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Interview with Stella Mudd Allen Regarding her life in Daviess County, Kentucky (FA 154)

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TAPE1, SIDE1

KAREN OWEN: There we go. Okay, Mrs. Allen, would you state for me your full name?

STELLA ALLEN: Stella Mudd Allen.

KO: Is Mudd your maiden name?

SA: Mudd.

KO: Is that your maiden name?

SA: No, my maiden name, yes, that's my maiden name. M U D D.

KO: And how old are you?

SA: I'm 98. I was 98 last November.

KO: So you're coming up on the 100 then?

SA: Mm hm.

KO: That's exciting. And what community did you grow up in?

SA: In the community of Owensboro. Daviess County.

KO: So what is the earliest thing that you remember?

SA: The first thing I remember is a toll gate.

KO: A toll gate?

SA: We lived in the county, and to get into the city, we had to come through the toll gate. Pay a toll.

KO: Do you remember what road that was? Do you remember what road that was?

SA: It was a main street road.

KO: Main street road.

SA: It was called Main Street then.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Later Second Street.

KO: Oh. Which part of the county did you live in?

SA: Just below Owensboro. About two miles out of Owensboro, just beyond the Hare? farm.

KO: Mm hm. I guess that's in the city now, isn't it?

SA: Yes, it is.

KO: Mm hm. So um, how much toll did you have to pay?

SA: Uh, five cents for a horse and buggy. Ten cents for two horses and a vehicle, either a wagon or a carriage.

KO: Mm. So, how old were you at this time?

SA: I was six years old.

KO: Have any idea why that sticks in your mind?

SA: Huh?

KO: Why does this stick in your mind, do you think?

SA: Why sticks in my mind?

KO: Why did you remember it?

SA: Well, my father would give us children a nickel to pay the toll. He give it to me one time, then my brother the next time, and my brother, other brother the next time.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: That's what sticks in my mind. That I had to pay the toll to get into the city. And this toll gate was operated by Johnny Devins who lived nearby.

KO: So uh, was five cents a lot of money back then? Was that a lot of money back then? Was that a lot of money at that time?

SA: Was that what?

KO: Was that a lot of money back then?

SA: Oh, yes. A nickel was alot money.

KO: What could you buy with a nickel?

SA: Well, pay the toll.

KO: Mm hm. What else could you have bought with a nickel back then?

SA: Candy. Cookies. I don't know what else.

KO: Could you buy a lot of candy with a nickel?

SA: Oh yes. At least ten or twelve sticks.

KO: My goodness. So when you were a child, what did you all do for fun?

SA: For fun?

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Well, we had a dog, and we would race with the dog, and we'd play games around the fireplace in the winter time, like uh, Fist Stalk? and games like that.

KO: I'm not familiar with that game. How do you play it?

SA: It's like a fist ball? The idea's that, my brother would put his fist here and I'd put mine on his and I'd put my thumb up my other brother put his finger there.

KO: Mm.

SA: And then he'd say, "Do I, shall I, do I take it off or shall I knock it off?" We'd tell him which ever he wanted and then, and then whoever was the last would have to play that game and start the game the next time.

KO: Mm.

SA: And we played "Willie Matrinity? was a good waterman, catches hens, puts them in pens, some lay eggs, some lay none" and, and then another one uh, we played was, I don't know where. Can't remember another one.

KO: Mm hm. How did

SA: Go ahead.

KO: That's alright.

SA: That's what we did. We played

KO: Mm hm.

SA: We played plays around the house, and in the summer time we'd race each other around the house, and catch each other, and whoever was {Someone speaks in the background} the, the uncaught would get to chase the ones the next time. So…

KO: You were telling me about

SA: We had no neighbors.

KO: Oh, you didn't.

SA: We only had ourselves to make our own games and our own fun, uh, play time.

KO: Did you get lonely?

SA: No, you never seemed to get lonely. Always had lots of fun with each other.

KO: There were three children in your family?

SA: At that time there were four. The one was too young to take part in the plays.

KO: Mm hm. So what were your chores around the house? What kind of work did you do?

SA: Well, we had to help, and uh, I, first thing I remember was piecing carpet rugs to make carpets for the floors.

KO: Oh.

SA: We lived, those carpets were woven, but in a loom, with the thread, you know, and it, this string of carpets that we, that we sewed, and I remember so well the thimble I was, I was taught to use a thimble at that age. I was four years old when I started it,

KO: My goodness.

SA: And now that thimble, I have it, and it just fits my little finger. {Chuckles}

KO: Oh.

SA: And then uh, another thing that I remember so well is we had uh, my brother and I had to take turns churning, making the butter, and uh, I could barely reach up over the top of the churn and reach the dash to make the, make the operation to…

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Make the butter.

