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Interview with Mary Bryant (Benton) Fitts Regarding Her Life (FA 154)

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Folklife Archives Project 154 – A Generation Remembers, 1900-1949

Interview with Mary Bryant (Benton) Fitts (CT 3 & 4)

TAPE1, SIDE1

MARY FITTS: I really enjoyed the piece that came out in the paper about the, Everett Thompson being Sheriff and dying and his wife finishing up and she was Sheriff when they hanged that black man. I knew her real well.

KAREN OWEN: Oh, you did.

MF: Mary Lillian, their daughter had their picture in the paper. Mary Lillian's husband died not too long ago and I feel sorry for her.

KO: Sure, she's going through a hard time.

MF: Yeah, she sure is. They went through a hard time when her daddy died, and her mother was left of course with both those kids, no money you might say. They had a real hard time. She was a wonderful woman.

KO: Before we get started, I was wondering if you could state your full name and your birth date and where you grew for the tape recorder.

MF: Well, my, my name now you mean?

KO: M hm.

MF: Well, my name is Mary Bryant Fitts and I am 85 years old. My birthday is the 26th day of November, and I grew up in Daviess County, in the Utica neighborhood. Went to Utica High School. Went to Utica School and High School.

KO: And what was your maiden name?

MF: Benton. Mary Ryan Benton. B-E-N-T-O-N, and I married Russell Brooks in 19and18 and we had two sons, George and R.B. Brooks, and George got killed during the uh Second World War, and R.B. was in the Navy but he came back home, and he lives out on the farm and he's retired now. He worked at the steel mills 'til just this last year. Just the one day

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last week, he was 65 years old. I told him, I said that I knew that I was in trouble that I would be living to have a son that was 65 years old. {Both laugh}

KO: If you want to, can we talk about the war for a few minutes. Do you remember where you were when you heard that the war had started and what you were doing?

MF: You mean the Second World War?

KO: Mhm.

MF: Oh, it, we, it was on a Sunday afternoon, and we was all sitting in the living room and reading the paper. We always enjoyed sitting in the living room reading the Sunday paper on Sunday afternoon, and that came, the news came over the radio, and I, I, I never will forget this son that got killed, George, when he read, heard that on the news, while he just jumped up and he began saying “I may not know what the world war is about, but I bet by gosh I’ll soon find out.” And he went the next day and volunteered. It’s the way that real old song started out. I don’t know whether you ever heard anybody say:

Goodbye Ma and goodbye Pa

And a goodbye mule with an ol’ Heehaw

I may not know what the war’s about

But I bet by gosh I’ll soon find out {Laughs}

He was, he was singing, just singing that, you know, and he, kind of in a quoting way, and uh, so the next day he couldn’t wait. He went and volunteered, and R.B. was up to the University of Kentucky in school, and he got on the bus and went to Cincinnati and volunteered for the Marines, to go, he was in then after so many years he transferred from the Marines to the, to the Navy. So he was in the Navy until the war was over.

KO: How old was your younger son?

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MF: How old was what?

KO: The younger son. How old was he?

MF: During the war, you mean?

KO: When the war started, how [old] was the son who jumped up and?

MF: Oh, he was, he was uh 23.

KO: How old were you at that time?

MF: Well, let's see. That was 19and, you can always tell my age by the years that come up since I was born in 1900.

KO: That makes it easy then.

MF: Yeah. Well, it was 19and uh 42 or 43. I forgot now which it was. 1942, I believe. Cause he got killed in 1945. April 11, 1945 when he got killed.

KO: Had he been overseas?

MF: He completed uh 50 combat missions, and had the Presidential Citation, when he crawled to the tail end on a fighter plane. The plane shot down a, a German fighter, and uh then went through all that and came back to the states, and they were training some men to go to uh the South Pacific and down in Jackson, Mississippi, two bombers collided in mid-air and all men on both bombers were killed. This was an ironic heart-breaking thing. Something that you never get over. You can learn to live with it but you never, you never get over it.

KO: How did the military notify you? How did you find out about it then?

MF: When he got killed?

KO: Mhm.

MF: Somebody called me, long distance. I never will forget that long delay when they started telling me about it and I just, I just said well, I could tell that the way that they were

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talking what they were going to say, and I said, “Oh, tell me quick. Tell me quick.” And, well, my husband was down in the field. It was 11th of April and he was down in the field planting corn. At that time we had a little ol’ country store. By the time that I hung up, while a salesman came in and I asked the salesman to go down to the field and tell Russell Brooks to come on home. Come on back, back to home. And so he uh, he went down there to him, and then I got on the phone to call different ones. Neighbors, you know, came in. It was horrible, just horrible. And uh the younger son was in Uttumwa, Ioway in training, and so course we called him. He came home. It was the only consolation I had about that was that we got to bring him up home so much, and get to bring his body home, buried, he’s buried out in the Rose Hill Cemetery. His father is buried there by him and course I will be, too.

KO: Did you all live in Owensboro at the time?

MF: No, we lived out there at about four miles south of Utica. A place called Handyville. A little village called, a little. Just had a store and a few houses close together. I don’t know why, oh they used the name of Handyville cause an old man built a store there years ago and he was called Uncle Handy Reed. So they named it Handyville for him. It was farm, all farmland out there. We lived on a farm from the time we married until well, until after my husband died and I married again in 1973 and came in town to live with the Fitts. So I was married a second time. He was an old neighbor. His, his home was out there and he was an old, he was a bachelor, and after so many years he married an old school mate and had two daughters and then his wife died. She had cancer and died. These two daughters, course, are my step-daughters now, and I just love them. They’ve been so sweet and good to me. They’ve got seven children, children, and this grandmother died before any of those children were born, so I’m the

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only, they tell me that I'm the only grandmother that they've ever had. {Laughs} They really are sweet to me.

KO: That's good.

MF: I really enjoy them a lot.

KO: When you called on your neighbors, what did they do? How did people react back then, when someone they knew was going through something like this?

MF: They came to you. They came to you. They, the one woman I especially love, and still do, she came just as quick as she could get there, and then all the other neighbors came in, and then uh when night came, well, course different people kept coming. Friends and neighbors, and they brought in a lot of food and just did everything they could do. Course it was quite a few uh about six days before we got his body here and got to have the funeral, and had the funeral here at the Third Baptist Church. It was the biggest crowd you ever saw. And it was just really, and uh, a pastor of ours that was in the service as a chaplain, he came and he preached the funeral, and course there was quite a few of people. Everybody nearly had somebody in the service at that time and everybody was just as kind and sympathetic as they could possibly be. Just everybody did everything they could to help you get, live through it and it was sure a hard, hard way to go, I tell you it is.

KO: Did he have a military funeral?

MF: No, no, no, they had a military service at the cemetery, but the funeral was just a church funeral. This, this uh chaplain that led the service, course he was in the military, and as a chaplain, and the pastor of our church at the time, there was three, there was three ministers in on the funeral. And uh course the music was the Third Baptist Church. I can't remember now who the pianist was. Any how it was really, really good music. This minister that uh, at the funeral

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was, he was, he had a beautiful voice and his wife, too, and they sang. So it was, it was quite, quite a funeral. Quite an impressive funeral.

