it was for. Popcorn, that was something you made at home, on the stove. We didn't know you could buy popcorn in stores. It was heavenly, I'll tell you.

Q: Was there a union at Fendrich's? In other words, did you know of any kind of a union -- was there a women's union, or---?

A: Oh, no, no. It was really bad.

Q: Had you ever heard of any kind of -- well, speaking of working conditions, how many hours a day did you work?

A: You had to get so many bundles ---

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Q: Oh, was it ---

A: No, it wasn't piece work, but you had to get so many bundles out, or otherwise you got laid off. You didn't make it then, you were just a dead duck, that's all. You didn't have to apply for no job reference. But I was doing housework, I was taking care of --- house at the time. And had to cook for three people, three meals a day.

Q: While you were working part-time at Fendrich's?

A: Yeah, it was a thirteen-room house, and I nearly knocked myself out, and I got \$5 a week for that. And one day a little pint jar of mayonnaise slipped out of my hand and broke, and by golly she took that out of my pay.

Q: But she was justified, wasn't she?

A: Yeah, she sure was. And I had another paying job, down here on --- his wife was in bed, she was expecting and had to be waited on, and I had a -- what do you call it? -- and made butter, and made forty pounds of butter a week, and I had to get up every morning and milk cows. And I had to keep the whole house going, do outside work and everything, and I got \$3 a week.

Q: That was, 'course you were the oldest one. That's what I was trying to point out before, is that you were the first born, and the firstborn was really supposed to be a man. It just happened that you were a woman, and that didn't make no difference, did it?

A: Yeah, the doctor said I was strong. That's why I had so many children.

Q: In other words, you think that women are as strong as men.

A: I think that depends. I feel like I did heavy work cause I'm strong and I had to do a lot of heavy lifting.

Q: Don't you think any woman could do that if she had to?

A: I don't see how ---, a little person could be as strong as I was.

Q: Yeah, because she's got it easy, though.

A: That could be, because -- On a Sunday afternoon, actually we'd wander around in the woods, pick up armfuls of wood here and there, pick up a piece of wood, anything we'd find, and bring it up to the house. And we'd use it for Monday morning, that was our --- Monday morning wash, and we'd get the water out of the big ---

Q: The point I was trying to make is there wasn't really anything that a man did that you couldn't do?

A: No. We'd mow hay, and shuck wheat in the night, and stuff like that, if there was moonlight. Cause we had no light, we didn't have no electricity. We didn't even have electricity ---

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Q: It just kind of got me -- not to cut you off there, but, it was kind of in style back in your early days that women didn't have all these hands and everything that you --- the Gibson Girl image, have you ever heard of that, with the lily white hands, and ---

A: Naw! I don't think I ever wore a short-sleeved dress. We didn't know what that was. Oh, that was modish [?], to run around, in a sleeveless dress, that was terrible.

Q: Did you have nice clean lily-white hands then ---

A: I remember one day, I was so terribly hot, at that time you had to go ahead and heat your iron, you'd have to get a couple of big baskets of corn cobs in, and really get the old stove going, so you could get your ironing done. And I was ironing, it was ungodly hot. Because our kitchen had a porcelain stove, it didn't have a ---

Q: Yeah, I remember.

A: And I was ironing in my slip. And boy, Dad came in the house, and oh, I really got it! I was ironing in my slip, and at that time a slip was more than what they wear now. You had big built-up straps over here, and --- compared to the straps they wear now. And he said, "You'd better get dressed," or something like that. And that was the last time I ever ran around like that.

Q: Half naked, eh?

A: Yes, half naked!

Q: Did you ever belong to any kind of social groups or societies like that? I mean, now you belong to the altar society at the church and so forth, but there was women's societies in those days. But you never --- ? Was there anybody that you ---

A: They had a rosary society, at the church.

Q: No, I mean, you know, people that didn't have nothing better to do with their time than to belong to a society. What about some of the people you worked for? Did you ever hear of any kind of settlement houses?

A: No, the people that I worked for were mostly --- people, --- people who paid me \$3 a week and I'd have to do all the housework. They were well off.

