

Interview of Mrs. Keeney
Interview by Laura Perlman
Transcribed by Laura Perlman

Laura: You said you were born in...

Keeney: Lyton.

L: Lyton-where is it?

K: Well, it's south of here, not too far, near Oskaloosa- Do you know where that is?

L: I've heard of it, I'm not sure...

K: That's where my father started his practice there, then we moved later to Pella, I think I mentioned that. We lived there until he went into the service in 1918. And we moved to New York City and then New Jersey when he was at a base hospital there. Then we came home and he went back to practice in Pella. I lived there and went to school there. I'd have gone to school in Grinnell, I think. Either here or Madison, er, except for the Depression and so it was so much cheaper to go to school at home and so I did...

L: How did the Depression affect your family?

K: Well, uh....

L: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

K: I had one brother, but, he was considerably younger than I- he was seven years younger. And, uh, I think that it affected everybody, but we got along because my father really was needed. And I think one thing that's interesting is that when things got better, and after the second World War, when people had more money, he'd had lots and lots of money on the books that hadn't been paid and people paid every cent- he had to- that had gone on for oh- five or six years, and a lot of people could have gotten out of it, but they paid it off. But, meanwhile, what we lived on was kind of a trade. Umm, he had patients who owned clothing stores, so if I needed a new dress, he'd say, "Well, you go into Nettie Black's and maybe you'll see what you want." And so I could get one and, uh, the same thing was true with groceries- when we needed groceries, we'd go to certain grocery stores. And then farmers would come in with a load of fenceposts, and you've heard all this before, haven't you?

L: Yeah, but...

K: And you know, so we got along. I think people got along much better in small towns than in the cities- and uh, I don't know what else to tell you that's... I can't say that we had any psychological problems, everybody was in the same boat.

L: Yeah, that's true.

K: And by the time I was in high school we were getting along for a good time- we didn't do anything spectacular. we had a- girls had , uh, oh, I suppose there were eight or nine of us and one girl's father was a dealer- a car-dealer. And they had a Studebaker. Now that means nothing to you, but it was quite a good car, and it was a Studebaker touring car- Do you know what that is?

L: No.

K: Well, it was a big open car with a top but no glass sides, and it had a front seat of course, and a back seat. And then what we called jump seats- you know, in the back, and they kind of come up between the two seats. And we had it figured, by riding on the fenders- which you don't know much about...but there used to be big fenders on the cars and about eight or nine of us get on that car and then we could wheel around town. (both laugh).. Then we had, uh, dinners together, and we each had one thing we could make- I could make meatloaf and somebody else could make , uh, baked beans and scalloped potatoes. And sometimes we'd ask some boys to come- most times we didn't- we didn't do a lot of dating

L: Was it harder to find food in the area or did the farmers provide?

K: Oh, gosh, no...there was plenty of food..there was no scarcity

L: See, when I think Depression, I think of the dustbowl and...

K: The trick was having to pay for the food, not to get it. And we got , we had pork chops. Of course, in those days, the butchers butchered their own meat- we didn't have to get it from those big houses they have now. And so you sometimes got good meat and sometimes you didn't. There was one thing I thought might interest you- this was a little before Depression times, which seems to be the area that you are the most interested in. But my father, of course, if you think back to 1920, medical practice is still pretty primitive. They were beginning to be really, uh, aware of cleanliness, you know, not only in how you treat your patients but in what your patients do. And he always worried about some of the products, the farm products people got. He was afraid they weren't very clean. Um- one way the farmers would get their food in was to bring- like, butter- they'd bring a great big wooden tub into the grocery store and my mother would go in and the grocer would give her a cracker and she'd scoop a little bit of the butter out and put it on the cracker. And if it was good, and sweet, and not too strong, then she'd get some in a little box-like thing and carry it home. And, uh, the same thing was true with milk. I had to go and get the milk. We didn't have, at that time, milk-delivery. They had it in the big cities, but not in the small towns. And I had to get out in the cold and take a little milk-can and get some milk- and I just hated that. I hated that job. And I didn't like milk, anyway. (both laugh)...so, Now that's umm, it sounds

kind of shallow to say so, but we really had a very good time- we had good friends, but the cities were terrible once again. I don't know if you've interviewed anybody who was brought up in a city, but we're probably all kind of small-town people.

