

This is the 29th of April, 1993. My name is Kindra Miller, and today I'm talking with Don Pederson at 1717 Manor Drive in Grinnell, Iowa as part of an oral history project.

KM: Okay, we'll start by talking about your early life.

DP: Umhmm.

KM: We can just start with where and when you were born.

DP: Well, I was born in February, but of course I don't remember that. (laughs) But my, ah, ... I had an older brother who was born a year and a half before I was, and he was born in the family home. And there was complications, and he died within the first day of being born.

KM: Oh, no.

DP: And, so my mother decided that when I came, that I should go to the... that she should go to the hospital for my birth. So I was born in the old community hospital, Grinnell Community Hospital, here in Grinnell.

KM: And what was the date again?

DP: February the 17th, 1925.

KM: 1925. And you were born in Grinnell. Umm.

DP: I grew up on the farm, we drove by it earlier this afternoon or this evening. I grew up there, about five years lived on the farm and started the country school a mile and a half away, walked to country school. And we moved a number of times because my father's a... was a farmer, and he'd get better farms, or sometimes the farm would be sold, and then we'd have to move on. So about every two years we moved to a different farm, all within just a few miles of Grinnell.

KM: Ok. Are there things about Grinnell that are... Grinnell now that were significantly different back when you were growing up in Grinnell?

DP: Well, yeah, there's... probably not significantly, oh... Colonial Theater is where they used to have the opera house, and so forth, is gone. And a lot of the landmarks are gone, and of course out north side of town, that was all pasture and farm ground and now there's all houses built up and there's more houses being built up.

KM: Were there mostly farmer's back then, or...

DP: Well, at that time, I don't think there was a lot of business. Grinnell College has been a very big part of Grinnell throughout the years, and they've employed a lot of people,



and there wasn't a lot of industry, so most of it, it was a shopping town for the community for miles around and it was the largest town, so a lot of it involved the retail merchants who did business with the farmers, and the farmers would bring the produce in.

KM: How much was Grinnell College a part of the town during that time, when you were growing up?

DP: Well, it was... it seems like the college people tended to run around with their own crowd, which is very natural, and so did the rural people, so there has not been as much cross socialization as I would like to see happen, and sometimes it causes resentment, but I think there has always been some back and forth, and the college has had an influence on the high schools and all the school system because they were, in my estimation, a very positive influence. They saw to it that schools were of fairly good caliber, and things like that, so Grinnell College has been a influence on the community.

KM: And, how would you describe Grinnell community in terms of being close-knit? I'm talking about the rural community of Grinnell.

DP: Well, the rural community... That's one thing that's changed dramatically since when I was a kid, we used to neighbor (?) a lot. And we did... so much of the work was physical work, shelling corn, or threshing oats, or all of those things that if you're not a farm gal, well, you don't know what I'm talking about. (laughs)

KM: (laughs)

DP: But there'd be groups of us that would get in the old threshing run, oh, there'd usually be 20 people or 25 people of the farmers in the neighborhood would get together and thresh the oats, and it was done in usually in August, and then you'd go from one farm to another, and you go to one farm and thresh, and then you go to another farm and thresh, and the housewife always had a fabulous meal, they each tried to outdo each other. There was all kinds of pies and cakes and chicken and meat and it was... a great time.

KM: Today, we went past what was the schoolhouse for you, and now it's a, what do you call it, a grange?

DP: A grange.

KM: What.. Did you have those, or was it these just collective...

DP: The grange was not very big at that particular time. The grange was big back in the late 1800's around Grinnell, and then it kind of died out. The Farmer's Union was big when I



was born and I was a small child, and then shortly after that the Farm Bureau came in and they were a large farm organization. And of course the National Farmer's Organization, and the American Farmer, and there's other farm organizations that have come along since then, but probably the biggest farm organization, when I was a youngster, my parents belonged to - the Farmer's Union, which was involved in dumping cream and killing little pigs, because there was not a high enough price. It was like the unions do, they withhold the work, and that was done, and I think once my parents dumped milk, dumped cream instead of taking it to the creamery, and that was frowned upon by a lot of people - that they were trying to get their prices up so they could make a living.

KM: How would you describe your family, in terms of how you got along with your siblings, or did you have any brothers and sisters?

