

Interview with Mary Schroeder

Interviewer: Frances King

n.d.

A: They had all [inaudible] made out of [oysters].

Q: How'd they get here?

A: Shipped by express.

Q: But how did they keep them cold? Just with ice.

A: Ice.

Q: Great big block of ice?

A: No, they iced that, they were chucking ice.

Q: Yes, but in that day, they didn't have refrigerators, they had block, big blocks of ice.

A: And you know where our first ice come from?

Q: No.

A: Boxing company up north. [Inaudible] Lake company.

Q: Really?

A: The first wagon I remember said "boxing company" on it.

Q: And they hauled it in, right from the river or the lake or what?

A: They shipped it down by train.

Q: Oh, [door slams]. [Tape goes down to an inaudible volume at this point]

A: And the milk, the milk was not pasteurized. The milk man came every day and ringed a little bell and he had like a people decorate now, that kind of a [pen] and he dug deep down in there and got a pint of milk of day.

Q: Where did he come from? From the country?

A: From the country.

Q: So, he had his own route?

A: And we did not have pasteurized milk. But anyway, my children were raised on bottles and my milk man lived on [inaudible] and he come, he would take, when we had these children, babies, he come three times a day with the milk.

Q: What devotion!

A: He was on Riverside there, his name was Walter Meyer. Well, anyway, Walter Meyer would take the freshest cow he had for so many months and he would walk down there with all those boxes of milk and he, when the [inaudible] he come three times. Now, you talk about service.

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Q: Now, you can't even get your milk delivered anymore.

A: But anyway, they were [Franklin's Ice] when the [inaudible] come along it wasn't fit to drink and [inaudible] we had pasteurized milk. So, I said Mr. Walmar, "well, I'll never go in [inaudible]," surely, they had a lawsuit. He sued them. So, anyway, [laughter] that was the craziest thing. He said to me "will you bring your two down and down to the next [inaudible]. Brown's gonna have this trial and I'm gonna prove to them that there were healthy babies." Well, we took [inaudible] when they were about six or seven and they just run up and down and then finally the judge says, "They're healthy children, now quiet down and go on home."

Q: How did the suit come out though?

A: What?

Q: What did the judge do about the suit?

A: He didn't do a thing. He threw it out of court.

Q: Threw it out of court! [laughter]

A: Threw it out of court cause he proved that there were healthy children, that was his point, that they would not be healthy. Well, anyway, the thing that has made to me, the biggest progress, one it the [PUDOS], the protection of frozen food companies. The food that is put out in grocery stores for display [inaudible], it wasn't like Smucker's with all that [inaudible] [interruption]

Q: You've seen great changes.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: You've seen [interrupted]

A: Every [inaudible] every strawberry tastes like [inaudible] and strawberry taste like blackberry. And come to find out that was made with [Peptin] to make a gel and I tried it and that's it, it never sold food. But people scooped it out with a dipper or spoon, I don't know, but the [PUDOS] is one thing and the other to me is that because [Schnucks] now, when I was, [inaudible] so did smallpox and the children grew up and my boy had typhoid fever, I mean my daughter had typhoid and my son had diphtheria. And that was when [antitoxin] first came in and everybody said "oh, it won't save you if you've any food poisoning in your life" anyway, that was the only thing that could save his life, so I run the check and I measured it from the [inaudible] the medicine to help people. Because you either lived on Madison, I mean Jefferson Avenue on that three hundred block of Jefferson. We had to move there because we were sick. We had, they had attempted something called [flux], running [flux]. And my father liked to dine a couple of times when he got his first job, so one day our doctor, in those days [interrupted]

Q: What did they do for medicine?

A: A lot of [laudanum], pasteurized [laudanum], fresh milk, and in all the books I've read they used than awful lot of [laudanum]. [There is a lot of distortion and low volume levels at this point.]

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Q: Well, they were using it for medicine.