L: I guess that would make sense- a small town would be more self-sufficient than a city.

K: I think so, yeah... More particularly in those days because transportation was- I kind of bridge(?) several means of transportation because I remember when I was a little girl- oh, four or five- we'd go over to see my grandmother who lived in Knoxville, Iowa, which was just about twelve miles from Pella and we had a car that had side-curtains on it in the wintertime- my father put curtains on the glass windows which you could peek out of. Then, when we were getting ready to go, mother would put what they called soapstones, which were kind of an oval stone in the oven to get warm, and then they'd bring those out and put them in the bottom of the car. And we had robes over us and soapstones at our feet because there were no heaters in the car

L: Did they stay warm over the entire trip?

K: They were evidently the kind of stone that could absorb the heat and they would stay warm over the entire trip. But it was, gosh, you didn't go over there in half an hour- it was a day's journey, both ways- it was fun, but I was kind of bored- it's boring to go to your grandmother's house, you know? (both laugh) Now, let's see- have you any other little things that I could tell you that nobody else has told you so that you have something to tell that's different?

L: Umm- what was it like to have your father in World War I as a doctor?

K: Well, of course, he didn't have to go across

L: Right.

K: He was stationed in New York City.

L: Did you have any experiences with GI's or anything?

K: Yeah, I was scared, I remember being terribly scared. The one thing that scared me so much were the cartoons. Now, I don't know if you've seen any, but, umm, they showed the soldiers with the helmets, with the spear on the top?

L: Yeah...

K: They were supposed to spear babies with those, and I was scared to death.

L: How old were you?

K: Four, three and four. And then, uh, there was a big munitions work, not too far from where we were and, uh, it blew up and there were terrible explosions and people coming by all the time- refugees from town that had to leave and uh, we had, uh, I wasn't allowed to go- I

wasn't taken to the hospital very often- once in a while I was- and I remember those soldiers in their wheelchairs. This hospital was, you know, in these wars we've had now, World War II and Desert Storm and all that, they have wonderful medical facilities now so they are taken care of right there- but the boys in World War I, they were given emergency treatment and then were sent home to base hospitals here, in this country, and they were taken care in more detail, I guess. And that was where my father came in. He was- x-ray was quite a new invention then. He worked and read the x-rays and there was a good plastic surgeon right there and he would mend men's faces- so it was a horrid, horrid experience for a little four-year-old kid. There wasn't anything very good about it- it seems to me that you're in the same boat- you're always having a war to think about, aren't you?

L: I don't know, it seems kind of a little foreign to me to think about a war in this country because all of the wars in my life have been across the world and have not affected me, so..

K: No, the only war in the United States was the Civil War. But I don't think that, uh, you can't say that the war was brought back to this country. I mean, my experiences were that they were brought back on big ships and taken care of here, ut there was no fighting here except that there was the big explosion that I remember- and I remember New York City.

L: What did you think of the big city?

K: I loved it. Three or four years old, and I loved it. My folks took me to some shows...what they called vaudeville. And I was sure, one time, these beautiful girls came out from the wings in these beautiful gauzy dresses and the pink and blue and yellow- and I thought they were fairies- and- oh, we went to different hotels and I loved hotels. And I loved the train. I've had a love affair with trains ever since. I don't get to be on them very often. Have you ever been on a train?

L: Umm...

K: Were you on trains in Europe when you went there?

L: Yeah- it was fun....

K: It is just kind of a different world. There are, um, now on Iowa Public Television there are some features now on great train journeys and one was the Orient Express. And that was always my ambition to go on that. But, I'm never going to now. But, gee, it looked so cozy and inviting.

L: Right... Were there many- obviously there's a train running through Grinnell, but were there any passenger trains in this area?