KO: So the war still going on at this time?

MF: Oh yes, but that was, well that wasn't very long. See that was 19, he was killed 11th of April of 1945, and the war was over uh sixth of August the Armistice was signed. Just a short time, and uh, just, just seemed so ironic to think that the war was that near over and he, he had had, he had flown so much and the noise from the plane had his hearing had gotten bad and they had offered him a discharge and he said well, when this war is over in Europe, says I'll take the discharge, but I feel like this is part of my job, and this war in Europe that I'm talking about being over with so soon after he got killed and the war in Japan was over. But after he got killed then uh, our younger son, he was an officer in the Navy and he was sent to Japan, and so we made, we put in an appeal to Barkley. He was a Senator at that time. And they brought back home before uh, the, before the war, he got home just a few, just a few days before the war was over in Japan, so uh they at that time there was uh, an understanding that if you just had one son left, you know, that that one could be discharged from the, well I don't know if you call it discharge or just say relieved of, of the burden of the service. But back, you said that you wanted to know something about the flu epidemic way back?

KO: Yes. Do you remember anything about that?

MF: Gracious yes.

KO: What do you remember?

MF: I remember how, how horrible it was and how people just, back then we used to say they just died like flies. There were so many people who had the flu and died from it, and uh Russell Brooks and I, we hadn't been married too awful long, and it was in 1918 and 19 when

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this flu epidemic was so bad, and we lived with his parents in the same house with his parents, and they had uh two other sons that lived in Masonville and uh they was all down in the bed and my mother-in-law, well she cooked, well she cooked day and night almost, and my father-in-law was, he would, he'd get in the car and take food up to Masonville to those, uh, part of the time, that part of the time we lived up there, and then a lot of the neighbors was down, and they stayed well and was able to send food to all the neighbors in the neighborhood. You know, course neighbors there they got cookin' or gettin' any food or anything. Just took care of the whole neighborhood. So it was, it was really a serious thing, but long up in the spring, why, people began to kinda get over it and we were the ones that were left.

KO: Did you get it?

MF: Yeah, I was in bed. My husband and I both were, we was all in bed with the flu except the mother and the father. His mother and his father. He had a, a brother and, that lived there at home. Two brothers. And course all of us sick with the flu. But these old people, it was a blessing, but they didn't, they didn't have the flu. Had no symptoms of it whatever, so they really tried their best to take care of everybody they could.

KO: How did they treat the flu back then?

MF: Well, they would just put you to bed, and gave you some medicine, you know, some kind of medicine. I don't even remember what kind of medicine they gave us. Some kind of influenza, uh, I guess that it was something that they discovered uh, they thought would be a cure for influenza. They claim, now I don't know whether it is true or not, they claimed that the Germans had sent, had sent those Germans over here is how come we to be so bad. I don't know whether that is true or not, cause it could have been just one of things that happened, you know.

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Whether or something had later on or had through the years, well they uh, they uh, course the weather had a lot of influence on it. Cause at that time that's what they thought.

KO: Hm, that's really interesting. Uh, I guess people had a lot of diseases back then that they didn't know what to do with.

MF: Well, people had the flu and uh, pneumonia. That was uh, that was what usually took them away. When after the year of the flu epidemic and go into pneumonia and then some, then some people had typhoid fever in the summer time. That was caused from drinking water out of wells that were tainted with some kind of bacteria, you know, that caused that typhoid fever. People used to get all of their water out of open wells. Now, thank goodness, the water system goes all over Daviess County, and so glad it does.

KO: Did anybody in your family ever get any other kind of diseases or anything besides the flu?

MF: No, no, not in my, everybody got, came through with the flu pretty well. Nobody had any real serious effects from the flu. We all got, got course was weak for awhile, but soon gained our strength back, thank goodness to the, for the in-laws did all of the cookin' and the feedin' of the food. {Laughs}

KO: They must have really been worn out.

MF: They were. They was worn out, but they had a lot of food on hand, and killed a lot of hogs and had a lot of meat, you know, and raised a lot of uh beans, and did a lot of canning of tomatoes and corn, and uh beans and everything like that. So we had a lot of food. Didn't have to go buy too much. Just on the farm, people, farm people preserved a lot of food every year.

KO: What about when you were raising your kids, did any of them get any serious illnesses?

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MF: No, no, those two boys were just as healthy as they could be. And all through school and through high school, and uh, and even in, even in college without any, any, any illness whatever. Just got along just as healthy, you know, just as healthy as they could be.

KO: What about other kids in the community? Did you hear a lot about them getting sick?

MF: No. No. No, no I don't think there's too many. I think that we had a pretty healthy community in that area.

KO: What about doctors? Did you have doctors near there or did you have to use home remedies?

MF: Oh, we had, there was a doctor over to Panther, and then a doctor in Utica, and uh that was we had a doctor in between Panther and Utica and then of course Owensboro doctors, too. Lot of people, doctors then would come out to you home. So this, this group of people who had typhoid fever that I was talking about, they uh, Dr. Tyler. I guess that you have heard of the young Dr. Tyler here in town, haven't you?

KO: I think so.

MF: Well any how, this, there's a young Dr. Tyler still here. This, this was young Dr. Tyler's grandfather and he uh, there was a whole big family that had typhoid fever that lived on, right close to us there and Dr. Tyler would come by and get me, and we would go down there and uh and help to do things for that family and everybody in the neighborhood helped out with them, too, while they had this typhoid fever. Takin' 'em food and, and we had a lot of, course there was a lot of laundry that had to done, and uh, we take the, changed the beds and do the laundry. Most of us had washing machines. Electric, we didn't have electric washing machines. We had gasoline. Gasoline motors. Maytags with a gasoline motor. And we didn't have any

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dryers. You put your washing and hang them on the line to dry. But everyone in the neighborhood just helped out all they could. We always did say that this, this neighborhood, course we felt like the best neighborhood in the county. {Laughs}

KO: How old were you when this all happened? When these people got the typhoid?

MF: Well, let me see. It was before the 30s' and before the Depression, so I guess it was on, was around in a, in a, no, it was before the Depression. I guess I was about 30, between 30 and 35 years old. Some where in there. I don't even remember exactly how old I was. I remember the Depression mighty well. That was in the '30s, early '30s.

KO: What do you remember about the Depression?

MF: Well, I remember that nobody had any money, just then, and people were hard up for, and some people were just simply hard up and didn't have money to buy food, and one of the funniest things that happened, course livin' on the farm, we raised a lot of food, and uh, there was a tenant farmer that lived uh on another farm there close to us and he had a big family, so uh, and in the fall, we had, oh just rows and rows of dried beans that we had raised, and uh, and uh, we had killed a lot of hogs and had a lot of pork meat and we just decided that we could feed one family with the beans and meat, at least. They had all their eating beans and meat.

{Laughs} So we gave them a lard can of beans and, and four or five pieces of, of meat and which time, you know what they did? They came back for more. {Laughs} They just wasted it.

KO: Oh, ok.