Q: They were a little upper-class then.

A: No, they were farmers. But they were well off. But this one family that I was familiar with, I didn't know, --- I didn't feel like, you know, I never asked them.

Q: Did you ever hear of settlement houses?

A: Yeah, I read about them in the history books, but I didn't know of any.

Q: We didn't have any in Evansville? Or you at least weren't associated ---

A: Oh, but I loved school. I won more spelling matches in school, and they were my favorites.

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Q: Well, I did pretty good.

A: Yeah, but you wouldn't stand up and spell! I spelled them all right.

Q: Wait a minute, we don't want that on the tape. Did you ever hear of -- well, I know you've heard of the Women's Christian Temperance Union?

A: Yeah, I read about them.

Q: But nobody out here in St. Phillip belonged to stuff like that -- you didn't have time for that garbage, right?

A: No, ---

Q: You know, a while ago you said something about going to movies. What did you wear? Weren't you kind of uncertain about what you were supposed to wear to go to town, or did you even think about that?

A: I didn't worry about that.

Q: Weren't you dressed different than other people, maybe?

A: No, everybody was dressed ---

Q: When you went to the movies, you said you were twenty-six, so that would put you in the thirties.

A: Well, I probably had a homemade dress on, because I don't think I ever had a boughten dress.

Q: Right.

A: All stuff I'd made myself. I've done a lot of sewing, and I taught myself to, I had no sewing ---

Q: How much was it to get into a movie?

A: I don't know, but ours were ---

Q: Oh, you got a freebie, huh?

A: Yeah, free passes. But I did a lot of sewing and after my mother died, I made all of my dad's shirts; I made all of the children's clothes. People brought me clothes and I'd rip them and rework them, re-do them.

Q: What did you do for recreation? I know you didn't have much time for recreation, bud when you had time, ---

A: We'd play baseball. We'd take and sew old sock material together and make a baseball out of it, and stuff like that. My brother had --- you know, we never had any baseball bats, but all we did was, Dad went and took some planks, and shaved them off at the bottom, so you could get your hand on them, and we'd play baseball and stuff like that. But I'd never really known how, I never really learned. I was surprised, right now --- watch it, on television. And I listen to the Triplets games --- I love any kind of sports.

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Q: Was baseball the only thing that you played though? That's the only game that you can remember?

A: That's all, the rest of the kids played ---

Q: Oh, cards, I know you played cards. You always had a deck of cards.

A: Oh, yes, and we had an old crank-type record player that really got the use ---

Q: Where did you get the records though?

A: Oh, lots of times we'd pick up records from --- People bought them, young kids that came in -- My sister that lives next to me and my brother had friends. Raymond brought a lot of them. The boys would come, they'd play cards, and then they'd crank up that old record player. At that time ---

Q: Now, this is when? This is in the thirties before you were married? OK.

A: It was after Mom died.

Q: But before you got married?

A: Yeah. It was around the time that we had "Oh my darling" and "Brown Eyes", "Old Johnny --- ". And we'd crank that old thing up and put that record on there, and man, they had a ball. Many, many, many times they would play it. A real good time.

Q: What do you remember about the New Deal, and Roosevelt, and the Social Security Act, and ---

A: Oh, people went haywire, they were ---

Q: Oh, this is it, huh, like an honor? [?]

A: My dad always said, "You just wait and find out," and he said, "Pretty soon things are going to get as bad as they was before."

Q: So, he wasn't in favor of Roosevelt?

A: Yes, he was. "You just wait," he said, "people are building themselves up just like they did when the Titanic went under." He never did forget that.

Q: So, he was in favor of Roosevelt, but he didn't think his program would work?

A: He didn't think it was going to work, the people would, you know, sit back and ---

Q: Yeah, sit on their butts and not do anything?

A: Yeah, just like now. If he were still here now, he'd find out, there's a lot of people getting Social Security and not doing anything --- And that's what Dad was predicting. And that's the truth, you know.

Q: But the program was designed to help people that couldn't help themselves.

A: But there are some people getting it [Social Security] that are riding around in new cars, and I know who they are ---

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Q: Here, here, let's not mention any names now!

