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

Interview with Nellie Ruth Sublett (CT 39&40)

TAPE1, SIDE1

KAREN OWENS: But, if you could just state your full name for me.

NELLIE RUTH SUBLETT: Nellie Thornton, Nellie Ruth Thornton Sublett.

KO: How do you spell that, maiden name?

NS: N-E-L-L-I-E, Ruth, R-U-T-H, T-H-O-R-N-T-O-N, Sublett, S-U-B-L-E-double T.

KO: All right.

NS: And it's my married name. My, my husband passed away.

KO: And how old are you?

NS: Mm?

KO: How old are you?

NS: Ninety-nine.

KO: Okay.

NS: Was ninety-nine in the June, the nineteenth.

KO: And, where did you grow up?

NS: Well, I grew, until I was uh, eighteen years old in Owensboro.

KO: Mm. Okay.

NS: Then I married a man that had a really good job in St. Louis, and I, we went to St. Louis and lived awhile.

KO: When did you come back?

NS: Well, I come back when the first baby was born. And, he said, told me when I, married him that he'd never live in Owensboro.

KO: Oh really?

NS: Yeah. {Chuckles}

KO: Why's that?

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NS: Well, he was workin' on the uh', World's Fair, in St. Louis.

KO: Oh really?

NS: Uh huh.

KO: Oh, how exciting.

NS: Oh, he had an awful good job. He was a contractor.

KO: Uh huh.

NS: He built houses, and um, so he had an uncle, that he worked with and he got a job, there and he got him on.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And he come home on a visit, and I was going with a girl, that was going, with his brother, his older brother, and we were awful good friends, and uh, he called, time to come in, on a visit, went down there to his brother, who had a saloon here in Owensboro on Fourth Street, and uh, he called me from up there.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And asked me, had his brother call me, and ask me if um, he could bring him down. His, his sweetheart would, these girls comin' over to my house that night to spend the night.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And, he was a goin' bring Tom for me.

KO: Oh.

NS: And I said, "Yeah, bring him along." So, that was the way I met him.

KO: Mm.

NS: And when we got ready to get married, why, we went together a good little bit, and he'd go back to St. Louis, and, and uh, 'course I was wild in the wool.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: Loved a good time and I had a good time.

KO: Mm hm.

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NS: I was a baby of eight.

KO: Oh, my goodness.

NS: Spoiled to death. And uh, he broughtfor him down there that night, and while we was talkin'and laughing and cutting up and, his brother said to me, said uh, "Why don't you propose, to my, brother."

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: He kinda liked me, too.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I said, "All right", and I grabbed me a piller off the couch and threw it down at his feet, and I said, "Will you marry me?" {Both chuckle} And he said, "Yes." That was the end of that. He went back to St. Louis.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I knew he had a girl in St. Louis. You know, a man as good-lookin' as he was. You couldn't uh, he didn't have any problem. And he'd tell me, "Make me a promise." I had a school sweetheart that I was foolish about.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, so he made me promise that I wouldn't go with anybody while he was in St. Louis at working. Well, I didn't make him promise me that, 'cause I knew that he wouldn't do it, do it anyway. So he went back to St. Louis and, he wouldn't no more than get on, the train to leave here, until when I started home, I, this old sweetheart of mine somehow or another would happen around, and I would go. He had a horse and buggy. I would get in that buggy and would go and we would go the whole time he was in St. Louis.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: And so um, his brother would write and tell him.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And he stirred up this trouble. Tom come back, to Owensboro, and that was when we uh, decided that, we'd get married. And I went, well, I went to St. Louis with him and I cried the whole time I was down there. Kept him worried to death all the time.

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KO: Were you homesick?

NS: Oh, Lord, yes. I was a mammy's girl. I didn't let my mammy out of my sight. But I thought, oh, I was so in love, I could go and stay. Didn't make any difference.

KO: How old were you at the time?

NS: Well, I was, I was eighteen years old, at that time.

KO: What was he doing at the fair? What was his job?

NS: He was a carpenter. He was a contract carpenter up in Louisville. But when he came back to Owensboro, when after our baby was born, then he got a job here, I come home. Mammy made him promise that if we had any children, that, he'd bring me back home.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, so he did, but we had a plan on going back to St. Louis, and one morning he went up town here, and just loafing around, just passing the time, and he run into uh, a man. I don't remember what the man's name was. He was a whiskey man, and uh, he was fixing to build him a big, fine home, on a corner of Daviess Street, I believe, and something. And Tom happened to go by there, and he was there talking to some other men, with the blueprints and Tom waited until he left, and got to talking to him and uh, he showed him the blueprints, and after Tom talked to him a little while, he said, "How would you like to run this job?" And Tom said, "Well, I, I'll try." So he give him a job. And then we moved back to Louisville. Kirkens, I believe was his name. Was a big, fine home, there, right there on the corner. And uh, he began then to uh, work around, with different part contractors 'til he finally decided he'd go into business for himself.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, he started building houses, and oh, he's built plenty, with the Lancaster house over here, and the built the Bursar house, and built the McKinney house over on, but everybody would come to him.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: He had Owensboro sewed up.

KO: {Chuckles} Oh, could I ask you a question again about the fair? Did you ever actually get to see the fair after it got going?

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NS: No.

KO: Or did you just see it in the building stage?

NS: No, I never did see it.

KO: Did you

NS: I never did see it.

KO: Did you want to see it?

NS: No, I didn't care. I wouldn't care anything about things like that.

KO: Oh, really?

NS: I, if it was in Louisville, maybe, it was, oh, I was interested in uh, but no, we moved to St. Louis and lived St. Louis for some time, the longest time that we lived away from home.

KO: How long was it? A couple years?

NS: Yes, about two years. And uh, then we moved to Owensboro, and he took up with contracting and, he just went on with that, and I kept house, and my life has been, just a housekeeper, a homemaker.

KO: Mm hm. Well, what was it like being a homemaker back in the early part of the century? What filled your day? How'd you spend your time?

NS: Well, staying at home, taking care of my, my boy. That's the reason why I've got such a good boy.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: These mothers'd stay at home instead of having babysitters. I don't know, you may have one. {Chuckles}

KO: No, I don't have any kids.

NS: Well, I tell you, I never would let Griffin get out of my sight. He was my entertainer.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: Where I went, he went.

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KO: Uh huh.

