GRINNELL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

groons

INTERVIEW WITH JEAN O. BEAVER

conducted by

ELISABETH BORG-BOWMAN

on APRIL 30, 1993

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH JEAN O. BEAVER

EBB: Okay, this is April 30th, 1993. My name is Elisabeth Borg-Bowman and today I'm talking with Jean Beaver about life in Grinnell and prior--we'll find out more... And could you start out by telling me where and when you were born?

JB: I was born in October of 1921 in McPherson County, Kansas, on a wheat and cattle farm. My dad called it a farm. Many people called 'em ranches, but be that as it may... It was about, uh, 11 miles out from town. It was a tiny little town that had a railroad station, and a school, and a post office. Of course, granaries and that sort of thing... Just about three miles away, and that's where the consolidated school was. Of course everything was on dirt roads and that sort of thing. In my life I never had a bicycle but I didn't feel deprived, but you see, I had a pony-- my own pony, and the pony loved me. I could go out to the corral and wave a piece of lettuce or a carrot and call "Patsy!!" and she would come running just as hard as she could come. I could get on her without a halter or a bridle or a saddle. But I could because I was the one that petted her and loved her and talked to her and it's, so you know, bicycles don't love you--

EBB: No! (laughs)

JB: But she did. It's an interesting life. My dad was a very gentle man who loved the animals and had great respect for them and respect for people. And my mother was so efficient at everything she did. She could ... anything she decided she wanted to do she could accomplish it, which is amazing for a five foot woman, tiny little thing, but... And I have an older brother and a younger sister. And uh, by the time I was ready for college, my father had had just enough of having boils on his arms and legs during harvest time, the wheat harvest and that sort of thing. So we moved to town, McPherson. He worked for a refinery in a sort of, uh, basic testing. He wasn't a chemist, but he did basic testing for them, not heavy work, but, he was sort of a self-taught man really. It was an interesting life. And so I went to college there at McPherson. I walked six blocks and went to college. It was ... of course it was a difficult time, there was the Depression time and during that time my mother was one of the first ones who taught the rest of the farm women how to...various sewing-- sewing and you know, tailoring and this sort of thing so they could make their own clothes and do... And then she also took some course and then taught some nutrition. She had been a schoolteacher before she was married. It may be that one of the best things about that life was that every Saturday when we went to town we(from the farm, not after we moved), we would stop by the library and everybody would get at least two books. The next week we'd bring 'em back and get two more. So we were all reading and learning and studying and it really was pretty great.

EBB: What kind of books did you read?

JB: Well, I read some stories and novels but as I got older it was more fun to read biographies and history things of that sort than it was to read the novels, and even today I'm really turned off by some of the novels that you get(laughs)-- really turned off. I just don't get them, really.

EBB: Um, were there any biographies in particular that you liked, of any certain people?

JB: I can't remember anyone specific at this point. Oh, I remember the Curies, Madame Curie and her husband. They really influenced me about the things they did. When I was in high school I had some great science teachers. And uh, so I took all the math and science I could. Then I went to college and the chemistry professor was a professor by the name of Herschey. And he had pioneered in developing the proper gases to be used in the submarine or that sort of thing, the right combination of gases, you know, and he also was the first person to ever to make a a diamond...from pressure. He used carbon--a bit of carbon inside of a thing-- and so he made diamonds about the size of two pinheads, something-- no, pinpoints I mean. That, mhmm, they were uh...and now they do make some industrial diamonds that way, not really-- not many because they can get--mine them much more cheaply. So he inspired me and I took chemistry and also took a double major in foods and chemistry, worked at that in several places.

EBB: What did you do? Um, what jobs have you had?

JB: Well, when I first got out of college-- fifty years ago-- in '43, that was in wartime and they weren't doing much experimentation, but I worked for a natural gas company in the panhandle of Texas. Most of my work was routine tests because the men had gone to war but I did some experiments with foods and the effects of cooking with natural gas, or even in the air-- natural gas in the air around the food(whatever you want with that...) However, my fiance was shot down.

EBB: Oh.

3

JB: In '43. And so I went-- kept working for a while and decided that'd be a dead end-and so I went back to the university to get a master's degree. I didn't get it; I didn't write the thesis because I met the man who was eventually my husband. And I worked for the Carey Salt Company-- they actually cared what salt did to food. Then after we were married we were at Cornell University. And my husband was teaching small animal surgery and taking advanced courses, and I worked in the experimental cheese lab; we worked with fatty acids. As a matter of fact, a young man and I in the lab probably did some of the first work on fatty acids. Interestingly...

EBB: Wow. Could you te--um, could you tell me more about fatty acids? Not-- I don't have any chemistry...

JB: Well, um, fatty acids are the basis of all oils and fats and they're the... For instance,

buteric acid would be the flavoring fatty acid of butter. And um, some of them are beneficial fatty acids of course, and some of them cause cholesterol and all that... And so actually where we did our work was in the experimental cheese lab, because where else could you get all these fatty acids more handily than from the cheese? We worked with those fatty acids on the lower end of the scheme of them...because they're simpler and easier to work with. And then not much had been done in 1945 on those...

EBB: Um, what was it like doing this experimental research as a woman?

JB: I had no problem. Um, because when I started out the men were off into the fighting, you know, and they needed someone who could do it. Besides, I had had very good grades. In my high school and college I had one C. And that was a course I decided to take for credit in badminton. (laughs) Well, anyway, so my grades were very good. I never had any problems at all. And, uh, the fact that I had the major in foods as well as a major in chemistry, when they needed a food-type chemist, well, that was just exactly what they were looking for. So I had no problem really in discrimination. I suppose, I--I, maybe I had a manner that didn't invite that. When I would talk about something, I didn't talk about it unless I knew what I was talking about. Yeah, mhmm... And, but I was never belligerent about that sort of thing. And so there really was no problem.

EBB: Did things change once the war ended?

JB: (sighs) Not for me.

EBB: Why?

JB: Well, I was doing the job. I did it well, so. But then after that when my husband--Well, we had lived there at Cornell, and then we lived two years in New Jersey, but we decided we were middle-Westerners. My husband-- his father had had a dairy farm at Kansas City. That dairy farm is housing now, but (laughs). That's neither here nor there I guess. Would you like to know-- hear a little thing that happened. It was in the spring before we came in the fall; it was in 1947. Um, we were at a party. There were several people we had never met before, who were there, and one of them was someone from Jersey City who lived in New Jersey at the time. And of course our speech was not the kind, not like their accent was at all. And he said, "Where are you from?" "Well, we're from Kansas." "Oh, that's way out west." "Well, it's halfway west." And then he said, "I've been out west too. I've been to Buffalo!" We looked at him, we looked at each other, and we just promptly turned around and walked away from him. We felt that would be less of an insult than anything we could say. (laughs) But it was typical of everybody there of course. But now we were middle-westerners and so we were looking for a practice. Veterinary practice, you see, my husband's -- was one. And um, in the middle west. And we looked at a number of them and Grinnell was a college town and the practice was a general practice. It was small animal as well as the large animal practice. And um, the man was not selling a lot of blue sky also. And so we bought it. That was in 1947 and uh,

we spent the rest of-- he died in 1990, but...l intend to spend the rest of my life here. It's a great place.

EBB: Um, what can you tell me about, um, the wartime? What was it like going to school while the war was going on?

