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Interview with Opal Cline Crabb Regarding Her Life (FA 154)

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

TAPE1, SIDE1

JOE ADAMS: Well, all right.

OPAL CRABB: ?? uh, three miles west of uh, Elva.

JOE ADAMS: Okay. Well, this is Joe Adams with the *Messenger-Inquirer*, and uh, the date is August uh, 14th or 15th?

OC: 14th.

JA: I think it's August 15th, and I'm here at the home of Miss Opal Crabb. Here near the Elva community uh, in McLean County, and today we're talking about her recollections of uh, of the years from uh, her childhood to about 1949. Well, that's it. Uh, first let me, let me if you would, just for my tape uh, tell me, tell me your, your full name and your age, where you grew up and where you lived most of your life.

OC: Well, first of all I'm eighty-one years of age. I was uh, born uh, in the same house, in a log cabin, at this location, and uh, went to school at the uh, one-room uh, school at Shady Grove, one room uh, school at Shady Grove, and uh, in 1920 I went to Beech Grove to the local high school. Finished high school there. I uh, graduated uh, 24th of May, 1924 and in September of that same year I started teaching school, at the local school, Shady Grove, one-room school, eight grades. My pay was forty-seven dollars a month.

JA: Oh my.

OC: {Chuckles} I taught there uh, four years, uh, at the end of the second year, at that, I, I was teaching at that time on a certificate by examination. I finished high school in May and I started teaching school in September, so I, I take uh, teacher's examination uh, I had uh, a certificate to teach and I taught on that the four years that I taught. But then the two years at, at, after I taught two years, I decided I needed to further myself, in the educational field so I went to Western, Bowling Green, and entered in, taught school that year and entered in Spring term in April. Then, I, I, at that time, I thought I'd just work out a life certificate, which I did, but at the end of that time I decided that I'd just go ahead and finish my degree, so in 1930 I received my Bachelor's Degree. I went to Nashville. Took a job at a tea room. I was assistant manager there, uh, several years, until the first child came, in 19n, in 1934. I was married in 1930. 1930. I was married in 1930 and my first child came in 1934, so I took time off there, uh, lived in Nashville, until 1938, we returned to Bowling Green and lived in Bowling Green. Meantime there'd been another child, a son, George. Came back to Bowling Green and lived there until, George finished high school, and then, at that time I started back to school, Bowling Green, and received my Masters Degree. I, in 19n56 my mother died uh, at this place. I was the only child, and the farm was here with no one to look after it, so my husband was, could, could retire. He was a railway postal clerk so he retired, and we came back to the country to live.

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

JA: Let me uh, if I may, uh, go back a little bit toward your childhood with you. Uh, now you grew up around this area?

OC: I grew up, I stayed in this area, I was here {Clears throat.} at the local school until 1920. Now those are the kinds of days that I would like, really like to talk about.

JA: That's great. That's fine.

OC: Mm hm.

JA: You know, uh, I want to ask you, you know, I guess school uh, school back then was quite a bit different than it is now. What, what was school like back then?

OC: Well, I, one-room school, all right. I think uh, Shady Grove school is a typical school, which it is. Might be interesting to say that I had my first school there was 1924 and '25, and up until that time uh, the common, water buckets and the dipper, sat on the rostrum and each person, children came up and got them a drink when they wanted it. Mm hm. And at the first year that I taught there, um, we had a pie supper and we made a fabulous amount for those days, everybody was so nice.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: So we had to buy some library books. The Board of Education didn't have any money to buy library books. We bought some library books, and we bought a pencil sharpener, and we bought a desk for the um, the school, for the school, uh, they had never had a desk, the teachers just had a small table that uh, I think was about 24 inches square, all she had. So we bought that. We bought the water cooler, bought a water cooler, and we had some money left over and we bought us a volleyball and a volleyball net. We were really rich. That was 19n24.

JA: Oh.

OC: 1924. Now this building, I'm, I'm sure that Miss Lattie probably told you about that. Now you had a big long recitation bench. We had, we had a rostrum. All the schools had rostrums. You had to take a step up to get there. Teacher had have her desk up there and a chair, and in front of that rostrum was this long recitation bench. Real long bench. But oh, there were about twenty in the year I graduated from the eighth grade up there, and we filled everything there, but that, that recitation bench, we were called up in front to recite. We called it at each class, but with eight grades or classes, lasted twelve or fifteen minutes each, because, then you'd have to take one, you'd have to take another. You had first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh eighth, you can imagine how many times you had to call somebody up to the recitation bench, but that didn't make any difference, that was just educational, because they just went back and listened to what was going on up front.

JA: {Chuckles}

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

OC: And at the back of the uh, the building, uh, was uh, a shelf, where the board and books set and the dipper and so on until 1924-'25 school term that I told you about. We'd be, and this water, this, this uh, uh, we had a, this water cooler had a spigot.

JA: Mm hm.

OC: Each child was supposed to have a drinking cup of his own. Each one had his drinking cup. They were the collapsible kind. Uh, so they had their own drinking cups. Uh, and if they, they didn't, if something happened, if a child didn't have one, he made them, we knew how to make them out of uh, sheet of paper, so we made our drinking cups out of paper if they didn't have one. So uh, the um, boys had to carry the water at the well. Water wasn't too good. Just very, just very poor. But the boys had to carry the water so they carried the water, I expect sometimes uh, I guess, about a quarter of a mile maybe. They had to go to carry the water. 'Course they didn't mind that. They were out of classes.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: {Chuckles} And at the back on the other side, we had uh, nails driven in where we, on the wall where the children uh, had their wraps and back benches back there to set their uh, over-shoes under. They all had to wear over-shoes in the winter. Uh, so uh, they had it, were there, and then so it was, it was the teacher's job always in the cold days to see that the child had his coat buttoned and his over-shoes on, and, and quite a ritual getting ready to go home on those cold days. 'Course we had uh, uh, big old pot belly stove that uh, the teach-, the teacher had to uh, fire and try to keep the children warm. She was the janitor. She built the fires in the morning. Got there about seven o'clock and built the fire in the morning. So uh, but these, the big days were Thanksgiving and Christmas and then Closing Day.

JA: Mm.