NS: But uh, no, I never worked a day in my life. He wouldn't let me. I tried to when we, we were first married and went to St. Louis.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: I said, "If you'll just, let me go to work, let me get me, find me a job." And he said, "The day you go to work, I quit goin', I quit my job." He said, "If I can't make a living for you, go back home."

KO: Oh.

NS: And I never did ask for a job any more.

KO: How did people treat women back then?

NS: Mm?

KO: How were women treated back then?

NS: Well, they was treated like queens.

KO: Mm hm. Oh really?

NS: Yes, they were respected. A woman would uh, well, if they didn't, they don't, didn't live in the ways like they're livin' now. Goin' to all these, fancy places and dressin' fancy and, half dressed and everything else. Why, it was a disgrace. My mother used to tell me if my dress got up to my knees, she said, "Put your dress down."

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: And down went that dress. And uh, I haven't got used to that to this day.

KO: I've heard that back in, in the early, like the Twenties, I guess, skirts started getting short, and women started cutting their hair.

NS: Yeah.

KO: Do you remember that?

NS: Well, the first woman that uh, come out on the street with a split skirt got arrested.

KO: When was this?

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NS: Well, that was, {Chuckles} I don't know, how long we'd been married, but her husband run a, well, you, I guess you would call it a, like these uh, Jim Davis and them Funeral Home, you know.

KO: Oh, uh huh.

NS: And uh, his sister, went out on the street, and she had that little split, skirt, and she was arrested for it.

KO: Oh.

NS: And that's the way this, that people in them days and time lived. You didn't learn about these poor little babies being killed. Didn't have any, why, it's, it's disgraceful when I think about it, to think about how people, how the women, have lowered theirself.

KO: Mm. What did you think about the women cutting their hair?

NS: Well, I didn't mind that so much. I had my hair cut, but I never did have it cut until way after I left home.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, we lived, moved to Paducah. He got a job down at Paducah, building uh, the gov-, on the government, he worked for the government. And he got a job down there, and I went with him on all his jobs, I went with him. And uh, Griffin at that time, was in college, and of course, I had, I could just close up the house and go. And I enjoyed it, but that, that Paducah. Boy, oh boy, that's the hottest place I ever lived.

KO: Oh really?

NS: Wuh. And I had my hair cut bobbed, and he didn't know that I was a goin' to, because I had pretty hair. My two sisters had hair, and all, all of us had heavy hair, a suit of hair. And they could sit on their hair. Straight down the back. Never did have it cut.

KO: Mm .

NS: And uh, so when he come home that night and looked at me, said, "Well, you look like a different person."

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: I said, "Well, maybe I'm not your wife." But he never did keep a bad word, never did say anything about it, but everybody loved my hair, and, I, I kept it, back, and it hung in,

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three, three curls across the back of my, neck and come down below my shoulders. But it was so hot down in Paducah, and I, I just couldn't take it.

KO: Were you about, what, forty, then?

NS: Yeah, I was every bit of about forty.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And, from then on we lived in Owensboro.

KO: Mm hm. What about when women got the vote? Do you remember that?

NS: Yeah.

KO: What'd you think about that?

NS: Well, I thought that it was alright. They had just as much right to say what was going on in the world as anybody, any of the men. Men was running everything anyway, so, I didn't uh, I didn't think anything about it.

KO: What did other people think? Were they kicking up a big fuss about it?

NS: Well, some of 'em did. Some of 'em didn't think that uh, women, that they knew enough about uh, business, but women have come a long way, since those days and times. Now, when my mother married, she was forced to stay at home, and take care of her family, and the father was to take care of the children. Nobody worked, no women worked. And it went on that way up until I was uh, I was married. It was while I was married that women, began to, step out and, take their place in their world, and it's alright with me if they want uh, leave their children 'n, do those things, why, I don't have any kick comin', I, I don't raise mine that way, and thank God, I didn't, for I've got the best boy that ever lived. And his wives will tell you that.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: He thinks a mother, a mother comes first.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And, I don't know. That was one of the hardest things that I had to do, was give him up.

MISS WELLS: Is that a picture of him on the wall.

KO: Does he still live in town here?

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NS: No, he lives in Louisville??.

KO: Oh.

NS: Uh, Miss Wells, go back there on the, and bring Tom, my picture in here, when we was uh, when I was young. {Chuckles} I don't look like what I look now.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: By a whole lot. I have Leukemia.

KO: Oh, I'm sorry.

NS: Yeah. And, but I live here by myself. I do every bit of my work. I don't hire one penny's worth of work done.

KO: My goodness.

NS: And I have a little girl down the street here, that, took up with me. I say, that I have had two awful, bad falls. I fell and hurt my back, right, over there in between that door. I was washing that door off.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I raised up, I'd been having some dizzy spells, that's been three years ago.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh,

KO: Oh.

NS: Turn the light on right there.

KO: Weren't you pretty? Well, you had your bobbed hair there, didn't you?

NS: Yeah, yeah. Just like I have it now. It's growing out though. I'm going to have to have, I'm going to cut some of it off.

KO: When was this picture taken? Do you have any idea?

NS: No, I don't remember just uh, just exactly the time. I guess I was uh, mm, I just couldn't tell ya. I can't remember dates sometimes. Miss Wells might.

KO: Hm. Well, he does look like a dashing fellow.

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NS: But uh, I was up in my forties. Up, in the closet there, on this side, there's a big picture,

MISS WELLS?: Mammy.

NS: No, it's not Mammy. She's, it's just one big, square picture. I'll show you, I'll show you how I looked. {Chuckles} {Pause} It's here. That's them. Now this is when Griffin was in school, over at the Walnut Street School. And uh,

KO: Oh.

NS: Now this is, this is me right here. And we uh, entertained the teachers. Parents entertained the teachers.

KO: Oh, really?

NS: And, they was all so surprised. {Coughs}

KO: What did you do for them?

NS: Huh?

KO: What did you, well, how did you entertain them?

NS: I, we had to dress as we dressed when we went to school.

KO: Oh.

NS: And uh

KO: {laughs}

NS: And uh, this is my niece, and she's got a jumping rope, and she's sitting in front of me when they were, when we was in school, and, we, we took over the school that afternoon.

KO: Mm.

NS: And let the teachers rest.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: And uh, so, she sit right in front of me and I kept pullin' her hair. {Both chuckle} Like we did, why I was always doin' something, her and me, she was uh, a year younger than I

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was, and uh, I like to look at that old picture, at how we were all dressed, you know, Lord, this is our teacher.