K: Yeah, oh, how many years ago was it? I suppose when the children were little, when we were first married- My husband would have business in Chicago and a lot of businessmen did and the President of the college did. And they would get a berth and take a change of clothes

in their suitcases but they got on board the train in pajamas and go right to bed in the berth. And their car would be taken off the train in Chicago. And they'd get there and get all cleaned up and ready to go and do their business and then come back the same night. So that's kind of interesting. L: Yeah,...umm, let's see, what else? World War II- did you... K: No, that didn't really affect me like it would anybody a little younger or a little older because my husband was too old to go. Well, he was just kind of on the verge at the time, but he didn't go, but it affected everybody.

L: Did your brother go?

K: Well, my brother, that's another thing, was a little bit too young- well, he was in college- he wanted very much to go and he, uh, enlisted, and they didn't take him, and they didn't take him, and everybody was being quite- they were saying his dad was a doctor and he had influence, you know, there was that feeling. And so he went. But, he didn't get to Europe or the Pacific, but his plane was a plane that had a drone plane. Now, I don't know whether you hear of those anymore, but at that time they had a plane that could be controlled either from the ground or from another plane.

L: Was there a pilot in it?

K: No, no pilot, just plane. They had exploded the bomb on Hakini(?) and so his plane was the first plane to get the drone plane through the fumes and smoke and everything. What happened to that, I don't know, but I remember that much about the war. And everybody was so pleased to have the war over and yet so worried about the bombs falling on Japan- That hurt a lot of consciences, I think. I think maybe like the consciences that are being hurt about this Waco thing. You know, if you were there, you would have made the same mistake, the same decision, anyway, but it always worries you. How do they feel on campus about it?

L: About Waco? It seems like on campus everyone's thinking that the deaths were unavoidable. David Koresh said they were all going to die, anyway. And a lot of people are criticizing the FBI, but I read an editorial in Iowa City on the situation and it said that no matter what the FBI had done, they wouldn't have done the best job.

K: We don't have much confidence in them.

L: Right. The public is very critical...umm, I'm just trying to think of something...umm, tell me about the winter of '36- we're supposed to ask you this one.

K: Of course, the famous winter of 1937. You know, you've heard all of this. I know you have. There was a lot of snow. The snow was so bad. The snow was so deep, the fences were obliterated. And, at that time, my father had built a house, which was really kind of a something

people didn't do very often in the Depression- out in the country and had started an apple orchard and was going to retire there. So we all lived out on that apple orchard and my brother put on his skates and the snow was so thick and so icy that it would support your weight. And he skated over to the next farm over the fields...so, you've heard that story, everybody's done that. And, uh, I was teaching in the west part of Iowa and I came home because it was closed- everything was closed up- And I stayed home- I think it was two weeks before anyone went back to teaching. On the other hand, we had snow plows, but nothing like what they have now. Whether they could cope better with it... or have more machines, I don't know.

L: How far away was your work from your home?

K: About 200 miles in western Iowa in a little town called Dunlap- it's near Omaha, if you know where Omaha is

L: Yeah, I have a friend who lives in Dunlap...umm, well, you said that it was a day's journey to go from Pella to Oskaloosa

K: Yeah, you see, that's when I was four

L: Oh, yeah, ok...

K: Then, when I was twenty- well, that's what I started to say, I guess, that I - my grandfather had a team and a buggy, but he also had a V8- no, not a V8, a Model T Ford. And, uh, so I lived through that era and the era when they had cars and airplanes, and then jets, and so, my generation has lived through all kinds of changes- it goes a little too fast for us sometimes.

L: I- It doesn't seem like there's going to be much more changing like that- on such a rapid and grandiose basis. Like from a horse-and-buggy to a car, that's such a tremendous thing.

K: Now, in a lifetime, now that I'm 79, and that was 75 years, well, shoot- you wait until, you're 79 - you will have seen such things that you don't even think could ever happen

L: That's true.. whe did you see your first- the first car you ever saw?

K: Oh, my father owned a car...

L: Oh...

