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## Interview with Oma Gross Regarding Her Life (FA 154)

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

Interview with Oma Gross (CT 8)

Transcriber's Note: The tape begins with Ms. Gross and the interviewer Kim Parson looking at photos. Most of their conversation about the photos is not intelligible on the tape. The interview generally is difficult to hear. If the words are unintelligible, the transcript is marked with ?? to indicate the problem.

TAPE1, SIDE1

KIM PARSON: This is Kim Parson and I am talking with Miss Oma Gross in Island, Kentucky on July 29, 1986 with the Oral History Project. {Looking at photos}

OMA GROSS: World War I, World War II, both. The ??, and I had skim on my eyes and I can't read it anymore.

KP: No, this is the, the *Messenger* thing.

OG: Yeah. And it's pretty good. Right down here is the, that was the president in World War I, over there,

KP: Uh huh.

OF: That was one that, signed the Peace Treaty. At the end, there's a lot pictures in, there of... We lived out, out in the country, and didn't have any real route, and we didn't catch the paper during World War I. And didn't have no radio, and anyway they wouldn't let much news out back then, like they did World War II. So I never did know too much. 'Course that was the one my brother got killed in, after World, World War I.

KP: How did you get the news? Just word of mouth, or ?

OG: Well, yes, yeah, and from people that did get the paper, you know, and I was tellin', you know, about uh, his blood he didn't want us to bring, his body back, and here's a piece that I found, in a paper that, um, tell what he said about, when he was killed.

KP: Oh. {Chuckles}

OG: He,

KP: He

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OG: He saw his own grave.

KP: Huh. He was, just walking around ‘n, {Chuckles}

OG: Someone first seen him and told him, said, “Well, I buried you.” And then he told ‘em it’s up to the cemetery and he walked around there and seen it.

KP: {Snorts}

OG: And he wanted, there’s some more pictures there, if you want to take them, and, there’s some of Bud and a good many of the awards.

KP: Well, I think what Karen’ll probably do is try to use some of the things that uh, we got from you at the church, ‘n I know they’re gonna be making pictures of a lot of things.

{Pause} Let’s save that. I just put that in the corner there, so I wouldn’t lose it out of there.

Well, I guess we should start off, I want to find out as much as I can about what you remember about when you growing up and uh, how things were when you were a child?

OG: {Chuckles} Well uh, my Father was a, farmer but he didn’t own his own land. He was a sharecropper, and uh, that way he didn’t have very much, ‘cause you had to, divide half what you made for the other fellar, and, we lived in some pretty hard looking houses. Once in a while, by some, they’d have a pretty good house, but, most of the time it was, bad.

KP: What did you do? Did you have to help work?

OG: Oh yes, I worked from the time I’s big enough to go to the tobacco patch, ‘n, them old worms. I’d just hate to pull their heads off. {Laughs} I had four brothers and one sister, and uh, you’re gonna laugh at this. {Chuckles} My sister and I got five dollars apiece in the spring, to buy our summer wardrobe. What would that buy now?

KP: Probably not much.

OG: No.

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KP: I bet you could get a lot then.

OM: Well, I tell you what we got. We had thin material. It was, uh, some of it called it boiled and some long. It was prettier than anything they got now. And it's ten cents a yard. And back then, oh, they trimmed it in an awful lot of lace, where you could get the lace for, three or five cents, you, according to the width of it. Well, you could get enough for a dress for a dollar, you know. Well, you'd get two dresses, and then, everything from, five year old up wore a hat. You never seen nobody without a hat. We'd get a hat for a dollar and a half. That would leave a dollar and a half to get our slippers. {Chuckles}

KP: Do, do, do, do you just get one pair of shoes for a dollar and a half or, could you get more?

OG: No, you couldn't get but one pair. We didn't go anywhere hardly. And our everyday dresses, our Mother would take eggs to the store, and you could get what they called calico. ?? Don't know what that is now. Four and five cents a yard. And that's, what your everyday dresses was, ??, they had a whole lot of that, ?? you did. {Chuckles}

KP: Is it something like cotton, maybe or?

OG: Well, it was cotton material, yes, but I just don't ever see any of it anymore. ?? as far as that goes. And, 'bout, the only place, that we would have, usually wear it to church, go to church, and through the ?? and ??, but we always looked forward to the Fourth of July. We went to Vickers Bridge Picnic.