KO: About when was that? Do you have any idea?

NS: No, I don't. I think, I can't remember dates.

MISS WELLS: You married in 19n6, didn't ya? Mrs. Sublett.

NS: Mm?

MISS WELLS: You married in 19n6, didn't you?

NS: I married, I married uh, uh, February the 8th, 19n

MISS WELLS: Six.

NS: Eight, eight, 19n8.

KO: Well, if the St. Louis, the St. Louis Fair was ...

NS: '04...if it was in the 4th. Let's see, when was...? I don't even remember when I married.

MISS WELLS: You told me 1906.

NS: Well, that's it, if I told ya.

MISS WELLS: You told me got that, you had your shower, your wedding shower was 1906 after you were married.

NS: Yeah, yeah, that's when I married.

MISS WELLS: That's been some years ago that you, you did that.

NS: Yeah, but uh, I just always been a homemaker.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I love it. I love to keep house better than anybody in the world.

KO: Mm.

NS: There isn't anything about the house that I don't love to do.

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KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I keep myself busy, and I love roses, and I've got roses out here. There are some of my roses over there now.

KO: They're pretty. Why how was being, when you first got married, how was being a housekeeper different, than it is today?

NS: Why, we were something. We was appreciated. And you just done anything that uh, was out of the place ur, was wrong, why, boy oh boy, people didn't have nothing to do with you.

KO: Oh, really?

NS: Yes, sir. We didn't hear any of this uh, abortion stuff, and all of that. I never will forget the first time that I heard anything about that. Oh, mercy, people just liked to have a fit.

KO: Mm. How long ago was that?

NS: Well, it's been a good while ago, but they've been doin' this a long time, but no, we didn't, we didn't, we, if my mother could come back, and see the way the people, the way that women are livin' these days and times, and the divorce suits, well, we never heard of a divorce suit. People married and they's married, and they lived together. And they made a go of it, and it could be again if, if women would, would do like they ought to do.

KO: Were you ever tempted to get a divorce?

NS: No, sir. No, sir. Never entered my mind. My marriage was, I guess, just about as happy as anybody's marriage could possibly be. We had our spats. But we always got over 'em. We worked together. No, this divorce business, it's getting to be something funny. Marry one day and the next day go get you a divorce.

KO: Well, when you were young and you were courting, how, what did people do when they were courting?

NS: When what?

KO: When they were courting, when you were young and you were courting?

NS: Why, I, we go to uh, parties. We had, we had parties around at the houses. Every Sunday afternoon, there's a bunch of us that would go to this house or that house or somebody else's house, but believe me, you had to go Sunday School and Church

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KO: Oh, really?

NS: Before you had your party. If you didn't, if you got up Sunday morning and said, "I don't feel like goin'", well, Sunday afternoon, you don't feel like havin' anybody around.

KO: Oh.

NS: And that was it. When we got up, we didn't ask {Chuckles} to stay at home or go to church, we were going and getting ready to go to church. Miss Wells, over here, knows that's the truth, and uh

KO: What d'ya do at your parties?

NS: Why, played games. We played uh, and we, we danced, we loved to dance. And we'd uh grab, we'd all, each one of us would have a sweetheart, you know? And we'd just dance around in our little parlor.

KO: What kind of dances did you do then?

NS: Well, we waltzed, done all that they're doin' now. We didn't have all that, fancy ol' stuff, it was just plain, dancin', just two-step or something like that, but they'd, people don't know what a good time is nowadays. Children don't, these young people that's marryin' don't have no good time, that's no good time.

KO: So when you went out on a date, did you take the trolley car or did you take a horse and buggy?

NS: Oh, no, we don't, we, no, my, my boyfriend had a buggy, horse and buggy. {Chuckles} I wasn't the only one, but there, they had the horse and buggy, then, had a horse and buggy, and we'd take a ride, Sunday afternoon with me, and I'll never forget the time that Mr., Miss uh, Merck came over to our house. He'd been workin' on this little automobile for years, and uh, drove that little thing over there. Just uh, old buggy top, sit on the, chair with wheels, you know, and we got in that, and, and uh, rode, took a ride.

KO: How was that?

NS: Oh, it was good, it was good. Fun, lots of fun. Now, things like that, entertained us. That's the way we entertained ourselves. And, we'd all go out here, there's called Hickman Park then, out to the, big park out here on, and we'd, a bunch of us go out there and swing, an', just whatever the boys were around, do whatever they want, but we always went with somebody else. We very seldom ever went by ourself.

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KO: Why was that?

NS: Well, we just enjoyed it more, bein' with somebody, with our friends. Now, Sunday was the only time, and, Wednesday night was the only time that you could have a date at home. Sunday and Wednesday.

KO: Oh really?

NS: And you had to be gone by nine o'clock, if you wasn't, bedtime was called on ya and you was put out.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: I never did have bedtime called on me but one boy, and he was a little city slicker. {Both chuckle} And, I, he come down home, I don't know how he ever made it, but he come down home, he thought that he could stay, you know, as long as he wanted to stay. And uh, nine o'clock come and I told him, now I said, "Now it's, nine o'clock. You'd better go home." He said "Oh, I'm not goin' home at nine o'clock." Was Clarence Owen, his name, his first name was Clarence, Clarence Owen was his name, and uh, how come me to meet him, I was at my sister's and she just lived down the street on Walnut Street from his mother and father, and they were awful good friends, and he came around there one, Sunday with 'em, and I met him, and then we got to goin' together, then I quit the one I was agoin' with, but I had one boyfriend, a school boyfriend, I, I never forgot. He was one of the sweetest boys, that I ever went with, and, he, he was more, he was more like a gentleman, acted more like a, wasn't slick then, not to be afraid of all the time or anything, you know? And uh, so I kept a tellin' him, [tape jumps] Pappy waited a little while and then he said, "Ruth, it's time for you to go to bed." But boy, {Chuckles} that boy got up and left.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: But uh, no, my life's been a happy life, been a lot of sorrow in it. I lost all of my sisters and my brothers and my mothers, and now I'm the only one left. And, Griffin's all I've got. I got grandchildren, but I

MISS WELLS: and great grandchildren.

NS: Got great grandchildren. I've lived to see the sixth generation.

KO: Yeah, I bet you have. When you were raising Griffin, what was it like to raise children at that time?