OC: We had programs, and the parents came, and the children recited and they sang and went through drills, and uh, all the countryside would come to these uh, uh, these were always in the afternoon. We didn't do these at night. The uh, the box supper, the pie supper was at uh, they were at night, night, and people came. Most of 'em even in 1924, most of 'em walked carrying lanterns. They walked uh, there because they, well, they wouldn't have wanted to get in a buggy and tried to worry about a horse when they could walk the distance. Usually the children walked it every day, so they could walk it, uh, for the uh, pie supper. Mm hm. Well, I would say these were was about fifteen, twelve, fifteen minute recesses. Uh, in 1918 we really had a good time. That was that big snow, uh, and uh, whole bunch of us there, 'course had about thirty, forty in school. I've forgotten how many we had, in those years. Anyhow, we had these double-desks, big long desks, and uh, no one had ever had thought of throwing any away unless they were broken. They were stacked back there in the corner of the school room, but they sure did come in handy. We took those uh, boards and we made sleds out of 'em and we slid down

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

every hill there, that uh, was around that school, and when it got pretty rough, the boys would carry water, and the night before, and uh, pour over all that so we'd be sure to have a good place to slide the next day.

JA: Oh boy.

OC: So we had a good time.

JA: Now this was back around, what, 1918?

OC: Oh, my, that was 1918, when that, we had, but we always did that anyhow, but 1918 was that long, hard winter, and uh, we had a deep snow, we had deep snow that stayed on for a long, long time.

JA: How did kids dress for school back then?

OC: Well, we might of wore, pretty much, what, we didn't want to, but we had to wear these long handled underwear that came clear down to the ankles and clear down to the wrists, uh, and then we just put on layers on top of that and then we had maybe, clothing to wear. We wore uh, I had uh, some sort, some sort of leggings that my mother put on me, but I didn't want to wear them because other kids didn't wear them. No, you didn't want to do what anybody, what, what everybody else was doing, not doing. No, you didn't want to be different. Hnh uh. Well, let see, uh, that just about covers the uh, uh, that just about covers the uh, school, I think, there, the, the early, early school there. I'm about ready to graduate, I think, from the eighth grade.

JA: What were you

OC: We had to, we had to take uh, to graduate from eighth grade there, oh we had, we had to do everything by examination. Kids think now it's terrible. But we didn't pass the eighth grade 'til we went to uh, we went to go to each, we had to go to Beech Grove. The teacher couldn't pass you. Uh, we, uh and the, the grades didn't amount to anything much at that. We went, I took my kids to Beech Grove and they took the uh, they took the eighth grade examination. The first year that uh, I taught, I had two who graduated from the eighth grade, and there were two boys. I took 'em to uh, uh, to Beech Grove and they took the examination, and so they could uh, be considered eighth grade graduates.

JA: Well, how many did you have that didn't make it?

OC: Uh, we had them all take it. See, all eighth grades, both of my students passed.

JA: Mm hm.

OC: One was an excellent student, the other just barely got by, but, but anyhow they were both, they were both eighth grade graduates, uh, so um, then at that time then uh, I, I had

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

four years here at the, at the uh, Grady one-room school. Now back to those uh, back to those early days, we kind of passed over. You know, uh, back in those days, we didn't have things to uh, worry about like people have now, uh, and I, far as I know, I had a happy childhood, all the time. I didn't have any trouble 'til I graduated from high school.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: That's when it started. Night of graduation, high school, that's when my trouble started, and, I had, don't you read now that a happy childhood is a really rare thing?

JA: Seems like it, I guess. Things

OC: You read it now and I'm not sure but what that's right.

JA: Well, maybe

OC: I don't, I don't know whether children are really happy now or not.

JA: Why do you think children were happy back then, uh?

OC: Well, they didn't have uh, they didn't have somewhere to go all the time, or to get ready to go and they always had things, to do, and their minds weren't cluttered with cars and movies and telephones and radios. They didn't know anything about those things. They didn't have them. Didn't have any of them. Uh, 'course, I remember the first car that ever passed this road here. First car that passed this road was all equipped, and you couldn't have a car, and uh, use your car like, a twenty-, and you couldn't, you just couldn't use it twelve months out of the year because the roads were nothing but uh, uh, they were trails like, and just big enough for a buggy to go over. And there were big holes. See, these roads were not maintained, and by any system, the only way we had roads, uh, we had, each, each community had an overseer. My daddy was uh, the overseer. I remember at one time, and he always dreaded it. He had to go and explain it to people, to have a roads day. They had to bring their horses, their two horses, their, and whatever they had to work with. Uh, they didn't have to bring everything. They just had to bring what they had to work with. They had to try to get the roads so that they could go over it. And the bridges, they were responsible for the bridges. The lumber wood was furnished. But uh, these men had to put the uh, the bridges in, and maintain 'em. Yeah. They just uh, it was just done locally, so uh, they couldn't go anywhere if you wanted to, just the local, just the local groceries. I remember one day going, uh, with mother to the doctor, I expect I was uh, probably about 7 or 8 I was going to school. I remember going into Owensboro, my, we had relatives in Owensboro, and we'd go occasionally. Uh, we got up in one morning, and left here bright and early. The old horse hitched to the buggy with a lap robe over, knees to try to keep us from freezing. And we drove to Owensboro. And we visited my Uncle Henry and Aunt Cora, that day. Uncle Henry was a former, commissioner. He was a commissioner there in Owensboro for several years. So, and they didn't have any children, and so we went to see Uncle Henry and

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

Aunt Cora, and it took, and we got there, somewhere around noon because we ate there soon after we got there. And I remember Aunt Cora had forgotten something that she had wanted for lunch, so she decided that uh, she'd have to go get it, so they had an old Maxwell car. So I felt like I was, movin' up in society.

JA: {Laughs}

OC: So we got to this grocery, uh, in the old Maxwell car, and we came home and had groceries, but I'm sure we didn't stay longer than an hour. Uh, in fact we had to come back. Take the horse and buggy. Make the trip there and back, in one day. They didn't have any more conveniences than we had. They still had an old outhouse in the back of the alley. That's in those days. Uh, they didn't, they just didn't have uh, all conveniences, and the uh, light fixtures, I remember, just uh, the kind of , they weren't uh, anything, I've ever really uh, much value. Uh, uh, things just hadn't uh, nobody could uh, everybody had about the same thing, in those days, except a few maybe, who had uh, maybe more money than some of the rest of us. Uh, I don't know about those, those early days. Those community ways that we were talking about there. Uh, uh, there, there was much community activity really, in these communities. I often marvel about that. Um, the um, the roads, I finally got out, well, they all got together each, each person, each family had, they butchered hogs, well, you probably had someone else tell you about that.