K: And, uh, in his practice, and uh, the roads were terrible so he had, uh, we had a car and my mother had a car- now, this, I'm talking about the 30's...uh, I was married in '37 so it was early 30's until then and, uh, he had to have a car for his practice because doctors didn't sit in their offices- they went out and he had a big country practice and he'd go and make calls on people. And then he had this- he did his surgery in Oskaloosa in a hospital there because there was no hospital in Pella then. So, um, he, uh, had his car and then she had a car. Then they had a car for what we called the mud-car- I don't know if you saw any pictures of the mud on the roads here.. It rained so much that the

farmers couldn't get out in the fields. You know, well, anyway, there'd be ruts like this. And, uh, this car was built up high, so it could go through those ruts. And then, they'd put chains on and it could go anywhere. But the trouble was that sometimes I would get mother's car and would drive into town and go to college. And dad would take his own car, and mother was left with the mud-car. So she'd get all gussied-up to go to her clubs, and off she'd drive, but the trouble was every time the car turned a corner, the horn would honk and the door would fly open. She'd get so mad, but she was left with it every once in a while.(both laugh)

L: I wish I could just ask you to tell me about life in Grinnell or Pella in general, but I know that's tough. If somebody asked me that, I don't know what I would say.

K: Well, I think that I uh. just really don't know what the answer would be, uh, I think everybody would have a different answer- I've had a good life. I was, uh, I always had enough to eat and enough to wear and I had three children and I had lots of, lots of friends and I love being here. This is a good town because of the college. Pella had Central College and that helped that little town a lot.

L: How do you think the college has affected the town?

K: I'm not informed enough to know in what way. I do know that if you live in a small town, where there is no college, there is such a difference. Even a junior college makes a difference. I think it's having lots of young people around and they bring in fresh ideas and whether people want to take them or not you don't know. And I don't know whether the town's attitude towards the college is any different from me or if some people that support it and some that don't- some might resent it, and I suppose you can find that anywhere, too. My youngest daughter lives in Beloit, Wisconsin, with Beloit College there. But that town is about 60,000, 40 to 60, I forget which. And the college doesn't affect it as much as Grinnell College does here, or Central College did there. And I don't know about Coe in Cedar Rapids. One daughter went to, uh, Luther College, and oh, it was so beautiful- she fell for it just looking at it...

L: That's how I fell for Grinnell.

K: Yeah, that's a beautiful campus- and, uh, I think it has an impact on Luther. There's another thing about Decorah and Pella- both are ethnic towns, uh, Norwegian and Swedish in Decorah, and Pella is mostly Hollen-Dutch from the Netherlands. And that makes a big difference. The college there is a Dutch reform college and they really support it. You don't hear as much stuff about the college as you do here, and I think it's because there's a diversity of people here, so...

L: Umm, tell me about- I want to know more about your family, actually- I want to know about your ancestry and history.

K: Well, if you have many- do you have many interviews that you're doing?

L: Just this one

K: Oh...Well, I would be happy to talk about Grinnell as much as I know, but if you, you would rather know some more personal things

L: Yeah

K: Well, I think it's more interesting

L: I do, too..

K: Uh, not that my family is all that interesting. I think maybe, I don't know, you can figure this out, I think maybe I'm a first-generation American because my father came over from Holland in 1890, when he was a year-and-a-half.. Now, does that make him the first one, or me?

L: Umm, you were the first one born here, so you are first-generation.

K: So, I am first-generation, and I don't think you talk to too many of those in these days, do you?

L: No..

K: And his, uh, Have you ever been to Pella?

L: No

K: Well, there's a bakery there that everybody likes that has awfully good stuff, and before you go home, you ought to get there and have some of their good things, but, uh, it, it's, my maiden name, that's why I, you know, I've got the "S" there? My maiden name was Sibenga(?), which is Fresian, and Freesland is a province in Holland..and they have their own- in the Netherlands, not Holland, Holland is a province, too. And they have their own language, the Fresians do. And they came from there, and established a bakery, and that bakery is still going. Now, it isn't a Sibenga bakery, but uh, as soon as they got here, they established that, and my father had one sister, who was the oldest and two other brothers, and that poor old soul, she had to quit school. Her mother was an invalid and so was her father. So she had to quit school and work in the bakery. And my father broke loose, he uh, wanted to study medicine, so he, uh, took his share of the, well, his parents had died by that time. One when he was twelve and his mother when he was seventeen, so he had a pretty rough time. I think a lot about a little immigrant boy whose parents are sick, how really frightening it must have been for that little kid.