KP: Vickers Bridge?

OG: Yeah, it was between Rumsey and Calhoun. You remember where it's at?

KP: Uh huh.

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OG: And uh, go in the wagon, we would hitch the team out in the woods. There's woods all around it, and usually take our dinner. 'N we'd go out there in the woods, and they had chairs in the back of the wagons, to set in, and we'd spread our dinner and eat it. But, me and my sister, we'd stay all day. {Chuckles} On a nickel popcorn ball. They had popcorn balls about like that, that's five cents. And we'd stay all day, 'n, and eat our little popcorn ball. Kid now, if you don't give them as much as five or six dollars, they throw it in your face but, you couldn't buy anything for a nickel either.

KP: It's true.

OG: And I don't know much more to tell you, now, as I started to say, right now, our house is, Dad ?? a plank, and usually about a half inch crack between, each plank. And, you didn't have carpets back then. That wind'd come up through there,

KP: {Chuckles}

OG: But we had great big, fireplaces, that was as big as from there to there. Wood fireplaces, you burnt wood. And you could build on a big fire and set you back to the back of the house, the fire was so ?? what kind of house it was. And I can remember, but I don't remember where it was at, but I can remember that we lived, on the river bank, and I like to gotten drowned twice. I was just two, three years old, but I can remember that. {Chuckles}

KP: What happened, did you just wander down to the water or?

OG: Well, uh, we had a dingy boat and a ferry boat both there, and uh, my brothers would, take my sister. She was four years older than me. They'd get out in that boat and ride around and wouldn't let me go. {Chuckles} They's afraid I'd fall out. Well, one day they got out there and I wanted to go and they wouldn't let me, so I started wadin' to 'em, and, I was up to my, neck when they saw me and hollered for Mother to come and get me. That was one time,

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and another time, I, there was a houseboat, on the river that a family lived and we all visited, and uh, Mother went one day, and she didn't let us kids go. {Chuckles} And I don't know, there was a great big tree, log, and that, we'd walk on 'til we got out to the boat, you know. Well, after she went and my older brother said, "Well, we'll just go, too." That's how well we minded I guess. So anyway, why, we got on that log, and I was three years old, and they wadn't paying no attention to me. They felt like loggers?? were, but anyway, I fell off of it. I clinged to it, but the log turned, and of course it did, and I went under twice, and if I went under the third time, I wudn't of come up, of course, but uh, the second time, why, I come up and my brother jumped in and got me out. I can remember my sister standin' up there, screamin' bloody murder.

{Chuckles} But I don't know why that, why that was ever at. Now, I remember the first school I went to, and that was uh, about, two and a half miles, I guess, down by Little Sacramento.

They called it the Jaywell? School House, 'course it was, down away with now. Oh, we would walk. It was uh, about, at least a mile and a half, from our house, and we had to walk it all the time. And bad weather, course the roads, wasn't nothin' but dirt roads. We didn't know what, overshoes was. Time we'd get there, our feet would be like ice, and stayed thata way all day.

KP: You all have uh, very many people, that walked to the school?

OG: Oh,

KP: Was it a big school?

OG: Yes, it was pretty big school back then, that, they went, they went to this common school, until they was grown. If I can find it, I've got a picture here somewhere. Why they'd go there, where now they go to college, but, but they went to this school, when, when they was grown.

KP: What are the types of things maybe that you all studied?

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OG: Well, I don't know. 'Course I, was a kid. I guess I ?? That's ?? {Pause} Uh, ??

KP: Here.

OG: ?? But, ?? as big as the teacher was. We was in the, I guess, eighteen or twenty year old. ?? at the school house. And there was uh, a grown girl, and a grown boy there went, and I guess I was six or seven, about seventh grade, I think it's what they taught. But back then, there was no high schools anywhere around, and the only high school you go to was to Bowling Green, and 'course, the people wasn't able to do that. ??

KP: What about, one of the reasons maybe that they went, to, school when they were up so old, did a lot of 'em miss school a lot because of the weather or having to work on the farm?

OG: Well, I wouldn't know. Now, back then they didn't have it but three months.

KP: Mm.

OG: As long as they'd have it. And uh, they would start you in the first, but they moved every time you went. You had to recite by heart.