NS: Just as easy and sweet as it could be.

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KO: Oh, really?

NS: They minded you. When you spoke to ‘em and told ‘em they could’t do, or that you didn’t want ‘em to, I never whipped Griffin with a switch. Never. I’ve spanked him. He said I was always aspankin’ him. {Both chuckle} I said, I said, “Yes, you’re not too big to be spanked yet, if you do something that I don’t want you to do, think you ought to do.” And he’s seventy-nine, seventy-eight, but uh, after Griffin come, that was the biggest change in my life, for he was my life. And his daddy has told me dozens of times, we’d get in an argument about something, and when it was over with, If I had won, then Griffin would he’d say, “So he’d say you was right if you knew you was wrong.” So I, I, my life has been a happy life, I can’t complain about my life. I was raised up in a Christian home, and that’s the way I have lived all my life. Live like you ought to live. Live a clean life. Praise, praise the Lord, for what he does for ya, and your life will be, taken care of.

KO: What was church like, when you were young?

NS: Well, just like they are now. Go to church when you want to. Don’t want to, don’t go to church. But uh, we had people that, was awful faithful to the church.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, I don’t recon’ you ever, you remember it, I don’t think that, know you will, but this little ol’ church over here on Main Street, we can call it Main Street, Second Street, they named, named it Second Street.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Well, when I was a girl, little girl, born, that was where we went to church, and it was just a little mission, just one BIG, GREAT big barn, big as my house. There wasn’t any partitions in it, if you wanted service to start a Sunday school class here all right start it, over here start one, start it, it was all right over there together, and uh, I, I learned to love children, and I love children, and, children, are the sweetest things to me than of anything in the world.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, my mother, she was just a tiny little thing, and lots of times I saw her little children that she taught. But she taught the little class until she passed away, and then I took it over, and I taught it, ‘til we moved out of Owensboro.

KO: What was the name of the mission?

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NS: Well, they just called it the Main Street Church. Now then, uh, some of these other churches that bought it, and it's named, uh, I forget the name now. I don't remember what it is. Do you, Miss Wells?

MISS WELLS: No, I don't.

KO: So it's still there?

NS: And then we built uh, from that, now Griffin was just, a little boy, at the time, we built the church over on Third Street, the Methodist Church over on Third Street, Methodist Church over there.

KO: Uh huh.

NS: Well, we built that, and moved from the Main Street Church over there, and I taught Sunday School class over there, young girls, from eighteen, down.

KO: Is that Settle Memorial?

NS: No. Third Street, the Third Street Church. Settle Memorial's up in town. I never went to Set-, Settle Memorial. My mother and daddy belonged to Settle Memorial when we moved down here. They joined up there, and then we moved, they, they was way up, across from Wendell's Store, up, on the hill as you go out o' Owensboro. Sixty.

KO: Oh, uh huh.

NS: And uh, he had uh, my, my daddy was a farmer, and uh, {Clears throat}, so we uh, moved

END TAPE1, SIDE1

TAPE1, SIDE2

NS: I never went to bed all the time that he was out, that, until he come home at night. I sat up and waited for him. When he'd come in, he'd always come to say how, "I'd always see ya sittin' under the light." Come over and kiss me, and I'd go on to bed and he would, too. But now then, oh I don't know, you just raise them so different. And the churches are teachin' so

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different, and they're accepting, things that, we wouldn't do, as have accepted in the church, when I was a girl.

KO: Do you remember anybody getting read out of church?

NS: No, no. Never.

KO: Mm. I wanted to be sure and ask you, what do you remember about the flood, of 1913? And '37?

NS: Well, I was down flat on my back with the, with the uh, sciatic rheumatism.

KO: Oh.

NS: We lived out on Eighteenth Street, and Tom was uh, runnin' a taxi cab then, here in Owensboro. And I went to got up and went to church that Sunday morning, feeling just as good as I ever felt in my life. I come home, and sit down on the side of the bed and took off my clothes. I always undressed when I come home from church. And when I got up, to go to the kitchen to get me somethin' to eat, I fell backwards, on the bed. And hit, that hit me. And when Tom come in, I was layin' on the bed, and he, Dr. Coffman,, Dr., Dr. Coffman was the osteopath, he was our doctor at that time. And he called him, and he just lived a little piece over on Frederica Street from us. And uh, he come over there and he told me what it was. Said it's sciatic rheumatism. And uh, he doctored me, he was a medical doctor, too. But he never give me a dose of medicine, only, he would develop, hypodermics, so that I would quiet down. And I had a niece that come and nurse me, while she was uh, a practical nurse. And she come and nurse me, and I was in bed, for, oh months, And finally one night, he come over there, Dr. told him to come by, and I had worked myself around some way that night, and he had come on, on that night, and on, at night on and in the morning, do that twice a day. And he come in, so I had a brass bed when these big round, posts in it, you know, and I got my head moved up against them posts, and I wasn't, wasn't, easy, you see, I couldn't get myself easy, I couldn't straighten out. And he told Tom, he said, "Well," says, "You're goin' to have to get her away, out of this, she's in a cramp." He says, "I'll take her underneath her shoulders. You take her underneath her, knees, and we'll just raise the same time, and just put her down." And BOY when they put their hands under there, and started down me, I started screamin' You could a heard me a block. And Tom said, "Let's put her down, let's put her down." So he did and, Dr. Coffman said, "Well, we won't move her any more." But he gave me a hypodermic

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And he said, "Now tonight," that was, late in the evening, he said, "In the night, she'll get, she'll work herself down." And I did.

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KO: Mm hm. What about the flood, do you remember anything about the flood?

NS: No, I don't remember anything. It didn't get close to us. It wasn't, it didn't bother us any. We was too far out. And uh, {Clears throat} it didn't do anything, to us, but that's been my life.

KO: Mm hm. What about World War I, do you remember when it started?

NS: Oh, merciful Lord, yes.

KO: Tell me about that.

NS: Well, I remember the people on the street, walkin' the street, didn't know what to do, what to do and how to do. I remember, alrighty, I remember uh, thank you, honey.

MISS WELLS?: Yes.

NS: I remember uh, the hangings that we had.

KO: Oh, tell me about those.