DP: Yeah, I had a sister who was 4 years younger than I am, and then I had a brother who was 14 years younger, so there was quite an age difference. My sister and I, we had the usual little... we got along great. And we still get along great, she lives in town, she's a secretary at one of the grade schools in town. And my younger brother, you talked about earlier about teachers, my younger brother is a teacher at the high school, so pretty everybody's involved in teaching, I think that...

KM: What are their names?

DP: Norma Kaisen (sp?) is the secretary at Bailey (?) Park School. And my brother is Roger, and he teaches math (coughs), math at the high school. He's the track coach, or cross country coach, I guess he is, and he was the ninth grade basketball coach, and he's been coaching a number of things.

KM: What do you think were the strongest family values that you were brought up with back at, you know, when you were growing up? What were some of the things that were emphasized in terms of family values that you think might be different for a person born somewhere else, you know, in the United States or in a different community?

DP: That's a good question. I don't know. We were always taught honesty, and cleanliness, and that's kind of ????????, but we were taught to be honest and not to gossip, and things like that. I think one of the things that I noticed, my wife who grew up in a small community, different from her, because we lived on a farm, our only people we socialized with... We were isolated. We saw the farm owners, they were a half mile apart, so you played with your siblings all the time. That's who your friends were, your siblings, because there weren't many other people, or maybe a close neighbor. We happened to



have some cousins at one time, that were only a half mile away, and they were our best friends, and also our relatives. But I think you develop independence and so forth when you're... you have to develop your own play things and your own... what you do, and you don't... My wife would stop in after school, you know, and get a coke with the other girls, and the fellows, we didn't do that we came home... Work oriented, I think, is the one thing that I grew up with, because we'd be home from school, and immediately Mom would have fresh made bread or cake or cookies or something.

KM: (laughs)

DP: and grab something and change into.. from our school overalls into our work overalls, and go out and start working in the, you know, yard. We always had get up in the morning after I became a little older, and milk the cows and feed the hogs and the chickens, and things like that, so we didn't have time, much time to play. I remember we didn't get to watch.. listen to the radio, we didn't have television then.

KM: Right.

DP: But even radio, I very seldom listened to the radio like the town people did. There was always work to be done on the farm, and you were expected to do it.

KM: Was there a division of labor between you and your brother and your sisters?

DP: The only division would be the older ones did those things that were more, either more skilled or took more physical strength, and the younger ones did the, gathered the eggs, and as you progressed up...

KM: Right.

DP: Yeah. I remember in, I think I was fourteen years old at the time, see.. I remember, about fourteen, and we were threshing, as I mentioned we were threshing grain, and they needed a spike (?) pitcher. In other words, a pitcher was one that pitched the bundles out of the shock (?) onto a hayrack.

KM: Okay.

DP: And they were... And my dad and my uncle were farming together, and they needed to hire somebody, and at that time, things were very poor, that was in the 30's, and you could only hire somebody ... uh, go to town, like Grinnell, and walk on the street, and there was always young fellows on the street that would for a dollar a day, they would come work for you. They would pick them in Grinnell. And they hired a young man to come out and pitch bundles on a hayrack for a dollar a day. And he came out, and of course he ate this



fabulous big noon meal, and he was not used to hard physical labor, and about an hour after he ate he became ill and said he couldn't keep on going anymore, but they still needed the help so my cousin, who was a little bit younger than I was, we said, "Look. Between the two of us, we'll take his place." And so we worked for a little while, and they needed more work out of us, and pretty soon we were each doing our own work.

KM: Umhmm.

DP: And so at 14 years of age I felt that I was doing a man's work.

KM: (laughs)

DP: And they didn't hire anybody after that, so (smiles and laughs a little) I guess I became a man right then when I could do a man's work at fourteen. But that's kind of the way things worked. You started out with the little jobs...

KM: Right.

DP: until you developed the strength and the skills to do...

KM: Was there any division of labor in terms of... between sexes, like something that your sister would do that you wouldn't do?

DP: Well, she, more or less, because there were only three of us, and my younger brother was so much smaller, or younger I should say. He didn't come into the scene until after I was about gone, so my mother needed help in the house, so my sister basically did the house... helping the house, with the housework. But yes, there was, there was... the chickens were for kind of... the gathering of the eggs, and that was kind of uh... women's work?

KM: Uh-hunh.