JB: Well, many of the teachers were either into--the men--men teachers. A few of the women were in the WAC. One woman I knew, she wasn't a teacher, but she could fly a plane and she was ferrying planes back and forth. As a civilian of course. That's where the discrimination was that you mentioned earlier. Uh, many of the young men were drafted unless they were like my husband, were veterinarians or engineers or MD students, in that they were through and they were given a reserve commission. Well, by the time my husband's schooling was done, well the war was over and his commission was cancelled, and since he was in practice and everything they never drafted him and all that. But that was very ... Now there was ... You had to use stamps to get meat. There were a lot of meatless meals. You'd grow things in your garden, and of course we had grown up on a farm and we got used to that and to canning various things and preserving things so that was not much different. I suspect in the city it was guite a bit different and more difficult to get food. I'm sure it was the same way in LeMars because it was rural enough that you could get food from the country and all that. Um, you had certain stamps that you had to get meats. That was not, there was plenty for me. There was really no hardship, as far as we were concerned. Um, gasoline was rationed. You walked where you could. Now my husband, when he would go on calls and that he had a special card that he would get gasoline to go out on a call and that sort of thing. Take his car out to treat animals, that sort of thing. But um, the greatest hardship was to see many of your friends go ... your cousin, your fiance ... and not come back. That was as ... about as much as you could stand.

EBB: How many from your family were in the service?

JB: Oh dear. Well, immediate family, I had a brother who was a veterinarian and he's older than I. He was about to be called up for service when he was vaccinating a heifer calf for Burcella abortus--bang's disease, undulate fever. Well, the person that was supposed to hold the calf didn't and the needle flipped up and he got the full dose in the forearm. So he spent over two weeks in the hospital, wavering between living and dying. So then the army didn't want any part of him, after that. So immediate family, no. But, I had probably seven cousins, close, close--we were good friends. I can't recall exactly which relation, but one was a first cousin. We were, um, most of my father's and mother's family were older than my father and mother so that their children were some older, but there were probably ten that went into the service. Two of them died. It was in France. It was, it was really...Maybe it teaches you what things are really important. But I know the parents of these, they would never get over it. And then during Vietnam when my oldest son was drafted. He did not want to enlist, he'd just gotten out of college, but...(sighs) They made him an MP and sent him to Germany and I must admit I wasn't

a bit sorry 'cause he was relatively safe there. But well, of course, many many people now don't realize quite what it was, only the older people. There was, um...it had an effect on your life that was indelible. You're even too young to know how Vietnam affected people. You've heard some... I don't, I really, I realize that we have to have armies and something like that for the tension, but I think we should make a greater effort to do things peacefully and without force. Fighting with influence. I know it takes longer, but it's more permanent.

EBB: How did other people feel about the war at the time? That war...

JB: World War II?

EBB: Yeah.

JB: Well, you see, we were attacked, you know. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor which was in Hawaii, which is part of the U.S., and was also then. So you can't just sit back and let that happen. And they had been moving up and down the Pacific and taking over other countries for quite some time. And there was much talk around that this could not go on forever. Especially the Australians were becoming quite upset, 'cause they were close, you know. Well, that was the actual spark that turned the page over from just trying sanctions and things to actual force because Japan was so, so powerful at that time that we had, it had to be an all-out effort. And of course, not only Japan but Germany, because Germany was taking over much of Europe and the horrible things they were doing to the Jewish people and... Any moral person couldn't help but be outraged by that.

EBB: Um, at the time, did people know what was going on in Germany? Or was it not until after?

JB: No, there were some people who had escaped, or found out about it and came and told. And uh, we heard about it at McPherson. The college was a church-related school and of course they were peaceful and many of the young men there did not serve in the army but they served as medics and that srot of thing. Possibly greater risk than if they'd fought. They didn't shoot, but they were doing something to combat the terrible things done to the natives of -- in the Pacific -- south Pacific and also to the Jewish people..and to the people of France. As a matter of fact, I, for a couple of summers, my last two summers of my college years, I was a counselor for the Chicago Girl Scouts at their camp in Wisconsin. Now I don't know why they hired a girl from Kansas, but they did, so... I've never figured that one out. But my tentmate was a girl, Nadine Posniyak, she was from France. Her father was Jewish and he was a newspaperman and he had been killed by the Germans. And her mother was not Jewish but she was imprisoned for some time and then always under surveillance. So Nadine's brother had escaped, gotten out of France a couple years before. And then she came out, through Spain and came to the U.S. and her brother lived in Chicago at that time and that's what she was doing in the summer, and she went to school in the wintertime. She -- oh I suppose it was twelve or fourteen years after that-- she went back to France. She and her husband and then, her husband eventually came back to the U.S. I have not heard from her since, so I don't know... But she told me many things, horrible things, that happened...that the Germans did to the French people. They weren't necessarily Jewish or anything else. I also had in college a professor that taught German and French and he was from Germany. He was Jewish and his father was the editor of a paper in Berlin and he was executed. And his mother and sister were in concentration camps. They were not executed. But he was teaching in France at the time so he got out. And he came and taught. And he lived across the street from where my parents and I-- we lived. We became very well acquainted with him. I heard so many things. So there were many ways that you'd find out about what was going on.

EBB: Were there, what were the attitudes of people towards, say Germans as compared to, to the Japanese?

JB: Well,(laughs) yeah well, you see, my name was Oberst. My father's, my father's father--my paternal grandfather and his brother came from Germany. They had served in the army and did not want to have to go back in. This was just right after the American Civil War. They didn't want to have to go back into the army; they did not like what they were being required to do, even way back then--the Prussian army, that was. So they came to the U.S. and they changed their name to Oberst, which is the German word for "colonel". Now what their name was there, no one has ever found out. They were very secretive about it, so. And then they emigrated to the middle West. My grandfather to Kansas, his brother was in southeastern Nebraska. They homesteaded there. Well, so there-- the name was Oberst, and there was, there were no recriminations during that time because so many people had come from Germany and in the middle of Kansas, they were, to get away from oppressions or to have a better chance for advancement than they would have had there. Now my mother's family were all English peple, so I'm a mixture. But then... there weren't recriminations then.

EBB: Were there any Japanese in your town?

JB: No, there were some Chinese, but I didn't know any Japanese. There was no, in Kansas there was more racism toward blacks than there would have been in Iowa. But this particular town there was not. As a matter of fact, my lockermate in high school was a black girl. And the principal had asked me if it would be all right with me if I had one, and I said sure. And she was a very nice girl. I suppose he asked me because he thought that, uh, it'd be helpful to her, maybe so. But I think she had very little problem of course, this was uh... But her brother had more problems than she.

EBB: Why was that?

JB: Because he was male and uh, you know(mumbles). Of course the girls, you know, there were always one or two of the white girls around, and some of them who were

writing for the newspaper, like I did, or y'know, they're good students and that sort of thing and entered in many of the school activities so that was sort of a help. But they apparently didn't find somebody to-- a white boy who was strong enough to stand up and help along. But several of my friends and I... We didn't really realize what we were doing at first, but then we realized that we really helped her. Interesting.

EBB: What kind of racial attitudes were there in your high school?

JB: (sighs) Well, only in that... Well I didn't experience any discrimination, so...But then, being black would make that like, "Oh, they don't need to take a college prep course," (like many of us did), "cause they're not gonna have a good job anyway", and all that sort of thing. But, well... It was a college town, too. I think that helps. I really think it does. Um, I knew two or three families there who were of Mexican descent, and they did-- they didn't seem to suffer any, or not much more--any more than the blacks. Not as much as the blacks, probably. But (sighs) Well the thing was this, that my father and mother had such great beliefs in the equality of the people, even if their skin had been purple it wouldn't have made that much difference to them. So we grew up feeling that, and practically all of our near neighbors, the ones we associated with, felt that same way. Heck, we came over here, we were strangers in the country, so find out through somebody else that same chance. It was marvelous really, looking back on it, it was a great thing. The attitudes around Grinnell are much the same as they were in that town. College towns, small college towns, have a great advantage, I think. Mhmm.