A: Well, we nearly died there, we nearly died. My sister had scarlet fever and she took a year and she couldn't even walk, even though she was two years old. She was two years old, she had to learn to walk and everything. And anyway, we talked about it, her ears bursted and run and we realized she had something the matter with her chest and she had a bad chest and there was an abscess there we didn't know. And you know, years and years afterwards, now that's the first X-ray I ever saw, they called up from Cincinnati, that's where my sister lived. And they called up said she was very, very ill. [The next few sentences are nearly inaudible] We went to Cincinnati to her. They took us to this room that was all black inside, about this size and walls were black, the windows were black and [inaudible] she wouldn't go in there without me. And she said, "Where are you, I want to hold your hand." And I said, "No, you can't do that." But I stayed in there. So, anyway, we [inaudible] twice. And they said, "You have got scar tissue on your lungs." And I was glad I was alone when [inaudible]. They said, "Have you ever had anything?" At first, she said, "What?" And I said, "she did too." And I said, "She had scarlet fever when she was two years old." And, you know, that led to [inaudible] and she died of a kidney trouble. That kidney pulled it out of its tract, and I know Mr. Herb [Gibbons], his wife had scarlet fever and after she was married with children something come up and took her right out. Because, my daughter was married eleven years before she had any children. She was thirty-one years old or thirty-two and she taught school all that time. And so, anyway, I think what prompted her to want a family was she didn't [inaudible] when she got her schooling there in Cincinnati, that they never had any children. What a miserable life my sister had after that scarlet fever. She was a miserable person because she only thought of herself, she didn't want any children and so anyway, my daughter saw what a life they lived and she said to me one year, she said, "Mom, I don't want to live a life like Aunt Jenny." So, she, and then another thing, my son's wife, [inaudible] before she ever had her first child, so that give her an option more than ever. Of course, Corey wasn't ours by a long shot [inaudible] there near seventy when they went through the Depression, they didn't have anybody after that. But, the first question her doctor asked her when she went down there, she went down to the general hospital, she went to the doctor and the first question he asked her was what disease she had as a child, my daughter. He said, "Have you ever had scarlet fever?" She says, "No" and he says, "I'd rather take my chances with a woman at thirty years old, your age, that never had it, but [inaudible] than one and twenty that had because it affects the kidneys." And now, you don't hear about scarlet fever.

Q: Well, I saw the other day where they're going to quit giving inoculation for diphtheria, is that what you needed to have before you entered school?

A: I was vaccinated, it was smallpox and it died off like flies. My father lived on down there on Fifth Street and he took care of his doctor's horse when he come in on a case. And Frank had to stand out, poor thing, and so he said to him, he said, he used to call him Hank, he said, "Hank let me tell you something," he said, "hand me that blanket of mine that [inaudible] I been on a small pox mission," he said, "I'm gonna vaccinate that little baby of yours, about two years old." And there was that [inaudible] because I had what they call [Beraloyd]. I had one or two places broken on my ankle and stuff like that. And father and mother, all three of us, [inaudible] I bring you the germ and they had smallpox, TB, scarlet fever, all of those and they sometimes on this street, where there are a bunch of schools, would

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be a whole block of their little tents were they would wash them. The soldiers or officers stood there
[interrupted]

Q: To make sure they stayed in quarantine?

A: Stay in quarantine, yes.

Q: When was that, Mrs. Schroeder? About when were you, what age were you?

A: When I went to school?

Q: No, when this happened?

A: Well, I'll tell ya, in about the 1880s [interrupted]

Q: That's when the epidemic came?

A: No, at the about the age of eight years old, it was 1890, well, it may be earlier [inaudible]. When they died, they turned around and just buried them because I think water had something to do with it, that was a crazy way we had with water, we had cistern out in the back and when water leaked, we had a good hard rain to wash the shingles off. We used to run out there and turn the spout around so it would go into the cistern and fill up [inaudible] city water might cost you maybe a dollar. But you had to be careful that you didn't wait too late when we got hot weather in warm weather your cistern got [inaudible]. Then we couldn't use that at all. But I don't know, I must have been twenty-one or two when we first [inaudible] the house that [inaudible]. That was sixty some odd years ago or seventy-two years ago, cause that's when our daughter was born. And we lived on the corner, there was no walks, [inaudible] the only place where we could have a horse [inaudible] and we had to have a horse and a barn. So, we moved to that corner because it had one and across the street, oh, when it rained that lot from clear to...do you know that area very well?

Q: Uh, huh.

A: Well, anyway, from Jackson to Evans, that was called [Coals] a rail fence and things to bring your cows there at pasture. And then walk the cow downtown and milk it and bring it back the next day and put it back in the pasture [laughter]. Yeah, isn't that something? This old lady that lived here, she [interruption, she speaks to someone else] That's alright...but anyway, life was hard.

Q: Listen, you started telling me about how you met Mr. Schroeder and we got off...