A: No, let's not do it!

Q: Oh, me -- You didn't really have any opportunities when you were younger to do anything, other than work on the farm, get those debts paid off, I mean --- you didn't really -- didn't you have any desire -- you must have had a desire to go on to high school. Would you have liked to?

A: No.

Q: OK, now wait a minute. If everything -- if your mom had been OK, if she hadn't been sick, OK, not that you'd have had a lot of extra money or anything, but let's say things would have been stable, like they were in the early twenties. OK, before your mom got sick and all this business, wouldn't you have liked to have gone on to high school?

A: No, I was doing --- I'll say it over again, when you have ---

Q: I was going to ask you something, Oh, when did you -- about meeting Dad. Go ahead and go into that. You said ---

A: But I want to finish, I said I really liked, --- housework, and ---

Q: All right, ---

A: --- At that time, they were having these little country dances, Olga and a bunch of us, we walked up then on Sunday nights. ---__ and I did, and Agnes, my sisters. That's how you'd go to dances. And going up there, at that time another girl friend had broken up with him, and they came up to the front door and I finally went ahead, and they took me back. ---. My only intention was that my brother and my sisters should be gone, settled and cared for and so on.

Q: But once you got them all out of the way, you were still going to go to Ferdinand ---?

A: No, my intentions at that time were, I knew that I was too old to go to Ferdinand, and I thought that I could always get a job in a nursery, or an orphanage, or somewhere, like that, and I thought, if they don't hire me, I'll work for nothing. If I don't have any home, why that way you'd have a home.

Q: So, you didn't have all the worries and frustrations of getting a date and going to the prom and so on?

A: I didn't worry about that. Cause I remember --- when they went on their honeymoon, and I --- Everybody would be gone, and there wasn't no place for me to go. Dad had remarried, --- But that's all you do, I mean ---

Q: You couldn't give a hoot less, eh?

A: No, that was the way I felt, --- I could do what Mom asked me to do, and that was as far as I could go.

Q: You had your own life to lead. So, you were going to go and do volunteer work, and if you could get some compensation for it, then you would take compensation, and if you couldn't, why ---

A: Somebody would give me a home.

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Q: But that's really what you wanted to do, take care of other people, and children?

A: Yeah, and I got them!

Q: Yeah, you sure got them, you got eight kids, you got in-laws, eight grandchildren, now ---

A: Yeah, but you know, like I told you before, they came in groups, and it's really been nice. Jeff and Joanna were first, and they were pretty hard, you know they were ---

Q: Of the grandchildren.

A: They came by yesterday and I think I got along pretty good with them. And I had them often when they were little, and somebody would have to go look after them, I don't get them now so much ---

Q: Yeah, now they're independent as hell ---

A: And then comes Andy, then little Matthew and -- What I like about them, is there's a whole slew of them now, you get lost [?] up there. Have you seen the pictures Mike took?

Q: Yeah.

A: And they all belong to us --- First of all, you get used to them ---

Q: You know, I never asked you anything about the church, how the church -- What effect the church had on your life, you know. That's a kind of dumb question, but ---

A: I think it had a lot more than what it has nowadays. The church meant more, and the services. If we didn't have anything else to do, we wouldn't have thought nothing of going to two masses a day. But nowadays kids go to one mass and spend the rest of the day lying around or doing something else. But they wouldn't think of going to two masses. And the same with Sunday afternoon services, --- for peace ---

Q: Yeah, it's during the war you're talking about?

A: That's right. And then when it wasn't during the war, we had vesper services on Saturday afternoon. That was a regular Saturday afternoon service, Vespers. And we'd --- combining singing and reading and so on, and stuff like that. And we thought it was interesting. And then they'd have Benediction, the blessing of the Sacraments. We went. And as far as getting the church cleaned, and so on, the school kids cleaned the churches, that was in the seventh and eighth grades. And they did it because they thought it was their duty. I mean, the kids didn't grouse like they do now. And it's not the kids' fault, it's the parents' fault. Because if the parents don't --- how can they expect the kids to do it?