JA: I don't know.

OC: Well, they butchered hogs, and they always um, uh, shared uh, responsibilities there uh, they'd invite all their neighbors, both uh, the man and woman would come. The woman would help with cooking for the men, and the men would kill the hogs. They would get up quite early that morning. They had a huge kettle, big, big, big kettles. Big black kettles. I think I've still got one out here in the smokehouse. But, they'd use around the neighborhood, and they'd put on water for scalding, the pigs, you see, and these pigs were shot with a 22 rifle. A 22 rifle was used all around in this area, because they'd shoot those pigs for butchering, but so they'd all join together for the butchering, for the butchering, and then, in my early days, they thrashed wheat in the neighborhood.

JA: Mm.

OC: And the women all went for the uh, wheat thrashing. My early job at that, uh, thrashing of the wheat was to wave a great big uh, oh, that's a, that's a long uh, cut for, cut from me, uh, a tree, to keep the flies off tree, uh, table, they didn't keep the flies off. We had flies everywhere in those days. Can you imagine that?

JA: Mm.

OC: Uh, so we used those big switches to keep those, that was my early duties before I could uh, start helping in kitchen. Uh huh.

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

JA: Let me ask you a quick question now, about how old were you when you were, that was your duty, thrashing?

OC: Oh, I started that early. I, I guess I must not have been more than eight or nine years old when I did that. Uh huh. And keep the flies off the table. Uh huh. Now, it, we were always fed when they were thrashing. When they thrashed wheat, uh because you see, uh, at that time, in those days, most everybody had uh, uh straw tick, they had at least one bed, that had a straw tick on it.

JA: What's a straw tick?

OC: Well, it's, it's, it's uh, it's uh, uh, it's a bed of ticking and it's uh, a heavy material, it's uh, called ticking and they, you had, you sew, you, you sewed it up and right down the center was uh, was uh, they left it open, and uh, then they changed it when the thrasher came. We had this great big pile of straw, so the uh, they'd take that and they would, uh, go in the wagon, and they'd take the straw ticks and they'd fill these with straw ticks. They'd have fresh straw, to uh, fill their straw ticks. See, they had the straw ticks, straw ticks and a feather bed. That's what they used. All had feather beds. You wouldn't have any other.

JA: I've seen those.

OC: Why, of course. We made our own feather beds. We had our own geese, and my mother picked 'em, picked the feathers off the geese and made the feather beds and the pillows. So uh, another thing, another thing they did with that straw, that uh, in those days, most of the uh, covering, of the, you call them parlors, parlors, and the living, the living room, there what they used for a living room, used to be recovered with rag carpet. These rag carpets, most all of ours were woven by a woman that lived a half mile out there to the west. She had a loom that occupied the whole, one whole small, not too big, loom that occupied the whole, the, the whole room, and she uh, the ladies would uh, used the old garments and they'd tear the, rags for, for those rugs. Oh, they'd be somewhere about an inch and a half wide, I guess, and then they'd tear those and sew 'em together, and, in these long strips and they'd roll them into balls, and these they would take to her and she would make uh, I, I don't know, whether, I don't believe that they were thirty-six inch width, and there were some smaller than that, I think, but anyhow then they would take these widths and sew them together and use them for their carpets. And they would stretch different, their straw on the floor and then they would tack these uh, woven carpet and the tack it all around the edges. Now you can imagine how much dust they had about March

JA: Mm.

OC: When they went in to sweep in those things, after, people had come in, with dirt all around the house. That wasn't, I don't think, I don't think any of us died from, I didn't know of it, but you'd have a lot of dust at times. Uh huh. So anyhow, they, they used it for the carpets and they uh, uh, for their, for their straw ticks, anyhow, so uh, we, we were always glad when the

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

thrashing machine came into town. Well, I, we, we covered the roads and the uh, uh, the butchering and the thrashing, uh, now, you know women have never had much uh, recognition all. Have you ever thought how little recognition of women?

JA: Yes, ma'am, I sure have.

OC: Uh, I made some notes on that somewhere in one of my, that I was working on, 'cause I have had absolutely, uh, I have just been interested in uh, in that, but anyhow, uh, they were, all they did was follow the men around where they wanted to go. Uh, that's, that's just what they did, and each you check in history, these history books, how many women do you have mentioned?

JA: Not, not nearly as many as should been. It's

OC: Oh, no, huh uh, and they just, they just didn't, just, you just have to dismiss women if you go to history to find out about them. Uh huh.

JA: I want to ask you. This is something that fascinates me. Back when women were, were struggling to get voting rights,

OC: Oh yes.

JA: What do you remember about that?

OC: Well, I'll tell you exactly what I remember about that. In fact it was the, what was that, the 19th Amendment, wasn't it?

JA: I think so.

OC: Uh, the 19th Amendment. I think that was 1920, that we got voting rights.

JA: I believe it is.

OC: I believe

JA: It was, close to that year.

OC: I believe, I believe it was, and all those old women that, worked, those women worked so hard to get uh, voting rights, and some of the women didn't even want to vote. They said that women shouldn't be. Women even said that. That's right. Said that uh, and I, I remember very well the discussion my mother and daddy had, when they passed that, 'course we were a little while, finding it out because we didn't know about it in those days. I guess we did have an old, uh, probably had a radio. Uh, 'course we had one of the first radios in the whole neighborhood. Uh, but I know their discussion in front of that fireplace—it was that fireplace, right there, because we built the house in 1915 and they've, because we were sitting there. Uh, I

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

remember my daddy uh, talking about it, and my mother was reluctant about going to vote. And my father said, said he didn't see any need of them passing it. He said they just have more votes to count. So that the women would vote just as the husband told 'em. Now how 'bout that?

JA: Phew. Gosh. {Chuckles}

OC: It was that way.

JA: It's terrible.

OC: In this area, when the first cars came to this area. Uh, a man wouldn't have thought about letting his wife drive.