KO: Did that

SA: He was older. He was two years older and he could stand up and do it very nicely, and I tried to do it as well as he could.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And we always competed with each other.

KO: {Chuckles} Didn't that make you tired?

SA: No, never thought about being tired. We just thought that this was something we had to do, and we were taught to learn and to like, to like to do it.

KO: Mm hm. What did your mother do during the day? What kept her busy?

SA: {Chuckles} She did everything. She sewed. She cooked. She cleaned, and they had no conveniences whatever at that time. Everything was done by hand the hard way, but she never sat down to rest. She was always busy.

KO: Did you?

SA: Looking after the children, keeping them clean. She had to wash our faces and hands about fifty times a day, I imagine.

KO: {Chuckles} Did people realize back then how hard it was?

SA: No. No, they never mentioned. Never thought about it. Never talked about it.

KO: Mm.

SA: Being hard.

KO: Mm hm. What did your father do?

SA: He was a farmer. He worked in the fields.

KO: Did you ever work in the fields with him?

SA: After, yes, after I grew up, I did.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: I worked in the tobacco patch. I helped 'em set the tobacco, and then we uh, as the, as the tobacco grew, it produced weeds, the ground did, you know. We had to take, to keep the weeds out of it, and had to keep the worms off the tobacco.

KO: Was that hard work?

SA: It was hard work but we never thought about it.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: As hard. We were always glad when meal time came, was always hungry.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And we always had a good meal.

KO: What did you have?

SA: We had, in the summer we had corn, tomatoes, beans, cabbage and beets, onions.

KO: Mm.

SA: Strawberries was desserts, in the season. Any other time we had raspberries, and blackberries, and all kinds of fruit. We had an orchard that produced apples, and pears, and peaches, plums, and every known, and cherries. Every known fruit at that time, we had.

KO: What about meat? Did you eat very much meat?

SA: Yes, we had turkeys for meat. We had chicken for meat. We had pork, and in the fall we always had beef.

KO: Uh huh.

SA: My father would kill a calf and we'd have meat, uh beef. We had no refrigeration so we just take what we could use and gave the rest away to our neighbors.

KO: Hm. So how did you get along with your neighbors back then?

SA: At that time, we had neighbors. We had moved to a, another county, to Henderson County, and we had neighbors there. And we got along beautifully with 'em.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: The children, of their, of neighbors and our children were very friendly and my father and mother were very friendly with the older folks.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: They were very generous with 'em. What ever they had they didn't need, they'd give to some neighbor that needed it.

KO: What about clothes? What kind of clothes did you wear?

SA: I remember this too well, that I always had beautiful gingham dresses for school, to wear and aprons with uh, trimmings of embroidery or braid.

KO: Hm. Did you wear shoes?

SA: Uh huh.

KO: Hm. Did you wear shoes to school?

SA: A suit?

KO: Shoes.

SA: Shoes?

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Oh, yes. We always had plenty of shoes.

KO: Mm hm. What did your parents do for fun when you were little?

SA: Well, they just had each other, and they had their work, and they made fun of that. They just made the best of what they had.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Once in a while, we would have a dance in the neighborhood, and my parents would always take us children, and they would dance. We would watch.

KO: Mm hm. Was that fun?

SA: It was much, lot of fun. We were always glad when it happened.

KO: Was there any certain time of year they usually had the dances? Was there any certain time of year that they had the dances?

SA: Oh, yes. It was always in the summer time.

KO: Why was that?

SA: Well, for one thing the roads were almost impassable in the winter, and uh, and in the summer time, we had more leisure time.

KO: What did people worry about back then?

SA: I don't know that we ever worried. I don't remember having, hearing my mother and father worry about anything.

KO: Mm.

SA: It probably happened, but I, but they didn't, they didn't show it to us children.

KO: How did people treat children back then?

SA: Well the main thing was, my mother would always say "Pretty is as pretty does." Somebody said, "So-and-so is pretty." Yeah, pretty is as pretty does. If does, if they do nicely, they're always pretty.

KO: {Chuckles}

SA: And then uh, that's 'bout all, they, we were always well treated.

KO: Mm hm. Did your parents spank you?

SA: Oh, we did.

KO: How did they spank you?

SA: Oh, they always had a little switch.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: They'd use a little switch and they'd say, and the switch would stand up on the mantle, behind the clock. When you'd see her get that switch down, you knew somebody had done, had been, had been doing wrong.

KO: Did that scare you?

SA: Yes. It did. We always felt sorry for the one that got it. Sometimes it'd be me. Sometimes it'd be somebody else.

KO: Did you get into trouble a lot when you were a kid?

SA: No. Not a whole lot. Just once in a while.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: It had to be very serious before uh, something like telling a story or maybe pinching somebody or sticking them with a pin or something.

KO: Mm hm. Did you have any dolls when you were a child?