A: Well, my sister come along she says, "What happened to your [inaudible]? She said, "Well, where do you go tonight?" and she was married at this time? And I said, "Well, I don't go anywhere," I said, I go down to [inaudible], [inaudible] Methodist. I was about fifteen, sixteen and I said, "I can't go anywhere with these crutches." And she said, "Well, crutches or no crutches, you'll go with me to Sunday school." Well, I did and anyway I finally got over that to a degree, [inaudible] I was crippled, I was crippled when I met Mr. Schroeder. Now anyways, the Schroeder's had two boys and three girls, and they all went to Sunday school and church too. And I never did know why the girls, I know why now, they were after them boys and I go down there they'd by [inaudible for the next few seconds]. So anyway, once I, I did that for quite a while, do down there with my sister and Bertha. And so, one

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Sunday I said, "Why don't you go to Sunday school with us?" and he said, "Oh, I'm too old for Sunday school." He said, "But I'll tell you what I will do, I'll go with the young people and stay for church." I went to that school and a friend of mine, people had buildings out in the country, where [Dade] Park is now, where the racetrack is now. And she come down and say, "Hey, Papa is gonna let me have one of the horses this afternoon," [inaudible] and she said, "Do you want to go with [inaudible] up to the river?" And we couldn't get through none of those streets, we had to go through [Waterworks] and go around all the way to [inaudible]. And when I got there, they was gonna have a big chicken dumpling supper and Aunt Mary stayed for supper and forgot all about Roy Schroeder. I forgot all about him and I [inaudible] "oh, mama," she was so angry with me. She said, "You know, if I would have known the kind of person Schroeder was then, I would have never tried that on him, I would have never tried that." You know, to forget him. So, she said, "March straight down there and apologize."

Q: Now what did you said? What did you, was he supposed to pick you up?

A: He was gonna take me to church.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Yeah, and I, I went off to eat something and I forgot he was there. And my mother, oh she said, "He had a new pair of shoes and a new tie and everything." And I said, "Well, I'm very, very sorry," I said, "I'll never do this again." He says, "Damn it, if I knew you were that type of person, I would have never tried that on you." But I never forgot it and we started going to church together.

Q: When he'd forgive you?

A: What?

Q: Was he upset?

A: No, not very [inaudible].

Q: Now, tell me about your graduation and [interruption in tape].

A: It was at the amphitheater on a cold winter night, the eighteenth of January nineteen one. And I [inaudible] and Cathy was [inaudible] to the stage of the theater. And we all sat in chairs and I had on a white dress and long underwear and a black petticoat and a black and white petticoat. And of course, coveralls [laughter] and I wore black shoes. And we never heard of something that [inaudible] not at all. And as cold as it was, I had a very fancy fan given to me with a [ponte] and with ivory sticks and I carried that on a black ribbon. I didn't fan it, but I carried it. And I had, and then they had, oh the badminton club give 'em something. And the children, I mean, the graduates had part of the program, someone could play the piano. In those days, people weren't too physical [inaudible] and anyway, we and then I think someone gave the address, I don't know.

Q: How long did it take you to get dressed with all those clothes and button shoes?

A: Oh, it took quite a while. I wore my hair, I had long hair of course; I never had it cut. And with a [bull whip] or a high, when I was married, I wore my hair up high and I had this dress and [ponte] butterfly in my hair. And the only thing, I often wondered why they didn't, they either didn't want to wear the dress

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with that long braid, as fancy as it was, why they didn't take this [inaudible] and use it on the dress. But they didn't, oh no, un uh. The three girls all had to have satin. And one had satin with lace like an old, like my daughter bought in Europe, [inaudible] with the lace and all and overlay satin. And another one married in the summer down in Duke, at Duke University and she would wear the same stuff she wore [inaudible].

Q: Well, they would want their own.

A: Yes, they did. And then this last one wore plain satin and wore, didn't even wear the veil at the [inaudible]. She had a lace veil that came from, I don't know where...

Q: Where were you married, when were you married? When and where?

A: Ninth of March 1904.

Q: 1904, and were you married out here in your church or?

A: No, nobody, those were two things that never happened was [inaudible] and it was not only me, but all. We didn't have an engagement, we didn't have a wedding ring, nobody was married in veil. And you'd be surprised, nobody was married in church. I never went to a wedding in a church, only later on I went to a wedding in a church, downtown at a big church [inaudible].

Q: Where did they happen?

A: At home.

Q: At home. Well, that's proper.