Q: As far as activities at the church, did you have your socials during the Depression?

A: Oh sure, my dad helped make the burgoo. As soon as I got old enough, when I was out of school ---

Q: Was the burgoo a regular thing even in your Dad's time? It was still an annual event?

A: Oh yes, yes. Old man Sheriff [?] and Pop and Steve --- Grandpa, them three would make that big pot -- that was a big thing. And then when I got old enough, I'd do the --- You had a lot of work to do for a burgoo. And we really looked forward to that social. And a lot of times, we had a dollar to spend ---

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Q: You mean the whole family or individually?

A: Individually. Boy, you saved up your pennies for that. I remember picking daisies one time, I don't know for how many days, you had to put a lot of daisies in the --- tubs and tubs and tubs of daisies. Edward sold them for me. He got two cents, and I got a penny. And we kept --- on that, and I thought I was rich. I remember I had about a dollar ---

Q: OK, so you had the annual social, you had the burgoo.

A: That's all.

Q: You had the holy days ---

A: Yes, but the social was the only thing we had for an activity.

Q: Well, what did you do at the social?

A: The burgoo went with the social.

Q: OK, OK, it was part of the social.

A: That old shed that's down there behind Father's garage, that's where the burgoo was.

Q: Yes, there was a barn there.

A: Yes, I still remember all that. We'd go down there and have that old ---

Q: A while ago I asked you about the W.C.T.U., the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and you don't know anything about it

A: No, I just heard of it.

Q: Well, how about Prohibition, which is directly related to W.C.T.U.?

A: I just remember a little of that. I remember my dad talking about those things, and I was interested. I had to be, --- he couldn't really talk about them.

Q: Did you get a newspaper in those days?

A: No.

Q: No newspaper. But radio, you had a radio?

A: We had what you'd call a radio after we got electricity, and that was 19-- oh, I don't think we had electricity until ---

Q: Oh, I see, you see I'm from the electric age, so I'm assuming that everybody had electricity.

A: I think we got electricity in about 1938.

Q: OK, before that time, what contact did you have with the outside world, really?

A: Well, nothing but the "R-r-ring" of the old-fashioned Bell telephone.

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Q: Oh!

A: Yes, that's the only thing we had. We just didn't ---

Q: What about magazines? Didn't you get mail? You didn't get no magazines, no Sears catalogs?

A: No, no, --- Oh, we had the Sears catalogs, most of the time we'd have one in the neighborhood and it got passed around, if you'd send for anything.

Q: Did you ever buy anything through the Sears catalog?

A: Oh, I imagine, long underwear, and shoes, and stuff like that.

Q: Oh, that's right, you'd go in and pick it up.

A: No, you'd have it brought to the house, that was parcel post.

Q: Oh, the good old mail carriers?

A: Yeah, --- for years and years. I rode on that traction [?] many a time, the whole family could go on the --- for a dime.

Q: I asked you about drinking -- you remember very little about Prohibition -- what about, when was the first time you seen a woman smoking? That was a really bad thing, for a woman to smoke.

A: Oh, yes! People were ---

Q: For instance, did you ever hear the word "vamp"? What was a vamp?

A: I didn't know what it meant.

Q: But you'd heard it, and you knew it wasn't anything good?

A: I knew it wasn't anything good, yes. I knew that when a woman smoked that she was bad --- And my daddy grew chewing tobacco, and when --- pipe, then ---

Q: Did you sell tobacco to Fendrich's?

A: No. I remember young boys coming to our house, you know, they'd come to play cards with my brother, and they'd all roll their own cigarettes. I remember watching it ---

Q: So, it was OK for the guys to smoke, there was nothing bad in that at all. But boy, if a woman stuck a cigarette in her mouth ---

A: Yeah, that was bad.

Q: And then if she also drank?

A: Boy, I tell you -- I wish I could make a list. We cooked our own soap, never bought any soap, never bought any soap for our faces. We always used that old lye soap to wash our faces with. When Mom got sick that year, in 1930, --

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Q: And you ain't got no wrinkles neither.