EBB: Going back to the war, were there any that you know of who refused to fight, say as Conscientious Objectors?

JB: Yes, yes.

EBB: How were they regarded?

JB: Well, if they had, if they were willing to be like a medic, to serve, that sort of thing, building up the areas that had been destroyed and that sort of thing, they were allowed to. But if they were Objector that would not serve at all, they were put in prison. For the time, for a short time.

EBB: And...

JB: At least I know two or three that were.

EBB: And personal opinions, um, towards them ...?

JB: Well, people did not like that. Now the ones that were willing to be, to do the ultimate service, like a medic or a, to drive a truck around in the front lines and that sort of thing, they were respected just as much as the other men are. But the Conscientious

Objectors... I think they felt that if we had not been attacked it would have been a different situation--most of the people felt that--could've been a different situation.

EBB: How do you think that compares to, say, attitudes during the Vietnam War?

JB: (laughs) It's a complete about-face. Because, uh, well many of the people, well I don't know how people on the Coast felt, but many people in my generation felt that we had no business going in there. We would be much better off using our influence in peaceable ways, financial pressures possibly, and that sort of thing, than we would to try to challenge them with armed forces. It worked out that way, too, didn't it? Yeah. Um, I don't know that everyone felt that way. My friends and I did, my husband, I know. 'Course what my son said-- "Well, this is my country." He said, "I go. If they make me shoot a gun I don't know if I can." Well, he never had to. But, uh, he was willing to put his life on the line, which is interesting.

EBB: Um, how many children did you have?

JB: I have three sons.

EBB: Three sons.

JB: Mhmm. The oldest one was during Vietnam. The others are younger and therefore they did not serve in the army at all.

EBB: Can you tell me about how you and your husband met?

JB: Yes, my husband and I met-- My, my brother was teaching at Kansas State University, and I was going to graduate school there. And my husband was a senior there and we met then. He and my brother were very good friends. My brother introduced me to him. Mhmm. And we were married about a year later, afterward.

EBB: What year was that?

JB: 1945.

EBB: Can you tell me what sorts of things you did, back in those times?

JB: Well, 'course, uh, I had a job and was going to graduate school. I worked for the teacher who taught medical technicians, so I worked in his office and wrote up reports of experiments that they had done and things like that. And my, my uh, husband-to-be at the time (to-be, was to-be right when I met him), he was working in the small animal surgery as, just an assistant there. Just, you know, he helped clean up and that sort of thing. 'Course he was a student in it too. But that way he got his room and board, for doing that. That's about all he got from that. Mine was about the equivalent of room and

board, not much more than that, which is all right. I think that's about the way it is now. It's more than it was then, but it's still equivalent for that. But many of the students were just assistants for professors, would, oh you know, in the offices, and do typing and all that sort of thing. But now maybe they have regular secretaries and all that do that work and fewer students working for them, I'm not sure. I really don't know what it's like in the universities now. I know this interesting part about this teacher who taught the medical technicians. And, well, he was one of them, of course and they were needing to work with various types of blood. Well they found--they, so they asked me what I was and I'm AB positive--AB--and they would--I was the only AB they could find, and oh dear they would stick me so much. And you know when somebody who knows what they're doing gets a blood sample they jab and get it, and the hurt's over, but they would just puuuuuush it in and oh-ho (laughs), it hurt all the more. Oh well, they learned.

EBB: But, what sort of dates did you go on?

JB: My husband and I? Well, the first one, we were going to go to a ball game, a basketball game, but we just walked and talked. (laughs) Yeah. Um, there's-- things of that sort. We didn't have much money so we didn't go out to dinner lots, and we'd eat in the boarding-house where each of us stayed. But there was an area right next to the campus that every Saturday they would have a band--mostly of college players--would play, and we would go dancing almost every Saturday night. Oh, we continued to go dancing, very much, all the rest of our lives. Loved it.

EBB: What kind of dancing have you done through the years, as music has changed?

JB: Well, well we-- 'course we were growing up in the big band era, when it was uh-- we still preferred that. Um, we're not really very crazy about country dancing, the square dancing, that sort of thing, no. We did do some of them, samba, and some of those, learned them but weren't really very fond of 'em. We still liked the previous, the kind of dancing we did back then.

EBB: Do you remember any bands in particular?

JB: Oh, most of them. I have quite a number of tapes of them down over there. Harry James came through several times, through Manhattan 'cause several of his players were, had graduated from Kansas State. Manhattan--Kansas. And well, that's why I particularly like that music... We both really very much liked to listen to jazz, too.

EBB: Um, can we go back to the Depression? Um, what were things like in McPherson County, in the Depression, that you remember?

JB: You didn't, you just didn't have any money to buy things. I'm thinking of one Christmas, I must have been nine years old, something like that. I've been trying to remember my times. And for my sister and my brother, my mother and my father, four

people, I had a dollar and a quarter to buy gifts for them. And so mostly I bought things and made something out of them. I got a couple of pieces of leather and for my brother and my dad I used the leather and made a watchband for my brother and a watch that my dad had had work, he would have a pocket-watch that he would use. That was in a for-instance when (mumbles) made it. (laughs) That was the sort of thing you did. And uh, I needed a coat and there was a good friend of my mother's who had a very good job and she had gotten a new coat and she had a coat that was somewhat worn but my mother took it and cleaned it and turned it wrong-side out and made me a coat and it looked great. It looked just like one you'd bought at the store. That was one thing. And when we wanted to have fun, we, we'd take our roller skates and meet a friend or, around the schoolhouse and -- The roller skates, we did manage to buy roller skates. Um, you did, you, well, of course we, as soon as we could we belonged to the 4-H clubs and they'd have picnics. And our parents would get together and they'd play cards, or dominos or something. Three, four couples, and the kids would all be there. Well, it didn't take too long and we'd conk out on the floor and stretch out on the beds, and you know. You couldn't afford a babysitter, so, you took the kids along. But uh--when they were little. But uh, I do remember the year I was, I was thirteen. And at that time we had a combine to harvest the wheat. Anyway, and combines then were not self-propelled, you had to have a tractor pull it. Well my brother drove the tractor and my dad had to be on the combine. And we couldn't afford to hire anybody to drive the truck to haul the wheat-wheat was only twenty cents a bushel--so my dad taught me to drive the truck. That's the first thing I ever drove. It was a s--not a pickup, but it was a smallish truck. Lent me the experience of the position of various parts of the truck by driving through the gates of the barnyard and backing and all this and everything. So I drove the truck and then he took me to town and said did I need a special permission. No, but they'd write one out if, that I shouldn't be driving other than to take the wheat to the elevator and that sort of thing. So, the summer before I was fourteen(in October), I learned to drive a truck! (laughs)

EBB: Did you ever drive it for any other reasons?