KP: {Chuckles}

OG: And uh, sometimes you couldn't get anywhere other than ???. I didn't get to go a whole lot. 'Cause my mother was sick after I got any size. My brother was sick a lot. I didn't get too far as far as my education was concerned. I was fourteen. I stayed home cause she got down. I wish that I could find that picture. I was uh, people, all ages as, as, big as the teacher, you know?

KP: Mm hm.

OG: {Chuckles}

KP: What were the kind of things that you all did for fun? I know you said you went to the Fourth of July picnic, but?

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OG: Well, a once in a great while, they'd have a ice cream supper. And, we'd go to that when we was kids, uh, we'd go to that, and uh, sometimes we might get ice cream cones, and sometimes we might not, but we got to play with the other kids, you know, and when we got older, well, you might say, why, they had parties in the neighborhood. Nearly, nearly every near a week or two somebody would give 'em a party. They don't ?? now, of course. But we would enjoy those parties, and uh, sometimes they'd have, they would have, make ice cream, have ice cream, you know, at the party. That's about all that you would know to go to. It wasn't uh, you had no, way to go anywhere. And, wasn't, wasn't, once in while there'd be a carnival or something, that you might go to the show, or play. But you definitely didn't do much going like young folks does now. You done more work, than you did goin'.

KP: What about, going out on dates? What was courting like? A lot different, I guess.

OG: Yes, it was different. You had most of it at home. You had, back then what you called, a parlor. And, you had your, your boyfriends at home, uh, your family wouldn't, let you go out very much. Mind, if you did, it was uh, in a buggy and a horse.

KP: Did you have a chaperone?

OG: Huh?

KP: Did you have chaperones?

OG: Well, I just didn't go. Uh, now once in a while in day time, why uh, I would go, but the most time we had our company at home, or uh, when we'd go to these parties or anything, just a great big bunch go, go, us, all together.

KP: Where did you go on dates? Did you go into church or?

OG: If we was close enough, yeah. But if we didn't, we stayed home. That's when we'd go to a party.



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KP: Mm hm.

OG: You know, a play party.

KP: Do you remember or, anything about how uh, they had medical practices, what the doctors did to help people that were sick?

OG: Well, they come to your house. You didn't know what goin' to the hospital was. These doctors would come to your house, and, I can just see 'em now. {Chuckles} They would have this satchel, and they carried the medicine with 'em. First thing they'd ask was to see your tongue. {Chuckles} And then, they'd say it was coated you needed, you needed uh, liver medicine. Oh my, that'd make you so sick you could die. I don't know that's funny. But you just had to have it back then, and you don't now, and I don't understand it. But if you didn't, why the first thing you know, you'd be, you'd be sick at your stomach. You'd be sick as a mule. And lot of times, you'd, you have typhoid fever, and the doctor'd fuss at you, say, "Just make yourself ??," and you'd ??, but you'd take that ?? typhoid fever. I can remember one time that uh, I knew I, needed to take a round of liver medicine, but, it was workin' out we was making ??, us tryin' to get to the ?? out, and I didn't say anything about it, until I got so sick at the stomach that I had to, and uh, so I take this round of medicine, you need to write this down. {Both laugh} I start to the toilet. 'Course it was always ?? from the house outside, but I never get there. There's a, pile of lumber about half way, and that's as fer as I'd ever get, and you're so sick. I sit down there and go to vomitin'. And when I'd get through, I didn't want to go out the rest of the path.

KP: {Chuckles}

OG: I can't understand now, that you don't have to take that, medicine. You don't get sick like that.

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KP: Mm hm.

OG: Give the shots, so many shots they give here.

KP: I don't know. Do you know what, what kind, what the medicine did, or anything?

OG: It just, moved your bowels, and there'd be just black, and move this uh, bile, they called it all, and it, it'd be just as black as it could be, and your tongue would be coated. It'd be just plum white. And you'd go to getting' sick at your stomach and gettin' blind, and you just had to take some. And now you don't, and I just, can't understand it.

KP: Mm. Well, I don't know what it would be.

OG: We'd taken calomile oil, and now, I don't guess they take calomile for anything.

KP: What was that for?

OG: Well, that was for that.

KP: The same thing?

OG: Uh huh. And oh, it would make you so sick. {Chuckles} A woman told, me once, she said uh, "Take, take it about ever hour, something like that." And before you get through with the round, why, you get yourself so sick, you couldn't hardly swallow. And uh, it was Miss Fergusons who told me this, and, and you know her daughter was over with the church?