NS: Ohhh, boy. The flood wasn't nothin'. We lived on Walnut Street at that time, and you see, they hung the, man down there on the courthouse square. And they woke me up, in the night, goin' by. It was up in the morning. The streets was lined with people goin' down there to watch that, and I thought that it's the awfulest thing that I ever heard tell of. This man that they hung, was a neighbor of my mother's, and we thought so much of him, they were such good people. Such fine people. And he got in with one, now this is way up further, further up than where I can remember, I guess.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Uh, he got in with a woman over here on, Second Street, that was a high flyer, and got her pregnant. Well, that was a disgrace. Ohh, people. Mercy, it was terrible. Everybody talked about that.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And he went down there one Sunday afternoon and killed her, and uh, then they, passed our house goin' up to, see him hung. We, we knew that he was such a good boy, and he'd never done anything that was wrong, or anything, but the boy, in those days and times, that was a disgrace.

KO: Mm hm.

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NS: He was disgraced. And it, it disturbed all the neighbors, all of 'em.

KO: Mm hm. Do you remember the Rainey Bethea hanging?

NS: The who?

KO: The Rainey Bethea hanging, they hanged that black man.

NS: Yes.

KO: In '36.

NS: Yes, yes.

KO: Tell me what you remember about that.

NS: Well, I don't remember anything, only that people were just goin' down there to see him hung. They uh, they thought it was terrible, and I, I, I don't, I didn't know the man that he hung. I didn't know anything about him, whether he was a Christian or, or whether he wasn't. And then um, I just don't uh, I never did know the man, himself but I knew this man that killed the woman, that was pregnant. And it was through shame that he did that, but I, I, I think that these others was, was drunk.

KO: I think so.

NS: Yeah, I think that they was, claimed that he was.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: But we've had some terrible things happen here in Owensboro.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: But

KO: Well, did World, we talked a minute about World War I. Did it affect your family at all?

NS: No, no.

KO: What about World War II?

NS: No. Didn't any of 'em, my daddy was in uh, in uh, was the uh, Civil War.

KO: Oh, he was?

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NS: Yeah.

KO: What did he tell you about it?

NS: Oh, he told Griffin, Griffin loved to talk to, talk to Griffin to, I never did talk to him very much about it,

KO: Mm hm.

NS: But Griffin was so interested in him, and he loved his granddaddy so much, that he would get him to tell him stories about it. Now, if he was here, he could take you a WHOLE lot, but I can't tell you nearly any of it. But one thing, after Griffin was a little boy, yeah, I guess he was about six years old, but he wasn't, he wasn't goin' to school, about five, and he has his little bed, and I, had him to sle-, slept in it, and I pulled it right up beside o' me, every night, and I went to sleep with my hand over on him, on his hand. And uh, he said to me, one day, he said uh, "Mother," he said, "I cain't get up this mornin'." I said, "What's the matter with you?" I said, "Why there's nothing wrong with you." I said, "You can get up." And he said, "No I cain't mother, I cain't get up this morning. I been shot in the leg." Pappy was shot in the leg.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: And he told him that story.

KO: Oh.

NS: And he, he showed me, he said, "Pappy got shot in the leg, and I, I got shot in the leg, and I cain't get up this mornin'."

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: That has been the sweetest thing to me, hearin' him tellin' me about, this, and all that I know about the war, is just what, Griffin, learnt, by asking Pappy questions. We uh, my daddy was uh, wore long, long whiskers, and my niece that I was tellin' you about, Annette, she, I was as just as jealous of her I could be. She was the first grandbaby, and uh, Mammy loved her just like I love my grandbabies. I realize it now, you know, when it's too late, and she loved to come down there and stay, and they let her come down there and she'd stay for a weeks at a time, away from her mother. Well, I wouldn't leave my mother. If I went home with one of the girls from col-, from school, and, and Mammy would always tell me, "Yes, you can go." They'd always, come home with me and stay with me then they'd think that I ought to go home with them.

KO: Mm hm.

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NS: And Mammy'd say, "Yes, you can go, if she wants to go." I'd go, but when dark begin to come, I hit the road.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: And uh, {Chuckles} went home one night and I was so ashamed of myself. I was a great youngin', great big kid, and uh, went home with one of the girls. She lived right over, lived right over here. And uh, I had to pass, her house, had to, had to pass the baseball park, go over the radio, the railroad track, to get from her house to my house. Dark as pitch and cold and sinister. Oh, that was the coldest night but she wanted me to go home with her, and Mammy said, "Yes, she can go, if she wants to go. She won't stay long." And so, she had a deaf sister, that thought a lot of me, way older than the both of us, and she was fixing some ice tea, and I hated it a lot of times. But we was, she went out of the room, she went out of the room, goin' to the kitchen, I went out the front door goin' home.

KO: Oh. {Chuckles}

NS: And uh, when I got home, I went to the winder and the blind was just about that much up, peeked in the blind. {Chuckles} Pappy was reading the paper. Well, I knew I better not go in that way, so I went on around to the kitchen winder, and my mother, in those days and times, they bought flour by the barrel. She had her own, flour barrel sittin' by the window, kitchen window there, and makin' up the biscuits. We had biscuits three times a day, and uh, we had meals three times a day, regular.

KO: Uh huh.

NS: And uh, {Chuckles} I, I stopped and looked. I saw her just in that ol', in that ol' kitchen, you know, and I was ashamed to go around to the door. I had to go around and come to the back door to get in the kitchen. And I thought, oh, what must I tell her, what must I do. So when her back was to the door, and that doorknob took a hard turn, she said, "Ruth, come on in." {Both chuckle} I never will forget that, and she was just as glad to see me as I was to see her. But oh boy, I have done some crazy things in my life. But oh, my mother, I worshipped my mother. And she'd for Griffin it, if he would ever come down there and stay, and of course Mammy wanted to love her, wanted her to sit on her lap. But boy, when she started towards Mammy, right in between, I got.

KO: Mm hm. What about childhood illnesses? When you were raising Griffin, was that a big problem?

NS: No, sir. No, sir. I never had a bit of trouble with Griffin.

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KO: But were other kids getting sick and did you worry about that?

NS: No, no. I don't remember of it being.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: I never. Griffin never drank, he never smoked, until after he went to college.

KO: Mm hm. What about the flu epidemic in 1918, do you remember that?

NS: No, I, that was an awful thing, but, they didn't, didn't any of my family have, have that flu. We all went through that, alright, but, I just don't uh, I don't know anything else to tell you about myself.

KO: What about the Depression, did that affect your family?

NS: No, no.

KO: Boy, you were lucky.