JB: Oh, in later years but it wasn't any fun to drive a truck! It wasn't like driving a pickup or things like that, it was a truck! (laughs) No, well, do you mean when I shouldn't have been driving it? No, no, I didn't. Only one thing happened and it was, we had gone to a 4-H meeting and this kid had, it was a Model A sedan that had, um, windows that rolled up and down. Now most of them-- No, it wasn't a Model A, it was a Model T sedan. Most of the Model T's had, were open and had curtains, y'know, that clipped on and off and everything, an open car. But this one was, and it, so it was, it was a top-heavy car. And we all jammed in to go to the 4-H meeting, and then after the meeting he was going to deliver us at home. Well he turned the corner a bit fast and we went over on the side. (groans) Now, not even a window broke, which is astounding, so we all clambered up out the upside and got out and pushed it up, and off we went. There were a few scratches and skins on it and he had to answer to his dad a bit about that. But-- got a lecture about turning the corner too fast. (laughs) Fun, that really was kinda fun, because nobody was hurt.

EBB: Was he well enough off that he could afford a car?

JB: Well, they had a truck and then that car. Well, we had a truck and a car too. You had to have the truck if you had the car and uh...When we, my brother and I went to high school, my sister was quite a bit younger and there were two other families within a mile and a half. And the first couple of years my, there were two in each house, so six of us in the car, and one would drive the family car and the next, and the three families would rotate going into town, 'cause the high school was about eleven miles away. And they didn't have school buses in Kansas then. But uh, then when a couple of them graduated I didn't really care for the responsibility of driving all several of my compatriots in, so by that time wheat was a better price, we could afford to pay somebody else that I could ride to school. Um, it's uh, sometimes the roads were really muddy. Kind of a problem to get to school at times, after rains.

EBB: Can you tell me something else about the other families that were around you?

JB: Well, there were three houses that were close together. You know, our farm was off kinda that way toward the left and the northeast, and the farm across the road-- the farm was along both sides of it. The house that was just to the west ours, their farm extended to the northwest. Um, they had more land away, we had a half-section there. The part that was up on the hill was the pasture and the rest was farmed for wheat and alfalfa and various things like that. Um, the other f-- they also had some cattle, mostly feed cattle, they did. Our cattle by that time were mostly dairy cattle. And mostly wheat, some alfalfa, a little bit of sorghums, that we would raise. This was not country where you could raise corn effectively. The moisture didn't come at the right time. The family across the road-- there were three children in it: two sons, older daughter. She had married and moved away, I can't even remember where. But the older son had married one of my grade-school teachers, just about one of my favorite grade-school teachers and they lived there for--(end of tape--45 minutes.)

EBB: Okay, we were talking about the grade-school teacher...

JB: Oh, the older son of our neighbor--Stockham. Both neighbors were named Stockham, they were brothers. He married one of my favorite schoolteachers--gradeschool teachers-- Noreen... And she was really a very good teacher, she also acted as a music teacher. Before that they had a special part-time teacher, 'cause this was a consolidated school, you see. But she also was the music teacher and she was a very caring individual. And my class had eleven students in it, which is nice. Anyway, we... And then she made a great neighbor afterward. My mother and dad appreciated her. The other Stockhams, one the daughter was my brother's age, a couple of years older than I, and the son was my age. Well, he went to service and he was injured and he lived for a dozen days maybe afterward, and that was sad. But they were very good farmers and they were the-- We didn't have electricity. And they were the ones--so--who started it. So we did the same thing too. We had water in the house because the windmill was a pressure pump. The wind drove the pump--a sort of pump, and we had pressure in the water. It was a tank of course. So we had water in the bathroom but we-- it didn't have hot water-- you had to heat it on the stove for that. That was still progress, y'know. And our radio, well, you had a battery and then-- we had two batteries and each Saturday one would go in when we went into town, or after school when we were in high school, we were in town oftener then, of course. Take it to be charged and pick up the other battery and there were companies that did that sort of thing. And the neighbors, the Stockhams did too. And we all had fun playing cards together, y'know. Played pinochle and played dominoes and various things like that, play together. The kids some too, and then otherwise they'd just play kids' games too, at the same time.

EBB: Did you go over to your neighbors' more often, or was one of the houses the main center...?

JB: Not really. It probably would be divided up about who went where. Oh, one family, they had a player piano and we loved to hear that. 'Course then they would like to come and have-- do their own singing and things like that and they would come to our house and my mother would play the piano and accompany for them. Oh--we had one little dog! A little fox terrier. We called her Peggy. And she never would come into the dining room or living room. She would, she was made to stay in the kitchen or on the screened porch off the kitchen. Except sometimes after dinner we would go in, Mother would start to play and we would all go in and sing along. Then the little dog would come in and sit under our mother's feet, just sit and listen. Not a sound until the last song, would be this song: (sings) "You'd never be blue, if I had you". And then she would sing along, just up and down with the music. And then after it was over, she'd just trot back to the kitchen and we'd all have a big laugh. And none of us ever figured out why she did this. So things like that were fun, you know. And I can remember the time that, it was in August, so it was after harvest. The locusts came. And it was like a cloud coming over. The neighbor said grasshoppers but my brother said "Those are locusts" and they were. But anyway, they came and just ate everything. In the garden, of course we'd harvested the wheat and we'd also harvested the alfalfa and baled it and this sort of thing, so not too great of damage for us. They'd strip trees, too, with all the leaves. Except on one side of our house we had some black walnut trees and the other side we had some cedar trees. They didn't bother either one of those. And then after that many of the neighbors around planted cedar trees. But I don't think we ever had locusts like that again. I must've been twelve or thirteen then.

EBB: Did they do a lot of financial damage then?

JB: Oh yes. Not so much for us, particularly. It rained soon afterward, and the grass came back so we could feed the cattle and harvest it. And we had harvested the hay so we had some feed and some grain and things for them; we had already harvested that. They didn't cause too much damage in the bins, a little, but not much. It was very traumatic because you couldn't walk outside without stepping on three or four. They were

that, so close together, just ... Yes, so then we understood what a plague was!

EBB: Oh, what year was that?

JB: Oh, let's see, it would be about '33, '32, '34, somewhere there. Mhmm.

EBB: And that was in the late summer?

JB: That was in August, yes. And in the next day, by the next evening, they were all gone. They'd ate everything there and moved on. So. And of course we had no more garden for the rest of the year. (laughs) Oh my...

EBB: When you talked about stepping on them, were you wearing shoes then?

JB: Oh yes, you wore shoes if you went outside! Oh, I didn't go out barefoot much; some kids did but not much. It kinda hurts your feet, you know, the gravel... I didn't like to have my feet hurt and stepped on.

EBB: Did your brother or sister?

JB: Not very much. Well you see, we liked to ride the horses. You were better off with shoes. You rode with a saddle most of the time. Not necessarily, but most of the time. And it was better to have shoes on than have...

EBB: What other kinds of clothes did you wear?

JB: Oh, jeans, shirt. In the summer we had cut-off jeans. Yeah-- that really isn't anything new; we didn't make the ends ragged, though, you know. Tried to be as neat as we could about it. Yeah! And we had, the girls had some...By the time I was a teenager we had, uh, some shorts, too. The girls would wear some shorts. It was probably the beginning--Oh, we'd go on a picnic, you'd wear shorts, mhmm. I really hadn't thought about what was the beginning of being able to wear shorts and that sort of thing. And sandals, you know, sandals, you know, guaraches usually, that sort of thing. It wasn't terribly a lot different. Well, and then we came to Grinnell in '47, late '47, and I guess it's the place we needed to be.

EBB: What was it like opening up your husband's veterinary practice?