KP: Uh huh.

OG: And she said uh, "Take the whole business at onct." And then she said uh, "Thataway you won't get so sick while you're tryin' to take it." Well, I had never tried it, and, {Chuckles} so the woman who lived right out the back of us, and she said, "I'm gonna have to take some heavy medicines, and I'm blind and I'm sick and everything else, and why that way." 'Cause that's what she was gonna take, but she wasn't gonna take it all at once. She took it all at

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once, and it nearly like to worked her to death. She said, “I don’t want your remedy anymore.”

{Both chuckle}

KP: Were you supposed to take it maybe, take it once and then take it all later in the day, or something like that?

OG: Yes, about ever hour or two, you know, something like that, and uh, before you’d get all of ‘em taken’, you’d done begin to turn sorta sick, you know, and she said, “Just take ‘em all at once.”

KP: {Chuckles}

OG: She said that’s they way she give ‘em to her kids. So uh, I imagine they got pretty sick. {Both chuckle}

KP: What about, uh, different ways maybe that uh, they buried the dead, then?

OG: Well, they didn’t, they didn’t know what vaults was. They made vaults. They made, they made wooden, and when they dug this grave, why they would dig it so far, and then they’d, they’d come out and have a shelf like. And, and then they would uh, that would, be a place to lay a plank, and they would put a heavy plank on top of that. And they said that kind of plank, the kind of plank that was cypress or what it was, but anyway, they said it’d practically last forever, and, they didn’t know what a steel vault, and, they didn’t embalm ‘em either. Now, they just begin embalming about the time my mother died, and at her request was not to be embalmed, and of course uh, that way you had to bury the next day, you know. And then if it was hot, why, they packed ‘em in ice. I have helped, do some of ‘em packed in ice. You take quart jars, and beat this ice up and fill these jars, and you’d put one on each side of their face, and one on each side of their hips, and one each side of their knees, and one of each side of their feet. And the, the ice would melt, as soon as you’d think, and we had to take ‘em out and do it

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again. That was to keep ‘em if it was hot. You had to keep ‘em cold and, you know. Then the next day bury them. That just depended on the weather, and we buried her at Greenville. And we buried her up above Greenville. And the first hearse was drawn by horses. And we was all day in that dirt and we was all day getting up in that mud was ankle deep. We had to stay all night.

KP: Did you really – I know my grandmother would tell me that uh, people would stay up with the dead. Like if they kept them overnight.

OG: Oh yes, yes. Always set up all night. Even my Mother and Daddy both.

KP: What was the reason for staying up like that?

OG: I don’t know but when we first began uh, takin’ ‘em to the undertaker shop and people thought it was AWFUL that you didn’t sit up with them anymore. I-I don’t know. It was just what had always been done and they, the neighbors would come in and uh, set up. and you would usually, your neighbors would bring stuff, you’d try to have stuff on the table, for them to go and eat through the night. Sittin’ up of course they would get hungry and sleepy and thirsty. Yes uh, they sat up with my Mother and my Daddy both. My mother was young when she died. She was in her fifties. My Daddy died in ’36. he was 85. And we sat up and most spent long, long time after it began having the undertaker shops. There’s so many people that want to be brought back home, you know? Some have yet lost ties with the church. I want my funeral in the church.

KP: What- what about movies? Did you ever get to, do you remember the first motion picture, first movie you went to?

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OG: Well, really I don't know whether I- I don't know. Now they used to have a theatre here and uh, it burnt down. And I went there but I was, I was thirty years old. And I, I, went with my niece and nephew, they wanted to go. And I went with them.

KP: You were three years old? Is that what you said?

OG: I imagine I was. And I just stood there, that wasn't the first one I don't guess, I ever went to. But I don't remember. There hardly was any. There wasn't, you know, we lived in, at Bremen for years. But the closest one there was Central City and that was too far to walk.

[chuckles]

KP: Guess you did have to walk, that-that probably cut down on the different places you could go.

OG: Yeah, it did. But we lived a right smart piece from town. A whole bunch of us and we enjoyed them parties, play parties. It's about the same thing as square dancing. Only the its sung instead of music.

KP: What about the first car that you saw around here, or maybe the first one that you all had?

OG: Ah well, course, my Daddy never did own a car. But I did. I can remember when the first cars come out and I never will forget you'd get going anywhere in a buggy or a wagon and when this car'd passed, you'd get scared. You'd ride faster than you wanted them to ride, cause they'd be scared. My Daddy never did own a car.