NS: Didn't know there was one. We hadn't, {Clears throat} Tom had uh, rented a little uh, a little place way out on the other side of Masonville way back off of the road. I don't think it made any difference where I had a house or where I had to stand up and sleep

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: I went with him and we had a little ol' house there, just, tore a rat, rat through it. {Both chuckle} Cold, it was so cold. But that was the happiest, happiest year of my life. I had him with me all the time. He farmed. He intended to farm, you know, but they didn't, they didn't get to his, to his, time to go. He was to be, he would have been, he had been called, and the next draft, draft, if they'd have had the next draft, when the call, when the uh, war was on.

KO: Oh. Did he?

NS: It ended.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And he didn't have to go.

KO: Tell me –

NS: He got his, he got his papers, and everything, and I was goin' back down to Mammy's, and stay with them while he went.

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KO: Was that World War I, you're talking about?

NS: Mm hm.

KO: What about the Depression, now, how did that affect you?

NS: Well, we didn't really have any Depression.

KO: Oh.

NS: We just, eat what we had, we had a little, enough money, could have, have something to eat, and we didn't buy any clothes or, spend any money, I never can spend any money foolishly in my life.

KO: Mm hm. What was he doing during the Depression/

NS: What did he do?

KO: What was he doing for a living then?

NS: He was on the farm, livin' on the little farm out there, and we raised all our red meat, and uh, then the neighbors, they killed uh, uh, hogs and things like that. I've always had, I've always been blessed with wonderful neighbors. Oh, nobody could ever have any better neighbors. This one over here, if she was my daughter, I couldn't love her any more.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Does more for me, oh, it just worries her because I can't get over this back fall, and uh, brings me my meals. If she cooks anything that I like, she'll bring

KO: That's nice.

NS: This little girl down the street here. I laid uh, I never laid eyes on her before when I had my fall, and they brought me home from the hospital. I couldn't walk, and they didn't think I'd ever walk, and I told 'em, I said, "You're just foolin' yourself." I said, "Yes, I'm goin' walk." I've had three doctors with me, had one specialist, and he asked me when I got ready to leave the hospital, he said, "Do you want to know what, how your back looks?" I said, "Yes, I'd like to know." He said, "Well, if somebody would take, a ball of clay or somethin', and just mash it all up in the hand, in a ball, that's the way your back looks." Says, "Those nerves, those leaders, the sciatic nerve is split, and those leaders are doubled and twisted, and they'll never be straightened."

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KO: You said that, I, I hate to change the subject on you, but I need to ask you some other questions. What about the radio, do you remember, the radio?

NS: Oh, we had one of the first radios that come out.

KO: Oh, did you?

NS: Yes, sir.

KO: What about it, what was it like?

NS: Well, it was just about like that thing right there, only it wasn't, it wasn't as tall as that and it didn't have a picture on it.

KO: Uh huh.

NS: And it had {Chuckles} ears. Did you'd put on your ear?

KO: Uh huh.

NS: I'd listen a little while and Tom would listen a little while. And uh, yes, we had, we had the first refrigerator, that was ever bought in Owensboro.

KO: Oh, tell me about that.

NS: Well, it was just a little, tiny, box that's sitting there, just like, just a little common uh, box you put your ice in there. The ice man come by and put your ice in there.

KO: So, this wudn't an electric refrigerator?

NS: No.

KO: It was an icebox?

NS: No, no, no electricity, didn't have an electric at that time.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: No, and uh,

KO: Well, what'd you think about the icebox?

NS: Well, I was crazy about it.

KO: Oh, really?

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NS: Yes.

KO: What kind of difference did that make in your life?

NS: Well, I don't know's it made any difference in my life. I was just, I was just pleased with it.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And we could keep more, puttin' it in this little icebox. Now we'd, lots of times you'd have to go the, to the ice factory and get your ice, and take it and put it in there.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And then we got to where, they had a iceman go around, ice, ice wagon and put it in.

KO: How much did he charge?

NS: Oh, you'd get a great big, hunk as big as that over there for ten cents. And they'd fill yer, fill, what your half, would come, would come in a block.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, if you wanted ice tea or anything, you chipped off a little block of it and put it in tea.

KO: When you got it, did you have all your friends and family come over and look at it?

NS: Oh, yes, they all, that was somethin' new. Everything that... Oh, I, I tell you I've, I've lived a life.

KO: {Chuckles} Well, uh, what about the airplane, did you remember the first airplane you ever saw?

NS: Yeah, I remember that, it flopped up here on Frederica Street.

KO: Did you see that?

NS: No, I didn't see it, but I heard it.

KO: What were you doin' at the time?

NS: Well, I was at home and tendin' to my business. {Chuckles}

KO: Mm hm.

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NS: And I was, {Clears throat} people wasn't uh, as curiosity and they are now. They, they don't, then they didn't, didn't, didn't, didn't bother you very much. You didn't think too much about 'em. And he'd been building that airplane for a long time, and read about it 'til it got old.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And then he was crazy enough try to go up in it, killed, been killed.

KO: So, you heard the crash then?

NS: No, I didn't hear the crash.

KO: Oh.

NS: Uh, some of 'em, some of the people, saw it or somethin', I don't know how I did it hear it, but, told just told it. News went around. Everybody talked it, you know.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And that was the one you would hear it, get your news. Then we had *The Messenger* and we had *The Inquirer*.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, we, we took the paper, and we'd hear it in the paper, see it in the paper

KO: Mm hm.

NS: See how it happened, what happened. No, I, I, I never have been curious about seeing things like, never has bothered me any.

KO: When was the first time you actually saw an airplane? Was it that guy's, at that guy's factory, or?

NS: Why, I guess it was that, that guy that flew that plane. I don't, I don't even remember, but you'll never get me in one of 'em. I can tell you that.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: I'm goin' keep my feet on the ground.

KO: I don't blame you.

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NS: But uh, no, my back, hasn't got well, and I can't uh, I can walk now. Boy, I fooled 'em all.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I'm getting' so that I can walk without my crutch.

KO: Well, that's good.

NS: Well, but I depend on it since I've had those falls, so much.

KO: Yeah.

NS: That I'm afraid to go without it, and they told me, too,

KO: I understand

NS: Not to get off of, off the sidewalk. But I can walk up and down the sidewalk, and that's my walk. Three years I walked up and down the sidewalk.

KO: Well, that's pretty good exercise.

