Interviewee: Augusta Pederson

Interviewer: Paul Samuel Decatur

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Transcriber: Jennifer Wolfson

Agusta Pederson
Side One

Paul Samuel Decatur [PD]: I am interviewing Mrs. Augusta Pederson in her home at 1304 Summer Street in Grinnell. This is for the Friends of Stewart Library Oral History Project about Grinnell during the Depression and World War II years, particularly the ’30s and ’40s. Ok, I think we can start now and you can start telling your story.

Augusta Pederson [AP]**:** Well, I might start by saying that my husband and I started up farming a mile north and a half a mile west of Grinnell. And we lived there for eight years, and I do remember a lot of things about that. It was hard to start up when you didn’t have really money to start up on. And we did raise–milk lot of cows and we had hogs. And we did the work mostly ourselves. And the things I remember, not only then but for years to come, was cleaning the kerosene lamps and chimneys and the lanterns. And of course we started up with horses, but before we moved eight years later we did have a tractor. And, of course–

PD: What year was that?

AP**:** Well, when we got the tractor I think we’d been there about five years. And then he started farming his father’s also, besides the farm we were on. So then we did get a tractor, which helped out. And then another thing I remember, not only there but many other years later, was how we’d take our baths. We took them in a washtub and–

PD: Which part of the house did you do that?

AP: In the kitchen.

PD: And you heated water?

AP: Water, and we had a reservoir, what we called, on the farther end of the stove from where we put our cobs and things in. And we did have a cistern. And we’d been fortunate. We were all the time in having a cistern and a drain. And if it was fixed right, why, it was pretty clean water. And then we also had a–I never had a refrigerator or an ice box or anything until, let’s see it was, until we’d been married so many years. Roger was born in ’38 and he was four years old before I got a refrigerator, even. And how we kept our cream, which we sold sweet. And we did milk several cows. And we had a pail and we let it down in a well that was right on the porch of the house. And we did not use that to drink. We had to carry our water a long ways, but that’s what we did. And then to keep things cold, we’d put them on the basement floor. And what I hated

about–what I disliked, I should say, most about the thing are the stoves too. They were so dirty. And you'd shake them and of course things would just go all over. And the houses were cold. And for entertainment when those eight years we were up there we did some of the time, once a week as a rule, we went to Newburg to outdoor movies. And it was free to start with, and afterwards they charged. And they would put things down and put planks across them. That's where we sat. Then we moved from there.

PD: And what year was that?

AP: That was, let's see, well we moved over there in '23 and that was eight years afterwards.

PD: 1931.

AP: That we moved east of what the middle school is for almost, it was almost two miles east.

PD: Oh, I see. That was what, Garfield Avenue or something?

AP: Well, it's right straight. We lived there. And that was part of the Depression. In fact, we had two different men, not at the same year. But they wanted to work for us. And Leonard says, "I don't have any money. I can't–" They said if we would feed them and do their washing– And these two men stayed there during the winter free of charge. And of course that helped out a lot.

PD: Sure. Were these local men?

AP: No. Well one was. But the other one was from Indiana. And Leonard says, "Why don't you go back to your folks?" And he says, "They don't have money." He said, "They don't even have enough to feed me." So it was hard on them too.

PD: These were young men?

AP: Yes, yes they were rather young men. So that really helped us out some. And wages at that time was, if you give a dollar a day a lot of times, that's what it was. But we really did fairly well. Well, then we did move down–Browns I think own the farm now. It was farther south and east of Grinnell. And we lived down there. And that's when we had the drought. It was on Iverson's farm at the time, but Browns I think own it now.

PD: And that would be how far east from where you lived? Where the old airport was, you remember that? Was it south of that too?

AP: Yes. Because before when we lived it was just west of the airport. And then this other would be about two miles farther south and a mile or so farther east.

PD: And there was a school on that corner?

AP**:** Yes.

PD: And that was Grant, do you remember the number?

AP: I don't remember that. And then where we moved again there was a school, but it wasn't on our property. It was across the road from where our land was. Then's when we had the drought.

PD: So you lived out on this extension from the middle school how long?