MF: So really we couldn't keep from laughin' about it, but we found out that no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't keep those people in food, but uh different ones helped all over the neighborhood so they got through with us and they didn't end up getting very hungry. But it

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was so ridiculous to think that anybody would waste food like that when, at a time like that, but it was just plain, plain ignorance what it was.

KO: How big was the lard can? You said the lard can with the beans?

MF: Probably, probably be a five gallon lard can.

KO: Oh.

MF: You've never seen a five gallon lard can, I don't guess? Did you?

KO: No.

MF: Well. {Laughs} I haven't seen one in years, but back at that time, when you killed hogs, why you, why you cooked your, your fat and made lard and put it in, in those big cans. Why most everybody had five gallon lard cans, maybe two or three of them. Nowadays, people don't even use lard hardly anymore. They use, uh, vegetable oil, you know, and Crisco oil. Crisco, kind of shortening in place of lard. Some people think that lard, well it's just too fattening, and some even, some people even think that it's unhealthy. I don't know. I used lard, used mainly lard for years. I don't know if it's harmful or not. Some people still like fried chicken in lard. The chicken is better fried in lard than it is in uh, in a vegetable oil. My daughter-in-law, I think that she still fries chickens in lard all the time. She did, I know when, when I lived out there.

KO: Well now during the Depression, did you, were you ever worried that you would lose your farm or anything like that?

MF: Well, one of our young neighbors lost their farms. No, we didn't, we didn't uh, we didn't owe anything. We had our farm, you know, paid for and we didn't, we didn't owe anything. That's what I said to my son here a short time ago after he retired from the steel mill. With so many people, you know, losing their homes, and, and having hard luck. I said, "Well,

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don't you thank the Lord that we don't owe anybody. " He said "I sure do." Says, "with my retirement pay and, and Social Security," says "I may have to have to reduce my lifestyle to some extent {Laughs} but I, we won't have to worry about losing the farm. But I, that worries me now to see people in the financial trouble that they are in. I'm afraid there are quite a few. Guess you been reading too, about people losing their farms out west?

KO: Mhmm.

MF: Around here there are several people out there who have lost their farms around here. It has been so, it has been publicized to any great extent yet, but that uh then there are some that get along just fine. You know, they just, they just all depends on how you manage. Management has a lot to do with it.

KO: How did you all manage back then? You grew a lot of your own food and stuff.

MF: Yeah.

KO: Didn't you have to have money for other things?

MF: Yes, you had to have money, but I tell you what, I tell you what I did to buy groceries and buy the children's clothes. Raised a lot of chickens and sold, sold chickens, and then in, in the fall, of course, uh my husband raised a lot of cattle, and, and hogs and between times he'd sell hogs and uh cattle to get cash money. I never will forget one fall I picked up fifty chickens. I sold fifty chickens to get enough money to buy the boys a, what they called a sheepskin coat for each to wear to school. {Laughs}

KO: Fifty chickens. {Both laughing}

MF: Fifty chickens. I never will forget that. Fifty frying chickens to get enough money to buy two sheepskin coats for them to wear to school. {Clears throat} And they loved boots. They just loved to buy boots, and, and uh, course sold a lot of chickens to have enough money to

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buy their boots, too. But, uh, we managed and, and made this best of it and didn't worry about it at all. We just, just hoped for better times and of course better times did finally come. But

KO: When the Stock Market crashed back in '29, did you?

MF: Oh, that was awful. That was awful. My father-in-law had a lot of money in the Central, in the Central Trust Bank, and, and he, they came, they came over to our house the day they got the message that, that the banks had closed and the Stock Market had, had broken, and uh, so it was really, really a rough time. Think about it. Just there all your money tied up. You couldn't write a check. You couldn't do anything.

KO: How much did he lose?

MF: About \$75,000. What was heartbreaking about it, he had these two sons, that owed for their farms, and uh, he could have, you know, could have loaned them the money, and, and saved their farms, but then they lost their farms. Just a heartbreaking thing. Never did, he never did get over it. My father and mother lived at Utica and they didn't lose their farm, but they got, they didn't make enough to make a living on the farm, and my father went to work with the WPA, and uh, it, it just, it, it embarrassed him and, and uh, humiliated him and just absolutely, it wasn't too long that he died of a heart attack. I always will think that's what caused it. Just worrying, you know, about, the humiliation of losing, of not being able to make a living without working the WPA. You know what they teased people and called WPA men? Course the name of it was Works Progress Administration, and {Chuckles} guess, guess to get some fun out of it, somebody uh said that the WPA meant We Piddle Around. {Both laugh}

KO: Oh my.

MF: You had to get a little fun out of it one way or the other, you know, so people, thank the Lord, that I know, that I know I have a good sense of humor. Cause a sense of humor can

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keep you going in a, in a bad shape, financially and, and emotionally. Got a good sense of humor, with you, you could get through it.

KO: When the banks crashed, did you think was going to be a temporary thing or did you realize that we were in for several years of...

MF: Well, we didn't have any idea of what it was going to be. We just hoped and prayed, and, and uh my father-in-law died and then my mother-in-law eventually got back about 75% of, of what they lost. But she got back just a little dab at a time but anyhow it gave her something to live on, and, and as long as she lived, and then, she, she came into a little money, and had a little bit extra that when she died, she had a little cash besides the land. And uh, course when she died, while then they, they had the, had the land was left to the, the family. {Moving around}

KO: I am a little worried about this. I am going to move this a little bit closer to you to make sure that I pick you up. {Moves tape recorder} Well what about the uh, the Roaring Twenties? You hear a lot about the wild things that went on back then. What were the '20s like? You were about, you were in your 20s?

MF: Yeah. The Roaring Twenties. That was right after we married. We married in 1918, and then in 19and20 the Roaring Twenties was the, was before the, came on before the Depression and everybody was just buying cars, and we had a, we bought a car during that time. A new car. When, when I married my Russell Brooks, why he had an old second handed Ford car that we called a Brass Fronted. I don't know whether you have seen one or not, but anyhow he bought that thing, and, and uh when he was, was courting me, while he would come up through Utica and he had a siren horn on that thing. He would start blowing that horn before he got to Utica, {Chuckles} and would blow it all the way through Utica. Not very many people

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had cars. So uh the ones that had cars, then they were the ones just had a good time, just then, it was, went to the movies, you do anything you could just to have a good time. And the was the reason that they called it the Roaring Twenties. Everybody was happy, and uh, well it was after the, First World War was over. The First World War started in 1914 and it, it, always right after a war, while prices go up, and, and people live better for a while. That's the way it was in '45, you see, and, and on through the '50s, and clear on up until you might say, just a few years, year or so ago whenever this, well they don't call it a Depression but I, it's a recession, they call it. I don't know. I, I call it a Depression. {Chuckles}

KO: What were morals like in the '20s? Were people a little more relaxed about their standards during that time? Or were they still as strict as they had been?

MF: No. No, they loosened up quite a bit. They sure did. Yeah, it was, quite, quite different. It was

KO: Can you give me an example? Can you think of any particular {pause}?