A: And we had palms, the greenhouse would bring that and [inaudible] and you did the best you could. I was married at home and had a very nice wedding. And the girl that played my wedding march, I run across her at one of the nursing homes one time and she was so happy to see me. And, but anyway, they had showers though when I married, thank goodness, had that [laughter]. And the man that I worked for Mr. Graves, now talking about, my daughter now is crying to me, "why did you do this and why did you do that and where did this go?" Now, she thought that my [inaudible] come from [Berman's]. Well, they didn't come from [Berman's]; they come from this [inaudible]. So anyway, things like that she wonder why we had a corner where she was born and we moved to Jefferson Avenue where my church is, on Jefferson. Well, we did it, I'll tell you why we did that, we moved because the water was so bad, Henry went out one day to get to his horse and he died. The platform was over a ditch and it started to float, and the horse was standing in water and he said, "Well, girl, we gotta get out of here." And I did have sense enough to not drink any water out of the cistern because the water deposits formed and it all drained, I think into that cistern, cause that's a big rain [inaudible]. So, I did not drink that water. Of course, the street across from us was abandoned and we sat out there by ourselves almost and we had a [dry well]. And I knew who they were, they already seen [inaudible] get all their drinking water you wanted, and I carried all my water across the street. And I did not, where there were so many funny things, odd things happened, things that I never heard of would show up. In the first place, Mr. Schroeder's mother said, "You'll never get up past your second year." Well, I just

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made up my mind and I had the confidence, so I used good, common sense and my doctor, the one I said vaccinated me, we had him when we had our married [inaudible].

Q: Who was he?

A: Dr. Johnmore, [inaudible] that's interesting, the first hospital here.

Q: Oh, where was it?

A: Well, that's all about the graduation, it was out then. It was cold. What I had on, I had a very beautiful dress, but my mother did not make my white dress. She made my [inaudible].

Q: Women never wore pants back then, did they? I would have been a scandal to the neighborhood, wouldn't I?

A: But do you know though, that old women [inaudible] all [inaudible] hair.

[Tape has some distortion at this point]

Q: Where was the Red-Light District, was it on First Street?

A: It was on High [Goodbalt] down there by [inaudible], I think down in there [interrupted]

Q: When I was a little kid, that was still the Red-Light District, its midtown now, it's beautiful out there, but then you wouldn't know it.

A: Well, there was ballroom [inaudible] down in there, there was a, at the end of First Street there I went to one of them balls down there and that was all the wholesale district and you wasn't scared to go anywhere at night cause it was technically a lot better...

Q: Where was the first hospital, out at the old marine hospital?

A: No, no it wasn't there. It was were Mead-Johnson's is now. And I remember father had a sister who was ill and was there. And I was about eight or nine and my sister was four years younger than I remember my mother was [inaudible] it was where Mead-Johnson's is now. And we called it [Cotton Bell] block. We got off of the street car, now that was a trolley for that time [inaudible] and it was enclosed in a big yard with a fence and we had to, all I remember we had to climb over that side and anyway, because the pigs and the cows and everything run loose, [inaudible]. And anyway, I remember goin' across that yard to this square building and she was in a room upstairs and all that and I guess [inaudible] and I remember just smelling whatever it was all over the place and I remember goin' to that front balcony out in front of her door and lookin' at the river. And that's about all I remember. Then the marine out wasn't out there or something, I been out there, I mean, but that was much later.

Q: It was up higher; it was up the hill.

A: Well, but anyway, we called it [Cotton Bell Bluff] and whenever [interrupted]

Q: Well, who ran it? Who ran it, can you remember?

A: I don't know, that [Cotton Bell].

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Q: But I mean the hospital, who ran the hospital?

A: Oh, St. Mary's.

Q: Oh, the sisters had already come and started there?

A: And they did good work there.

Q: Well, I'll be, that's interesting.

A: And then the other hospital was [Wellborn Best] now it is, that we called [inaudible] hospital. And that was on [Fourth] where it is now and just the one structure and [inaudible] and the doctor who attended grandpa's church was there. There were two very bright surgeons there. One of who [inaudible] was just a good family doctor. But his brother was a surgeon. Now, my doctor was a general doctor and the other at [AM] was a surgeon. And he'd do [inaudible] this and that. And I don't remember, out there in the country there [inaudible] was an explosive at a sawmill and I expect people [inaudible] got hurt. And they didn't know who to get down there and there wasn't a surgeon out there. There wasn't nearly [inaudible] no place with a surgeon, they were very rare. And they took the engine of a train at [Southern] and somebody meet him with a horse, and he went as far as he could on a train at the engine company and I don't know what that cost him, but anyway, they had to come a long way.

Q: What did you think when you saw people on the moon?

A: I didn't care for that.

Q: That didn't thrill you? Didn't impress you?

A: No, it didn't. I thought, what would I do there?

Q: Well, I don't want to go there, but [interruption]

A: Well, it was interesting.