JB: Well, the fellow had been in practice, but he was getting older and he did not do the latest sort of thing. Well, we'd made friends with other veterinarians around and there was somebody at lowa State that my husband had known and knew that my husband had had special work in small animal surgery, so my husband did a lot of small animal works and even in a small town. And to begin with, there were some times, "No, we'll just eat macaroni", rather than go buy things because somebody had, they'd charged the bill, but

the first of the month they usually paid it, so, everything's all right. There was only that one through the winter and spring that we had to watch, that sort of thing, because we paid our drug bills and that sort of thing, on time. No problems, really, after that. I'm not saying that there weren't times, "No, we can't buy a car now, we'll have to wait till people pay their bills." Because farmers, when the weather was very bad, they couldn't always make those payments. You know, when prices were down, this sort of thing, you understand that, though. But, it was lots of hard work, but lots of fun. Well for instance, I'll tell you why, what made this fun was ... Before we could afford to buy an incubator for puppies and you know, that had been a caesarean section, or maybe new pigs or little goats or something like that, to keep them warm until the mother could take care of 'em or in case she had died, we couldn't afford to buy the incubator. So we fixed a box to put, set on the oven door. It was an electric stove, not a gas stove. And have this oven turned on low, and uh, keep them warm there. And I always felt that maybe one of the things that sort of helped the puppies and the little animals was a little boy coming by and saying "Nice puppy, nice puppy" and pet it. I think that helped, because I firmly believe that attention does help. Well, I think they proved it in taking care of preemies, the babies, that the touch of another human helps it.

EBB: Was that one specific little boy or were there lots of little ...

JB: No. Well, there were some, yes, but mostly my boys.

EBB: Oh!

JB: The other boys, the other kids loved it. Especially the time that somebody came in with a blanket, tourist, came out and said "Here, here's an owl and it has a broken leg." So, and there it was, a bard owl. Not a barn owl, a bard owl. With a round head, and it had stripes on it. Had a broken leg. So we put it in the cage that we had for a Great Dane. But, well, before, while it was still wrapped in the blanket, they gave it a sedative and put a splint on its leg and put it in. And we called the Conservation people and they said, "Well, could you keep it for a coupla weeks?" They wanted it to be well by the time they took it to release it. So all the kids in the neighborhood would all come around to see this bard owl. Now the first few days, any time you go by, it would click its bill at you. You didn't want to stick your finger in there 'cause you'd lose your finger. Because the owl was about twenty inches tall and the wingspread well... But, it couldn't spread its wings out in a Great Dane cage. But it could not fly without being able to stand, you know. Because one foot was, one leg was broken and that's why it couldn't fly. That's how the people... I've often wondered what courage these two, these tourists had, to catch that thing, yeah. But then when it had recovered we, the conservation people came and then they released it up at the (ledges?) I think. But it was a problem for what to feed it, 'cause you know they feed on mice and that sort of thing. Well, we had a cat in the office that kept the mice population well down. But we did have some liver in the freezer that we weren't going to use. So we cut that in bits and we had a forceps that was about eighteen inches long and we'd put it on the end of the forceps and put it through the cage hole in the cage, give it to the owl, and the owl would take it and eat it. But after about three days, the owl did not click its bill. Clickclickclickclick, it would be upset when anyone walked by. And that really always sort of bothered us, because we were worried for fear that it would like humans too much. But all the little cub scouts and the campfire girls they came around to see this owl. Which was a good lesson for them to write down. Grinnell's an interesting town. There's, uh, it has its share of racism and recriminations and all that, but... Basically, and I think a high percentage of the people are people who try to do the best they can not only for themselves but for the town, area they live in, and also the rest of the people who live here. And that's what, to me, that's what makes it pretty special. Of course, in every place there are always some that, that you wish would move away.

EBB: Now, I understand that you worked at the museum, for some time. Could you tell me about that?

JB: Well, Mrs. Stoops, whose husband was a professor at the college, she was working with it, and I had met her through a book review club that I joined and still belong to-- try to keep my brain exercised. Anyway, she got me interested in it, and all this sort of thing, in the fifties. So I have worked with the museum, and on the board, and various things with it since then. It's a real challenge to learn, and it's fascinating to learn, about the people's coming. When you think about the tremendous courage and stamina that all these people had coming out into a prairie, it's amazing. Absolutely, you have to have great admiration for them. You really do. Yeah, we came here in '47 and I kept the books. And then we found, sat down and sharpened our pencils and instead of finding a job--I could've gotten something at the college, that we would have more money left if I stayed home, and the office was like close, right there. Kept the office, and the books and hired somebody to clean. And I think maybe that was a benefit to the three sons too, because they were aware of what Mother and Dad did and what it was and they got to be around all the animals, go to to the country with their dad. They learned all about the facts of life that way too, without having to guess and by-gosh about what it's all about. I think that's a very good way to learn for them. Besides, they were a part of their dad and of me, and all the things we had to do.

EBB: How old were they when you started, when the veterinary practice was started?

JB: The oldest one was one. And the others were born later.

EBB: About what age were the children when they started helping?

JB: Well as soon as they got old enough they would, when one of us had to be away from the phone for a while... As soon as they could write down somebody's name and what it was and they could get in touch. And they could, from the time they were tiny they could operate the two-way radio. Y'know, when somebody wanted the doctor... From the time they could write they could answer that. They also had an office man by that time so it was only in emergencies that they had to do that. But they also were called in to

help sometimes in the surgery. But, for instance, say you did a caesarean on a dog. You'd have the puppies and you had to be sure each one would breathe and you might have six people around there trying to get puppies to breathe, y'know. So, they learned very young to do that sort of thing, to rub the puppies and blow into its face and mouth. I think they enjoyed it. One of the very first things, I just told my oldest son about it, and he didn't remember it. It was in the spring after we had come here, in the spring after '48. So he was a year and a half. A woman came with a parakeet. Now if the parakeet doesn't have the right food, or won't eat the proper food, its bill, its beak will grow. And if it grows too much or something, then it has a problem eating. So this parakeet wouldn't eat the food that she was supposed to have, so the woman would bring it frequently to have its bill trimmed. Which was a rather delicate operation, you had to trim it just right, of course. But this time she came and she did not put it in its cage, she just brought it on her finger. When she came up to the door the bird flew away. And there we were, looking for that bird. (laughs) In the trees, and everything. And then I became aware that there was this year-and-a-half-old boy, cooing at the peony bush. Although he really wasn't cooing at the peony bush, he was cooing at the parakeet in the peony bush, so in other words, he found it for us, the parakeet. That's how he became involved, ves.

EBB: That was your oldest son?

JB: Uh-huh.

.

EBB: What ages were all your kids? How far apart were they?

JB: Oh, um, four years between the first two, and two and a half between the next two.

EBB: Is that how you wanted them spaced?

JB: Mmm, we had to decide we wanted a child in order to have one.

EBB: Um, and you, you just wanted to have three?

JB: Well, no, that was. Well, we began to think about what a college education and everything like that would cost, and you know-- and three is fine. And there were also health problems and all, so...they don't wanna do too many caesareans, so.

EBB: Oh, you had--?

JB: Yeah. Not the first. Did you know that in Grinnell there was a little town, when it first started, was called Jerusalem?

EBB: In Grinnell?