A: No. Now during 1930, when the doctor came, you know, and she was sick, he said we should bathe her sores, you know, with Ivory soap. Then we bought Ivory soap, and I bet you that was the first time that I remember seeing bought soap at our house. We didn't have any --- in rolls, you know, and that was the only stuff we had.

Q: What did you have to buy? You had to buy sugar, which during the war was rationed, right? And gasoline, when you finally got your automobile ---

A: Yeah, we didn't have a car for a long time ---

Q: Hm, you mean Hoover couldn't put a -- Hoover said he was going to put a car in every garage and a chicken in every pot. Did you ever hear of Herbert Hoover?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: But you didn't like Herbert Hoover?

A: Yes, I did. I liked everything in the news, I enjoy reading about him ---

Q: But you didn't know that much about him at the time?

A: Well, I think that people made too big an issue of that, you know, that was just a saying that he used. He didn't really mean a chicken, I don't think.

Q: Well, I don't remember. It's a long time ago.

A: I can remember my brother was still in school when Mom died, and I can still see him there, in real old rumped-looking pants, clothes weren't neat-looking like they are now. Ohman, it was terrible, ---

Q: It takes a lot less material to clothe a woman now than it did back then.

A: That's so.

Q: Oh, that reminds me, one of the things we talked about in the class was the corsets, now--

A: Yeah, a lot of people wore them. But I was thin, just like a beanpole. I didn't need one.

Q: Oh, you didn't need a corset!

A: No. I was so thin. There are a lot of things here, I'm going to have to make notes--

Q: Oh, some kind of co-op?

A: Yes, then we had --- for milk, and stuff like that. That time --- far away.

Q: And at that time, too, you were pretty self-sufficient on the farm as far as taking care of yourself.

A: No, we got--

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Q: What I'm getting at, I want to get into, like your fields. You didn't have no fertilizer like you do now, other than taking the manure out of the barn and spreading it.

A: No.

Q: You didn't have any fertilizers, you didn't have any weed killers. You got out there and pulled row after row, acre after acre of corn--

A: Yes, and you took buckets, you went out and you pulled off the tops of--what do you call it now, with balls on, like onions?

Q: Garlic.

A: Yeah, garlic. We picked them in a bucket, the top was used, for a penny a bucket. We'd fill the bucket full. We'd take a great big old post-hole digger and dig real deep holes, and throw that in there, and mix it up, --- Then when it was really rotten, --- would come up and bury it, or then Dad put it in a big basket, dry it, and burn it. That was the only way you could get rid of it. We used to go out and pick corn , --- when the corn didn't come up good, he gave us, like a nail sack ---

Q: An apron?

A: An apron-like thing. And then we'd put corn in there and we'd go and seed it. Acres and acres of corn, we'd fill it in, you know, wherever there was room, we'd plant it.

Q: You chopped, you hoed.

A: Our recreation consisted mostly of, like on Sunday afternoon sometimes we'd make ice cream, and Pop would plant a couple stalks of watermelon somewhere and we'd have watermelon, once in a while. That was great fun. He made his own beer, and we'd help him with that; we didn't have no icebox ---

Q: So, you didn't play tennis or go boating then?

A: No. We had a long rope, sometimes we had a line that he had, that he used on the horses, you know, a hook-line. We'd put our milk and stuff down into the well, let it hang down there and just barely hit the cold water. Then we'd pull it up, and that was our icebox. We kept butter and stuff down there.

Q: Oh, in the summertime, anyway.

A: And that's the only icebox we had. We weren't the only ones; our neighbors had the same.

Q: What about the women's movement? You know, you said that at Fendrich's there was no union. Was there any union talk, or did you hear of any one being fired for trying to put a union in?

A: Oh no, the one thing they fired you for was if you couldn't keep up. That was like a line, you had to do so much in a day, no matter how bad the tobacco was. You had to work with that, and boy, some women would faint. And they'd have to take them out in the washroom, and they'd throw up and they'd be so sick. And they'd have to just drag themselves back in again to work. Cause if you didn't keep up --- You had so much to try to do.

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Q: Where else could you have worked at that time?

A: There wasn't no other place.