L: Did they bring him over here, or did they..

K: The whole family came over..

L: Ok

K: And I think they were all scared to death, you know? But, they chose to live in, uh, Pella, which is Dutch, and uh, it had some Americans, and

the funny thing is that the Americans were very, very kind to the Hollanders. And they helped them while the Hollanders didn't help each other, at all. And I think that happens in ethnic communities sometimes. That they are so unsure of themselves that they are afraid to do anything more than just heed the mark(?), you know? So that was..Well, my mother came from, uh, Knoxville, which was twelve miles away, you remember I told you about that?

L: Yeah

K: And they both went to Iowa, and he studied medicine there, and went to Evanstown for his degree, and then she studied here, and she was a Phi Beta Kappa (both laugh) And, uh, she studied there and then went to teach school, and then they were married. And then I went to Central, and learned to be a schoolteacher. We didn't have all the options that...What are you going to be when you grow up?

L: I have no idea (both laugh) I think I want to major in Sociology

K: Do you?

L: Yeah.

K: Well, you're getting a start, talking to all these garrilous old ladies.(both laugh).. So then, uh, I taught out in the western part of the state and my husband was with the Grinnell Mutual Insurance Company as an inspector. Now, what an inspector was for property insurance company was to inspect properties, particularly farm properties for fire and wind hazards. And if they'd find things that weren't safe, they'd have them fixed. And it was kind of a preventive sort of insurance..

L: So that the insurance doesn't need to be used?

K: Yeah, and so, uh, he was out there, inspecting chimneys and stuff, and so was I, and we met, and we were married in a year. And came here. And, well, I didn't work after that, in those days, you didn't. And then I had three daughters, we had three daughters. One, (unintelligible), she's fifty-something. And the others are six and eight years younger. The war intervened there, and we decided we didn't want any children while that was going on. And I think that happened in lots of families, too. And then my husband, uh, he was very successful. He became President of the Insurance Company and was there until he retired, I suppose, 65. And then we kind of fell in love with the lake country up in Minnesota...

L: It's so beautiful up there...

K: Yeah, and we moved up to Gull(?) Lake.. Where are you from?

L: Rochester, Minnesota

K: Where?

L: Rochester?

K:Minn?

L:Yeah...

K: Well, then you know what I'm talking about..

L: Yeah..

K: Do you know where Gull Lake was, is? It's kind of a ...Do you know where Brainerd is?

L: Yeah

K: It's.. Brainerd's just thirty miles out

L: Ok

K: And we lived on the other side. Then my husband's health failed and we decided- it was still quite remote, I guess it's been built up quite a bit since then, so we decided it might be better to come down here, so we came back down, and uh, I've never been sorry, it's been nice to come back, people have been wonderful. They breeded(?) us and took care of us, so as I say, I think I've had a good life...

L: Where else have you lived?

K: Oh, my dear girl, you don't want to know! We moved about every two years. The first place after we were married was a little place on Spring Street. And, uh, that was a three room apartment. Then we moved to Park Street, where we lived right across from the dorms. And it was torn down about a year ago. Then we moved to a couple rental properties. Then we got a chance to buy, uh, a house. It was a darling little house. It had a shake roof and was made of paving brick. I loved that house. Then, after many more moves, I moved here. And I fixed it up just the way I wanted it and I love it! I am very happy here, I haven't lived here a year yet, but.. You can see that when you asked me where I've lived it was ho, ho, ho time! (both laugh)

L: Yeah. Do they take care of the yard?

K: Yeah, they do the yard and uh, there's some planting out there that the people before me did, or I wouldn't have it. Because I simply can't get out there and do that.

L: Umm, what else?

K: Now, am I answering you the way...

L: Oh, yeah, this is fine, you're doing a great job.