KP: How old were you when you first started seeing cars out around here?

OG: Well let's see I guess twenty some odd. Around twenty. I never will forget my aunt had the entire house then. We lived at Greenville. She was there and we went to pick up [chuckles] seen a car coming, and scared. She wanted, my Daddy to stop and let her out. He

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wouldn't do it. And she turned around in the wagon and put her feet on the outside and boy, she was just a-gigglin'. She was a kickin' you know, with both feet. He wouldn't let her out, he told her to turn around and behave herself. And I know those people in that car was tickled to death because back in that time, we was drivin' an old wagon and he didn't pay a bit of attention to it and she was the one that's having the fit. But uh, I've been in car, I mean wagon, and I just hated to see a car pass, cause you'd really have to hold still in the wagon cause they didn't want to be there. And I remember the first radio out here.

END TAPE1, SIDE 1

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

OG: Stopped it, ?? [chuckles] they was funny-looking. I wonder who's got one of them.

KP: Mhmm. Hmm. Well I've never heard that, about the lightnin' strikin' a home like that.

OG: Yeah, it would. It run out that mouth piece?? right there across the house. It just ?? we ?? on ours. ??

KP: What were maybe some of the, the, different songs and uh, things that were out when you were growing up?

OG: [chuckles] Well I can't remember too much about that. I uh, there was one who liked to sing a lot. Casey Jones.

KP: You remember what it was about, or?

OG: Well, uh, he was a conductor on a train. And then there was one about Floyd Collins. I didn't have that song, dear but I...he was exploring in a cave, I guess you've heard

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about it and got caught in there. And uh, well the government, government, government came and made him get him out. And no tellin' what it cost. And, they worked on it for days, and said they couldn't get him out. They claimed they had a pipe that went down there that they was putting feed and water to him. Then they claimed couldn't get him out and they just covered him up.? Well he had some friends here at Central City that uh, that he wanted to go with him and they wouldn't go. They went and told his Daddy and that they could get him out. Course he didn't believe it. So then after the government didn't get him out, why they went again and told him they could still get him out so he let them try, and they got him out. And when they got to him, why he was laying way over in the corner with a big rock on him and his food and stuff was in another corner. He wasn't gettin' any of it. And he just laid there and died. And uh, they buried him. And then somebody stoled him. I don't know why. And when they found him he was on the river bank and something had eat his face pretty bad. They had him in a cave over there, uh, I think it was in, I don't know I didn't go in, we went to the cave, but I didn't go in. But there's some of them did, and they said that he was in the cave and had him in alcohol, and uh, course to make money out of it. And they said he looked like a wax doll or something. But they claimed that that was where something eat his face and they'd fixed it, you know. They hardly got him out and then next thing you know and all.

KP: Hmm. What about the 1913 flood or?

OG: Well now, I wasn't anywhere about it. But I remember it. My brother lived over in Hopkins County and it run them out. And they uh, he went down and he went down to the south and moved back in and it come up again the second time he come up, it got on the third row of boards on top of the house. And they moved out that time and why they went to Louisville. Had to clean it up again.

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KP: Mhmm.

OG: But I lived in Bremen at the time. And he wasn't over there about it. There, there's what he did. We was on this island, but uh, water got around to where they couldn't get in here. The grocery stores, they'd come and they'd go so far and they'd bring bread and stuff that they would run out of and got the ?? a lot of stuff that you couldn't get they just couldn't, the trains and everything couldn't get in here, the water.

KP: We were talking about World War I a little earlier and uh, the different things that went on. You remember, uh, much about World War II, and did uh, did you get news any quicker in World War II?

OG: Oh yes, yes, they uh, you got news all the time in World War II. We thought we got too much. We go, we believed they give out too much. The things they would give out that we thought hurt us in a way. Oh yeah, it would come out, in World War II.

KP: What were some of the things that maybe you thought they shouldn't have been tellin'?