AP: We lived there two years. And then we moved down on the other place and was down there. And that's when–number six south is where it was terribly bad. Luckily we were on halves. Leonard didn't even do a thing with ours. But for half of it, he put the corn through, well he, through sort of a combine to get what little corn there was. And I heard Don our son say, "Yes, Mother, and we herded milk cows in the road." And he said, "And you made me go down to the school house, and Norma got to set." But Norma was four years old, and she wasn't really large enough. But she could holler for help if they started to get past her. "Oh I remember that," he says. It was so dry. Leonard says, "I never knew that cattle would eat fox-tail hay." But there was one person–that was Raymond Pilgrim–that had alfalfa. And he lived not too far from us. And it looked so wonderful. We saw them have a load of this pretty green alfalfa. But I think he was the only one in the neighborhood at that time that had alfalfa. Of course then later on–

PD: What was the reason that he had it and nobody else did? Was it just that he raised alfalfa?

AP: Well, he was perhaps one of those that investigated in things and found it out. Of course, we had alfalfa afterwards too, but we had never had before then. So then we lived down there a few years. And then also it was kind of hard when World War II, because Don had started school at Iowa State. And of course, he was drafted. And I said,"Well–" or Leonard says, "Well, I really need him on the farm." And Don says, "No," he said, "Dad," he said, "the other boys are going, and I think I should take my turn." So we had that too. If anyone ever has anyone to go to service, why, they know it's kind of hard to give up but then we were so thankful that he came home fine.

PD: And, so you lived down there until– Were you still living down there when Don went into service?

AP: No, we had moved. In fact, we moved one year– We moved four years up where Glen Harrises live, which is on 146. I suppose everyone knows where Glen Harris lives: the first house after you go under the bridge. And we lived there for four years. Then we lived on what we called Badger's place–it was across from Swaney's Dairy–for one year. We would've probably lived there longer, but we bought the home place. And so we were on the home place when– that's where Leonard was born–and we were living there at the time that Don was taken in.

PD: So you moved there, what, late '30s, probably?

AP: Well, I can tell you just about, because Roger was two years old, and he was born in '38. So that's what year it would be.

PD: Well, let's go back to the beginning of the '30s. At what time during that period of time did you finally–did you have electricity? Not to begin with, I know. At what time did you finally get electricity, for example?

AP: I don't think we had electricity until we moved where Madeline and Glen lives.

PD: Now Madeline and Glen–

AP: Harris. Yes. And then we had electricity. And since then we've always had, because we had it put in on the house out home. And running water. We never had running water then. And like I say, I never had even an ice chest. And I always– We used to cold pack our meat, which they don't consider this safe anymore. You have to pressure it. But we never– Don says, "Mother, we weren't sick." And I said, "Well, maybe I did it right." And we had our own garden all of these years that we had our own garden. We had our own fruit trees. And then, as you know, we had our milk. And we churned our own cream into butter. And got along that way. And poultry. And I've sold dressed poultry for years and years. But it really helped out. It helped us very much.

PD: Now you mentioned that you sold sweet cream. Does this mean that you had to take it to town every day to deliver it to the produce?

AP: Yes, we did. We took that for a good many years. We took it down here to– I don't know whether it was called Meadow Gold at that time or not. I think it was two different ones there. And so this is the reason–and, of course, especially from Saturday till Monday definitely we had to put it down in the well so it would– Then when we'd take it down there then we would take buttermilk home for our chickens and hogs. And they did very good on it. So we really saved where we needed to.

PD: [inaudible] Meadow Gold. That's on the corner of West Street and Third Avenue. And what did they use the cream for? To make butter?

AP: Oh yes. And then they also made ice cream. They did different things with it.

PD: Now of course you had chickens?

AP: We had chickens

PD: Did you sell eggs?

AP: I sold eggs and I– We had incubators, and we would put the eggs in there and hatch them. And I raised a lot of chickens and even ducks. I put duck eggs in that too. And then like I said, we would–even my folks helped me out some–we would dress–we'd put an ad in the paper–and we would dress poultry and deliver it. Like at Thanksgiving and things, why, sometimes it was one o'clock at night before we would get through. And then the next morning it was getting up and delivering those. So we were kept busy.

PD: Oh, I'm sure you were. Let's see, so not having running water you didn't have indoor plumbing until probably you moved on the place out on the home place?

AP: Well, we did have, when we moved on the place across from Swaney's Dairy. Everyone will remember Swaney's Dairy. We lived across from there, and that did have. And we had electric lights and a bathroom. So we really felt–

PD: That was living.

AP: Yes, it was a lovely home. It was big, with lovely woodwork and all. And it would've been nice to stay there, but we wanted to have our own home. And we were always glad that we did.