SA: Oh, yes. My, one of my first memories, I had a beautiful bisque doll. Bisque. Do you know what bisque is?

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Well, I had a beautiful bisque doll. 'Course it's breakable, and my little two year old brother did a lot of crawling, so he crawled to the door, threw my doll out on the rocks and broke it.

KO: Oh.

SA: And that just broke my heart.

KO: I bet.

SA: And my mother said, "Well, never mind. We'll get another doll. Santy Claus will think about it." Says, "He'll bring you another doll at Christmas time." And I thought Christmas would never come.

KO: {Chuckles} How long away was Christmas? Was it close to Christmas then?

SA: Oh no, that was in the spring.

KO: Oh, so you had to wait?

SA: I had to wait all that time. It seemed like several eternities before Christmas Day came, but I did get the doll.

KO: How old were you at that time?

SA: I was four years old.

KO: Mm. So what did your doll look like?

SA: Well, it just had blond hair, blue eyes and to me it was a beautiful thing. And so dressed up. I thought it's just so pretty and I called her Mary Ann.

KO: Mm. What kind of toys did the boys have? What kinds of toys did your brothers have?

SA: Well, my older brother wore pants and uh, and uh, black, a shirt they call it.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: My younger brother wore dresses and an apron.

KO: When did the little boys switch from the dress to pants?

SA: When they were about four years old.

KO: Mm hm. What did the boys play with?

SA: Well, my older brother was interested in machinery. He was always building threshing machines or binders, or something that was used on the farm, you know.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And he'd take corn cobs and, and, and reeds, the reeds, you know, that, that uh, grew along this stream on the back of the place, and he'd take those reeds and make uh, rods to go from one thing to another, you know.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And then he'd play marbles, and that's about all

KO: Mm hm.

SA: That's about all the games I know that they played. Oh, they played ball. Once in awhile they'd catch, they'd play catch.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Or Anty-Over over some building on the place.

KO: Mm hm. What did people consider evil back then?

SA: I don't know, that I never, we never thought of anything like that when we were little.

KO: Did your parents tell you not cuss, or not to dance, or not to drink? What kind of stuff did they tell you not to do?

SA: Well, they told us, they brought up all those things and told us that was wrong. That uh, God didn't like us for doing things like that. We never thought of doing it.

KO: Did you go to church?

SA: Yes. We went to church every Sunday. And that's about the only time we'd go, we'd go, because uh, uh, my father as a farmer was very busy on the farm all, all through the week.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: We'd go every Sunday. We'd go to Catechism in the afternoon on Sundays.

KO: Where did you go to church?

SA: At St. Stephen's. Old St. Stephen's. It was, uh, St. Stephens's was then on the, on Main Street and Cedar.

KO: Mm hm. Did you like going to church?

SA: Oh yes. We just gloried in the fact that Sunday was the day to go to church. Got to dressed up and all cleaned up, and put on our best things to go.

KO: What was Catechism like?

SA: Catechism was uh, teaching of God's word by the Sisters of Nazareth. Sisters of Charity, and they would come down to St. Stephen's. They belonged to St. Paul's Parish, you

see. They'd come down to St. Stephen's to teach the St. Stephen's children on Sunday afternoon.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And we reverenced them. We just thought they were the most uh, lovely people we ever knew.

KO: Mm. So what was school like when you were young?

SA: I went to the public school when I was young, and school was {Clears throat} from the first grade, well, there was no limit to the age, 'til they finished what they called the Eighth Grade, and it was all taught in one room.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: With one teacher.

KO: What school did you go to?

SA: It was called the Carraco School. It was three miles, we were, it was three miles from where we lived. We walked. On rainy days, my father took us in the carriage. On any other day, we walked. In the winter time, we didn't go. They got too bad, and the snow was so deep.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: We just didn't go in December and January. School was only five months then.

KO: Golly. Was it difficult to learn in a one room school?

SA: No, it was not difficult.

KO: What was it like?

SA: Well, it was, there was a lot competition. We competed with each other, and then we, we, we took delight in, in what we called getting ahead of the other fella.

KO: {Chuckles} What was your best subject?

SA: My best study was arithmetic.

KO: Was it unusual for a girl to be good in arithmetic?

SA: Yes, it was. My brother thought that I was all but a boy because I could tell him things that he didn't know.

KO: Mm hm. So uh, what about walking to school? Did you mind doing that?

SA: No. We never thought anything about it. Uh, except when it was raining, we didn't like it then, because the, the roads were just muddy and slippery, so my father would take us. But uh, we really, really would rather walk because we'd have a lot of fun walking, running and playing along the way.

KO: Mm hm. Did you ever, were you ever late for school?

SA: Late?

KO: Mm hm.

SA: No, never.

KO: What happened if you were?