MF: Well, I, I was trying to think about a, a certain thing that happened in the neighborhood but I can't uh, I can't, I can't think of, of just exactly how to tell it. {Lightly chuckles and then long pause} I, I don't, I don't remember all of it. I just, I just, I just remember people were more careless, and uh, and I guess, I guess you'd say more tolerant, too, and things happened just, but uh, {pause} maybe were a little embarrassing to families, but anyhow, everybody, everybody came out of it. Course country people, uh were, I guess you'd say, a little bit more careful of, of their morals, than city people. Seemed like to me that they were.

KO: Could women drink and smoke then?

MF: {Laughs} Well, that's what I was trying to think about telling you about. One woman that went to drinkin' finally uh, left home and married a man away from home, and then

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she uh kept on getting mixed up with a whole lot of other men, and finally she shot a man and killed him. And that was one of the horrible things that came to the neighborhood, you know, when that happened to her, and then uh, she uh, she finally died, and, and they brought her body back. She's buried out there not very far from where she grew up.

KO: Did she go very far from home? When she?

MF: She, she went to Chicago.

KO: {Starts question}

END TAPE1, SIDE1

TAPE1, SIDE2

MF: Think about it. Uh, whiskey being made illegally, but it uh, there were stills, different stills, stills all around through the country. And if you got caught, course you got, you got put in jail, and the still torn up, broken up, but uh.

KO: Did many people get caught?

MF: Not that, not that I remember. I don't remember anybody in particular, but I am sure that they were but back, back then you just, was just hopin' and a' prayin' that everything would just work out all right. Prohibition was soon ended anyhow. It didn't last too long.

KO: Was it considered socially acceptable to drink then, during that time? Did people think you were a bad person if you drank alcohol?

MF: Well, they, they kept it pretty much under cover, the people who drank. They didn't uh, course there'd be a few people that would drink uh, uh, just promiscuously, but not, not too many. It wasn't, it wasn't accepted socially. Religiously, anyway. May have been some cases that it might have been accepted socially, but not religiously. People were uh, most people

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uh, that were church people, uh refrained from drinking alcohol. {Laughing} If they drank it, they kept it hid. Like some people do now.

KO: What about uh the clothes when you were young? What do you remember about the clothes you wore?

MF: Oh my goodness. Well, uh, the clothes were different styles from what they are now. They uh, they uh, tell you one thing that I remember that I, that people never see anymore is high top shoes. Button shoes. You ever hear or tell or see any button shoes? Those, those were really stylish at the time, and, and the skirts were longer, and uh the, the, we wore midi blouses. Did you ever hear of a midi blouse?

KO: I think that I have, but I am not sure what they are.

MF: Well, just a long, just a long blouse with a belt, just, I guess that's the reason they called it that midi blouse came from the, from the navy, you know the navy midi. The uniform, the uniforms that the navy wore. It was a long, the top was, was called a midi. So people wore midi blouses, and uh they wore quite a bit of silk at that time. People who could afford it had, had, wore a lot, lot of silk.

KO: How old were you when those high top shoes were in style?

MF: Oh, that was way back when I was just a girl. About the, about 1910 and 1912, might be 1915.

KO: What about corsets? Did women wear corsets back then?

MF: Yes. {Laughs} Yes. Yes. Yes, they wore corsets. Some people had, wore great big ol' long corsets with a lot of stays in them, you know. Supported on, supported on, supported. And uh, yeah, most, most women wore corsets. I never did, I never did wear a

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corset. I just wudn't, I wudn't very big and I just uh, I just didn't like to be bothered with a corset.

KO: Were they pretty uncomfortable?

MF: Well, I don't know. {Laughs} I didn't wear one enough to know, but I think that they were though, cause people complained about 'em, and I remember people saying oh that they wanted to get home and that this corset off as quick as they can. They put them on when they dress up to go to church, you know, or went to town or things like that. And, and uh

KO: When did women quit wearing corsets? Do you remember?

MF: Well, no, I really don't. I just didn't think enough about it, you know, to bother about it. Uh, I guess way back in the, in the '30s, I imagine that's about when they quit wearing 'em. I know that they uh quit wearing corsets and stays and well, they began wearing, they got away from the old corsets and stays and they wore what's called a girdle. Just more of a stretch girdle. I had one of those stretch girdles, because, at times I needed to, I felt like I needed to keep my stomach in. {Chuckles} And, and from showing quite so much. But uh, but I know people, I think some women still wear girdles all the time.

KO: What about uh, when you were a girl, what was life like when you know, when you were really small? What do you remember about those times?

MF: Oh, I just remember being happy and having a good time. Living at home and going to school and having a lot, a lot of company, and a lot of the relatives come in the summer time and spend the summer. We lived on a farm and they lived in the city. The kids would come and visit us in the summer, and uh I remember just having a good time in the neighborhood. We had a lot of parties. Had a lot of yard parties, and everybody would gather in

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the yard and we played games, party games, and just, it was just a lot of fun. Everybody, everybody had a good time. Enjoyed life thoroughly.

KO: When you were courting, how did uh young people date back then?

MF: Well, see, see, when I was courting, why, I just, the man that I was courting, why he had his car. Several people had cars, and, and the ones didn't have cars, had buggies and, and uh drove, drove a buggy, drove a horse and a buggy. Even, even the car, those that owned a car, you had to, in the winter time, the roads got muddy and you had to use a horse and buggy. I never will forget after we married, we got every now and then, we got in the habit of coming in to the show every Saturday night. Tom Mix was runnin' a serial at the movin' picture show so we come in to the show and whenever it would get to rainin' and get so, so muddy that we couldn't come in the car, while we would we get in the buggy and great big ol' heavy lap rug and we'd put over our laps, you know, to keep us warm comin' in. And we would come in to show and thing about it, we didn't, we didn't get back home til about twelve o'clock at night. By time the show was over, you know, and drove home in the buggy. {Laughs} About ten miles out of town. We had, we had a good time.

KO: When you were a kid, did you get to go to town very often?

MF: Oh, let me tell you how the kids got to town. We'd either come all the way to Owensboro in the buggy or we'd go down to Utica and catch the train, and come in on the train. And it was just a, really a lot of fun to come to Owensboro on the train, and we had a, had a lot of relatives that lived out close to Chautauqua Park. When we get off the train and get on a street car and ride out to their, their home and visit. {Laughs} It was fun. We had a lot of fun.

KO: Were the trains anything like we are used to today or were they very different?

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MF: Well, course now we don't have any trains any more come through here at all. Big, big 'ol passenger trains went to Owensboro and Russellville. That's where the train was a eight o'clock train in the morning and a eleven o'clock train at noon and a four o'clock train in the afternoon. Had that many, many trains. Eight o'clock train, well, it came out, it came out from Owensboro and went to Russellville. Then the eleven o'clock train would come from Russellville go into Owensboro, and then the four o'clock was going back to Russellville in the afternoon. But you'd come into town on eleven o'clock train and go back on four o'clock train to get you. I remember one time I came in to get my eyes tested, and I walked from the depot clear down to the, to the Masonic Building to the doctor's to get my eyes tested, and that's a pretty long walk. I remember that, but then as soon as I got my eyes tested, I had rush back out to catch the four o'clock train to go back home.

KO: So, uh did they make good glasses back then? Was it easy to, to help your vision or?