K: I did tell.. I have to tell you I figured that- my father was a great one for moving, too. He'd get a line on a house that was a little bit nicer than the one we lived in and so then we would move. And I figured we'd moved, that in my 79 years I've lived, I've lived in nineteen different houses.

L: Wow.

K: That's quite a record, isn't it?

L: Yes.. I've lived in seven houses in eighteen years.

K: Well, you're better than I am! (both laugh) Where do you live?- oh, you told me, Rochester.. Is your father connected with the, uh,....

L: My mom's a doctor at the Mayo Clinic, my dad works in Iowa City. She works in the emergency room in Pediatrics. I don't know how she does it, with all the stress.

K: I don't either...When my husband was sick, uh, he had uh, lung cancer, and when he was sick we made many trips up there, and it's amazing how well organized that place is! With the number of people they see, I just can't understand how they do all that..

L: When did your husband pass on?

K: 1983- no, '84. We came back here in '83, and we both knew he was not going to live, and so, we sold the house and in no way anticipated to do that, but we'd had it, and so, uh, we came back and it wasn't too long after that he died, and I always wanted him to leave before it got too bad, and he wasn't too comfortable most of the time, but it's, but everybody has that to go through, too...

L: umm, tell me, tell me about your, about your daughters.

K: Alright, well, you know a mother likes to talk about her children. Uh, the oldest is named Martha, but we call her Marty. And she went to school at Iowa State, and, uh, got a degree in journalism. They've got Bachelor Science degrees at Iowa State. They've changed that now, but she got her Bachelor Science degree in journalism, and never could earn a living at it, it's terrible. Better have something else to do or just be a humdinger. She was married right out of college. They live in Toledo, Ohio, and she then went back to um, uh, a two-year college, a community college and studied horticulture and she does, um, landscape design, and she uses oh, I guess it's three or four plants at a time. And her husband is with, uh, owns Corning Fiberglass. You know the pink panther you see in the commercials? That's his company. And, then, uh, they have two children, a boy, who lives in Omaha and is married, and a girl that lives in Columbus and is married and is going to have a baby soon. I'm going to be a great-grandmother! Then, the middle child is Cindy. She is an artist. She did, uh, all of those except the oil up there (points at paintings on wall) and some more in the living room, they're different techniques, you know, mediums that she did. And she teaches art in a little school in uh, Nebraska, and her son is there...his is the only picture I have out, I've got to get some more pictures out...And he's graduating high school and going to school at Nebraska-Wesleyan, which is a small school in Lincoln. He could have gone to the University, but he's kind of a shy, withdrawn kind of little boy-child-man...and uh, we thought it probably would be better for him to be at a smaller school. And so that is what he is going to do, and then she has two step-children. This is her second marriage, one of whom is still in school, and the other has graduated and is living in Minnesota, and I can't remember what the name of that little school is. Then the baby is uh,

Mary, and she's in Beloit. And her children are the youngest, they're, they're twelve and fourteen, and she teaches english at Beloit high school. And she loves dramatics. She's always involved in Community Theatre and that sort of thing. So they all have something they like to do and something they'd normally (unintelligible).

L: I don't know what I want to do with my life

K: But, you know, it's funny how things do work out for you, even though you make up your mind that you're going to do thus-and-so, unless you're just driven to do that, that's something else, but many times, things kind of point the way. Now, my husband is uh, a graduate of the ceramics engineering division in Ames, no he isn't either, it's uh. I got him mixed up with my son-in-law, who's in ceramics. He was in, uh, agricultural engineering, well, he never, he had an executive job right from the start, he never did do anything with agronomy or anything like that. Then my son-in-law, Bob, who's with the, who owns Corning, was a ceramics engineer and had a job for a while out in California with Glady-McBean(?) which makes Franciscan dinnerware. And he came back and got his MBA at Purdue and has owned Corning ever since. He never used his ceramics, he never made pots, you know? And, Mary, is not a career-minded person. She is teaching school to earn a living. Period.

L: Yeah, that's probably going to be what I wind up doing with my life.

K: Oh, Cindy loves it, she loves to teach. Well, somebody was saying what he thought people ought to do when they graduate from college is just to take a year and have a good time for a while, and then you kind of learn. Well, it takes you that long to find a job these days.