SA: I don't know.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: I don't know. Nobody, uh, nobody was ever late, so I don't know.

KO: What about, did the kids behave themselves in school?

SA: Yes, everybody behaved. Our, the parents taught that. They got instruction before they left home. At least we did.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: We should do what the teacher told us, and we went there to study and to learn, not to play. Then they had hours for us to play time, so that's, we would play.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: But at school, we never thought of playing or cheating, like they do now.

KO: Mm hm. Did you take your lunch to school?

SA: Yes, we took our lunch.

KO: What'd you take?

SA: Whatever we had. Fruit, bread 'n sandwiches. Sometimes a boiled egg. But uh, maybe sausage or something like that.

KO: How did you keep it cold, while you were at school?

SA: They didn't. We didn't. We had a shelf that we put our baskets on. They, they stayed there until lunch time.

KO: What did the kids play at recess?

SA: Uh, "New York and Pennsylvania," and "Farmer's Daughter, " and

KO: How do you play "New York and Pennsylvania?"

SA: and, How to play "New York?" Well, you'd divide, the, the children would divide. One would be, there'd be two captains. One captain would be "New York" and one would be "Pennsylvania."

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And then they'd choose their, ones that they want, you know.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And then they'd have uh, they'd, they'd line up against each other, hold each other with a bond and, and uh, it's just hard to explain. We'd line each other up, hands gathered around the waist, and on, and the two captains would hold hands and then they'd pull against each other. Whoever won, whoever uh, let loose first was the loser. So it'd be either New York or Pennsylvania.

KO: {Chuckles} What was that other game you said you played?

SA: Hm?

KO: What was that other game you said you played?

SA: Uh, "Farmer's Daughter."

KO: How'd you play that?

SA: Well, "The Farmer's in the dell, the Farmer's in the dell, the Farmer takes a wife, the Farmer takes a wife, the Farmer takes, the Wife takes the Child, the Child takes the Dog and the Dog takes the Ball and then, uh, the Dog takes the Ball and, uh, the Ball, the Dog, the uh." I don't know how that ended now, but that's the way it started.

KO: Uh huh.

SA: And then we played "Handkerchief", where you'd make, form a ring around, you know, and then you drop the handkerchief behind somebody and if they didn't get it, they'd have to get inside and then they, they'd have to stand inside the ring until somebody dropped the handkerchief behind them, and if they saw it, and got it out, they'd have to get out of the ring,

but if they didn't see it, they'd have to stay there longer. And that was one of the games we liked.

KO: Mm hm. Did you ever get sick when you were little?

SA: Yes. I often ate something that didn't agree with me, then I'd throw up. I'd have to be taken home. That was mostly in school.

KO: Do you think that might have been food poisoning?

SA: Don't know.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Could have been.

KO: Did they ever call the doctor for you?

SA: No, they always had home remedies. Cleared things up for me.

KO: What did they find that worked?

SA: Castro oil. {Chuckles} Castrol oil and quinine.

KO: Oh my.

SA: Camphor for stomachache.

KO: Was anyone in your family ever seriously ill?

SA: Yes, my two sisters had scarlet uh, diphtheria and scarlet fever both.

KO: Oh my. Did they have it at the same time or different times?

SA: They had it at the same time. They had the scarlet fever at one year and the next year they had the diphtheria, and I escaped all those.

KO: You were lucky.

SA: Yes.

KO: What happened to them? Did they survive?

SA: Mm?

KO: Did your sisters survive?

SA: Oh, yes.

KO: What do you remember about their illness? How were they treated?

SA: Well, they were bathed quite often. I remember my mother sitting by the sides of their beds, and bathing them, bathing their heads, and their faces, you know, and foreheads.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: She kept them clean. She'd always have to change their clothes, their nightgowns two or three time a day.

KO: Because they had been sweating a lot?

SA: Yes. That was after the fever broke.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Before the fever broke, she'd just bathing, continually, you know.

KO: Mm hm. Were they afraid they'd die?

SA: I don't know. They, they never spoke of death.

KO: Mm hm. How old were you at the time?

END TAPE1, SIDE1

TAPE1, SIDE2

SA: Flirt?

KO: Mm hm.

SA: I never thought a thing about it, at that time.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: No, I wasn't a flirt, I was casual.

KO: Mm hm. Were you nervous about, around the young men?

SA: No. I was never nervous around them. I was always perfectly calm, perfectly natural.

KO: Mm hm. So, did you marry?

SA: I didn't marry. I, at the uh, at an early age, no.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Because I began teaching school at seventeen.

KO: Oh.

SA: And then uh, I taught school for five years and I had a nervous breakdown.

KO: Oh.

SA: 'Cause I was teaching so many children in one room, and some of 'em were older children, and some were younger. It was very hard to discipline those children.

KO: I bet.