OG: Well, I don't remember now what it was but I know there's things that they told that uh, you hear a lot of talk about, that they, this country would tell. They, they had things that they had and all, but uh we thought that was bad. They didn't tell nothing in World War I like that. My brother told me, uh, he said now "You'll get a letter, and a whole lot of it's cut out," said "Don't get scared because if I write anything that they don't want the war censors then they'll jst cut it out. Said, they always, can't ?? read them ?? before they see them. And, but I never did get one that had ever been cut out, and then after he went across why, he told me to look under the stamp. Course he couldn't have wrote much under there but he said always look under the stamp,



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the letter came to me but there wasn't no stamp on it. And they went across and there never was a stamp ever put on.

KP: Hmm. Well, was he gonna write things to you that maybe he felt the censors would cut out, try to get that in under there where the stamp was.

OG: That's what he told me. They didn't know where he was at or something, you know. Some of them had that fixed before they left. It's something they would say when they was in a certain place. It's the words, you know, that let 'em know where he was at.

KP: Mmhmm.

OG: We never thought of anything like that...But I never will forget what he told me when he left. He always called me Pea. And he said uh, "I'll come back whole or I won't come back." And I said, "Don't say a thing like that." Now of course we didn't know then that they would have hospitals and things to take care of him, we didn't know anything about that. 'Cause we had never lived through a war. And uh, I said you know better than to say things like that. I said, "Regardless, of what kind of shape you'd come back, we'd take care of you." He said "No I'm not coming home to my family unless I come back whole." So it made me think then that his captain said he was right by him when he got shot and he told Scott to take first aid.

[Tape breaks off ]

OG: ?? he'd come to this dugout and he was in it. He seen he was done gone, and uh, we had all tramped on him and all, and I believe I told you about him that about them clocks?

CP: What?

OG: The clocks?

CP: Oh yeah the clocks! Yeah, I remember that.

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OG: There's three of them and they all ?? nine down. And they all stopped to the minute. They didn't tell me. Cause I was ?? Miss Mabel was there and uh, my brother, ??and my daddy, ?? my daddy?? and he said to me "You'll hear from Larry" and I ?? it was just an accident. And he said "Not like that." And he went home to sit down. when they, now he was killed in uh 14th of October but we didn't, I don't know why they took so long in letting us know. It was about the middle of December before they ever sent us a telegram. When they did, my brother said he wished he would have set down and heard it and my neighbor said I did, and uh, said it turned out found the clocks stopped. I got a letter from a boy that he said went in this dugout to refill his gun. And he said, my brother said to him, said Larry they've got me. He said, "Well I'll stay with you." And he said "No you can't ?? thataway" I'll get more before I go, and he told me what it was and he said that was all and that was just a sacrament said that was ?? Now that was, I don't know, just a mystery, in a way but he was a Mormon ?? I would have believed it.

CP: What about when the war was over and people came home? Was there big celebrations?

OG: Oh yes, yes, and you know that has always been funny to me, in a way. A bunch comes in my house and they want me to go with 'em. And I don't know why, we just seemed like we, that I, seemed like I couldn't separate. And I guess that was why. But I didn't know at the time, that my brother was killed. But I know I just, I didn't go with 'em to celebrate. Oh yes there was celebrations everywhere. Shooting guns and I think there's some pictures of it up there...over at the church, not for sure, some celebration.

CP: Mhmm.

OG: And I guess in the cities, I lived out in the country, I guess in the cities they did. We didn't much wanna celebrate. was another one?? we uh, there's a fan ??

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CP: What about uh, crime in this area? Do you remember there being a lot of crime when you were growing up?

OG: No. You never thought about locking your door. We didn't leave them open? No, there wasn't very much crime of uh, somebody might steal some chickens, or something like that. [chuckles] You didn't have no screens. Nobody had screens, you can imagine the flies. Now one or two flies will wear you death. And they were just be in swarms, and course you would get you a limb off a tree or something and fan them off the table, when you's eating food. I think now one fly worries me to death. Back then, the house is full of 'em. Nobody had screens and uh, course when you lived on a farm, i guess, I imagine it was worse than in town, I don't know. But you had stock and chickens and hogs and things like that you know like I knew ?? [chuckles] and uh, when a child went to sleep, why you, uh went and bought a mosquito ball. And you would fix something over the bed so it wouldn't be right down on them and cover 'em up with it, so they could sleep without flies and the mosquitoes too. The mosquitoes was bad; we sprayed for 'em. I don't know how young folks would do if they had to live like we lived back then...

CP: [chuckles]

OG: ...wash on a washboard all day long, and iron everything. And your iron would set your iron on the stove. I had brothers and uh they wore white shirts. And back then these shirts, lotta times would be pleated. Oh, it was a job ironin' them things.