MF: Oh yeah. Yeah. They uh, they um, they had to test your eyes. The optician, the optometrist would test your eyes and then they'd send that test off. They had to send it off to get your glasses made then you would come back in to get 'em. Try 'em on and fitted and when they got 'em, when they got 'em made. Well I've been wearing glasses ever since I started school. When I first started school, well, I had trouble 'cause I was nearsighted, and uh the principal of the school was a real close friend of ours and so she, she went to my dad one day to say "Nathan, this child is nearsighted. You're goin' have to do something about it." So that was when he brought me in to the doctor, and I walked from the train down to the doctor's, old Dr. Lambert. He was the doctor he took me to.

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KO: Well, was it unusual for a little girl to have to wear glasses back then or was that pretty typical?

MF: Well, wasn't very many. I can't remember any other little girls wearing glasses, {Chuckles} but there might have been. I don't remember, but, but there's something unusual for you know, that young of girl, a child, to have to wear glasses.

KO: Did people tease you about wearing glasses?

MF: No, but I was always breakin' 'em. {Laughs} I'd get in a lot of trouble. I liked to play ball with the boys, and a time or two I got hit in the head with it and broke my glasses. {Chuckles} Playin' ball with the boys. I was, I was what you call a tomboy, I guess. I was left handed and they liked me to pitch for 'em. At school, you know, play ball. Pitch for the boys. I got hit. I never will forget broke my glasses right across there. They were, uh, they didn't have, they weren't, they didn't have any frames, and I thought that they was really pretty. They had glasses without frames, you know. The temple just attached right on the glasses and the nose piece. That's how come the first ones I had had no frames. They's just little bitty things. Just about that big around. When I first started wearing them. I kept those for a long, long time. Finally, I don't know what become of 'em.

KO: When you got up to be a teenager and you got interested in young men, did people tend laugh at those glasses don't get passes, or did they {MF Laughs} make it hard for you to get a date with glasses?

MF: {Laughs} No, I didn't have any problem with, with dates at all. The glasses never did bother me. They didn't embarrass me or bother me any way or any how. I just uh wore them cause I could see so much better with 'em. Could read so much better with 'em. They, they did tell me when he first tested my eyes that he didn't think that they would get any worse.

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He thought, and they didn't. They didn't get any worse. I'm just nearsighted, then long course, now, I, I don't know what you, what the problem is. I, I don't have any, any uh glaucoma or anything like that, just uh, I had my eyes checked just this last year and I've got to go back in. Dr. Maddox is the doctor. He does, he does know uh, uh be careful about your eyes and about half the women here have had surgery, eye surgery.

KO: Gosh.

MF: They, they go through it just fine. They get along just fine.

KO: You mentioned that you were a tomboy when you were young. What kind of games did you all play, when you were a kid?

MF: Oh, well, mainly it was ballgames, was main, uh the main, took the most activities during ball, softball they called it. Wasn't, wasn't that baseball? Softball, and course we played Hide-and-Seek and, and uh games like that. Nothing, nothing that varied. Took a lot, too much energy, just...

KO: What was school like when you were a kid?

MF: Oh, I loved school.

KO: Oh really.

MF: Yes, I sure did. I always did love school. I loved my teachers and enjoyed school an awful lot. And we had uh, had, had a lot of, well, activities at school, and recess at the end of the noon hour and times like that. Everybody, everybody had a good time.

KO: Were the parents very involved in the school back then?

MF: Well, yes. They, the parents visited the schools. We didn't, when I was in school, I didn't, we didn't have a PTA then, but after I married and, and my own boys went to school, we had a PTA. The Parent Teacher Association, you know, that worked with the teachers and

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helped out in school. But uh all the parents back when I was just a child and even through high school, the parents were very cooperative and I remember we had my high school principal that, he depended a lot on, on parents for advice and uh cooperation, and if anything, anything happened, like somebody was unruly at school you know. Why he'd, he'd interview the parent and, and the parent and the teachers work together to straighten the kids out. Well, it was really nice, it was. We didn't have any problems like sometimes now I read about, you know, teachers just being attacked and treated terrible. I've got a granddaughter that teaches out at Apollo High School and uh she doesn't seem to have any problem. {Chuckles} One time she told me about something that happened that, that some boy walked up behind and pinched her, and she just hauled off and kicked him as hard as she could kick him. {Chuckles} Nothing more, never did like that. {Laughs} Never more trouble. {Both chuckling}

KO: I guess not.

MF: But she loves to teach, and I'm glad she does. She said to me one day when we was talking about teachers striking. She says, "Grandma, did you know I'd teach if I knew I wouldn't get any pay, cause I just love to teach that much." Now what she's interested in mostly now is computers. She taught this summer. She just, she just had one week, she's just now going on a one week's vacation, and be back to start school next week.

KO: My goodness.

MF: She really loves to teach.

KO: Well, did you ever work outside the home?

MF: No. No. I never did. I never did work outside the home. I always just uh well, stayed at home and took care of the kids. Never did, never did any public work.

KO: Did you ever have any desire to?

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MF: Well, no, I really didn't. I really didn't. I was busy, you know, in the neighborhood and helping people, and just uh, just never really had any desire to do any public work at all. Not for pay.

KO: How were the women treated when you were young?

MF: How were women treated?

KO: Mhm.

MF: Well, respectful, and uh, uh, most everybody was respectful to ladies and, and mothers and daughters and, any, any women. I never did know of any men, women being mistreated. Of course, I guess they was. But they didn't, I didn't hear tell of anybody was, anybody was beat up their wives like you do nowadays. Like you hear about nowadays. I just didn't know anything about it. Course the news didn't get around then and, and people kept things like that hid.

KO: Mhm.

MF: Because, well, they were so durned ashamed of it.

KO: Mhm.

MF: I think some drunk man would once in a while come home and beat on their wives, but, which I, I guess I know of, heard someone say the other day that children were, they would go to school with bruises, you know, with their parents, and they would just say that they ran into a door or that they fell down. They were ashamed to tell that, the way it happened. And I just, there are always people more or less embarrassed by something like that happening'. But I just didn't never did know of anything about, wasn't familiar with anything of that kind taking place. {Someone in the background speaks.} Did you hear what she said?

KO: Didn't hear what she said. {Short pause}

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MF: It's twelve o'clock.

KO: Is it lunchtime for you?

MF: Well, I'm going to go to lunch after, after I get through with you, but I'm not in any hurry.

KO: Well, okay, I've just got a few more questions for you. What about when women got the right to vote? Do you remember that? {Coughs}

MF: Oh, my goodness. Yes. When I graduated from high school, my uh, I had to make speech, and uh the title of my speech was "Her Place in the Sun." And that was, uh, about women, you know, getting and having the right to vote. And I was so happy when women had the right to vote. Yeah, I was really, pretty pleased about that. That happened just before I turned 21 years old, and I just couldn't hardly wait until I got 21 so I, I could vote.

KO: Well how old were you when you graduated?

MF: I was 17. Graduated from high school.

KO: Did you already know women were going to get the right to vote? Or were you talking in favor?

MF: Just, just trying to build up for it.

KO: So why were you so speech?