L: I have a lot of friends who are seniors and none of them know what they are going to do. Some of them are going to live in Iowa City and are going to figure that out while they are there.

K: What are they going to do? Why Iowa City-so they can get started on another degree or something?

L: Um, they don't really- for the past few summers, they've all lived together for a while, and they always pick up and go somewhere, like they've been to Arizona and to Ohio, and to Wisconsin, and this summer, they just want to stay in Iowa.

K: Do they pick only college-towns? How do they decide where they are going to go?

L: I don't think so, they just go where they have connections. An aunt or a grandmother

K: Well, you know, the big tendency now is to come home to live

L: I'm worried that I might do that

K: You probably will, I know my grandson did. Uh, the daughter of a friend of mine, her son came home to live, and he finally left and she

was so thrilled because she had a guest-room again. She thought she had a guest room when he went away to college. Little did she know that he would live there until he got a job. That's kind of the way we used to do it during the Depression. We had to go home, because there weren't any jobs.

L: Did you see a lot of farmers having a lot of sons and daughters to help them on farms? Or, what, did the dustbowl region reach up here? How did it affect the farmers here?

K: There just wasn't any- anything. There were some places in Iowa where there were some crops but, uh, between, during the, this was back uh, in the twenties and early thirties. Two things happened, one was that the farmers, you know, the farmer has to borrow the money to buy seed, or buy stock to feed whatever, and they couldn't pay their bills and the banks went under. So the banks had failed, and it was a very strange thing. Have you ever been without money?

L: Well, right now I am..

K: Well, you know you could get some more, but have you ever been when you couldn't get it? and if you imagine that going on for three or four years, that's what it was like. Panic is what it was. Like I said, I didn't feel it that personally because my father kept right on working and kept taking care of people.

L: Did your friends- were any of your friends affected by it?

K: Well, yeah, uh, let's see. One girl, a brother and sister were good friends of mine. The father was in a bank which failed. And I remember that, once we were at a football game and it just went through like wildfire that the Security Bank had just failed. And, uh, it was really rough. And another girl, the one who had the Studebaker- he barely kept scratching along, but you know, a garage, it would have a service department so he had that going and uh, there was one thing that started up..Have you ever heard of Pella windows?

L: Um-hmm

K: Well, that factory started up in the Depression.

L: Oh, really?

K: But it was called Rollscreen then. So things were kind of starting but uh, I have never known a town to be as completely disenheartened as Grinnell was. I think it was worse than the other towns I lived in. I don't know why. It hit earlier. I have a friend who says they lost a couple of banks before they did any place else. It was mismanagement at the banks. And then, they had this big Spalding buggy works, for Pete's sake, in the twenties, and they were still trying to make money, I guess and ..

L: Cars were too strong by then....

K: Cars finally came out, but they never got off the ground. And there were people who were very... Well, I'll tell you where they lived. there's a very pretty brick house on number Six, uh, how can I tell you? It's on Sixth and Main and it faces the south. It is a very beautiful house. And that was one of the Spalding houses. there were many and uh, I never saw such a dreary town in my life. All of the houses needed painting, and you know they are big houses, and people couldn't afford to paint them. Then the town looked perfectly beautiful in the summer with the big elms that arched over the street. and that was lovely. But the elms died. And here were these houses all without paint, all looking so dreary. I think maybe that's one thing that brought Grinnell to it's feet, they looked so awful. And when they didn't have those beautiful trees hanging over, you could really see how awful they looked. and then people started picking up and cleaning and whatever. There was no building going on until after the Second World War. There were very few- between 1920, Grinnell was kind of in its heyday in 1920, and 1926, everything went bust.

L: When was it that you moved here?

K: I may give you a different point of view than somebody that's lived here all their life, but that was my, you know, when you come to Grinnell, you get a different idea

L: Did you, let me see, what am I trying to ask? But um, did you see much of flappers when you were in New York City or in shows or wherever?