CP: Especially having to set that iron on the stove to keep it hot.

OG: Yeah. and you couldn't hardly keep from a black streak from going across it. You'd clean your iron, still had a black streak. I was talking to a woman the other from Calhoun, she was down there at the home and I was down there, and then when she went home, she called th-two-three times a week and uh, she was talking about "Wouldn't ya like to go back to the good

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old times?” And I said “No, I wouldn’t.” I think some of ‘ems all right, but I said, I wouldn’t like packing a lamp around everywhere I went. Uh, you would have a lamp, you know, that you would pack. I never will forget I dropped it one night and it rolled under Daddy’s bed. And I’s scared to death, afraid the floor would run out, then catch a fire and blow up. I-I had to crawl under there and get it and throw it out in the yard. I said, no I don’t want to go back to packing lamps around everywhere I go. And of course we didn’t know the icebox ?? course, the icebox is come in first, before refrigerators did, you’d buy ice and put in there but you didn’t even know what that was.

CP: Well what about when electricity came in? What was it like? How did it make life different you?

OG: Well, just made life a whole lot different. Now we got electricity out in the country before anybody else got it. Oh uh, we got it ?? the mines, hooked up to the mines, uh, they was uh minin’ on our ground and uh, so they hooked us up to the mines and that’s where we got our electricity and uh, well, ?? why you didn’t have anything but the lights and the iron, that’s all you had. Electricity didn’t even amount to anything ?? about two or three dollars. And they kept adding things to it and then ?? [chuckles] its pretty ?? now.[chuckles]

CP: How old were you when you got electricity, do you remember?

OG: Yes, it was after I married that we got electricity and I guess I was uh, I imagine I was forty-five years old. And I can remember when they got electricity here, and I’m and we owned the house here in Island ?? but, it hadn’t been there very long, and we hadn’t ever had our wired, and the renters wanted to wire, cause we didn’t wire it ?? We didn’t have anything. That’s the reason it’s no plug ins here ?? it was wired back when we had nothing. All the plug ins they had ?? moved here back there behind the other ?? and they had the ice box connected up ?? the

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ceiling and then we had a ?? put in the ice box ?? in the bedroom ?? ceiling might. ?? where you can plug in anything else. ?? fan back there, I ?? in the kitchen. ?? I can't sleep under it and I can't sleep ?? [chuckles] It's so hot I can't sleep without it and it just chokes me up stops my head up. ?? So I have to find ?? I don't sleep very much.

CP: What about in the winter and ya, the houses close to ya didn't have any central heating? What did you do to keep warm at night in beds?

OG: Well, that's when I say we had these great big wood fireplaces and you would just cover up you know, we could put a great big log in the back, then another one on top of it. Then you put what's called a forelog in front and then all in between you'd fill up with uh, the little ones you know. And you couldn't sit by it, warmed up the house as far as I'm concerned, but I was uh, that kind of shape lots of times, but you didn't get cold. But now it was so different when they began being grates with coal you know. That didn't warm the house like the wood fires did. Your legs would burn in front and your back would freeze. [chuckles]

CP: Well, let's see, are there some things that I haven't asked you about that you thought maybe we'd talk about, or?

OG: Aw, can't really think of anything.

CP: What about- what about maybe like the stock market crash, in the Depression, how did that change things?

OG: Well, now that didn't-didn't bother us very much. We lived out in the country. And we had our cows, we had our chickens and killed our hogs so we had our milk and butter, our chicken and eggs and our meat and lard. And we had our corn, dig that and mills were everywhere. You'd take your corn to the mill and have it ground and eat your meal. And uh, and as far as the, and of course we had gardens and we'd canned to put up everything. And as far as

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what we had to buy in the grocery line, we didn't have to buy anything but sugar and coffee and flour but now, people in towns, uh had it bad I believe. We had a family here back of us worked in the mines. Of course the mine's shut down. They was really in bad shape and uh, we would give them milk all the time, give the guy a milk, everyday and uh, we had dried beans, and he kept beans and he had a whole passel of children but he was, he was ?? now he wasn't ?? and I probably would be. But uh, my brother-in-law told him, to get that almost in our backyard. Told him to come on by and shucked him out a sack of corn. And he would take the milk around and he was too lazy to shuck out that sack of corn.