JA: Why was that? Was that just...

OC: Well, men were, uh, uh, women just, they didn't, they didn't ask for any rights and didn't have any. They just stayed at home 'n worked, took care of the family, children. Now stop, uh, I bet in all the big families, uh, up until, well about, both my, both sets of my grandparents had big families. One had ten in the family and the other I believe had seven. It was just about the next generation there that there weren't as much, so many children in the household. Just very few had big families then. Uh, in our family, in, on, on the Cline side, uh, of the ten, of the ten uh, children, uh, uh, I was an only child, and uh, another, one of those children had an only child. One did not have any, three had an only child, and one did not have any children at all. Uh, uh, right about that time, somehow that these, that these families got uh, just didn't have as much children, but still uh, women still didn't uh, know that they could get out and uh, and they could actually . Now, they would go to church on Sunday. Women went to church on Sunday, but they didn't even take any active part much in the church. Some would teach a Sunday School class, but to, but to think about having a woman elder or a woman deacon. No, no.

JA: Mm.

OC: No, no. They, they just didn't have 'em. Mm hm. Did you want to talk about that?

JA: Yeah, uh, you know, that, that's very interesting to me. What

END TAPE1, SIDE1

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

TAPE1, SIDE2

OC: The last, the last child went to college, I started teaching again, and I taught thirteen years after that.

JA: How did you all preserve meat, and stuff back then? Back in, like when you were growin' up?

OC: Well, I just told you about the butchering.

JA: Yeah, but I mean like, did you, how did you preserve it over a long period of time?

OC: You can't preserve meat or, or, only, only by uh, curing, uh, the uh, the curing uh, this butchering, kill, kill their hogs. My daddy always killed four or five. And uh, they took the hams and shoulders, and then they uh, now, the trouble came, with uh, you can't keep it, you see, unless you do something to preserve it, but you took the uh, uh, ribs and, and, and, and you took, you took the uh, ribs and the sausage and uh, all the other parts that you couldn't uh, preserve. I remember they always tried to kill hogs here, here, always to kill hogs about the time that my daddy would be taking tobacco to market at Owensboro.

JA: Mm.

OC: So uh, then all these spare parts. We couldn't use all of those, of course, just three in the family, so my mother would pack those, there, and put it in a big box, and he would take it to Owensboro and sell it at one of the groceries there, and he got, became so well known there that uh, that one grocery, I've forgotten the name of it. They, they depended on him year after year to bring him good sausage they said. Uh, they liked the sausage particularly so they did that. But the hams and the shoulders were uh, they called 'em sugar, they, they had two ways of curing. You could salt cure or you could sugar cure. The salt cure was used first, but that made the hams really too salty, and they had to be soaked so long before they, uh, got the salt out that they could cook 'em, but the sugar cured hams, the sugar cured hams were uh, much better, uh, they, I did have a, the recipe here they used for that, it's here somewhere. I kept that, I've been fascinated by that. I know they used so much salt and so much pepper and some saltpeter, and there's something else, but I don't remember the proportions that they used, and they, they all made, uh, uh, they, they always, them individually for three days in succession they rubbed those well, with uh, with this uh, mixture. And then at the end of the three days, then they hung 'em up. They made a hole through the hock end, and they, with a wire, and they hung 'em up. The old, old smokehouse is still here, where they hung 'em, and the things they hung 'em on. And, and they hung these, and then they uh, then they had uh, they used an old tub, and they put dirt in the bottom of the tub. They used special wood, uh, hickory or sassafras. My mother always

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

liked to use hickory. Uh, and they built the fire out of that, and then they smoked those hams. That gave them the smoke, you see, having, have the taste of the hickory or the sassafras, whatever it was, and they smoked 'em for quite a little length of time. Uh, maybe uh, maybe not necessarily every, every day but quite a length of time then, and when they thought they'd been smoked enough, you had to always worry about skippers in the ham 'cause they could ruin your meat.

JA: What's a skipper?

OC: A skipper is a little worm, and he burrows there next to the bone, on the uh, in the uh, ham or shoulder, and if they get into your meat, your meat's gone. You lose it. So then you had to use every precaution to keep uh, whatever it took to lay eggs that hatch the skippers, to keep them out. So what they did was they took uh, uh, she took uh, uh, first she used a uh, a cloth sack and put it in it so nothing could get in a cloth, in a cloth, and uh, uh, then wrapped it tightly so nothing could get in it, and then she would, then after she had uh, had that on it, she'd put it in uh, uh, a paper, heavy paper bags, and then hanged 'em up down there. Uh, last 'til they got ready to use 'em.

JA: Mm.

OC: So they, they cured their meat on there. Now the uh, you couldn't keep the meat because we had no refrigeration. Uh, no refrigeration. Now at one time we had a club in this area, uh, see, we all had cows, and had calves, uh, cows were one of, cows were one of the things we had, you know, we had, they had, they had cattle on the farm, so uh, they, and after the weather got cool, say October, uh, you wouldn't do it early because it'd be too hot. But they had these little clubs and they'd kill uh, a calf each Saturday, see, and then divide the, meat, and we could use it, you see. And then we'd have meat. Fresh, fresh meat, meat, that week. And that, that got to be work eventually and the farmers got those, they just they'd just eat chicken.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: So we had chicken. Chicken every Sunday. Mm hm. Uh, we had no refrigeration here. I think my first child was born in 19-34 and we had no refrigeration, for about a couple of years there. Oh, it was longer than that maybe, 'cause we, we didn't have electricity until, Franklin Roosevelt put the lines through here. I don't know the exact date on that, but I don't believe we had it all, uh, I don't believe we had it all, when she uh, when she came along. First thing we had was a coal oil refrigerator. We used coal oil, for our first refrigerator that we had. I don't know what year that, we had that a few years before the electricity came. It certainly was a bright day, when electricity came. Uh.

JA: When was, about how old would you have been then?

OC: Oh, I

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

JA: Been then?

OC: Oh I, I was married and had this child so I was in twenty, I was twenty-five when I was married, twenty-nine, well, I would have been thirty years old, I guess.

JA: Mm. Was that here in?