NS: Yeah, just as good as any.

KO: I was wondering, there was a bank robbery out at West Louisville

NS: Oh, yes.

KO: One time.

NS: Yes, yeah.

KO: Do you remember anything about that?

NS: No, no, I, I just remember they had it, that' all. I knew they had it, 'n.

KO: Mm hm. Back in the 1910s, they had some hard winters, do you remember anything about those?

NS: Oh, honey, the winter that I married was the worst winter I ever have lived through.

KO: Oh, really?

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NS: Yes, this one we had this last year, the sleet and ice and everything. The lines was all down, power lines, telephone lines, light bar, we didn't have any lights bars then. And uh, the telephone was out of order. But uh, icicles hanging all over everything.

KO: They didn't have electricity and telephones back then, though, did they?

NS: No.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: No.

KO: What do you remember about that winter?

NS: Well, I remember that it was bad.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: It was sleetin' and snowin'. It lasted so long. This, this last spell that we had, that bad spell that we had here reminded me more of the winter that I married.

KO: Oh.

NS: We married and went to Henderson on our honeymoon.

KO: Oh, you did?

NS: {Both chuckle} Yeah, stayed two days and I come home. {Clears throat} Yeah, so uh, and it was, oh, it was the worst winter. Snow and ice. Sleet.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: But in those days and times, we didn't hardly, we didn't pay any attention to it.

KO: What time of year did you get married?

NS: Huh?

KO: What time of year did you get married?

NS: What time of year?

KO: Mm hm.

NS: We married February the 8th.

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KO: So it was in the middle of the bad weather, wasn't it?

NS: Yeah, yeah, right time, bad weather. Yes, sir.

KO: So, what was your wedding like?

NS: Well, it was just a common wedding, just the family. I didn't have a big wedding. I married at home.

KO: It, was that pretty typical back then?

NS: Oh, yes, yes. My sister married in the church. She, was the only one that I remember, marryin' away from home. All the rest of us married at home.

KO: So, what was it like? Did you decorate the house?

NS: No, no decorations, except just for a bunch of flowers.

KO: Mm hm. It must have been hard to find flowers in the winter?

NS: Well, it come from the, the uh, the flower house. Just a little, spray of something.

KO: What did you wear?

NS: I wore a little, light tan, dress, that a seamstress, that lived {Coughs} down on Second Street up over on Moss, over one of the, stores, down there. It was uh, a little silk blouse, and skirt, and a little jacket,

KO: Oh.

NS: With a big, flop sleeves to it, and uh, that's all there was to it.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Just married.

KO: What about uh, tell me about the schools back then, when Griffin was young, what were the schools like?

NS: Oh, the schools was wonderful. I never had any trouble with Griffin in my life, in school.

KO: Mm hm.

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NS: And uh, all children was all good, and the parents, I tell you the parents in those days and times were, well-thought of people. We didn't have the scum that we have now. No tell of all this stuff, killing people, and, for a dollar or something like that.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: We lived in peace.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And uh, you could go out, and you, you wasn't afraid, that something happen to before you get home. It just, this, this life is not any life. I guess maybe they think it is. I don't know. But if I killed somebody, I wouldn't think it was, much life.

KO: Mm. Well uh, were the teachers paid very much back then?

NS: Paid. My son, my uh, school teacher, now this, this is one woman you ought to go see, {Chuckles} that Ms. Burke. Her mother was my first Sunday School, my first Sunday School teacher, and my, well, my mother was my first Sunday School teacher, but she was my first school teacher. And uh, oh, I think she was one of the sweetest women that ever lived. And her, Ms. Burk, could tell you a whole lot about those things.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: "Course she's younger than I am.

KO: What's her name?

NS: Mrs., William, Mrs. William Burk.

KO: Okay.

NS: And they live on um, Lexington Avenue.

KO: Okay. About how old do you think she is?

NS: She's eighty years old.

KO: Oh. Okay.

NS: Past it now.

KO: Okay.

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NS: And I rocked her when she was a baby, and she calls me. Oh, she just, she just, looks after me, and does; he's the millionaire of Owensboro.

KO: Oh really?

NS: Oh, yes.

KO: I didn't know that.

NS: Oh, you'll see one of the most beautiful homes that you ever went into when you go into her home.

KO: Mm.

NS: Oh, it is so pretty.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I wouldn't care if you told her that, but he is,

KO: Okay.

NS: He's in bad shape now. I don't know how it'd be to go now, but if sometime later on, maybe.

KO: Okay.

NS: He um, he's uh, real, he's in real estate business.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: He owns almost everything in Owensboro.

KO: Mm.

NS: He's big shot.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And when I got hurt, boy, they was the first ones, just as soon as they heard it, him and her and William come to me, and William said, "Now, Miss Ruth, is there anything you need?" Said, "Don't you hesitate to call on me." And they've taken me out to the Country Club to dinner, and just, so good to me. Oh, I have so many good friends.

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KO: Well you know you were saying he's the millionaire of Owensboro reminds me of a question. When you were young, how did you tell the wealthy people from the, the not so wealthy?

NS: You didn't.

KO: Really?

NS: You didn't. They didn't put on. They didn't make on. Act like, they's wealthy. They didn't, didn't want you to know they was wealthy.

KO: Oh really?

NS: No.

KO: Mm.

NS: They's just as common as you was.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Loved you just as much they loved the rich. There was no difference between us.

KO: Was there anything that you really wanted when you were young that you couldn't afford?

NS: No. Fixin' to say, I, I never did want anything, 'cause I never could get it.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I didn't want it.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Mammy would explain it to me. She'd sit down and say, "We didn't uh, have the money to, buy it with." I was just, grewed up as a poor child.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: I didn't have any money to spend. If uh, Pappy would come in out of the field, tired, and sit down, maybe, he'd always, put, put a pillar on the floor and lay down on it, and bring in a little switch off of the tree, and I'd keep flies off of him. Didn't even have scree-, didn't even have screens. And uh, when he'd get up, he'd give me a penny or two pennies. I'd

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Interview with Nellie Ruth Sublett (CT 39&40)

go to the grocery and get me, some, some, a stick of chewing gum or stick of candy. Boy, I'd be just as happy as a lark.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: Didn't take all this mess of money, to make you happy, and that's the way I have always lived. I don't, I don't want the best, I just want, what, is convenient, and what'll help me.

KO: What about electricity? Did you see that as something that was convenient?