DP: Is that what you (chuckling) want to find out?

KM: Yeah!, exactly.

DP: ...you know, and that kind of thing. Males did the stronger physical things...but I will say my mother did about anything. She was... She could do most anything. She was a very small woman, but she could do about anything...to help out. Therefore my sister would be more inclined to help out in the house, so my mother could help outside. But after I became big enough, then my mother spent more time in the house, and less outside.

KM: You said something about, umm, the men in the town during the depression who would be willing to work for a dollar a day. How did the depression actually impact on



your family's finances, or did it?...or the average farmer?...or did you notice, or were you too young?

DP: Well, I think the thing was everybody was poor. And if everybody is poor and you don't have television to see that other people have a lot of money, it's no big problem. As long as you're...if you have patched clothes, it's no problem. If you go to school, and your clothes are patched and their old, it's a problem. But when everybody was poor on the farm, and nearly everyone was...Uh, we had no money, we did not go to the movies, we didn't have candybars, we didn't have food, except what we grew ourselves. Our entertainment was taking spools of thread and poking sticks and putting them on a matchbox and making our own wagons. We really received toys as such. But we didn't know we were poor because everybody was the same, so I think poverty is only in the mind...and we didn't know it.

KM: Hmm, I'm curious--um, you said you didn't listen to the radio much and you pretty much, you know, during your leisure time you entertained yourself. When was your first exposure to living off the farm, or leaving Grinnell, or realizing there were other forms of entertainment and...

DP: Well, I went to a country school for four years and then I went to Grinnell high school and graduated and I told my parents that I wanted to go to college. I had an uncle who was a lawyer in Washington D.C., and I decided sometime in grade school I was going to college, when I graduated from high school my father told me there was no use in going to college, I was going to be a farmer anyway.

KM: (laughs)

DP: And there was no need...incidentally, my parents only had an eight grade education, so. But I told him I was going, and he was like you said your parents were, he said "Well, if you go you'll have to pay your own way. My father tried to discourage me. And my mother, umm, she told me to do what I wanted to do. So I went away to college at seventeen and I guess that was really the first time that I...I'd seen a few movies before that. We use to have movies in the little town of Newburg where they use to show movies on the side of the bank building and it was free to get in. But other forms of entertainment...we never ate in a restaurant. I think once or twice we ate in a restaurant...

KM: Oh, really.

DP: ...out of high school. But we didn't know we were poor because everybody was the same. Usually the parents would get together and we'd play cards and make some coffee and pop some corn and have a cookie or two and enjoy each other and it was just as fun as spending a hundred dollars to go to a theater



(laughing as he speaks) probably I would imagine.

KM: Well, if your father didn't encourage you to go to college and you, you know, were pretty isolated, umm, where did you get the incentive to go to college?...where did it come from?...or where did you think it came from?

DP: I think it came from my uncle.

KM: Your uncle?

DP: And I swore I would never be a farmer when I was growing up.  
(laughs)

KM: (laughs)

DP: Under no circumstances. If you have ever pitched chicken manure out of a hot chicken (smiles and chuckles) house with the ammonia fumes...

KM: Ughh.

DP: can almost overcome you (smiles and laughs more). It's different, but yes, I decided I didn't want to become a farmer, so I knew I had to go get a college education. But, of course, the war came along and I got involved in the war.

KM: What age were you?

DP: When I went to the army?

KM: Yeah.

DP: I was, let's see, I think I was... well I went to college for a year, and then I came back to the farm because my father needed help and I had run out of money because my parents weren't helping me.

KM: Right.

DP: So, I came back to work and by that time I had turned eighteen, and they were drafting at eighteen and so I came up for the draft and should have went into the service, but my dad needed the help to get the corn picked in the fall. So I had a farm deferment until the fall and then I had just turned nineteen when I was drafted into the service.

KM: So what is a farm deferment?

DP: A what?

KM: A farm deferment?

DP: Okay, you don't have to go into the military. During the



(coughs) second world war the production of food was such a vital part of the war effort that let many farm boys stay home, deferred them from going into the military so they could stay home to produce food.

KM: Did you have to make certain crops, or was that....

DP: You had to appeal to the board. And then if there wasn't enough help to get the crops harvested, then they would give you a deferment. And they gave me a deferment to get the crop, but then the process before I was called up was quite (?) some time after that.