JB: Yeah. Well it is now part of Grinnell. (Shows on map) See, here, the original town

was about this area, like so, in 1855. And then this little place right there, this is West Street, between Sixth and Fourth and West and about to here, was Jerusalem, where this line is. That was Jerusalem. And they were a very strict religious sect but as you can see that in '57 this all became Grinnell. (laughs) All that land, west of Grinnell, was added to the town. Never lasted that long. But that's where the police station is, right here now. And by the time we came there was an alley there, and right there, just west of West Street-- well the house is still there-- that's where we were originally but then we, ten years later, we built an office out on, north, on 146.

EBB: What sort of a house did you have?

3

JB: The first house? Well, it's still there. It's a two-story grey house, there was a-- It has two entrances--one was the office and one was the home entrance, right at the back. And there was a garage in the back but we did build a new garage. The house is still there. It was quite a large home. Two-story frame.

EBB: Was there anything distinctive about the architecture?

JB: Not of that house, no. There is about a lot of the houses in town, but not that one.

EBB: Did it have a porch, or a balcony...

JB: A couple of small porches, but nothing, nothing architecturally different, really outstanding, no.

EBB: How was house set up, um, as far as what rooms you had for what purpose?

JB: Well, the west room was the office. It was quite a large room, probably twenty feet square. And then, our private entrance coming in the east, you could either go on upstairs or down the hall to what was kind of our living/family room. And then because our son was little and we had other children-- we wanted to have other children-- there was a room, as you went down the hall you weren't beside it, but there was a sort of a playroom for them. And we put a little stretch-gate across that if we were busy and needed to be we'd keep them in the playroom, because they didn't have anything in there that they could hurt themselves on. If I had to go help my husband with animals in the office or something, they'd be safe in there. You know, and they didn't mind, there was a lot of things they could do.

EBB: Did the boys all live in the same room or did they have their own rooms?

JB: No, they all-- no actually, four bedrooms upstairs... The two younger boys were in the same room-- it was a very large room, and the older boy was in another room. And they preferred it that way. The younger brother, he said, "If it's all right with Steve, I'd like to stay in here with him." It was fine with Steve.

Ebb: Um, when did you start working with the museum?

8

JB: In, about the middle fifties. Mhmm, the middle 1950's. And at first I, well I still work with the auxiliary and I guess I'm still on the board. I did, not a great lot at first, I had quite a... I would be busy at home because I always did, kept a lot of the books, buncha basic bookwork. Not the daily posting, but other than that... So I was busy with that as well as a few other things. And I do like to play golf once in a while. I had been the treasurer of the museum auxiliary, which does the actual day-to-day running and the, I don't know, gets the "hosticism", that sort of thing. I did that for, I don't know, a couple years. Maybe more. More about '70, just before 1970. And it's very interesting, really, to learn about that, and to realize what the life was like for those pioneers-- pretty spectacular. You know the museum in-- I think it was '52-- the museum was above Cunningham drugstore. And I think it was '52, but -- it burned. The drugstore burned and all. And many of our artifacts burned. There were just a few things we saved and so practically everything we have, we've acquired since then. That was a real setback. But at that time the daughter of Burton, a Mr. Burton, who had been the postmaster here for many years, she had gone to California and there were no other descendants and so they gave the museum society his house when he died. Well, his house was not satisfactory for a museum-- it was small and that-- but with that house we were able to buy the museum on Broad Street, 1125 Broad Street, just north of the funeral home. And, uh, that house was built in 1894, and same floor, and much the same as it was. We had the walls repaired but they were repaired to look like they were and, just to restore, not to change, so it uh...And this last summer, we...we replaced the garage that they built in 1921, replaced it with a replica of the carriagehouse which was built in-- when the house was built in 1894. The only thing, we don't store hay in the top-- second floor, we have storage in there-- there's a room. And we have a stairway instead of a ladder to climb up to get to it. But the outside is much the same as the original carriagehouse was. In one more year it's a hundred years.

EBB: How did the fire happen, um, above Cunningham's?

JB: It started in, in there. I don't know if it was electrical or if it was the gas, but something of that sort. There was, of course, Candyland, with a little restaurant. Well, they have a fountain there now, it had the fountain and a little-type restaurant there. I don't know if it started in that or whether it was in the drugstore or not, but it was an electrical problem.

EBB: What kind of a fire-fighting force was there in Grinnell?

JB: Oh, very good by that time! That was the only building that burned then. But Grinnell's history is certainly punctuated by a lot of major, disastrous fires.

EBB: Such as?

JB: Well, in 1889, a fire started from a spark at the railroad on Main Street and there was guite a southwesterly wind then, from... So it burned that block where, between Commercial Street and Fourth Avenue there was, I think, the one building that was on, at Fourth and Main, was not burned, but the rest of it was burned. And in 1889, they did not have water, for instance, to fight fire like they needed to. And with the wind, and it-it burned the whole block. It did not burn the church across, cater-corner, and across, or anything across the street; they were able to contain that. And that's really about, at that point that's what they had to do because of the heavy wind, and it was coming. But all those buildings from Commercial Street to Fourth Avenue on Broad were built up right away again so that the outsides were done by the end of the year, in 1889. And the merchants that wanted to were allowed to build shanties in the park and continue business, so they could stay in business until they had their building replaced. And then, it was in, uh-- off the top of my head I can't remember-- a fire started in the middle of Main Street-- between Fourth and Fifth Avenue and burned through on eastward, and uh... There was a livery stable on Main Street then, and it started in there, and all those burned. Not the end buildings but there was a panel through that burned. That's why many of those buildings on Broad Street have a a date up above, between Fourth and Fifth, eighteen ninety-something. And Main Street buildings, for instance the Spaulding building, if you're on Main Street and look up on the east side, see Spaulding(shows on map), that was built after the fire. Now, the streets on Fourth Avenue, from West Street to, from Main, no, from Main to Broad, (shows on map again) there's Fifth Avenue, there's Fourth, from Main to Broad Street. There on the north side, west of the alley, are some of the oldest, they are the oldest businesses, still, in Grinnell. These buildings, right there. This is where Boklada is, this is where the bank would be. Now these, the buildings, one of them was in 1875, there's one in '79, and one-- a couple of 'em in '80, they're the oldest downtown buildings. And there's a home on Third and Summer. It's a little blue house-- part of it's two-story. Well the two-story part was the second house in Grinnell-- other than a log cabin. Now the first one was the Long House, which was a store and apartment and hotel, or whatever they needed. But then this, this building was the English-Scot store and it is still there. It was moved to Third and Summer. That is, the two-story part was. There's a porch, and a kitchen, been added. But that's the oldest building in Grinnell.

â

EBB: What sorts of things have you seen come through the museum?

JB: Well, we have... Now I suppose what we are keeping track of most is various obituaries and lives of people that just, uh, because, actually nobody else right in Grinnell is keeping track of all those. And we've, we're updating our files and putting them on videos and this sort of thing to help preserve them, because paper deteriorates, y'know. Um, what things come through... Well, the high school burned. Um, this, it was in the early 1900's. That was the first high school built, and it burned. And it had a bell, and a belltower on it. Well, the bell being partly brass melted. And there is the end story of the young girl who was going to school there, and she watched it and she saw the bell melt down. But the museum has the clapper, because it was of iron. But it is bent almost

double, that's how hot it was. That's, that's a really intersting thing. And then we had parts of things of Billy Robinson. But we have, because the airport now is called Billy Robinson Field and they have an area there, we put the artifacts we had about Billy Robinson-- the flier, you know, pilot-- out there. Space and room was kind of a problem; it is for most museums. Of course we have J. B Grinnell's desk. It was actually property of the college but it's on loan there. They don't have space for it. We have a couple of washing machines that were made in Grinnell. We have a refrigerator made in Grinnell. In the garage, the-- we have some buggies that were Spaulding buggies and also one Larras buggy, made in Grinnell. We don't have a Spaulding car because we can't afford to buy one-- if we could find one. Um, and we have various clothes that were donated. But the things that we accept are things that are important because of the people who were there, and the people who owned these things and these people were important to Grinnell's history...which is... And the house itself was built by a man named McMurray and he owned a dry-goods store, a kind of a department place, a dry-goods store.