SA: And, so I, I had a nervous breakdown and I quit teaching, so then I got a job in the department store, and that's when I was twenty-one.

KO: Was this in Owensboro ?

SA: Yes, I was living in, I was, my parents were not living in Owensboro at that time, but I lived, I had an aunt that was living there, and I boarded with her.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: So, and, clerked. Worked at McIntees as a clerk.

KO: Let me ask you, why did you want to be a teacher?

SA: Well, that was about the only thing that was open there for girls at that time, at that age. That and nursing, and I tried to be a nurse, and they wouldn't have me, because I was too small.

KO: Oh.

SA: I didn't, didn't measure up.

KO: {Chuckles} How tall are you?

SA: At that time, I was fifty-nine inches. Now, I'm fifty-six.

KO: Mm hm. Where did you teach?

SA: I taught in Henderson County and in Daviess County.

KO: Would you have liked teaching if you hadn't had so many children?

SA: I think I would, because I loved to see their minds unfold.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And see their minds improve. I loved it. But that, the older ones were very hard to cope with because they were, they had minds of their own, and

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And they felt like I was, they were superior to me, and just was so hard to keep them in line.

KO: Mm hm. How old were the oldest children?

SA: Some of 'em were eighteen years old.

KO: Uh huh.

SA: And they were ignorant.

KO: And they were still in the eighth grade?

SA: No, they were in the fourth and fifth,

KO: Oh my.

SA: Grades. They just hadn't, hadn't developed. That's why they were so hard to discipline.

KO: Did they miss a lot of school because of working on the farm?

SA: I think that their parents were invalid. They just didn't care.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: I'm not sure. We, that's what I assumed, that the parents didn't care whether they learned or not.

KO: Mm hm. Did you go past the eighth grade? Did you go through eighth, eight grades, or did you go?

SA: Oh, yes, I went to eighth grade. I went through high school.

KO: Where'd you go to high school?

SA: I went to high school in Henderson.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And I took the train, the local train, every morning and evening. The train took me to Henderson on the morning and brought us back at six o'clock in the evening.

KO: Were you living in Owensboro at the time?

SA: No, I was living in Reed, Kentucky.

KO: Oh, uh huh.

SA: Yes, it was a little city at, little village at that time, and now it's just, it's nothing.

KO: Mm hm. When you had your nervous breakdown, was there anything that they could do for you then?

SA: Only rest.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: I had, had bed rest for nearly a year.

KO: Uh huh. How did people react to people that that happened to? Did they understand?

SA: They understood, the situation, and they were very kind.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: I had a good doctor, and he was uh, very efficient, and he recommended bed rest, and plenty of fruit to eat.

KO: Mm hm. How much did they pay teachers back then?

SA: Well, I was paid thirty dollars a month.

KO: Did that seem like big money?

SA: Oh, yes.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Felt like I was rich.

KO: {Chuckles} So, how much did a clerk make?

SA: Only six dollars a week.

KO: Oh. Did you like clerking?

SA: I liked it. I loved the contact with people.

KO: Mm hm. What was your job?

SA: I was at the uh, embroidery and stitcher counter for a while, and then I was with the cosmetics, and then they put me with the fabrics, and I loved finding dresses for people who would come in to buy and I'd help them to make, show them what one material, what material would look best on them, and all that.

KO: Uh huh.

SA: And I was very successful. So, I think that led to later life, in my later life, days in my life, and I became a dressmaker.

KO: Oh. I bet it did. So, did you stay there long, as a clerk?

SA: I was a clerk for twelve years.

KO: What happened next?

SA: Well, I married, after twelve years. Um, the boy, the man that I married had been in World War I and he was gassed, and when he came home, he seemed to be uh, in perfect health, but he took a bad cold and it went right to his lungs, so his lungs were being filtered, were filtered by this gas, you know. So there's no help for him. I was married to him eighteen months.

KO: Oh, I'm sorry. How old were you when he died?

SA: I was thirty-seven when he died, and he was thirty-nine.

KO: That must have been terribly sad for you.

SA: It was and my daughter was less than five months old when he died.

KO: Did you ever…

SA: So that was when I took up dressmaking. At his request.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: He said to me just before he died, he says, "I'm sorry I'm goin' to have to leave you, but," he says, "You have a God-given gift." He says, "You're so handy with a needle," and said that, "I don't want you to go out to work. I want you to stay at home with our child, and bring her up in your way, instead of leaving her with somebody else."

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And he said, "I have no money to leave you. I have a bit of insurance and that, that'll pay for my burial expenses."

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And he said, "You will be able to make it with your needle." He says, "I know, I have talked to God, and God has told me all these things," he said. So I listened to him, and I did what he said.

KO: What was it like to be a dressmaker then?