CP: What about uh, maybe the Ku Klux Klan? They were active...

OG: What?

CP: The Ku Klux Klan? The Klan.

OG: Yeah, yeah. It tried to come back. When they started out, they did pretty good things, but they was a few that got into it and they was a few that done dirty work and it was laid on people of the Klan. They'd knowed it would be, you know. I can't, I can't understand. [chuckles] A funny thing, uh, they, I was talking about. The Ku Klux Klan had a meeting and we went to it and uh, my Daddy was into it and they didn't know it. And uh, his mask, we could see the side of his face [chuckles] and when we got home that night we went teasin' him about it, but of course he denied it but we knowed it. They didn't even have to tell the family you know.

CP: Did you all sneak out to go one of the meetings, just peekin' in or something?

OG: No, he was used to us coming to the meeting. But uh, but you know, they didn't think that we'd know any of them because they had on masks, you know. That, he didn't have his mask on right, straight and we could see the side of his face and his moustache. We went teasin' him as soon as we got home and he said "why, it wasn't me. I wasn't even there!"

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CP: [chuckles]

OG: But we knowed he was there.

CP: Did you hear stories of different things that went on? Things that maybe the Klan did, or?

OG: Yeah, we'd hear things, but, uh, things they'd done and uh, I guess probably they did do it. But what they done was the good now you'd take uh, I've heard them say once, there was a man, uh he was lazy and uh, he wouldn't keep wood for his wife, she had to get out and cut her own wood and everything. and a bunch of 'em went there, and they took him out and just beat the fire out of him. and they told him that they'd better see wood piled up there all the time, and they did too. He got the wood cut. [chuckles] Now they done a lot of good, things like that and uh, I don't know whether these things that have happened, I don't know whether they've done it, or somebody else done it and they knowed they'd be blamed. They could just put on a mask you know, and do anything and be lazy [chuckles] but now I knowed several that was in that, and they was good people. I don't think that they did do to avenge, then the law took over. The law never could have made that man cut wood.

CP: What about racial problems? Were there any racial problems?

OG: Oh yes. Back then, you know, white people just wouldn't have anything to do with colored people and within the last few years, and when they'd get on the bus, why these colored people wasn't allowed to sit anywhere but in the very back, the very back, the seat back there and that's when they had to go by themselves. Well it was pitiful in a way, but it was the way you was raised and you just didn't have anything to do with them, that's all. It was a different time then, now they come out with rights and now they can sit anywhere they want to. But you can't blame them for not liking the white people and I don't see why but they keep a fighting

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about slavery. I hear it on the news and cut it out in the paper about how we used to treat the slaves. Well of course it's not the people here and now, and uh, I don't see why they keep it stirred up. Course, they did treat them slaves like dogs, they worked them like dogs and treated them like dogs. And they would beat them you know. But now in my lifetime, there hadn't been no slaves. But we lived close to a family that had been slaves, and uh I was just a kid but I liked going down talk to them. But now they said they had a pretty good little master. But for some of them, it was awful the way they done them. But they just, they'd tie 'em and whip 'em and hit, you know, just cut the blood out of 'em.

CP: Mhmm.

OG: But, this old man, he laughed, he said uh, but first the white boys would eat it, and d then they'd take their stuff off the table. Well they had a stand with molasses and it didn't last as long as the white boys and the white boys didn't do nothing. And uh, they wasn't very hungry, so he said uh, that one night they'd come to the table and uh, they ate up the molasses, so he got up and he was gonna slip in and get the white boys and the molasses. And the uh, The "Old Monsters," he used to call them, he had a piccolo and he'd sing! He said he yelled at him, and he said, "Boy, I'd dropped that bag." [chuckles] But he said now, he was good to us, he said, but a lot of 'em was. Then he said of course there's a big bunch of uh, little huts around and Nigras were livin' in 'em you know, their slaves. And he said, the night after they'd all go to bed, up at the house. Why, they'd all get together and uh, go up and draw, they had molasses by the barrels. And they'd, boy, they'd go and draw them out some molasses and cook whole pigs and have molasses occasionally. Well, they'd draw straws which one was to go get these molasses, so he said, uh, he got it one time. Well he went and he drew a gallon of molasses and he heard a



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rabbit and got scared and he run, and he left the barrel down, you know and the stopper out of it.

So when they got over it and went back to see about it, molasses had run everywhere, you know.