EBB: Um, were there any people that stand out in your mind? Um, just from working with the museum?

JB: Well, there were lots of people. Um, well, of course, J.B. Grinnell, and Hamilton, and Holyoke. These were the fearless friends who-- they were four friends-- who decided this would be a place to be because the railroads were going to be built to cross at this point-east and west, and north and south. 'Course, they had much to do with it and it's interesting to read of their lives. But, um, well, Billy Robinson's interesting. I think that if he had lived, there might have been a plane manufacturer. And I knew the person who worked with him, Charles Hink -- I knew him. He was, he and his wife were delightful people and I know his daughter very well. And, um, Charley Hink was, would be the one with the know-how to make a tool and Billy Robinson would design it with the plane, and he and Charley Hink knew how to -- That's really guite a talent, isn't it, to know how to make a tool, or make an engine part, or those things. Yeah, anyway... Um, I think some of the teachers, the original teachers who built up the school originally were, they had to be pretty great. Cranny was the high school teacher before we came and all, but I've learned something about him. There also were many teachers at the college who were really outstanding, dedicated, marvelous people, too numerous I couldn't mention them. But they really have made it into something. To think that they had the dedication to work with the college and everything. Well, in 1882 the tornado levelled the school, and to think that they had the courage and the determination to put it right back together and make a better school than ever. That's what really has caught me, my admiration, that these people didn't let something like that keep them from doing what they felt they should do.

EBB: What have been the attitudes of people that you know towards the college?

JB: Well, there are some who "I'll go over there and kick the college", but then, they are really very few of the people. Most of the people realize that there's several facets that are really important. Financial-- it's one of the biggest employers, if not the biggest, in the

town. Well, so it's certainly a financial benefit. But also, I think it, which maybe is at least as important, maybe more so, is that it raises the level of, of people's knowledge. It brings in the kind of people who are more interested in learning and in knowledge than many towns that wouldn't, towns that don't have a college. I really believe that, and I really think that's probably much more important, than the financial part.

EBB: Do you think that's what a lot of people think?

JB: I think a lot of them do. There's al-- like I said, there's always some people, who would be against anything, as long as it wasn't their idea. (laughs) Don't you believe that? Well, and I don't believe there's anything you can do about those people, you just try to go on your way and ignore them. But most of the people feel that the college is a real benefit. Now there'll be some things, for instance maybe some of the students who think that it's gonna be <u>cool</u> to go and do something against the college, or against their own school or against the neighboring town's school. But, I'm not sure how you cope with that.

EBB: How were attitudes towards the college, um, that you went to, in your town?

JB: Well, it's much the same as here. They felt that that was very important that that college be there. And they felt that it raised the level of the town, not only financially but also the level of learning. And probably, there're fewer poor with that sort of attitude, than anything. It's interesting, in the town of Grinnell, that the businesses we have are what is all called "clean" industries, other than the college, you know, the... Well, there's the re-insurance company. And even the Donaldson company, it's-- they manufactured [couldn't understand] and things. It's a clean industry and all that. Of course we have the seed corn things, but that's sort of important for the, because of the farming area. So we don't have the pollution problem that some towns and cities would have. It's interesting, isn't it?

EBB: Um, what have been some of the major businesses in town?

JB: Well, first there was the Spaulding Company, and they built buggies. Not first... Before that, they bought the facilities from a company called Kraber, something and Nash, and they built farm, well like, binders, headers, machinery. But then of course when tractors came along, with combines then they were not in business and then the Spauldings bought their buildings, which was west of West Street and south of Fourth Avenue. There is part of a water-tower there still. And then there was, well there was a number of companies that processed feeds, uh, this was a long time ago. Then later there was Morris and Schultz shoes, they, shoes-- it's a shoe factory and also that sort of other leather things. When we came there was a shoe factory; it was still really a going thing. They made women's shoes but then the time came when you could import shoes from Brazil and Spain at such a lower price that they couldn't compete. And then they transferred, this Morris and Schultz company also made baseballs. And that has become DeLong's. And they had, they made gloves, also. And DeLong's, they bought DeLong's, but DeLong originally started making just the jackets. Well, they make jackets now too. But it's a company, they kind of, family's--it has a different name of course, running it, sons or daughters you know, that sort of thing. It's a company that adapted as it needed to, to survive. Many of the old... then there was also a... I don't know if they canned things, but a food-processing plant. That was long ago.

EBB: Do you know about when?

JB: I think it ended in the twenties. But it-- [end of tape, 90 min] Um, I suspect maybe that's what most of the companies have ... In other places the changes would be about that. Y'know, you can't keep making buggies, and you can't keep on doing that sort of thing. Then there was, well, many of the companies that would sell plants and things like that, they have changed-- they don't sell the same kind of plants. And trees and nurseries and things like that. Or they go, it's more economical to combine into a little bigger place so they don't uh, that sort of thing is less. Well, and then, the Sign company has only been here, the S.I. Sign -- it's not too many years. And then the company that builds all kinds of conduits and things out on 146 that hasn't been there too long. Donaldson was here before we came in '47 and they're much the same. They make the mufflers for trucks, tractors, that sort of thing. Clean air-- how 'bout that? The re-insurance company, of course, started, I think maybe the 40's. You need to talk to Mrs. Lawrence Keeney for that. Her husband was instrumental in getting it started and all. Originally their offices were above the Grinnell State Bank. You can see, go out to the South on 146-- see how much they, that enormous complex of buildings that they have there. Have you been out there?

EBB: Uh-uh.

80

JB: Well, it's on the other side of the interstate and it's glass and it's the largest <u>re-</u>inusurance company in the U.S.

EBB: Wow.

JB: Yeah! (laughs) That's...then of course the west edge of Grinnell was the Miracle Playground Equipment company and they also-- And then because of union problems they had a plant down at, in Missouri, at Monat, Missouri. And because of labor problems they just moved on down there, which was a very sad thing. And that hasn't been more than fifteen years, something like that. I don't know how that company down there is doing, don't know anything about it. And also, the same family started the stadiums. Well, no, it was DeLong, after he sold his jacket firm. Started building stadium seats, seating. And, well, there was some mismanagement so that company isn't any longer. But the Grinnell hospital has their outpatient, and that home health department's there so that they're using the building. 'Course there's that mill and then there's, out south of town, that, VanWyke's trucking. Those are newer, because when we first came and before that things were moved by the railroads. I could get on my soapbox and say that I think that

it's a shame that we have neglected the railroads, because that's the most fuel-efficient, less-polluting way of moving people and equipment and everything.

EBB: Did you use the railroad a lot?

JB: Yeah, yeah... When we went from Kansas to New York, we went on the railroad train. And when we came here first, if we wanted to go to Chicago we got on the train. And when I would go down to visit my mother we'd get on the train. And get on the train here. And I had to change in Des Moines, with both my kids and all-- that wasn't any big deal. Then when we'd get to Kansas City, they'd switch the car so that we, instead of going on south, we'd go westerly toward Wichita. Well, but we'd get off at McPherson, before we got to Wichita. It was a great way to travel with your kids instead of having to drive. Yes we did! I went-- first time I went to Arizona or West, I went on the train. It was--well for one person it was cheaper to go on the train than it was to drive, and have overnight stays, you know, and that sort of thing, sure. I enjoyed it. I think you would too, if you had the chance.