OC: Right here at this place. Mm. First thing then my daddy did, when they got that electricity, that electricity up, he and my mother went to Owensboro. They went to Gunthers. They had a big day. My cousin, uh, was working, was working there at that time, a cousin of mine, so they picked out a General Electric refrigerator, and a General Electric washer, and uh, this cousin said, “Now you uh, got to have an iron, so we’ll just, you bought those two appliances, we’ll just give you an electric iron.” And uh, I don’t know whether they bought the clock at that time or not, but a clock was involved somewhere. I think that they gave them an iron, but they gave ‘em a clock. I can’t seem to recall, but that clock is still in operation.

JA: Mm.

OC: I have it right by my bed in there. It has been operating, in, we had trouble with it, uh, they, they started it running and then three or four years it just stopped. Well, they took it back, Gunther’s was still in business, and they sent it somewhere. I guess the GE place. GE. They sent it somewhere and it was returned and has never stopped since.

JA: Mm.

OC: It has gone night and day through all their lives and mine, too, since then.

JA: Hm. Here’s something, too, though, I, don’t know if you had any of ‘em around here, but did you ever hear of a group called the Possum Hunters?

OC: Well, uh, you, now you don’t mean the group called the Possum Hunters. You just mean possum hunters, don’t you? We had possum hunters out here all my life and coon hunters and fox hunters.

JA: Well, the group I’m talking about was, was kind of uh, a vigilante group.

OC: No, no, uh. These were just, just, just individual possum hunters and coon hunters, uh, uh, fox, and so many people ate coon and possum, you see. Possum. Ate, cooked the possum. Possum had too much fat. I never could enjoy, possums too much. Uh, but uh, they’d uh, cook the, they’d cook ‘em and drain as much of that fat off as they could, and then uh, boil them, and then uh, they’d put uh, sweet potatoes around ‘em, and run ‘em in the oven, then bake them. Now those sweet potatoes were good, but they, there’s just too much fat on a sweet potato. Now I had, had coon. I could stand that pretty well, and, and ground hogs in this area but we never had a ground hog here until, ‘til, ‘til I was a big girl and now we have to fight them,

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

morning, noon and night and all, year around, I think. I don't, I wonder if they ever hibernate. We just, they just ate up my garden even this spring. Had to plant twice. But we never ate ground hogs in this area, but when we were living in Bowling Green, the uh, veterans there had a celebration on the eleventh of November every year, and they got so they, their meat would be barbequed ground hog. Those farmers would get out and kill the ground hogs, and then put 'em in their freezers and then they'd have 'em all barbequed. That was the first ground hog I ever ate, with uh, veterans, uh, barbeque, at that veterans barbeque.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: And then we did have, we had possum hunters. Still have possum hunters there, but there, we had uh, a man over here who, raises, who used to raise coon dogs, and he's still huntin' coons. Mm hm. You know, back in my early days, I bet nobody ever told you this, that one of the things farmers did, here in the country, was make rabbit boxes, and set rabbit boxes and catch rabbits and sell 'em at the local stores.

JA: No, I didn't know that. I sure didn't.

OC: Each morning they would go to their rabbit boxes, and check and they, they'd have to, the rabbits were alive, of course. They baited them with an apple, and they'd take these rabbits out of the boxes, they had to kill 'em when they took 'em out, and they said, they said they gutted 'em. They'd make uh, right there, at the abdomen, they'd just cut that straight through, they'd take all the entrails out, and then they could take those to the local stores. Well, it wasn't unusual to see these uh, rab-, rabbits hanging up on the outside of the stores. People would buy them.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: See there, you see, if it was cold weather for uh, they, they would just freeze out there. They'd, be, be the meat would be all right, you see.

JA: How old were you when that used to happen?

OC: Oh, I must have been five years old. Something like that. I even, I worked for a time, I had a rabbit box, just for quailin'

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: My daddy had uh, a rabbit box to set, so I wanted one, too. Mm hm. So that, they actually sold rabbit when I was in, I was in my early childhood.

JA: What, what do you remember, you said your family owned the first radios, what, what do you remember about getting that radio?

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

OC: Well, I, I'll tell you about the radios in this family. I hadn't heard of radios, really, not very much. I just thought that they were something that, that didn't ever work out, you know.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: So it was in about 19 'n uh, well, I don't know, '22, maybe or something like that, well, I'll tell you the first I ever heard of one. It was a little earlier. It was about the summer of uh '21 or something like that. Uh, I told you that I had my, these relatives in Owensboro. Well, my Uncle Henry had bought uh, uh, a radio. He thought his brother ought to have one, so he had a friend, they plugged that radio in. These radios were battery powered. Didn't run on electricity. Uh, so uh, he brought, brought this friend, he and this friend came down one day in the summer, and my daddy said now that he just didn't want to buy any radio at that time. So they said, "Well, you've just got to listen to it." He'd never even heard one. Well, none of us had. Well, the old dirt road out there, they, they set the radio out, out there in the road, and it had just a big ol' battery, just like a car battery, for it to use. Uh, at that time, well, they set the battery out, after they turned that thing on, and you know it talked.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: Oh, we were just dumbfounded, and my daddy still couldn't believe it, but anyhow, he wouldn't, he decided he wouldn't buy it. Then it was the next Christmas, I think at Christmas, this, I had a boyfriend, who taught, I was in high school, and he taught uh, eighth grade out here. Well, he was all fascinated with that. He talked radio day and night. He got the terminology straight, and he knew what to use and so on, so he said, "I'll just build you one for Christmas." I guess the hole is still over there where he bored to put the antennae up.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: So, uh, a few days before Christmas here he came with this radio. Uh, he had the, we had uh, two tiered table, sort of, I don't know what it was, how we had it or, but anyhow it had space down underneath for the battery, then there's little box here on the top, for it to sit on top there, on the second there for the radio. So he, uh, that morning, worked all morning on it. He uh, bored a hole there in the, floor and it's still there. Stopped up with something. Right there in that corner, radio sat right there in that corner, and he bored a hole there and he measured for his wires and pulled the wires up and attached them to, the homemade radio, then he took his antennae, but then he took his antennae still out there on there, ran 'em up the side of the house, and he ran that uh, uh, that uh, uh, uh, clear across the yard. He ran, he ran it all himself, and sure enough, it worked, but we had to use earphones. We couldn't just, we didn't just turn it on and it worked. So, I remember we, the first thing we got was KDKA, Pittsburgh. Then we, oh we were really getting something finally got WSM, you know, Nashville station, and then we had country music every Saturday night. But you know

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

JA: And this was in the '20s?