SA: It was wonderful. All my friends rallied around me. The friends that I had made when I was a clerk, and they brought me materials to make for them, make

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Especially for their children. I started out working, making things for children.

KO: Was it a hard way to make a living?

SA: No. It wasn't. I always thought of his words, it was a God-given gift, and if I didn't do it, I probably wouldn't be able to do it as well with something else.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And I paid for my home. I bought a place. I paid for it, and I sent my child to a private school all of her life. I even put her in college. She went, finished cum laude, at the college, so I felt like my work was well done.

KO: I'd say, I'd say so. What do you remember about World War I? Did you know your husband then?

SA: Yes, I did. He was in the war.

KO: Were you friends or had you already started courting then?

SA: It was uh, we were engaged.

KO: Oh. Were, how did you hear about the war starting? What were you doing when you heard about the war?

SA: I don't know, can't, I don't recall that.

KO: Okay.

SA: I know that uh, he came to me and told me that he had volunteered to go. He thought it was his duty.

KO: Mm hm. What was his name?

SA: Jesse.

KO: Jesse.

SA: J-E-S-S-E.

KO: Jesse Allen?

SA: Mm hm.

KO: So how did you hear about the end of the war?

SA: After the end of the war?

KO: How did you hear about the end of the war?

SA: Oh, I was uh, at the end of the war, I was, still I was clerking at that time, and it came over the uh, radio, that the war had ended. Armistice Day was fun. And, 'course we were all very happy. We were jubilant. I know that we stayed up all night.

KO: Oh really.

SA: Celebrating. Just waiting for our friends to come home.

KO: How soon

SA: I had a brother in it, too.

KO: Oh, you did.

SA: Mm hm.

KO: How did he fare in the war?

SA: He didn't get any further than Camp Knox. Then the, the flu broke out there, and he became a nurse, and nursed all those fellas. With the flu. He didn't take it.

KO: That's good. How soon…

SA: He didn't

KO: I'm sorry.

SA: Get to the battlefields.

KO: Was he disappointed?

SA: Yes, he was very disappointed.

KO: Did Jesse get to write you when he was in the army?

SA: Oh, yes. I'd hear from him occasionally. It'd take it forever for his letters to reach him, but I always got them.

KO: What did he write about? What did he write about?

SA: About the war. What he was doing. When he'd, when he would come home. He was always anxious to get home. And then the worst thing about it was that they put him in the Army of Occupation after the war was over and he had to stay there a year.

KO: Uh huh. I bet you were disappointed.

SA: Mm hm. He was, too. But he made the best of it. He said that was, that was when they, that was routine. They just had to do it.

KO: Mm hm. So when

SA: He never tried to defy anything. He always had to do, whatever came up, he was able to do it with what

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Now we got back to Owensboro.

KO: I was just wondering what your wedding was like.

SA: Hm?

KO: I was wondering what your wedding was like. How did people get married then?

SA: Well, I had the two, my two brothers had gone to Detroit to live, because they couldn't find work here, and they had gone to Detroit, and the, and they were working for the Ford Motor Company, and they were paid such good wages. They said, "Why don't you come on up here and wait til this fella comes home, and live with us." Said "You'll get a good job here." So I did. I went to Detroit, and lived, and um, we rented an apartment. We took an apartment, and lived with, with my two brothers, and I worked at J. L. Hudson's Department Store, which was very up my line, you know.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And I was making fourteen dollars a month there, a week there, and they were making good money at the Ford Motor Company.

KO: How much were they making?

SA: I don't know, but I know that they'd need thirteen dollars a week board.

KO: Oh my.

SA: So, with that and my, my salary, we, I'd just, just save a little bit of money.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: 'Til my husband came home. And when he came home, he came on to Detroit, and we were married.

KO: Mm hm. So, did you have a big, fancy wedding?

SA: No, we had a very, only had a cousin and my two brothers, only relatives there. It was a very quiet wedding. We didn't want a big wedding.

KO: Mm hm. Did you take a honeymoon trip?

SA: No, we did not.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Because we planned to go home as soon as uh, things were opened up here.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Which we did.

KO: Mm hm. Did you get homesick in Detroit?

SA: No, I didn't. There was so much excitement at that time, there, and everything was all just up and up, you know, and everything was booming.

KO: I was wondering what you remembered about the weather, when you were young. Did you, do you remember any major disasters or any?

SA: Seems to me, you know, when I was young, I was always cold natured. It seemed to me like we had so much snow, so much more snow than we have now.

KO: Mm hm. I've heard other people say that. What about the flood of 1913? Do you remember that?

SA: Yes, indeed, I do.

KO: Did that affect you?