EBB: You mentioned the hospital. Um, how was health care there, in Grinnell?

JB: Well, actually I am on a committee now and we are working at celebrating the 25 years of two hospitals uniting. You see, in the 'teens the Catholics built a hospital. Well, the communities then-- talk about fighting against each other. They-- other people in the community-- built a hospital on the west side of town, Catholic hospital on the east. Then in the forties it became obvious that if we wanted to have a hospital here, keep on having a hospital here, and a good hospital, we'd have to -- in the sixties, I meant to say -- that we would have to combine it, because technology was getting to the point that, there was not enough patient-load and everything to support two hospitals. So, my husband became mayor in '64, and there was need to have a committee to join a legality. So he appointed a committee composed of members of both boards who realized the, well, who were aware, I should say, of the reality of the situation, of needing to combine, to build one good hopsital. And so, in '68, it was done, it was combined into Grinnell General Hospital, the two hospitals. And St. Francis out here, was made as a nursing home then. And the hospital deteriorated, of course, and was not usable, so they built the one-story facility they have now, the nursing home. And the community hospital there, they used it and built on some more, for a while. And then they needed more facilities so they took down the old and built the all-new facilities they have now. But the most marvelous part of it all: that hospital and all of it was built without any federal or state money. It was built by donations. Isn't-- doesn't that say something about this town? I think it really does. And it's, for a small-town hospital, it's an extraordinarily good hospital. When we first came and my two sons were born, I got much better care than I did at the hospital in Trenton, New Jersey, when my first son was born.

EBB: How so? What was so special about it?

JB: Well, they paid attention to all of the various problems, to everything. And the nurses really cared. You could tell the difference between your care there and in the large hospital. Of course, maybe they were run too much in the large one, I don't know. But you can have, you just had that <u>feeling</u> of such a difference. Um, and these doctors here at that time, they were working under, it was a rather handicapped situation, you know, with a little hospital. 'Course they would send special cases to either Iowa City or Des Moines, which they do now. But they were really dedicated doctors and nurses, and administrators, and building a new hospital kept these doctors here. I'm really convinced of that.

EBB: You mentioned that your husband was mayor. How long was he mayor?

JB: Twenty years.

EBB: Wow-- starting when?

JB: In '64.

EBB: '64. And what were some issues that came up while he was in charge?

JB: Well, before he became that he was involved -- we were both involved -- but he was on the school board and we were involved with getting a new school built. And then we built our facilities out on the north edge of town and we were out of the school district then so that was a reason to be able to get out of it. But anyway, no, he didn't really want to get out of it. But then the city council and all, at the time we were building there, they were not forward-looking about anyone in the town expanding or growing at all. As far as putting the facilities out, they were very, well, they just had no visions of any kind of future, they weren't thinking about that at all. So when the -- we were finally annexed into the city he was so upset about the whole thing that he ran for the city council, and he was a councilman for a couple of terms, and then became mayor. And when he became mayor, in all those years only twice did he have an opponent. I think the reason why he was so respected and why he was elected so much was that he would always listen to people and hear what they had to say. He might decide not to do what they said but he would listen to everybody and then he would make up his mind. You know, and everybody knew that he respected their position and their opinion. It's again, a matter of respecting people, respecting animals, respecting growth, the way the world is, and how things grow, what we need to do to have a good world. It all sort of hinges.

EBB: What sort of problems did he have to deal with?

JB: As a mayor?

EBB: Yeah.

JB: A lot of them. Mostly peeople who could only see their little point of view. Who couldn't or didn't see the point of view of what the town or the area as a whole needed. It might be right in line with what they wanted, but it also might be opposed to what they wanted, the benefit and the best interest of the town. I think maybe deep down that was the most difficult. There were little daily problems and that sort of thing, but...

EBB: But like, what kind of little things?

0

JB: Weeeell, people didn't want a "Keep your dog tied" law. And, of course, when they're repairing streets there are always some people who are irate that it's a mess in front of their house. Other people are more philosophical and realize how much better it will be... And nobody wants to pay any more money than they have to, so the money's always a problem. But that's understandable, that's quite understandable.

EBB: Did you play a role in public affairs?

JB: Well, possibly...possibly. I was always there trying to help. Yeah, I guess I did. I was in some organizations and I seem to have the ability to talk. Sometimes that's not good. And, well, of course, working with the museum and in my church, I did many of the things through there, and would talk about various things and give programs for various of their meetings and all and... I suppose in that way I did. I didn't want to run for office. No, no, no way. It was enough to be behind the scenes. My husband was also active in the veterinary association, and he was a member of the national board for four years. It was, that was an interesting life. It was very interesting that at a meeting in Boston we shook hands with the Vice-President-- it was Ford-- and then the next week here I was, back at the office, Ryan was sick and I had to clean dog-pens. (laughs). That's kinda what life was like. Ups and downs and funnies.

EBB: Which organizations did you belong to, what kinds?

JB: Well, I do belong to one of the PEO chapters. I belong to the Book Review Club, the Historical and Literary Club. I belong to the Tuesday Club, and we just-- that was a very, very old club, and we-- the Tuesday Club and the Historical Club, were-- and another one-- were the ones that got the museum started. Organized a committee, then pushed together and got that. Well, and I do play bridge. There's one bridge club, we meet once a month. And there were three of us that are still playing that started it in 1949. (laughs) It's just great to get together. The bridge is an excuse to get together, of course.

EBB: Do you think it was that way with a lot of the organizations in town?

JB: Possibly, possibly. There are a lot of organizations that really do philanthropic things, that sort of-- Well, PEO does that, there's a college, they have a college and also--

EBB: What is that? PEO?

JB: That's a, it's a national...Cottie(?) College is owned by the PEO Sisterhood and they also give scholarships and have a program of helping women who don't have quite enough money. Part of our dues and things we do to raise money go to give them a monthly-- There are a couple of women in town who benefit that way. And I've been active in that sort of thing, so...it's, um, keeps one busy, out of mischief. (laughs) I like to be busy. I also like to knit and to do needlepoint, and that sort of thing. I belong to a poetry club; we write some poetry. Some of it's pretty good; some of it's pretty bad, but it's all right. It's a fascinating life.

EBB: Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

JB: Well, that I'm just very glad we found the town of Grinnell, as I stay here. And I have a great admiration for these people who came to town... Well, here it is-- 1854, it was a village. '65 it was incorporated. 1882-- a second-class city-- meaning, that's according to size, you know, but it's still... But, when you try to think back to what life would've been then, it was pretty rough. We have it pretty easy. 'Course, there are pressures and everything... And I am one of those who think that our country progressed so well because people were not so hung up on keeping their own ethnic...they blended. I grew up in an area where there were people from Germany, people from Sweden, and people from England. And so help me, it didn't make any difference. The only way you could tell, was what their name was, you know. And really, they were just, they made no difference at all, and they blended. And I wish we'd still do that, but we're not doing it. That bothers me. I've gotten rather, deeply philosophical there, I'm sorry about that. (laughs)

EBB: No, that's great! (pause) Is there anything else?

JB: I don't think so.

. .

4 8

EBB: Okay. Thanks a lot! [end of interview, 110 min]