CO: Yes, this was still in the '20s, uh huh. So uh, this was the first time a radio had been in any house here. On Saturday nights, every now and then, you'd have someone come in on a Saturday night just to put on the earphones, to listen, listen to that thing talk. It was kind of hard to believe. Well, uh, the, a friend uh, he took care of it a little while, and we enjoyed it so well, directly and my daddy said, "Well," said, he guessed, "Maybe we just ought to have another kind." So then he bought one of these big cabinet radios, you know, that's this, this cabinet down in the bottom would house the uh, battery, you see, then the uh, radio part was on the top, so then, then we got our, we got , then we got the radio.

JA: Mm hm.

OC: And how, what bothered me, I finally got accustomed to the radio, but what floored me was when they talked about television. {Chuckles} And I checked every, I was fascinated, with, with television, after the fascination. I could not imagine, I could kind of imagine, something coming over airwaves, I knew these airwaves did travel, but to think that you could see it, it was beyond me. I knew that it would never, never happen, so I made me a scrapbook on that. Everything that came out on television, about, everything I read on television, I made me a scrapbook on it, knowing that it would never, never materialize. Imagine how I felt when they got it.

JA: When did they get it?

OC: I don't know, but we didn't want one. I said that my kids did not need to be bothered with clutt-, cluttering up their minds. I still believe it. I am still of the same opinion. Uh, they just waste too much time with television, so uh, we didn't, we didn't buy one. Well, we didn't buy one until at least uh, George, the, the, the uh, youngest, the uh, youngest child had graduated from high school, which would have been, I don't know, pretty late, and uh, but that year, they would discuss things at school, current events and things, you know. One day he came home, he said, said, "We've got to have a television, for homework. Yes," said, "He's got to have for his education. Can't even discuss intelligently at school."

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: Well, so, he talked his daddy into it. So we bought a television. That must have been, let's see, he must have, I don't know what year he graduated. He started to school, started to uh, college, he entered college in '56, so that would have been, uh, that that would have been somewhere '5-, summer of '55 or "5-, summer '54 or '55, somewhere in there. That would have had to have been, 'cause he entered, he went to school in Sept-, he entered college in Sept-, September of '56, so it had to have been somewhere around there. He left his television home for that year.

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

JA: Well,

OC: Mm hm.

JA: Was, was the first one you saw in the '40s, you think?

OC: I really don't know. No, I don't believe we had them that early. What did, what other, what dates did other people give those?

JA: I don't know. I, I know that they had 'em late in the '40s, and uh, late, but it was, '48, '49,

OC: Mm hm, but I was just fascinated by them. I'm just about as fascinated now about, uh, now my, my fascination is with fusion.

JA: Mm.

OC: For a new energy. Do you think it'll ever come to pass?

JA: I don't know. I, I, I tend uh, I tend not to underrate anything anymore, seems like

OC: Well, you know just, just a few days ago, this article came out in the paper they came out with, it's uh, it's the heat that they have to contain.

JA: Uh huh.

OC: And uh, and it just doesn't a month or so ago something come out, and said that they had uh, had made some, progress, but it was so discouraging. They said it would be many, many years, they thought before it could be perfected, and I know that, and you think that the when it comes and you know about it, just think of me, and know I, that I wished that I could have been here when it happened.

JA: I sure will. I sure will.

OC: I would, I am fascinated by fusion. Uh, make electricity out of the air? How about it?

JA: Oh, boy, that's

OC: No, no, no more, no more, no more coal, no more oil wells, how about that? Is that good or bad? Put a lot of people out of work

JA: I guess it just depends on which side you're on. {Chuckles}

OC: {Chuckles} Well, but imagine though, no need for fossil fuels at all.

JA: Oh, boy.

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

OC: How about that?

JA: Listen, are there any things that I didn't ask you about that you think are just real important that you want to tell me?

OC: Well, let's see, let me check on it.

JA: There might be something that I haven't asked ya. I, I think that you covered a lot of good stuff.

OC: Well, now let me see. We've gone into women's rights, haven't we?

JA: Yeah. We talked about those.

OC: Nobody to rec-, uh, we had Esther uh, Whitley to recommend, uh, she got her name in history because she fired the, with the men against the Indians and she got her name on there, and I, I, I just, well, she, I think they built one of the first uh, brick houses, you know, in Kentucky, you know about that? And he put his initials, W. W., in front, that was alright, but know where he put hers?

JA: I'm afraid to ask.

OC: In the back.

JA: Oh no.

OC: Yes he did and it's still standing. You go look at it sometime.

JA: Where is that?

OC: Well, let's see, it's at, at, back here somewhere, around that Wilderness Road, somewhere on that uh, road oh, back, it'd be, down below uh, oh, you'll have to check on that. I used to know just where that was but I just can't tell you right now, but anyhow he put her initials on the back there, E. E. W., after Esther on the back there. Uh, so uh, uh, we've gone, we've gone into that. Let's see what else I have here. Uh, I think one thing we haven't uh, checked on, I see, is uh, the river travel.

JA: Yeah.

OC: We depended on absolutely here.

JA: Oh really.

OC: Early days. The Green River is within uh, a mile here and we absolutely depended on the river, uh, for everything. {Clears throat} Yeah, uh, I remember my early days, when the, we called it uh, Callyope those days, but then we graduated to Calliope. Yeah, you don't say

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

Calliope, they don't say Callyope any more, but the dictionary says either one's alright, but, but anyhow, that's how we knew, you see, when the, boats came down the river, you know. You'd, you'd hear, we could hear them. It's just about a mile straight through here to the Green River, and it goes kind of all around it, and these stores, these uh, little old place I told you about, though in the radius of three miles. See, that's where they got all their supplies from was from the river. Bring in to these stores to sell to us, and they brought things in, coffee 'n sugar 'n flour 'n things like, and then the good ol' women, that's all the money women ever had those days was pin money. They had uh, sell the eggs, 'n the chickens, by the way, I haven't, we haven't talked about hucksters, have we?