PD: Let's talk a little bit about the economy during those years. Now being on the farm– Of course there was many government programs which were intended to help the farmer.

AP: Well, we at one time belonged to Farmers Union. And then we have belonged to the Grange for many years. And we've always thought they were nice.

PD: Did you have any recollection of government programs? Well those were the Wallace years, I guess. There were a number that were implemented to restrict production, basically. Do you have any recollection of those times?

AP: Yes, when you could only put in so–

PD: And a course hogs, I remember there were times when–

AP: Well, I can remember when we were supposed to throw our cream out. That was one of those times that they was trying to get the market up, and some of them thought it was terrible that we did. But we went along, but it didn't last long. But I'll have to admit, maybe it wasn't the thing to do.

PD: That was what they were asking you to do.

AP: They were asking us to do it and so we did and it was pretty hard to, to–

PD: Why do you think that it was discontinued so quickly?

AP: They probably brought the price up some [laughing] to help out. And then of course there was a lot of people that was against that because there were people that needed it. Of course the farmers wanted a living out of their work. And that's the reason they did it, because they said that we wasn't getting along.

PD: Let's see, other farm programs. Of course REA. That probably may have been part of the program around here. I don't remember but–

AP: That I don't remember too much about.

PD: And of course the WPA, the CCC, and some of the other projects weren't really rural related. Did you have any recollection of–

AP: There was one of them, but I don't remember. That's where they had men to go out and work to dig ditches and things. And they gave them some money for it because they thought it was so much better for men to work and get a little bit. Yes, I remember that because I happened to know a man that was on there that– He was a very good worker. He wanted to work but he could not get a job. And he was perfectly willing to do that.

PD: Do you remember what– Let's see. How do I want to ask this? I don't want to put words in your mouth. Were people anxious to go on this program? I understand they were forced to. But how did they feel about it?

AP: That I really wouldn't know whether they– But I know this one man that I was telling about, he was very willing to go because he was one that didn't think that you should get something for nothing.

PD: I understand. Ok, now let's talk a little bit about the– What about social life? You mentioned the Grange and I presume there were probably neighborhood socializing.

AP: That's right, and the schools had programs. And the children, especially at certain times of the year, they would put on these programs and the neighborhood would go. And then we also had card parties. And I've had many and many a card party. And of course some don't believe in card parties. But ours was never one where we ever had money. And it was just done for a good time and I think everyone had. And my daughter says one time, "How's come we always move in large houses because–?" And I was the one that had so many of those, but Leonard and I enjoyed that. We really enjoyed having people. And like I said, we had a very good time, because we didn't eat out for dinners and things then. We would get together with families or friends and–

PD: By eating out you mean in the town?

AP: Yes, come to town for dinners or lunch, which so many people do now. But at that time, why, we didn't have the money, but we didn't miss it because we'd never had it. But we'd have our ice cream get-togethers, and we really enjoyed it, like I said. We always enjoyed ourself. Even if we worked hard, why, we always had time to enjoy neighbors and relatives and friends and things.

PD: What was the typical Saturday night?

AP: [laughs] Oh that was coming to town and meeting all your friends, or a lot of them, and buying your groceries. And there was once in a great while I would do the milking and I sometimes would milk as many as eight cows and separate and do all the chores. And somebody says, "How's come you did that? " And I said, "Well, Leonard would not come in until he got his work done out in the field. And we would have never got to town before the stores closed. So I just did that." And there was a lot of women worked just as hard as I did. But Leonard knows,

too, that I worked with him the whole time picking corn. Course I picked corn before I was married even, so [laughs]– But I would go out and pick corn. The one time that– We always aimed to get through picking corn by Thanksgiving. And I'd never taken a wagon by myself, because we would pick the corn together. And so this one time Leonard says, "We're never going to get through by Thanksgiving if you don't take a team by yourself." And I said, "Get the team ready for me and I'll go." So I did. And we finished by Thanksgiving, too [laughs]. So we had a lot of fun in some of these things.

PD: You of course probably had a telephone?

AP: We had a telephone all the time. And it was, of course, a party line. And it was then– Of course every once in a while you'd listen in on a conversation, but they listened on mine too. But one thing about it, when we were living– That was the year Norma was born–in '29–why what we called home place, Leonard's folks lived, the house burned down. And of course at that time they'd get on the line and they'd-–someone would find out. Well, they'd just ring and ring and ring. And everyone knew when there was a lot of ringing to go. And so they did find out about it there. But it did burn to the ground. And so another house was moved out from town out there. But we did have, we've always had a telephone, that's–

PD: How were the lines maintained in those days?