SA: Yes. I was in that flood. That, my home was not in it. I, happened that my home was on a rise. It was down on West Second Street. 914. That was on the uphill like, you know.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And the water never even got in my basement. That was all around me. I couldn't go anywhere other than having to go in a skiff. A boat, to get there. And we were takin' care of refugees, and they were brought to Owensboro to be clothed and fed and I sewed for them, and I went and helped cook for them. They were at, takin' care of at the KC Hall.

KO: The Knights of Columbus Home?

SA: The Knights of Columbus home. Uh huh. And oh, there were so many of 'em. They were just, their homes were under the water and they had lost everything they had. My brother, my second brother and his wife were in the flood and they lost their furniture and everything, except their stock.

KO: Uh huh.

SA: The stock they took, they drove to uh, uh, across the river into Henderson County, where it wasn't flooded, and left the stock on a farm there until the water went down. But they lost all their furniture.

KO: Boy. So uh, I was wondering, what about the first movie picture you ever saw. Do you remember that? The first motion picture?

SA: Yes, it was put on by the Nickelodeon, it was called then.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And uh, I don't know what the picture was all about now, but I remember being there and not being very well impressed with it.

KO: Oh really. {Chuckles}

SA: Because I felt like it was a phony. I don't remember what the program was.

KO: Mm hm. What about the first automobile you saw?

SA: The first automobile was a Ford, and it was owned by Z. T. Robinson here in Owensboro.

KO: Were you frightened of it?

SA: No, I thought that it was a wonderful thing that it could go without a horse and bug-, without a horse hitched to it.

KO: Mm hm. How did people react to them?

SA: Well, I think that they were all thrilled, that, that uh, something easy had come along.

KO: Mm hm. I was wondering if you remember when women got the right to vote?

SA: Yes, I remember that quite well.

KO: What did you think about all that?

SA: Well, I just thought, I didn't approve it very much because I thought a woman's place was in the home.

KO: Mm hm. How did other people react?

SA: Well, they seemed to, a lot of 'em seemed to think it was a great thing. It gave them a voice in matters of concern, but I didn't care whether I had a voice in the matters concerned {Chuckles} or not.

KO: When was the first time you voted?

SA: Let's see, I guess it was 19- uh, I didn't vote for four years after they were given them the right to vote.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And then I didn't know who to vote for

KO: Mm hm.

SA: 'Cause I wasn't concerned with politics at all.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: As I said, I thought a woman's place was in the home.

KO: Mm hm. What about Prohibition? Do you remember that?

SA: Yes, indeed I do. The speakeasies were all over the place.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And homebrew.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: I remember quite well.

KO: Did people take Prohibition very seriously?

SA: Yes, I think so.

KO: What did you, what did you think about Prohibition?

SA: Well, I thought twas unnecessary. I thought people could use their minds.

KO: Mm hm. So, do you remember the flood of '37? {Pause} Can I get you a drink of water, Ms. Allen?

SA: No, thank you. I don't right now.

KO: Do you remember the flood of '37?

SA: Yes, I do.

KO: What do you remember about it?

SA: I remember it was flooded. The water was all over the place.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And so many people were, lost their homes. And there's one couple who were deaf and blind, both of 'em, and they couldn't find 'em for the longest time. Finally they found them in a, in a hay loft of a barn, on a farm near Reed, Kentucky, and they were almost starved. They'd been holding out up there because they saw the water and they knew couldn't get out and they couldn't call for help. They couldn't let anybody know where they were, and they were so hungry that uh, that took food to them and set, they threw up everything that they ate for a while.

KO: Oh my.

SA: But they did live through it. But that was something we all thought about.

KO: Did the flood affect you any?

SA: No. I was, I, I was high and dry.

KO: That's good. What about the Depression? How did that affect you?

SA: The Depression affected everybody.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Even the rich, because it, a lot of 'em lost their riches.

KO: Uh huh.

SA: The banks failed. And it was really bad. People were thrown out of work. My two brothers lost their jobs in, in Detroit. They came home, hoping to find work here, and they finally did, got work with the TWA.

KO: Oh.

SA: The PWA.

KO: Oh.

SA: PWA. Public Works.

KO: What did they do?

SA: They worked on the roads, digging ditches.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Doing hard work, but they were glad to do it.

KO: Mm hm. How did it affect the dress business?

SA: The what?

KO: How did it affect your business?

SA: Oh, it affected it very much because nobody had money, and, but I had, I made enough to keep us alive.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And to feed, my mother was living with me at that time, and she hadn't sold her farm then. The farm's wasn't producing anything because nobody, there wasn't any money. No matter what you had, you couldn't sell it. But as a dressmaker, people had to have clothes, and there were some people who, I sewed all night long sometimes for fifty cents.

KO: Mm hm. Were you frightened?

SA: No, I knew that God would take care of us. I trusted him.

KO: Back in the, oh, let me ask you, do you remember the hanging of Rainey Bethea?

SA: Of who?