MF: Well, I just thought that women ought to have the right to vote. I thought they should have a say so in what was going on in the government. And just like I still think that. I, I, I think that, well, of course, I'm not as, I'm not in any of these women's organizations that are pushing so hard, but I still think women ought to have the same right as a man. Every way and every how.

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KO: So how, when did women get the vote, did people say “oh, our country’s going to hell in a hand basket?”

MF: No. No. I never did, I never did hear anything like that. Some people might have had that attitude, but I just never did hear anything like that all. I just, well some people refused to vote cause they didn’t think that it was the thing for women to do, and I’ve got, I’ve got friends yet that belong to certain churches that still don’t think women ought to vote. But, I, I, I, I don’t think, all for it, all for women doing everything they can do to help out, keep the, keep the government and the, on the right track, on the right track.

KO: You mentioned earlier coming into town, where uh, to see a movie, every Saturday night.

MF: Yeah.

KO: Do you remember the first movie you saw?

MF: Oh, my goodness. {Chuckles} Uh, let’s see, what in the world was the first movie I ever saw. Nickelodeons. You ever tell hear of a nickelodeon?

KO: I’ve heard of it, but am not sure what they are.

MF: Well, it was just a movie that they just charge a nickel for. It was just a, more or less of a funny movie. Wasn’t anything dramatic or all just uh, I don’t remember. I don’t remember the first movie I ever saw. I sure don’t.

KO: What were nickelodeons like? Were they silent movies or did they have sound?

MF: No, they were silent. Silent movies. All the movies were silent for a long, long time. I can even remember when sound first started.

KO: What was that like? Was that exciting?

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MF: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Everybody was happy when they started sound movies. Made it a lot more people would go to sound movies, than they did to silent movies.

KO: Oh, really.

MF: Yeah.

KO: Do you remember the first talkie you ever heard?

MF: No. {Chuckles} No, I sure don't.

KO: What about the first radio you ever heard? Do you remember that?

MF: Well the first radio I ever heard, my mother and father-in-law had this radio and the main station you could get was Chicago. Sears and Roebuck. And uh, we all, you had to have earphones, then, and we all had to take turns, take turns listening to the radio, and uh it was real interesting.

KO: You uh, Sears and Roebuck operated the channel?

MF: Yeah. Sears and Roebuck, yes. They paid for the channel.

KO: Like they had advertisements on it?

MF: Yeah. Mhm. Yeah. That's the reason they called it Sears and Roebuck.

KO: How old were you then?

MF: Oh, about 20, 21 or 2. Somewhere along there.

KO: What kind of stuff did you listen to on the radio?

MF: Mainly music.

KO: What kind?

MF: Oh, uh, just popular, popular music. Course they had news, and uh, you'd listen to the news and then the main thing was popular music. And sometimes religious music but any how it was real interesting to hear that.

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KO: What about the first airplane you ever saw? Do you remember that?

MF: No. No, I sure don't. I don't remember the first airplane I ever saw.

KO: Do you remember when that man had the plane crash on Fredericka Street?

MF: Yes, I sure do.

KO: Did you see that by any chance?

MF: No, no, I didn't see that, but I remember when it happened. It was a horrible thing.

KO: Did people predict that that was going to happen before it happened or did everybody think he was safe and that there wasn't going to be a plane crash?

MF: Well, uh, {Coughs} course some there was a difference of opinion there. Some people thought that he wasn't uh, that he shouldn't be flying, and some people thought that he, uh, that everything was just fine. But it was, it was a really sad situation. Happened, I never will forget, just how horrible it sounded when it happened right there on Ninth and, Ninth and Fredericka Street's where it happened.

KO: Were you in town that day?

MF: No. No. No. No, I just heard it on the news. I don't remember if it was on the radio or how, but any how, I heard it, I heard about it but I wasn't in, wasn't in town. Was out in the country.

KO: What about the first automobile that you ever saw? Do you remember that?

MF: Yeah. {Chuckles} The first automobile I ever saw. I just looked, right here, because there's one in here, {Sounds of pages} This magazine made me think about that. The first automobile I ever saw is right here. See that old fashioned automobile?

KO: Mhm.

MF: Hutmobile.

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KO: Hutmobil.

MF: Mhm.

KO: How did you, how did you happen to see it?

MF: Well, I met somebody, drove it out from Owensboro, out to our church, to uh church uh gathering. I don't remember now just what, the association or Buck Creek Baptist Church and the man that drove the car out there was uh the sheriff of Daviess County. His name was Butch, Butch Milton. And he, he, he drove that car out there and everybody was, was swarming around it, you know, and lookin' at it, and, and excited about it. That's the first car I ever saw.

KO: How long was it before you actually got to ride in one?

MF: Oh I started riding in a car in 19and14. Guess must have been about 1910, I guess, when that first car was, came out there from town.

KO: Were you scared when you first rode?

MF: No. {Laughs} No, I wasn't scared. I was always rather adventurous. Wasn't much afraid of anything. I always just, I never was scared. If I ever did get scared, probably be scared to death. {Both chuckle}

KO: You've seen a lot of new inventions come and go in your life time. Can you think of any invention that changed your life more than any other?

MF: No. No, I really, I really don't. I don't think, I don't really think of any invention that, that made a lot of difference in the way I lived. What inventions did you have in mind? Anything in particular?

KO: Washing machine. Refrigerator. Telephone. Electricity.

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MF: We always had telephone. Since I can remember, we had telephone, and uh washing machine, uh I was not happy when I did get uh, my first washing machine. Like I told you, was a gasoline motor washing machine, and uh the first refrigerator I ever had was just a plain ol' icebox, and it was, it was something to be thought of 'cause it keep, keep food good and cold and keep milk from sourin' and once upon a time before we got any, before we had a icebox well, the way, the way we would keep the milk, we would hang it in the well. Put it in a bucket and hang it in the well. Keep it, keep it cold and butter the same way.

KO: How old were you then?

MF: Oh, that was in the early, early, early '20s.

KO: And that's when you get the uh icebox?

MF: Yeah, about '21, '21, '22, somewhere along there.

KO: Well you mentioned the flood of 1913, did you remember anything about that?

MF: Well, {Clears throat}the water was, uh from Owensboro all the way out at least 8 to 10 miles, and a lot of people did live up on a ridge like and lot of people came, and uh had to get out of the flood, and to come, come to uh our house to, you know, to live during the flood. And then over to Pettit, which is right here, right on Panther Creek, one of my brothers-in-law and his wife lived there, and they just, instead of getting out there, they just moved upstairs. And uh my husband and different ones would get in a skiff and go to their house and took food to 'em and see about 'em. They went around and took these skiffs and went all over the country where in the, where people refused to get out their homes and was living upstairs. So it was really, it was, it was awful. Think about it. Corn, the water got clear up, when the corn was tasselling out, the water got clear over the top of the corn. And the water was just there, everywhere. Drowned out all the crops. Now course these people in South Carolina sufferin' terrible from the drought, but

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the flood was just about as bad. Course it didn't reach over as much territory, I don't think, as this drought has, but Thank the Lord I hear this morning that it's raining there. Course it won't do much good, but at least, at least something. Help out a little bit.