AP: Well, sometimes it was the one that was the chairman over that line. And I know Leonard was. And then if there was any trouble, well, then they would let that one know a lot of times. Of course sometimes they would have to get help from Grinnell. But if it was some little thing, then we would–whoever was there would try to straighten it out. So that was the way they did that. But they wouldn't call Grinnell, because that was charged then, you see. Otherwise, why, they would just do it. If there was a limb down on a line or something, why it would easily be fixed.

PD: Who owned the lines?

AP: The farmers themselves owned the line, I'm sure.

PD: Ok, how about radio?

AP: Well, I think the first radio we perhaps had was when we moved where Glen Harris lives. So then– But we had a radio. But we never had television until we came here. Then we got television.

PD: So you're saying you had radio probably about middle '30s?

AP: Yes, yes.

PD: Did you spend a lot of time listening to radio? That was part of your social–

AP: At night, that's right. We did listen to that, especially in the winter time. Then they would give the weather forecast, which we most always listened to.

PD: Sundays I–

AP: Was church day. Sundays was church day for us.

PD: And your church was located–

AP: Since we'd been– We used to go to the Lutheran, which is over here on Elm Street. And then of course there was for a little while they didn't have a Lutheran church in Grinnell. They had the one out on the other highway north of Malcom, but we didn't want to go out there. And of course as I was a girl, I went to the Methodist. And so then when this one closed here, we went to the school house down– When we lived on the Iverson place we went to the school house. And then when we moved up on 146, why then we went back and we joined the Methodist Church. And that was, oh, that's been about fifty-four years ago. And Sunday was *always* church day for us. And then we would do things afterwards. Go places or have people to our place, one of the two, a lot.

PD: For dinner.

AP: Right, right.

PD: I guess we talked a little bit about the government programs. Do you remember any particular natural disasters that were particularly noteworthy in those years? Of course you mentioned the drought.

AP: Yes, that was a bad time.

PD: Tornadoes, windstorms, I suppose fires, you mention the–

AP: Well, we've had, not as bad as some of them. But on the home place we had a straight wind that took the hen house down. But course it would rip off shingles and things like that, but that was about as bad– Of course we did have hail once in a while that– I know one of the neighbors says to Leonard, "How" he says, "That would make me sick if my corn had been hailed like that." And Leonard says, "Oh well, it was just part of one field." He said, "I feel lucky that it wasn't worse." But the drought, that was that year, that was really the, perhaps the hardest on us. But we had been farming a few years, so it wasn't as bad on us as some of the other people. Because we had been farming. And then, like I said, we really relied on our cream checks as we called them and our poultry money. We did a lot with that because we milked quite a little.

PD: Ok, let's talk a little bit about your recollections of – This may or may not be. There may be some things here that you remember that are not particularly pleasant, I don't know, but relationships between, say the town and rural people, and between different ethnic groups, between different economic groups. Any types of things that you remember that might be–

AP: I don't myself– I can't say that I noticed a lot of difference. I've had the children say that sometimes some of these children in town would feel like they were a little better. In fact my son said they had a reunion, and something was said to him about graduating from Iowa State. He

said, "You know, that made a big difference. Those girls came right over–women they are now–came right over and talked to me." Because they just didn't realize that Don had the education that he did. And he did go in service, so he had to come back and finish his schooling. But otherwise– And as far as the churches are concerned, they used to say about the Catholics and the Protestants– But I have *so many* good Catholic friends. We never had any differences. We knew they were Catholics and they knew we were [tape change]

Side Two

PD: Start back in the early '30s. At that time you were–you had a tractor by that time?

AP: Yes, about that time was about when we got our first tractor, which did help out. But before then it was all horses. And then it was all that work cleaning out and feeding the horses. And also you had to be so careful because the collars had to be so clean or else they would get sores on their necks. And then of course all of that. And it went so much slower. So it took more time. And when we would–most always at corn picking time–we would have all of our chores done, and we would both be out in the field picking corn by daylight. And then at noon Leonard would scoop that off, which– We did have a lot of corn, and it seems like putting one ear at a time in that wagon would never fill. But it's surprising how, if you're good at it, [laughing] you can get it.

PD**:** And you probably got good at it.