JA: I don't believe so. {Chuckles}

OC: I made a note on hucksters, one, one day. I'll, I'll find it directly, anyhow let's go to the uh, let's go the uh, uh, let's go to the uh, river, river travel. {Clears throat} Well, there were two, uh, two boats I remember distinctly, the Bowling Green and the Evansville, uh here, on, on this river, in my, in my day, mm hm, and Evansville, uh, I, I remember, I uh, uh, that burned. That was the, that was the last, really the big one. It burned. It burned at Bowling Green. 19n-, I, I'd say about 1930, '31 maybe, '31. Here's a thing about that they had two of those things that played their music, you know, and uh, I think that was when that one, burnt. See, it, uh, it went through uh, the Green River, then up the Barren to Bowling Green. See, Evansville to Bowling Green, uh, and they had fixed uh, that also, from the Green River to Barren, but they had just, that was interesting, they had just gotten, in there from a trip, and uh, the Calliope was playing uh, whatever it is that they were, they were playing. They played Stephen Collins Foster songs on the Evansville, and they were playing "Old Black Joe" when that thing sank.

JA: Uh.

OC: "I'm coming, I'm coming" Remember?

JA: You heard that?

OC: No, I didn't hear it, but that, that was, that's the story that goes along with it. Uh huh. Yes. Uh huh. It burned after the war there in, in Bowling Green. Uh huh. {Clear throat} Well, now you see, think of all the freight, practically all the freight was brought by, by, by the, by water, all those years, and then they had excursion boats running, uh, up and down the river, and uh, and they uh, Evansville was noted for its food. If you dined when you where going somewhere on the excursion or to Evansville, you really dined in, you really dined in style with black, people waiting on ya, silver gleaming, while table cloths and everything.

JA: Was there any black people around here, back when you grew up?

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

OC: Black people? Uh, we had uh, uh, Uncle Floyd and Aunt Ann Pruitt. They didn't know what they were white, uh, there, there's a story behind that, uh, Uncle Floyd and Aunt Ann lived at Beech Grove and he ran a saw mill. They were black and they had a family. The interesting story behind that was, you see, they, and they uh, they had this big engine that they used and they would uh, go, go to different places and cut lumber and so on, and for people, and they used that engine to make, help with thrashing sometimes. They were going over to uh, uh, he, he and his son were going over to, a farm, over here on other side of Beech Grove to thrash wheat, and uh, the bridges weren't very good. I told you just, uh kept up by men, but they had this heavy bridge plank that they laid across the bridge and the, this big ol' engine went over that. They were so heavy. That was one thing I was always afraid of, when he passed here with that engine, when I was growing up, uh, but anyhow they were going, they were going to thrash wheat on this farm, and there was just not too, uh, not too uh, wide a bridge, and he thought it looked pretty good, that son of his. Uh, so he decided not to put the bridge plank down, and just as he got to the middle of that bridge, the bridge gave way, and it uh, bridge went under and uh, steam, the boiler burst and he was scalded,

JA: Mm.

OC: And they took him there to the nearest farm house and he died in a short time, but that was Uncle Floyd and Aunt Ann.

JA: How old were you then?

OC: I well remember it but I sure can't tell you, I expect I got that written up here. Would you be interested in knowing when it wast?

JA: I sure would, uh, really just trying to figure out where that would ??

OC: Let's see. I wrote that up, in something that I had here. Turn off your recorder while I look it up.

JA: On uh

OC: 1911.

JA: Mm.

OC: 9th day of July 1911, They finished working on the John Hancock farm on their way to traveling on a dirt road now highway 140, two and eight-tenths mile from the intersection of highways 160 and 140. On this road there's a bridge, spanning Cedar Creek, there's a wooden plank, customary before crossing such structures; the bridge planks, which were always taken off, nine or ten per bridge. He decided he could take the steam engine cross without this saving time and extra work. The bridge collapsed, plunging the engine in the ditch. The impact caused the steam boiler to explode, hissing steam. He was taken to a nearby farm house where nothing

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

could be done for him. Remains were interred in country cemetery for black people off Highway 5593, this apparently was right here.

JA: Mm.

OC: Very short distance from the town of Comer, the place I told you about. George, George Norris, a black minister conducted the graveside services.

JA: I bet that must have been a big, big blow around here.

OC: Well, but, especially because uh, the press {Clears throat}, one other, just one other black family, that'd be true, and uh, they were not differentiated against at all, uh, they were just a family in the community, uh, I, the Pruitts, most everybody around here took their corn to him. He ground it for them. That's how they got their corn meal. Corn meal was ground there. Mm hm. So um, I remember there was one family at Delaware, uh, the Piper family, family at Delaware.

END TAPE1, SIDE2

TAPE2, SIDE1

OC: Green River, that's what they're talking about, Green River not only provided transportation for McLean County, provided theater, in the form of showboats and photography, all our pictures were taken, on the showboat, on the, on the photography boat.

JA: Oh really. They had a photography boat?

OC: Oh, yes, they had a photography boat. Came, tied up and they lived there when they came into the area, why they played their music, and we knew that we could go have your pictures taken.

JA: Oh, man. How old were you then?

OC: Why, I will show you some of the pictures. One, one was taken around, somewhere, I've got one here. Well, they were, I know that uh, they were here, my, my mother and daddy married in 1901 and their picture was taken on one of those. Nine-, 19-, they were married in 19-, 1900, they were in, in January of 1900 and their picture was taken on one. And I have a copy of one here I'll show you I know that was taken in one. I remember getting ready to go have it taken. They were having photo, photographs of myself and my family were made on

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

these boats. As to showboat presentations, they mainly four-act dramas and vaudeville specialties between the acts.

JA: Even makin' showboat presentations?

OC: Oh yeah.

JA: Out here?

OC: I went, I went to the, I went to one sometime about, I was still in high school and I had, uh, uh boyfriend and uh, there were, uh, a girl and I uh, were uh, dating two uh, boys and we ran, and we were dating uh, boys who were interested in things like, and uh, two couples went, went to one, and we were all in high school at that time. It had to be around 19n22 uh, because one of those boys did never go to, to finish high school, so it, that was the last time I know it was here, in the, in the area. Mm hm.

JA: Wow. How did you know? You mentioned something about the photography boats blowing their horns or something and let you know.