Q: Fendrich's was the only place in town? Wasn't there other plants, and ---?

A: I never knew of any other places. And boy, you were lucky if you got on there. And worked at that house there down on South East Second --- it's a home now.

Q: What about pottery, surely there was a pottery around.

A: Not at that time. Old Man Fendrich was kind of aloof, he had no heart in him.

Q: Little heart?

A: Yeah.

Q: You mean--what did you work for, what was the wages you worked for?

A: Now, I wish I knew.

Q: It wasn't very much?

A: No. As I remember, I don't know--

Q: You think that might have had an influence on why he hired you?

A: --you made ten, fifteen, seventeen dollars if you worked every day.

Q: Do you think he could have got men in there to work for that amount of money?

A: He did, there were guys in there.

Q: Oh, there was men in there, but mostly women?

A: No, women were all the ones on the machines. Men were mechanics and stuff like that.

Q: Oh! Were they making the same as you?

A: I don't know. I can't remember, it's been years ago.

Q: Who cares, eh?

A: People just weren't that greedy, I think, years ago, as they are now. You didn't care what your neighbor made.

Q: Well, you see, this is part of the women's rights movement, is that they wanted the same amount of money that men were getting. And their claim was that men were getting paid more for the same kind of work that women were doing.

A: Yeah, I think--! can remember reading about that--

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Q: Well, you see, it was going on at that time.

A: Well, I think, even now, that they're making the same, with ERA or whatever you call it.

Q: Well, you see, these are some of the things that were started way back in your time. They were started then. Of course, if you didn't get a newspaper, and at that time you didn't have electricity, so you didn't get to listen to the radio ---

A: ---

Q: Do you remember anything about Eleanor Roosevelt?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember good things, or bad things, or what?

A: I knew that she really helped her husband a lot when he was elected.

Q: Do you remember that from hearing it back then, or do you just remember it from the shows that have been on T.V.?

A: No, I remember I always liked history, and I was reading a lot. And that was just starting to get into the history books when I was in school. I wish I'd kept the books we had.

Q: Did you notice in your history books--

A: Not in mine.

Q: Now wait a minute, let me finish the question.

A: You see, she was --- Roosevelt was in in 19-- I don't have the years, but I ---

Q: Well, 1930's. She was in down through the 1930's.

A: So, it got into the history books back into the 1940's. The history books got changed, and I remember that we couldn't afford to keep them. I would have loved to have kept them, and read up on that, but ---

Q: Do you remember any women in the history books, and women's names? Did you learn about any women in history books?

A: No, not that I remember.

Q: Other than maybe a queen, did you learn anything about them?

A: Yeah, about the English queens and stuff like that.

Q: But no American women, that's what I was getting at. Like, let's say, Elizabeth Ann Seton--at that time she wasn't very famous. But Clara Barton?

A: Yeah, that's one, and Susan B. Anthony. I remember that story. But I would have to reread it again.

Q: Now, you see, she was part of the real early women's rights movement.

A: I picked up the books that the kids read in school--

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Q: Did you ever hear of women's suffrage? Was there anything in these--

A: Yeah, I remember reading about that. But I think it was in one of the kids' books, I don't think it was in my book. I really don't. But I remember real well, that I bought my own geography, it was a book about this thick, and I told Ma, I paid for that out of my money that I saved. And I wasn't going to sell it. And she connived me into letting the rest of the kids use it, and it finally went down the drain. And I wanted to keep that so bad, it was a yellow book. And I bet if I see one today, I could tell you which Section ---

Q: And you learned about other countries?

A: My dad--my grandfather came from there, he came over from Germany, and I was just when he would talk, I was just a little kid. He had a lot of influence.

Q: Grandpa was the immigrant, your grandfather.

A: Yes, my grandfather, and he had a lot of influence. He would read and read and read--that man, he just spent his days reading--

Q: Did he ever tell you why he came over?

A: No. You see, I was too young for that.

Q: He never told you why, though, why he came over?

A: I don't know, I was born in '15, he died in '19. So, I wasn't really too old. But I remember him, ---

Q: He didn't live here at home?

A: Yeah, he did.