KO: How many people took shelter in your home, would you say?

MF: Oh, I don't know how many people were. There's four or five families. It's like a ten room house. Uh, uh, families, these families wouldn't be, wouldn't be a big family with children. Just be a man and his wife. {Coughs}

KO: Was it hard to feed those people? Keep them dry and entertained and?

MF: Well. {Laughs}

KO: Things like that?

MF: Everybody just seemed like they just, you know, worked together and rest and talk and have a good time. Do the best that they could do to make the best of it, and you had to see about the cattle and the horses and, and keep them out, out of the water, too. So people had to bring out, bring out their, their animals, too, as well as dry out themselves.

KO: Mhm. What about the '37 flood? Do you remember anything about that? There was one in 1937.

MF: Yeah, another one in 1937. Well, the '37 flood, what I was most concerned about, that was in Louisville. My sister lived in Louisville, and I couldn't get anything out to her. They had to move out of the flood. They lived down in the part of Louisville that, well the water got their in house, and then they bought a place at that time up in the highlands, and they still live up to the highlands, thank goodness. But that was really bad, that '37 flood.

KO: But did it affect you here?

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MF: No. Well, it affected some people, but not, not us because we, we were just at the time be away from, from, the 1937 was over more roads. Over 431. Quite a bit over that and 81, too. We couldn't get to Owensboro. Had to go around Pleasant Ridge and get in that way sometimes. Some people did. It was, it was really bad, but nothing like that '13 flood.

KO: I was wondering if you, by any chance, remembered anything about that bank robbery in West Louisville? Back in the '30s?

MF: No.

KO: Man and his wife robbed a bank.

MF: No. I didn't know a thing about that. No way, no how.

KO: I'm looking at my list of questions to make sure that I am not missing anything.

{Pause} What about the Ku Klux Klan? Do you remember anything about that? Was it active around here?

MF: Um, it, there was some organizations, the Klu Klux, that I thought was so horrible, that I just didn't even want to know anything it. I did, I did, I do remember one time that at uh, at church one Sunday night the Klu Klux came to church and they all came to the church and there was a, an evangelist there holding a revival, and they came in and gave that evangelist some money. So, but that, that did me with that the evangelist and {Laughs}. I just thought, I just thought it was terrible to think that that people would come in with hoods on like that and even give him

END TAPE1, SIDE2

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TAPE2, SIDE1

MF: Well, nobody that I knew sympathized with the Klan. They just rather not have anything do with it at all. Most anybody in our neighborhood had nothing to do with the Ku Klux Klan. I never did know where these people came from and came and brought money to the evangelist, but he was from away from here somewhere, away from that neighborhood, and uh evidently he had, he had uh upheld them in their attitude or they wouldn't have given him any money. That's what I didn't like.

KO: What church were you going to? What church did this happen in, do you remember?

MF: Cumberland Presbyterian.

KO: Was it a big church?

MF: Out on Highway 81. No. It was out on highway 81, close to Glenville. Do you know where Glenville is?

KO: Yeah.

MF: Do you know where E.W. Richmond lives?

KO: Mhm.

MF: Well, right across the road from E. W. Richmond's home is where Mt. Pleasant Cumberland Presbyterian Church is. I'm still a member out there. Go out there once a month. {Chuckles}

KO: Oh, really?

MF: Yeah. Go to Walnut Street Baptist other Sundays and

KO: Well, were people upset with these people coming in like this with their hoods on?

MF: Oh, just about, well, were more or less shocked. The church was pretty soon after they came in and gave him the money, why the church, the services dismissed. Course everybody just went home more or less in, in a state of shock, and I don't know if some of them might have known about it, but if they did, they kept quiet about it. Nobody ever did say anything, never did talk about it any more at all. Never did anything happen like that again, thank goodness.

KO: Do you have any idea how much money they gave him?

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MF: No. No, and I never will.

KO: This happen on a Sunday night?

MF: Yeah. Mhm.

KO: About how old were you then?

MF: Oh, I was 25 years old at least. Maybe, maybe 30. I don't know. Somewhere between 25 and 30. I don't remember exactly.

KO: Were there many racial problems around here back then?

MF: No, no. We didn't have any racial problems. There was a time when a quite a few black people lived at Utica, but everybody just got along beautifully. Never did have any problems, any where any how, and when I was a child we had a black man lived in an old house in our yard. We called him Uncle Karo. We just thought the world and all of him. He had, lived on the farm with us, and uh kept the yard and he, he did odd jobs for Momma and just kept around and just was like one of the family, more or less. We just thought the world and all of him, and uh, and then uh all the neighbors in the neighborhood, there were some black people owned good farms close to us, and they were very highly respected, good, good people. So we just, we just always felt, you know, uh just a nearness to the black people. Never did have any ill feelings toward them any way or any how.

KO: What about crime? Was there much crime back then?

MF: Not that I knew about. I didn't know anything much about much crime back then.

KO: We talked a little bit about the hanging awhile ago. Did you get to, but you didn't go to the hanging?

MF: OH, my goodness no. I didn't want to go to the hanging. {Chuckles} No I sure didn't. No, I just {Chuckles}, I don't believe in capital punishment. I do, I do think that people ought to be put in, in the, in the jail or in the penitentiary the rest of their lives and give 'em a

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hundred year sentence or two hundred year sentence, something like that, but I think that'd be more punishment than, than uh hanging or electrocuting either one. I don't believe, I just don't believe in capital punishment.

KO: Back then, were there many people who opposed capital punishment or did most people pretty much?

MF: I don't remember hearing it discussed to any extent whatever. I never, I never, people just didn't discuss anything like that.

KO: You mentioned that you and your husband used to have a General Store, out of Handyville.

MF: Yeah.

KO: What was it like being in that business back in those days?

MF: Oh, it was just a lot of fun. It was uh, maybe you had the people, uh the neighbors all came in and uh, and uh bought groceries, and uh we handled a lot dog feed. I was telling someone this morning that when, when the bird season came in, we sold more dog feed than we did human feed. {Chuckles} A lot of the neighbors had dogs, you know, and did a lot of hunting and they wanted to take good care of their hunting dogs, and then, and then this little ol' country store was more or less a place where people would just hang out. They'd come and just sit and talk and have a good time and then we had a tennis court built right beside the store, and young people would come and play tennis, and drink coca-colas. Just have a good time in general. It was just a, a, I stand that little ol' country store when our youngest son got out of high school. He was just 16 years old and we thought he's too young to go to college, and uh, when he lived on the farm, worked in the tobacco, made him sick, just sick that he could vomit, just sick as a dog, so we built this old store for him to have something to do, and then, then the next

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year he went to college and we had, we were left with the store to take care of, but we had a lot of fun.

KO: Was that back during the '40s that that happened?

MF: Well, yes, the early '40s. Yeah.

KO: How long did you stay in the business?

MF: Till after '45, then we sold it and somebody else ran it then after that. About '46 or '47 somewhere along there is when we sold it. Sold the stock and rented the building.

KO: Mhm. You mentioned your son getting sick at the tobacco fields. Do you have idea why? Was he allergic to the pesticides?