OC: Yeah, the, the, the steam blew the Calliopes, and things of that type. That's how we, we knew, that they were, that they were, on the river. We could go, Delaware is tied up, also is tied up down here. At that time there's a town called the McKinley down there on, but that's long been gone, there was a post office down there, but it hasn't been there for a long time, but any how, one of the main items that were equipment on a showboat were the steam Calliope, and this was especially useful informing all of us that a showboat was in the area, uh, the last one I recall having gone to was the Wrightsburg Landing. That was approximately 19- uh, about 1922. I've got a date there. I haven't put a date there, but that would be about right.

JA: Where was the Wrightsburg Landing?

OC: That Wrightsburg Landing is uh, on the Beech Grove, uh, uh, above Beech Grove, it's the one that Beech Grove depended on to get uh, their freight came. Uh huh.

JA: Is that where you usually got on the boats and stuff?

OC: No, no, we used it, we just went there because the showboat was there that night. No, ours was Delaware. That's where we'd go. We always got an appointment. We went there for our pictures and, and things. Uh, let's see, about the 19n, about the year uh, 19n22. Uh huh. But you see uh, back to this, this boat that had such good food, uh, about the excursion boat, there was probably a century they carried practically all the freight I think I'm repeating it. During the last years there were large excursion boats running tourists, up and down the river, in three, in their floating palaces. The Evansville had good food. It was served in palatial red and gold dining room. All through dinner, never less than three meats, were served, usually ham,

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

fried chicken, roast pork or beef and never less than three desserts, pies, cakes and blackberry pies, blackberry cobblers in season.

JA: Did you, and you ate on these boats?

OC: Uh, I remember one trip on the one.

JA: Uh huh.

OC: Uh, and but she just, and that wasn't from here, they ran excursions, back when I was, when I, back when I went to school there in '26, when I went to school in Bowling Green, there were running excursions on those boats to Mammoth Cave, and we'd go on those boats everybody would go on those boats at Bowling Green.

JA: Wow.

OC: Mm hm.

JA: I bet that was fun.

OC: Yes, that was a lot of fun, mm hm, but uh, uh, uh, I, I think, those two were the last that were, back in, those days, I told you they grew, that farmers, had animals, their surplus pigs or cows. They didn't have any way to send them, only, uh, by river, and down here at Delaware. They had pens, built, for pigs and for cows, and you knew when the boat was coming, so they, and before they came, usually day before, you would uh, they didn't uh, you drove them, I helped my daddy drive pigs to Delaware. My dad, mother would go and follow us with a horse hitched to a buggy to bring us home, and I helped him drive the stock to Delaware.

JA: {Chuckles}

OC: This was three miles, and then uh, he took feed for them, and the boat would come probably next morning, and he'd have to go down, the next morning and feed 'em before the boat, came to pick them up. It was just a lot of fun to watch them, they had the black, men, you see but at that time, I don't know what you'd call them, go over and get into the boats and watch them bring it out, and you know what, they were uh, they were happy people. So often they'd be singing. Now, those were early days.

JA: What, back, probably, probably you were like, thirteen, fourteen or?

OC: Well, not any, not any older, maybe twelve, uh huh, not any, not any older, uh huh. Uh, {Looks at papers.} that's we got, we got the river the river traffic and uh, and uh, these post offices, that I have here, all these have post offices, you know. I told ya. Oh, uh, these uh, and these uh, roads uh, these old trails, they were connected by ferries.

JA: Mm.

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

OC: Uh, we had a ferry at Delaware, and we had one at uh, Rangers Landing Ferry, the next one up the river, and then one at Wrightsburg, and the Delaware ferry took, that's where the people from Elvy got their supplies. That's how they took care of their uh, got their corn, and their coffee and sugar and so on, and then, and McKinley got theirs from, from McKinley and Beech Grove got theirs from Wrightsburg. Mm hm.

JA: Boy, that's interesting.

OC: Mm hm.

JA: That's real interesting.

OC: Mm hm. Uh, the post offices, these, all these post offices were estab-, established just, a little bit before 1900.

JA: Mm hm.

OC: Uh, the post offices. We had post offices, uh, and we had uh, we had our own, I guess your uh, I guess your uh, uh, newspapers, helped me learn to read, uh, back in those days, see, I could always have the uh, your paper, I can't ever remember, not having an *Owensboro Messenger* around.

JA: Is that right?

OC: Uh huh, and uh, the uh, at first it was just twice a week. We didn't have any mail route, see, so on Saturday, my daddy, would go alone during the winter because it was just too much of a trip, too cold and bad for all the family to go, but in the summer we could all go, 'cause it was more comfortable. Now on Saturday he'd go and he'd buy the groceries, take the eggs 'n uh, the eggs to market to sell, and so on, and uh, then he'd pick up the mail. So uh, at first we just had the twice uh, uh, week, uh, paper, and then directly we got a, mail route. I was pretty young. I guess I wasn't any more than eight years old. Got a mail route, out of Beech Grove, and then they sent us out, these little uh, newspaper, they sent us out these little uh, bargain rate things that we could get at uh, at a group of them. Maybe I, you, haven't heard of them for a long time, but I know, in one of the things he, he chose, he thought we ought to have, I, I know that we got the *McCall's Magazine*, that's one of 'em we got, a subscription, I know that we got the *McCall's Magazine*, but I think what I enjoyed most was the *Cincinnati Inquirer*. I don't why he chose that. That came twice a week.

JA: Huh.

OC: But in that, I just found, I, I learned all about Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton and the Longhunters. It just educated me to have these, stories that ran

JA: Uh huh.

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

Interview with Opal Cline Crabb (CT 27 & 28)

OC: Uh huh. And I thoroughly enjoyed 'em. Mm hm. Mm hm. So we got, we got the mail route, uh, got, got the mail route, and we got, kept getting more mail, kept getting more mail, and then we took the daily paper then after we got the mail route. Mm hm. I have an interesting thing here, you might be, I it, Is there anything you want to ask me to record?

JA: No, I think, I think that'll do it. I sure do appreciate your time, I, for takin' the time to talk to me. I, gosh, uh, I just can't believe the incredible details you have on this stuff. That's great.

OC: Well, you just remember I'm kind of workin' on it.

JA: Well, that's true, but still though, you, you just have such an excellent memory.

END TAPE2, SIDE1