KM: Were you scared?

DP: Oh, no. Not scared. When you get into a car and go someplace, you don't think you'll have a car accident, or a plane. When go to war, you don't think you'll get killed (laughs a little).

KM: So, do you think that was a typical attitude of men, young men that went into the army, or into the services?

DP: I can't say.

KM: You can't say.

DP: There were some of them I'm sure that were scared. I was not. I guess I've been philosophical all my life and I think a lot of them are that way.

KM: Did you go in with friends...from Grinnell or..

DP: I went in...not really...there were some people that lived in the same area, when I got to where I was assigned to take basic training. Most of the young men were from the east coast. Of course, that's where the larger population was from, very few from the midwest. ??? New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, all over, most of them from that area.

KM: Do you think you got an education in that respect, um, meeting so many people?

DP: It broadens your outlook on life and so forth.

KM: How do you think that's changed you, you know, meeting so many people, or how do you think being in the war has changed you?

DP: Oh, I don't know. I really haven't thought about that I suppose. I did get assigned over in Europe and fought through Germany and Belgium and up north of Berlin and most... The biggest experience I guess was that there was about fifty of us, and incidentally there was one of the fellahs that happened to be there (?) who happens to live up the street,



and you said were there local people, I didn't know it until afterwards. He lives up the street about three blocks, but there was about fifty of us or fifty-five of us and we went some fifty miles behind enemy lines and tried to meet up with the Russians in Berlin and we were surrounded constantly. I think we had the fifty of us unofficially had 250 thousand German troops surrender to us, which is a little ludicrous, but, you remember, it was the end of the war and we had so many weapons and so many souvenirs that ????. I went to sleep one night. We were way behind the enemy lines and the Germans knew that the war was practically over, but they were not giving up their guns, so when I went up to ????---I had been on guard duty---and I laid down. I had to wiggle around. There was a dance hall above a bar that had been ????. And after I laid down in that because you couldn't have lights on. When I woke up in the morning, there were all them Germans except they had all their hand grenades and pistols and rifles and everything and they knew the war was nearly over. As long as we didn't molest them, or try to capture them, while they let us go our way.

KM: What did you think of Europe?

DP: Oh, I enjoyed Europe. I ...I was one of these people that ..I still love to travel..and I took...every chance I could go to someplace, I went. I went to Paris, the french riviera, Switzerland--I skied in the Alps. A young man and it was the only time I really ever skied in my life.

KM: (laughs)

DP: And then after the war was over, they (ended the occupation?) troops in Germany. And ahh, but there was nothing for us to do. So they set up a school; they set up the ???? American University in the southwest of France down near the Spanish border on the Atlantic (?) ocean. And I went down there for two months and ???? in the University atmosphere. And that was very interesting and enjoyable. So I travelled extensively throughout Europe. We use to get, I can remember, we use to just travel, and one day we got out and stuck out our thumbs and some officer picked us. We drove and we were in the middle of the woods and we looked at our watches and realized we had to be back. We had spent half of our time that we had off going out. We said "Oops you have to stop and let us out." And the man said "Why do you want out for?" We said "We got to get back to camp. And he said "Right here in the middle of the woods?" And we said "Yeah," because we had to get back. So we walked across the road and stuck out our thumbs and hiked back to camp. (laughs)

KM: (laughs)

DP: But it was different. You grow up, I guess.



KM: Aah, what was the sense of comraderie among soldiers.

DP: Ooh, I think it was great at the time.

KM: Did you think you had a sense of purpose in what you were doing? Or what was...

DP: Ooh, sure. That war was different than any, different from Vietnam, or probably even the Korean War because everybody was behind it. Like Stud Terkel said, if you read him, it was the good war.

KM: I have it in my bookbag.

DP: Ooh, you do! I wrote a paper for a group that I belong to on the good war. I should let you read that. But, that was the good war because clearly it (had the?) United States behind us. And yeah, I felt we had a sense of purpose. We felt the Germans were terrible, and the Japanese were terrible, and we found out....matter of fact, I dated--I wasn't married then of course--I dated a German girl after the war. And we found out that their people were just like our people and it was just the leaders who were leading them astray and there were probably some other people who....

KM: Was there any particular funny stories that happened that you want to relate while you were there or anything that was *shocking*, or something that opened your eyes?