KO: Rainey Bethea.

SA: Yes.

KO: Did you go to the hanging?

SA: No, I didn't go to it. It wasn't, it happened about seven blocks from where I lived, but I didn't go.

KO: What do you remember about the hanging?

SA: I remember the awful crowds went, that passed my house, going to it.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And I remember the, the sound, the bell, when it rang after, that he was hanged. Which were not very pleasant memories.

KO: Mm hm. Uh, do you remember anything about the labor unions getting started in the '30s?

SA: The what?

KO: The labor unions getting started in the '30s? Or the '20s? The unions? Do you remember anything about the unions?

SA: The unions?

KO: Mm hm. Do you remember anything about the unions getting started?

SA: I don't know what you mean.

KO: You know, like at uh, KenRad and places like that. The union came in.

SA: Oh, the industries?

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Yes, I remember when the KenRad was working. Was located on East Main Street. It employed a lot of people.

KO: Mm hm. What about the Klu Klux Klan? Do you remember anything about them?

SA: We didn't have a Ku Klux Klan. Uh, it wasn't very active in Owensboro, but was active down through the South quite a bit.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Yes, they did a lot of uh, damage, burnt homes. And did a lot of damage.

KO: Did they do that around here?

SA: Not much. If they did, I didn't read it or hear about it. I remember Owensboro, when Owensboro didn't have any pavements, except brick.

KO: Oh, really.

SA: I remember when we, when I was about six years old, I loved to go to town and walk on those brick pavements.

KO: Mm.

SA: And {Chuckles} we had stones to cross the streets, you know. Stepping stones, they called it. And I couldn't walk on those. I'd have to, walk on one and go in, go down on the other one in the mud {Chuckles} to get to the next one. I was a short lady.

KO: Oh. Do you remember getting electricity? Do you remember getting electricity?

SA: Oh yes.

KO: Tell me about that.

SA: Well, we, we were afraid of it at first. We just afraid to do anything about it because, just afraid we'd get shocked. {Chuckles} But it was a wonderful thing to have a light, 'cause didn't have to put coal oil into it to get a light.

KO: How old were you at the time?

SA: Well, I guess I was about twelve years old.

KO: Were you living in Reed then?

SA: No, I was, yes, I was living in Reed then. I had left and been living there. Had just moved to Reed in 189-, 18and98.

KO: So uh, you got electricity then in 189-

SA: Mm hm.

KO: -8?

SA: Mm hm.

KO: Was it expensive?

SA: No. I remember what Edison said, he's goin' make it so cheap that it would be, be expensive to burn candles.

KO: Mm. END TAPE1, SIDE2

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

KO: Let's see, uh, where was the first place you saw electricity?

SA: Uh, I guess it was in Owens-, in Owensboro. I, the electricity was, the lights above the city.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: And the street cars were run by it.

KO: Did you ride the street cars very often?

SA: No. I didn't, because I preferred to walk. I loved to walk on the brick pavements. {Both chuckle} But then, by that time, they were being replaced by concrete.

KO: Mm hm. What about indoor plumbing? Do you remember the first indoor plumbing you ever saw?

SA: Indoor what?

KO: Plumbing.

SA: Plumbing?

KO: Mm hm.

SA: Let's see. Yes, it was at my aunt's home, on West Fifth Street.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: She had, they had a grape arbor that ran back through the garden, and they had the, what they called the "privy" there. And then uh, we always like to go there because we didn't have the kind of privy that she had. But then one day we went there, and there, the privy was gone, and I thought "My goodness what did they do with that." They had the plumbing inside the house. So I thought, "Oh, how wonderful that is. Don't have to go out in the rain."

KO: Mm hm. Was your aunt a rich woman?

SA: Well, they were well-to-do. They had, daughters were worked, had worked in the woolen Mills. They had woolen mills in the early part of Owensboro, and the sons worked at the

tile factory, so they were, they all had good jobs, so we considered that they were pretty well off. My uh, her husband was a carpenter and he had all the work he could do.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: So we felt like they were, they were not rich of course, but we felt like they were. 'cause they all had good jobs. They all had money.

KO: Mm hm. Well, Ms. Allen, I think I've asked you all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

SA: I think it's just about covered all of it. All that I can remember.

KO: Okay.

SA: But I can recall a lot of things.

KO: Mm hm.

SA: A lot of people don't know about it all.

KO: Well, if you think of anything else you want to tell me, just give me a call or have someone call me.

SA: Okay.

KO: And I'll be happy to come back out. I'm going to give you a card with my phone number on it.

SA: Okay. My daughter's gonna to be here next month, and she'll be anxious to know what I've, what I had to say about all this.

KO: Where does she live?

SA: She lives in Texas.

KO: Oh. That's a long way away.

SA: Yes it is.

END TAPE2, SIDE2