NS: I, my, my, Mommy and Daddy had that put in the house.

KO: How old were you?

NS: Oh, I was, I don't know, I was just a young kid, I wasn't, I was going with the boys. In my teens, I recon', when that happened.

KO: What was your reaction to it?

NS: Huh?

KO: What was your reaction to it?

NS: Well, at first we didn't know how to {Both chuckle} work the thing, but we got used to it, and, we thought it was wonderful.

KO: Mm hm. How did it change your life?

NS: Didn't change it any. No, electricity didn't change our life any. We just went on and lived just like we'd always lived, only just turn on a light, instead of a lamp. I had our old uh, oil lamp for a long time, and I give it to uh, Miss L-, Miss, one of my neighbors. She thought it was so pretty.

KO: Mm hm. What

NS: But

KO: I'm sorry. I was going to ask you, what did change your life, Miss Sublett, during the first, say, between 1900 and 1950? What things happened that changed your life the most would you say?

NS: Well, I guess, getting' married.

KO: Mm hm.

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NS: Changed me, the biggest change in my life. In a way, at times, I was disappointed. Now, my, my Daddy, was a home man.

END TAPE1, SIDE2

TAPE2, SIDE1

NS: At home, sometime I could've come in, but my Daddy wasn't there to. He come in out of the field, change his clothes, and we'd all sit at a little grate. We'd sit by him in Mammy's room at night, and we all had a seat. Pappy would sit on this side of the grate. Mammy would sit on that side of the grate, and 'course me right back down in Mammy's lap, and we, all around. I had eight, I had four, four brothers, four, let's see now, I had four sisters, and three brothers, and we all minded until they left home.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: We had to be in that place when we had prayer time come. And, that changed my life a whole lot, because I wasn't Christian.

KO: Oh.

NS: And I miss that. And I still miss it, but I lived to see him converted,

KO: You did?

NS: And that was the happiest day on earth.

KO: Well, good.

NS: And I had millions of times, and I'd always go to Mammy. He'd get in a card game, or he'd get in pool game, he never drank, he never smoked. One of the best natured people that ever lived on earth, but it was his habit. He wasn't raised like I was raised. His mother had a big family. She was a good Christian, but she didn't teach the children to go to Sunday School and church like they should. And I had to go through all of that. And Sunday morning that, he was converted, I tell you, ohhh, that was another change in my life, for the good, for the happy. He

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never denied me anything, anything that I wanted. He was uh, always wantin' to swap cars, getting' me a new car. I never knew when he was comin' in with a surprise, you know

KO: Mm hm.

NS: And I'd get after him and beg him to save. I said, "We might need this sometime." "Oh, well, if we do, we'll get by." He was a very, go-lucky, boy.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Everybody loved him. Men, women and children, loved him. And uh, I don't know the, I guess that was one of the biggest, changes that ever come in my life, is gettin' married, and learnin' of the world.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: The sin that was in the world. I didn't know anything about it. And then I think the next, of course, would be, that I saw Sam Thomas saved.

KO: Mm hm. Well, what was considered sinful when you were young?

NS: Mm?

KO: What was considered sinful, back then?

NS: Uh, he didn't do anything that was really sinful.

KO: No, I said, "What was considered, sinful"? You said that you, became aware of the sin in the world. What was considered sinful back then?

NS: Well, people gambled, and drank, smoked, you know, that was terrible, but he didn't do any of that.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: I never did have to go through any of that.

KO: When he got into card games or pool games?

NS: Oh yes, we loved to play cards. I played, belonged to clubs, and we women would play, meet and play, play uh, penny poker.

KO: Oh, really?

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NS: Yeah, we'd play penny poker. That's as far as we'd go.

KO: {Chuckles}

NS: We never did go any higher than that.

KO: How old were you when did that?

NS: Oh, mercy, that wasn't {Chuckles} too many years ago. That's been uh, twenty years ago or more. And uh, at night, the men and the women would have a game somewhere, and, in a home, you know,

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Invite, have a pair of us, you know, play, and we just all, we just had the best time, oh, we did have such a good time. But there wasn't any harm in it.

KO: Mm hm. Did you play cards when you were younger?

NS: No sir. Never was a card in my grandmother's house.

KO: Oh really?

NS: No sir.

KO: Was that considered bad?

NS: And there never was uh, whiskey.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: But uh, it was after I got married, I got into all that, and I wudn't a got into that but Tom loved it so, and uh, I got older, I began to see that I could go with him, and be with him, and know where he was and what he was doin', and keep him, from ever doin' anything that he oughtn't to do.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: So I, well, up until now, my, the only thing is that I miss him and I miss my boy.

KO: Mm hm.

NS: But, that boy of mine has brought more joy into my life, than all the boys in the world, put together.

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Interview with Nellie Ruth Sublett (CT 39&40)

KO: Mm hm.

NS: He, he loves his mother. I, I tell you one thing, that happened, when he went off to college, that night, the next, that night, we sit in our living room and talked. His daddy had gone to bed, and then I cried. I just cried the whole time. And he said, “Now, Mother, I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” he said, “I’ll write to you every Sunday afternoon, and you write to me every Sunday afternoon,” and I said, “Alright, we’ll do it.”

KO: Mm hm.

NS: Now, that’s been ALL these years, over fifty years worth of that. I get a letter every Tuesday morning. He gets a letter every Tuesday morning.

KO: Pretty good.

NS: From me. But for over fifty years, I got his letter this morning. He loves, he knows I’m foolish about him, and they’re just foolish about me, and she wants to send me a box, and if she were at that telephone, “Did you get a letter from Griffin this morning?” She’s got kind of away from it because she knows it’s “Yes.” And the postman said to me once, one day, said, “I have carried the mail, to a lot of people, but I have never, had anything like this.” Says, “That letter is in the mailbox, every Tuesday morning, to be brought to you.”

KO: How old were you when your son when to college?

NS: Huh, what?

KO: When your son went to college, how old were you?

NS: Well, I guess, I was in my thirties, about thirty-six, I reckon, maybe. I, honey, I can’t remember the dates, I can’t, remember, I just know that uh, what happened, not when. But uh, I tell you it’s been a long time. And they all think that I ought to go into a home, and uh, have somebody, or have somebody come live here with me, I couldn’t do it, couldn’t do it. As long as I can get up and have my son stay with me when I come home from the hospital.

END TAPE2, SIDE1