DP: Well...aah..

KM: As a person that, I never been witness to a war, or had anybody I know go to a war.

DP: Is that right?

KM: No.

DP: I remember when we first landed in France and we got out and we ?????????? and we got up there and we heard a plane and, we were young boys, eighteen or nineteen, and we all ran out into the field and some of the older soldiers said, "Get back here, get back here! (They're striking.--??)" (laughs) So, we saw them and they were coming in with machine guns and troops. So we decided to get back inside under cover so they wouldn't see us. Little things like that. I was trying to think, I think one of the experiences, aah, that the aah...we went into a small German village. The artillery had shelled it, just dropped a bunch of shells on it to keep the Germans who were defending it in their homes. And immediately they stopped shelling it and we poured into the town. Of course, the first thing you do is check the buildings out to see if there is any Germans there. And I ran in one house and there was no Germans, civilians, but no soldiers. I ran out the back



door and I ran in the back end of another house, the next house, and as I ran in there, why there were some canned cherries, home canned cherries.

KM: Umhmm.

DP: I tried to get the lid off and I couldn't get the lid off, so I used my bayonet and broke it off and, of course, there was glass in it.

KM: uugh!

DP: But, I pour the liquid, poured the cherries and let the liquid, the cherry juice, filter through my hand. And, of course the red cherry juice ran down my hands and off of me and I was eating the cherries and I had red cherry juice all over my mouth and about that time I noticed there was a door and I looked behind the door checking things out and there was quite a few bottles of wine.

KM: (laughs)

DP: And so, I immediately stuck a couple in each pocket...

KM: (laughs again)

DP: ...and coat pocket and a couple under each arm and I took off. Of course, as a combat man, I had the grenades hanging around my belt buckle and I had bayonets in my boots and a rifle in my hand and I tore out of the front door and the house ???, the woman who lived, she saw me with this red...on my face and red on my hands and she began screaming and yelling. She probably thought i had killed somebody. (laughs)

KM: (laughs)

DP: And then she realized what i had done and then she saw the bottles of wine that I had and she began yelling at me. We didn't know what to do. And finally the priest of the Catholic church came up and he spoke English and he said this was the communal wine, or the wine that belonged to the church...

KM: Ohhhh!

DP: ...and that I should give it back. By this time the sergeant came up and I said "Hey, look sarge, this priest wants this wine back and I think we should have it." And so the sergeant looked to the priest and said "What do you use this for?" And he said "We use it for celebration." He says "Give him half and he'll celebrate his way and we'll celebrate ours!" (laughs)

KM: (laughs)



DP: It's just those odd, tidbits that ???

KM: That brings up another question. Were you brought up in any kind of religious background?

DP: Yes, my father, my father's parents were both Norwegian and there is a little tiny church building over (there?) that my father, my grandfather, and two other Norwegian people, a Norwegian Lutheran church and all the services were held in Norwegian. I was baptized in that and then when I came an age when I could start talking, and everything was done in Norwegian, and I could not understand Norwegian, so we dropped out of that church and eventually joined a Methodist church. I've been Methodist, I guess, since then, but I'm not a great church-goer.

KM: Okay. When you came back from the war, I assume you finished your Bachelor of Science?

DP: Yeah, well when we came back at that time, ????? you get money for college, when we came back from the service.

KM: Ooh, okay.

DP: So I got back and as soon as I got back I went to college and then I met my wife and we got married.

KM: And what did you do immediately after, you said you worked for...

DP: I graduated as an engineer from Iowa State and then I worked as an engineer with the Soil Conservation Service.

KM: And how long was that?

DP: Just three years.

KM: Three years?

DP: And then my father said he was going to move to town. And I said "What are you going to do with the farm?" And he said "I'll rent it out." And I talked with my wife and we decided to move back to the farm. We moved there and lived there in '52, so that has been some forty years ago.

KM: Umhmm. What attitudes of yours changed that you thought, you know, farming was a viable occupation for you at that point?

DP: Probably the monetary aspect. When I worked for the Soil Conservation Service, all of the people above me seemed they were stable in their jobs and there was no chance of promotion. And I loved the work, I thought it was a great job, but it looked like there was no chance of advancement. And, you know, you always think you can make more money and I



knew that I knew how to farm, and probably I was too optimistic about the farm, about how much money it could make. My father had done very well at it and so I thought I could make more money on the farm and it was something I could utilize my degree with and...