K: Well, we didn't know that's what we were looking at, so..(both laugh) Well, uh, we saw them in the movies. Joan Crawford was in- Our Dancing Daughters, I think was the name of it, and we were always doing the Charleston all over the place. But, we rolled our hose, our socks, beneath our knees. A friend of mine had to teach her daughter how to do that- she was going to be a flapper. And, uh, you rolled, well, I can't tell you, anyway, that's what we did. And we wore waists down to here (hip-length) and short skirts. And, uh, I do remember, I was in high school, and we'd go to school and make spit-curls, you know, soap them down? And I can't remember anything else that we did because of flappers. I think maybe in a small town they didn't signify much, maybe, maybe I was just dumb.

L: Um, my grandparents, when we were visiting Grinnell, pointed out the True Value hardware store because it used to be an Oldsmobile dealership. Can you tell me about that?

K: Yeah, you can tell from the big windows and the tires with wings. Well, it was going when I got here and closed after I was here, and it became other things. Once it was a store like a Wal-mart. Now I don't know what it is. A True Value and some other things. And then the

there were- are several businesses downtown that have picked themselves up. Of course, the Masonic Hall, you know where that is, and, uh, the Grinnell 2000 on Main Street has done a lot for the downtown area. It's looking far more presentable than it used to. There are still too many empty places, but...

L: Why?

K: Well, they are blaming Wal-mart for the stores closing down. because they can just outsize anything else. Now, let's see, I suppose if I could focus in on things, I could come through with some more stuff for you, but, uh, I really, I wish I had some wonderful adventures, but my life was just very daily, that's just all there was to it.

L: Well, tell me about your daily life.

K: Oh, my dear child! Washed and ironed and cleaned and I did a lot of sewing for my girls. With three daughters one does.

L: Did you buy them many clothes?

K: Oh, yeah, but then they could have more if I made them. Let's see, they wore, saddle shoes, white thick socks, and then they put sock-tops inside of those. Have you seen the kids do that?

L: Yeah.

K: And they dressed up. They wore...they never wore jeans to school and when my oldest daughter was about high school-age, she never wore shorts downtown, either and so you see, how fast things can change.

L: Was that in the fifties?

K: Yeah. fifties, she was 14 to 16, what does that make her now yeah, that'd be.. I never can remember- the fifties, I think, yeah, because she graduated from college and was married in the late fifties. And they wore pleated skirts. And another darling thing they did was they wore gathered skirts with three yards, maybe four yards of material, so they were very full. Then they wore starched, crinoline petticoats, and they, when they washed them, they had to be starched or they would put sugar water in them to make them stiff. And then you had these great big, stiff petticoats. And we went to Washington, DC with the girls to see the nation's capital, and we had to carry those dumb petticoats, and they wouldn't go without them. And those ballerina cappizio shoes. I think they still have cappizio shoes. and uh, that was the style then.

L: Wow, those giant petticoats...

K: They were awfully pretty skirts.

L: Do you have any pictures of them?

K: I'll tell you what I did. I decided that I would have to let something go, so we went through the pictures. I had boxes and boxes of them. And they took the pictures they wanted, and I threw the rest away, because they each had some, and I have pictures of them again,

because I keep getting them, but I have told them that I don't want any pictures to keep, I just want them to look at, and then send them back. I don't sit and dwell on the- I'm too busy to sit and look at pictures.

Maybe there will be a time, then they can give them all back to me. But they each have a wall in their houses with framed pictures from each side of the family. And, uh, so, I haven't missed them, except when someone like you comes along and says, "Let's see some pictures!" Then I have to say that I'm kind of a mean old woman, I guess. Anyway, I know what they look like.

L: That's what matters.

K: And they all have pictures of themselves

L: Oh, you were only a school teacher for three years?

K: Yeah, three years. I was married when I was 23 and had my first baby when I was 24

L: Oh, you only worked until you were married?

K: No, I graduated before I was twenty and worked then until I was married, and I never worked since then.

L: umm, I don't know if there's much else..

K: Well, I'm afraid I don't have a very interesting life to talk about...Just plain vanilla.

L: Well, we're just trying to get your perspective... And you can't say you don't have a chocolate twist.

K: Right. (both laugh)