Q: I can't look at the moon anymore without thinking that somebody's been there.

A: That's right, and I did enjoy it, the technique of the [touchdown] you know, but I think one time I enjoyed it the most was when they [touchdown] and a young man, a doctor [inaudible].

Q: Um, do you think the world has changed an awful lot? And that people have changed?

A: Yes.

Q: You do.

A: I do, and I, family life has changed. And family life has changed and their love for children; something has happened. The people want to give their children away and sell them and all that sort of thing. Something has happened to adults. What do you think has happened?

Q: I don't know.

A: And another thing too, now it's alright to eat out, but these people, there's two things that are detrimental to a child's health, television is one thing, it keeps a child from reading cause I saw that

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happen there [inaudible] for over sixty years at that [inaudible for several seconds, the tape volume lowers considerably]. And anyway, I don't think people eat in a dining room like we used to, set at the table every night together, now that was a meal we enjoyed. But children in high school, they probably carry their lunch and trade it and don't eat together [interruption]

Q: Eating together used to be a communion in itself; it had a meaning, you know? Now, everybody runs [interruption]

A: Everybody runs and regardless of what you have [inaudible] and they tell you they'll come after church for dinner and she had mash potatoes and chicken and gray and all that sort of thing [inaudible due to lower volume]

Q: You're right.

A: But no, I think children would read [inaudible] except my little great granddaughter.

Q: That's because of you?

A: Yes, and they said all the time she was just like me, but I didn't believe anybody [inaudible]. [laughter] She come last year, her birthday is in March and she, they brought her part way and she come, and she was named Stephanie and her father's name was David, Stephanie [inaudible] named after her grandma [inaudible]. So anyway, she come back here on her birthday and she come down the hall and [inaudible] and she says, "Hello, grandmother" and I looked up and there she was, and she was eight then, she'd be nine then this March, next month. And she was dressed in one of these [Centennial] outfits her mother made her with the long skirt, and I laughed, and she said [inaudible] and I said, "Oh, Stephanie, you look so sweet," and she said, "mother made this for my birthday." So, then when she come for my birthday, in June, she stayed a week. And I saw a lot of her and then her mother had added one more thing to it, an apron. But the thing that [inaudible] not the dress exactly, but the petticoat. And she, she said, "Did you ever hear of a petticoat, grandma?" I said, "Did I ever hear of them? I always two of them and my mother and great grandmother wore three." But you know, you've got to think about a child, they don't know anything about a petticoat, they call everything a slip.

Q: You know, I still call a slip a petticoat every once and a while, just for fun.

A: I see no reason to change, because with her, she loves to read and anyway, she come in last time she was here, and she come in and she come quite a bit that summer [interruption]

Q: You get to see a bit of your grandchildren [interruption]

[Inaudible for several seconds]

Q: But the granddaughter who lives in Connecticut is coming this summer?

A: Yes, she's out of school. Her father and mother flew her this Christmas, it was her Christmas present, to San Francisco to, oh what would you call it? A conference, a convention I guess you would call it and she went out there with prospects to get a job. She was a whole year without a job. But she got a hundred dollars a week on unemployment and then she went with her husband, the one right here in this picture. And the two the trip [inaudible], she, Brittany's down in Seattle and they always loved to

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[inaudible] their father never would let them have a tent. Anyway my two boys were scouts [inaudible] at the railroad track there [inaudible] but the boys loved to go there and they come one summer and stepped outside, each of them in pup tents and they made so much ruckus that anyway, he was mad [inaudible], but anyway the last thing they said, "promise me one thing, please [inaudible] we can't do nothing but talk to our father, we want a tent. We want a tent for Christmas, grandma." I said, "Oh, I'm not gonna get mixed up in no family trouble." In the first place, I said, "Your father doesn't know how to put a tent up and he wouldn't allow it either." But anyway, they always wanted to do that very thing and show, they never did get a pup tent, but anyway, for their wedding presents when they drove from Cincinnati to Seattle, that was their first teaching job. They camped out on the way and she said [interruption]

Q: Which one is this now?

A: That's the one in the picture.

Q: Oh, the one in Connecticut.

A: Now, the other two, one lives in Richmond, Virginia that's the oldest one. And then come Lucy and she lives down in Paducah and she married and got two children. Now, each of those has a boy and a girl and Stephen, the second boy, my son, he's younger than all of them and anyway, but his brother had [inaudible] they had two boys, one will be fourteen next summer and his father [inaudible] an engineer for in the Air Force [inaudible] he didn't fly a plane at that time . They lived in Turkey twice [interruption in tape]