KM: Yeah, how did your degree help you, do you think?

DP: Well, college always helps you no matter what job ???...

KM: Yeah, I agree.

DP: Like I said, we did all of our own carpentry work. Now you can't say that...you learn to think and figure out problems and so forth in college in math or whatever you take. It's all (problem-solving or part of it?). And I think that helps you. College---you don't need to learn just exactly, in estimation, a specific thing like maybe a doctor or somebody like that. In liberal arts, it teaches you to think and broadens your perspective and so forth.

KM: How many people, aah, at the time, do you think, went to college?

DP: Farm boys very few...very, very few. In fact, I was made fun of in public school because they thought, "Ah!, you're going to college--you're stupid to go to college."

KM: (laughs)

DP: And it was the general feeling at that time. Farm girls were a little more ???? for a year or two because they became teachers quite often. Probably the girls had a desire to go to college more than the boys did and that sounds unusual, but...

KM: Why do you think that is?

DP: I don't know. The girls could get a job as a nurse or a teacher. It was kind of what they could do at that time. If they didn't get married, because at that time that was most women's dream to get married, because they couldn't make a living, but if you couldn't do that, then if you were a nurse or a teacher, you could make a good living. And there weren't any other jobs that...they weren't open for women back then.

KM: You were saying how you didn't want to, when you were younger, how you didn't want to go into farming. Your peers, you know, that you went to school with, was that the consensus among other farm boys, that they didn't want to continue, or was it the opposite?

DP: They all wanted to. Most farm boys wanted to back then, but of course, the changes in agriculture are such you don't have



near the farms we do. So, most times we wanted to go back to the farm, but winded up not being able to farm. Had to leave the farm. I, who didn't want to farm, winded up on the farm and stayed there.

KM: What was the average size of the farm?

DP: When I moved to the farm with my dad, it was 160 acres was about average. Now we have 750 acres and my son farms it. And he is not a big farmer. A lot of farmers have a 1000 or 2000 acres now. So, it's really limited the possibilities of young men becoming farmers.

KM: How do you, as a person that is just learning about, you know, issues about having to do with the environment, how do you think farmers relate to the environment since they are so close to the earth and farm animals? Was there a concern at the time about the uses of..I don't know...

DP: Pesticides? Herbicides?

KM: Yeah, pesticides and herbicides.

DP: Well, we were told they were not harmful. That's another thing. You asked about how I grew up. I grew up believing that the government was always right and that the police were always right and, you know, we didn't question such things. So when we were told that pesticides and herbicides were safe and wouldn't harm anybody.. And I think that probably some of the companies thought they wouldn't, but they found out the lingering effects and so forth did. Farmers don't mean to be hurting the environment, but economic survival sometimes tells you to do things that you know...that some farmers know are not the right thing to do because ???

KM: Also, I was thinking, what were...you said you went overseas, and when you joined the service you were exposed to different people from different parts of the United States and when you went to Europe, you were exposed to different cultures...how did Grinnell residents, especially in the rural community, view people of different faiths and from different countries and different eth.. ethnic-i-ties (laughs as she tries to pronounce the word).

DP: Well...even during the second world war there were some German people living in the community that were discriminated against because they were of German descent, although I have German ancestors in my background on my mother's side. We didn't have, aah...i think we had one black family, two black families. I graduated with a black girl (?) who was very well-liked. I don't think...I think there was discrimination against... Of course, the Japs--everybody hated the Japs. (laughs) But that was because of the war.



KM: Right.

DP: But, probably there wasn't as much concern because there just wasn't...it didn't crop up. I don't know...people say "Are you prejudiced against blacks?" I've never been in a black home. How would I know whether I am? I'm not prejudiced against blacks when I know them. I'm not prejudiced....I think they are just people. I don't even notice it when they are around, but I think there was some....ooh, you know, aah...they thought ethnic groups and people of different cultures and so forth were wrong. I think there was some of that, but if you've not had contact with anybody, how do you know it. The fear of the unknown is what causes people to be that way.

KM: Umm, what about something more general, like how do they view people from the East coast, or maybe larger cities?