MF: No, it wasn't the pesticides. It was just the smell of the tobacco. Did you ever smell tobacco in the, growing in the field? Well its got an odor to it alright. I don't know. I don't know why it made him sick, but it did. It sure did.

KO: Do you remember when farmers started using insecticides and that type thing?

MF: Well, way back then we used uh what's called Paris Green to kill tobacco worms. That was, that uh, uh was far back as people started growing tobacco. They used it, used that. I guess you'd call that an insecticide.

KO: How did you apply it?

MF: With a spray. With a hand spray. Course later on they had sprays on the back on tractors. Great big sprayer. Then they just walked and sprayed it by hand. I guess at the beginning of it.

KO: Was that a very expensive chemical to get?

MF: Not too expensive. Wasn't near as expensive as chemicals are nowadays. I think that the way they are applied and all makes, what makes 'em they more expensive nowadays.

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KO: Did it change the farmer's life pretty much when he started using more and more chemicals?

MF: Well, uh, I think it, I think it, I guess you'd say they improved their crops maybe by using the chemicals. I don't know. I, I, I don't really know what big change it did make. How much of a change it did make.

KO: You said about the store awhile ago. Did you work in the store much yourself?

MF: Oh, part of the time, just, we just took turns.

KO: So uh, do you remember anything about Ken-Rad came to Owensboro?

MF: No. No, I sure don't.

KO: Do you remember anything about the dam being built here?

MF: No, I, no, I don't remember anything about the dam. I remember when the bridge was built.

KO: Do you? What do you remember?

MF: Well, I just remember that everybody was excited over the, they had a big celebration in town, and when, uh, after the bridge was built. People came in from out in the country to the celebration, and drove across the bridge. Just for the joy of it, you know, having the bridge cross the river.

KO: Did uh, you come in for the celebration?

MF: No. No. No. The boys did. My brother. They all came in, but I didn't. I wasn't, I stayed back at the little ol' store. We had the little ol' store then. I remember when they came back telling about it.

KO: How did that change people's lives? Do you remember?

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MF: No, I don't, I don't, it don't, don't think that it made lot of difference in people's lives. Uh, getting, being able to across the river and go to Evansville maybe helped out some, but I, I, I don't know it did, made any difference at all. I couldn't, I didn't observe any difference. Just, never was concerned about it particularly.

KO: So um, I was wondering what you thought about Franklin Roosevelt?

MF: What'd I think about him?

KO: Mhm. Were you a fan of his? Did you not like him?

MF: Oh, yes, I like Franklin Roosevelt very much.

KO: Was he a popular president?

MF: Yes. Yes, he was. See his picture down here on the wall? {Chuckles}

KO: I noticed that.

MF: Roosevelt, yes indeed, he was a popular president, all right.

KO: Do you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard that he had died?

MF: Well, uh, my son got killed on the 11th of April and on the 12th of April is when Roosevelt died.

KO: Mhm.

MF: At the same time. And of course, I was very sorry to hear about it, but sorry, and sorrow that my son was dead. It was just. I never will forget I got uh, uh sympathy note from a preacher, and uh this preacher and uh in the sympathy note he said two great men have gone home to be with God. Speakin' of my son and uh, and Roosevelt, and I appreciated that. I thought that it was sweet attitude for him to have, course it's this son of mine was really a, a noble person and he knew he was. I appreciated him saying that.

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KO: How did the, the public react to the president's death? Did it, did it have much of any impact on other people, do you think?

MF: Well, as much as you would expect from uh, course everybody, he'd been president for the third term, and everybody had, seemed like everybody had confidence in him, why, right, now I think everybody more or less just as crazy about Reagan as seemed to me like, but I'm not, but I think the majority of the people are. I been noticing last night on the news that there's talk of him running a third, for the third term.

KO: Oh, really.

MF: I don't how it's going to work out. I just wonder.

KO: What about the labor unions getting started back in the '30s? Do you remember anything about that?

MF: No, I really don't. I just never had any dealings with labor unions.

KO: And uh, do you remember when WOMI started broadcasting here?

MF: Yeah.

KO: What do you remember about that?

MF: Well, I remember that, what a joy it was, just to hear WOMI and knew that, the main thing enjoyed about WOMI was the music they had. Remember a neighbor girl that sang with a group that, that uh, was puttin' on a program on WOMI. Course, I enjoyed that.

KO: Did you feel think, gee, she's a celebrity now?

MF: Yeah. {Laughs} Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

KO: Do you remember where you were and what you doing when you heard that World War II had ended? And how did you hear it?

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MF: I heard it on the radio, and I, I guess that, I don't know where I was. At home, I guess. I don't remember now, seems to me like I was down there at that little ol' store, when I heard the war had ended, uh ended.

KO: Sounds like maybe the radio played a big part in people's lives.

MF: It did. It did. Before we got television. Yeah, the radio played a big part. We had nice cabinets, you know, radio cabinets, and good radios and before we even had electric radios we had battery. Battery radios was the first thing we had. Everybody wanted to keep their batteries up, keep, keep, one's that you, batteries was running down, you, sometimes you had two batteries, so you had one ready and one when you wanted to listen to a program.

KO: When did the radio batteries become replaced by the electric ones? Do you remember?

MF: About 19, about 19 and 36. Out in the country, course here in town we had electric all the time. Out in the country about 19, 1935 and 1936.

KO: Is that when you all got electricity?

MF: We got rural electricity. Mhm.

KO: How did that change your life? Did that have an impact?

MF: Well, it made it a whole lot easier to have electric refrigerators and electric radios, electric clocks, and everything, everything electric.

KO: Was this something that you had been looking forward for a while, or?

MF: Well, for a couple years. It, it was about two years getting electricity all over Daviess County.

KO: Was it a very expensive thing to do?

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MF: No, not too expensive. Not as expensive then to do it now. It's going to get more expensive now as, with this uh, things happen to the Green River, going to be more expensive, and I hate that, too. I am sorry about that, cause my home out there is all electric. Everything. Heat and everything. Electric heat so it is going to cost a whole lot.

KO: What about um, your first TV set? Do you remember the first one you ever saw?

MF: The first TV set I ever saw? {Chuckles} I sure don't. I don't remember the first one I ever saw.

KO: Do you remember the first one you ever owned?

MF: The first one we ever owned was in 1955.

KO: It was a little later than the time I am looking at here. I am looking at like 1950 or before. Did many people

MF: '54?

KO: Before 1950, is when I'm, I'm

MF: Oh, the television?

KO: Well, all, this, this whole story is mostly about things that happened before 1950.

MF: Uh huh.

KO: And I was wondering if anybody even had TVs before 1950?

MF: Oh, I see. No, I don't believe they did. Not anybody out in the country. Did not have it. I sure don't, I don't remember anybody having TV. Several of those people had TVs before we did, but I can't remember just what year it was. It might have been, might have been 1950 when the first started, uh, when people first started having TV, but I sure don't remember for sure. And then the people I could ask are dead and gone {Laughs} can hardly find out.

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KO: Well, I think you pretty well answered all of my questions. Is there anything else you wanted to tell me?

MF: Ah, well, I want to get up. {Laughs}

KO: Okay. Okay.

END TAPE2, SIDE1