Q: Oh, he lived here. He built that home back on the hill, that you lived in?

A: Oh yes.

Q: That was a log house.

A: Yeah, a two-room log house ---

Q: In other words, originally it was just a two-room log house, was all you had.

A: Yes, I'd like to back some time and find out just exactly what happened that he came over. That requires a lot of money and a lot of time --- I believe that's what I'd like to do. I really liked Grandpa. I can still go up to the cemetery and find his tombstone, you know--

Q: He's buried up here?

A: Yes. I can remember how he'd rock --- you never saw the house we used to --- I don't know where they, in them old small houses where they'd just make two, three rooms, and they had rockers all the time. Old rockers, with old straw seats in them.

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Q: A rocker took up a lot of room, too.

A: Yeah, it did. Boy, he would rock, and he'd play with me, and --- boy, I said, I can remember him. I would be standing on the side or somewhere. He'd take candles and he'd roll them, and I'd chase them and bring them back, just like a dog or a cat. We got the biggest thrill out of that. But yeah, he'd do that to you all the time, we didn't have balls or anything, we just took candles and rolled them, then we'd bring them back. Then he'd roll them again--good old Grandpa--But I was just trying to think the other day, how in the world we would do it --- You know, when Mom was laying a corpse, we had no electricity, and she laid out at home, in the hall here ---

Q: Not a good health trait, by the way. Did you have a cold?

A: I think people were healthier then than they are now.

Q: Well, I don't think the death rates would prove you out, because people were dying quite a bit younger back then than they are now. They're living a lot longer now. And although you hear of a lot of people with cancer, which we were talking about before, then, to younger people that you knew, still the averages show that people are living a whole lot longer. And your Uncle George beat the averages by quite a bit, Uncle George Kruzas. And so, did your father and evidently your grandfather.

A: ---

Q: Yeah, that's what he keeps telling me. It doesn't matter to me. He can stay around as long as, he wants to.

A: ---

Q: Do you remember the day that, the day of Pearl Harbor?

A: Yes.

Q: OK, now that was probably before you met Dad, or you might have--

A: We had one of them old, old long radios, you know--

Q: OK, so you had electricity by this time. Because you said you got electricity in 1938.

A: But we didn't have it very long, I remember that. And we had one of them ... And I can still remember hearing that on Sunday morning.

Q: Well, if you had it before the ,war, then, did you hear things coming over the radio leading up to it, like you could tell that Hitler was taking over certain countries and so forth?

A: We couldn't get stations like that.

Q: [to third party who has entered the room] This is just between me and her. You can beat it for right now and I'll talk to you in a little bit. I've got this _ tape on and I'm interviewing her, not you.

A: I can't remember getting stations on our old radio like we do now. Now you can switch back and forth and get anything you want. I just remember years ago, I remember my dad used to--

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Q: No, I wasn't talking about that. But surely, if you had the radio--

A: I don't think we had--we wouldn't listen to news reports and stuff like that--

Q: OK.

A: Because I remember my dad would turn on and he'd listen to WLS, the old ball game, and I guess we just didn't care that much about it, about the news. At that time, there was--what do you call it--a paper called the Ladies--the Evansville Journal. And you bought it for about two dollars a year. And when we finally got on our feet, we were able to get that paper. That was a great boon, for us.

Q: Well, good, OK, that was after your mom died, then you started keeping up a little bit with what was happening--

A: Yeah, but still, I mean, I would have to dig into my brain to remember now, in was interesting, it still didn't carry news then like if does now, but it did carry some things.

Q: But that day, that a war broke out, you remember that?

A: I can remember that, and I can remember the day--

Q: Did you hear it over the radio first, or did you hear it from other people?

A: I remember when I went to school, when Lindbergh's baby was kidnapped. We were too poor to have a paper at that time we didn't have a paper.

Q: But the word got passed, somebody had a paper, evidently.

A: Yeah, school kids, some of the other school kids that had wealthier parents got it, --- we didn't have any of that. We didn't have a radio then.

Q: [to third party] You're not supposed to be in here. Yes, it's a women's history course, not a men's history course.