DP: (laughs) Well, probably in the same vein really. You know, they were pretty provincial back fifty-sixty years ago. They were all shysters out to get them. (laughs)

KM: (laughs)

DP: I think my observations, and I'm prejudiced I know, my observations are that a lot of people in the midwest know a lot more about the east coast, than the people on the east coast knows about the midwest.

KM: I think you are right.

DP: Probably because we have travelled more. We've been in every...we've travelled more than the average farmer. We've been in every province in Canada, plus the northwest (territory?) and I've been to Europe four times. I just got back from a trip from Australia and we've been to Japan, South America. So I've travelled extensively and go to see other countries and so forth.

KM: So what keeps you coming back to Grinnell? Why did you decide to settle in Grinnell? Umm, what is it about Grinnell that is attractive to you?

DP: Of course, it's home.

KM: Right.

DP: for the first place. I told you earlier in the evening that I don't like big cities. And it is like I walk out the door and Ernie Fishman (???), retired professor who lives next door, we battle (???) with each other and the fellows across the street, they waves at you and you talk to them. I remember visiting a good friend of mine from the service in Hobokken, N.J., and we walked out the door one day and the



fellah across the hall--what do you call it--a brownstone, second story, apartment house--anyhow, one of those right in the middle of the city, you know, where you walk up a step into the apartment building.

KM: Yeah.

DP: Anyway, the fellah, his mother and his father were dead, before he stayed with his mother, and we walked out and the fellah across the hall walked out, and he didn't...And I said "Don't you speak to him?" And he said "No, I don't know him." And I said "Did he just move in?" "No, he's lived here for years."

KM: (laughs)

DP: You know, in Grinnell, Iowa we don't do that. We speak, or I speak...I nod my head to pretty near everybody in the city of Grinnell because most of them I either know or know who they are and if I don't...if I saw you, I would probably nod to you (laughs), not because I know you, but because it is a friendly greeting. I don't think that happens too often in the city. They would think something is wrong with you. So I like the....they know too much about you in the city---like Mr. Tharp (laughs)--he tells you about me, but there is a certain amount of friendliness and so forth.

KM: Okay. I wanted to ask you about role models that you had when you were young. Can you remember any role models because I think role models tend to change over time. I think the role models we have tend to be celebrities and stars. What kind of role models did you have, or were you exposed to role models, or were people in your community your role models?

DP: Like I said, one of the reasons that I went to college was because my uncle was a lawyer in Washington, D.C. and I knew he made good money and probably money was important. I always wanted to become a lawyer and then when I was a senior in high school I decided that I was too bashful and too shy. I always thought that lawyers were all trial lawyers, so ????

KM: Right.

DP: And math was one of my favorite subjects, so I thought that engineering would be a good idea. But, about role models, I was talking to a man the other day about role models and I thought J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI were catching all of these criminals and pulling down the Mafia and now I read he was a fake and that he worked with them and we both said, when we talked, here was kind of a role model, not really, but a fellah we admired and he...well, it's kind of disheartening to build up somebody and....aah, I didn't think of farmers as role models because I didn't want to be a farmer at that time. I didn't want to be a rock musician because we didn't have



rock music then (laughs)...it's hard to say.

KM: Hmm, I'm trying to think.

DP: I probably had some.

KM: What about school teachers perhaps, or people in the community?

DP: Hmm, I never thought about that in my life, having role models. Hmpf. I had teachers I really enjoyed, but I don't think that I held them up as a role model or anything. I guess I never thought about it.

KM: Let's move on to your family. When you came back you finished college and got married and I assume you started having kids.

DP: Yeah, when we were in college, yeah, our first kid born while we were in college. She is the one that lives in ????, Australia now, so...

KM: How was that? How did you feel prepared for that? You know, the idea of family and your role as a father?

DP: I think that...well, young people now don't get married---like our boys didn't get married until they were in their thirties, but when I returned home from the war I was about, what, 21?

KM: (slowly repeats) 21?

DP: And, I thought, gee, it's time to get married and get the family and that was what you were taught to do. It was a part of life and you would look for a young lady that would meet the ideals you had and you got married and when you were married, you started a family. It was just a part of the way life went. i don't think much thought was given to it. It was something that was just done. Many people were that way.

KM: What did you think of family life? Was it what you thought it was going to be?

DP: Yeah. I kept going to college and my wife was started teaching right away, taught right after we got married for a year and a half until we had our first baby.