AP: Well, we did. We really did pick fairly fast. I know we had a hired man one time and he said, "Well, I'll go in the back because I sure don't want to go in front of you," so–

PD: Do you remember how many bushel of corn you could pick a day? I mean not yourself, but say Leonard, for example, or the two of you?

AP: The two of us? No, that I don't know. But we had these big wagon boxes, and then we'd have such big loads. We'd put ears of corn between the boards and we'd have that so that it would almost–so there was a lot of corn in those.

PD: Would you pick one of those by noon?

AP: Oh yes. Oh yes. We'd have that picked by noon and then Leonard would scoop it off and I'd get our meal. And it was very fortunate, we had– Leonard's mother was good. She would keep the youngsters when I was picking corn. Once in a while we'd take them out and they'd have to sit in the back of the wagon but we couldn't pick as fast then. So they did go over to Grandma Pederson's quite often when we were picking and–

PD: And where did she live?

AP: They lived on 146 at that time and we lived [interrupted] Yes. So that was that first eight years. And it was very nice to have someone like that–

PD: And your crop at that time, your crops were in the early ’30s were what?

AP: They didn’t yield like they do now.

PD: Yes I know, but I was, the different types of crops that you might have had.

AP: Oh, we had, at that time we had corn and oats and, once in a while, barley. And then of course we had to use– and we did for a good many years. It wasn’t only that– We used the binder. First it was the horses and then we pulled it. And then we would have to shock these bundles to make a bale. And you had to put them upright so that they would stay until they were all done before they would put those through a thrashing machine that would separate the oats and the barley from the rest of it. And then they would have to stack their hay.

PD: Tell me about the thrashing.

AP: Oh, yes, I did that for so many years–cooked. I didn’t get out. But we would cook, and we would always have dinners at noon. And then of course there was–somebody would, most always the children, would take water out. They would have maybe a pony or something and take water out to the men, because they would get thirsty. And we would have, oh, quite a few men that were on thrashing. And we did that for several years.

PD: Now did you cook– You were the only one cooking? Or did you–

AP: We most always had help.

PD: I see and–

AP: My sister-in-law one time had–they had so many there, and somebody wanted to know if she needed help. And she says, "No." She says, "Can you do it?" "Oh no," she says. "My-sister-in-law’s coming and when there’s two of us, we’ll do it." We worked good together. So the two of us– And sometimes we would even dress chickens that morning and put them in water a little while and have fried chicken for dinner. And we most always gave good dinners because the men worked hard. So–

PD: Sure, I’m sure. Now these–who owns the thrashing machine?

AP: As a rule a man would own the thrash machine, but once in awhile there would be maybe two or three that would go together and run it. But as a rule it was one man, because at that time they had to have what they call a tank wagon that–they hauled water for the machine and–

PD: This was a steam engine?

AP: Yes. So they would have to have that, and so it got real nice when they got these combines–

PD: You said you had lots of men to feed. Who were these men?

AP: They went out with their wagons and they would be one on the wagon and one on the ground. And sometime we would have several wagons. And the one on the ground would throw the bales up, and they would stack them on the rack. And then when they'd get their rack full then they'd come and pull up beside this thrash machine and throw it over into this thrash machine until they were gone. Then there would be another wagon. And so there were several men. And then, of course, there was most always about at least two or three with the machine. And then they also had to have a man or two stacking the straws that came out. Then all of these others out. So we had several men.

PD: And these men were–

AP: Just neighbors. We really neighbored at the time.

PD**:** Yes. And after you got yours done–

AP: The other neighbors would do theirs and everybody would go and help each other.

PD: So all of the farmers just followed–

AP: That's right. That's right. There would just be quite a few of them. And so many of them there'd be one man–maybe he'd have his hired man–and they'd both go.

PD: And did the women follow it around too?

AP: No, the women just at their house would do it. Now that was when we lived where Madeline and Glen [Harris] live, on 146. We had silos to put the corn in, because, like I said, we always fed stock. That's what we did. And we had silos. And then, there would be several [of] them because, they would cut the corn. And then they would go out there. And I told Leonard, "Now," I said, "you'll have to let me know," I said, "when I'm supposed to cook for those." And he said, "Well, they said not today." He came in at eleven o'clock one day, and he said, "Oh," he said, "you'll have to get ready." And I had several men. And he said, "You'll have to get ready." And I said, "Well, I thought you said I wasn't." And he said, "Well, they got through and they're coming down." I got my dinner. It wasn't too bad. [laughing]

PD: Sure, I'll bet it wasn't.

AP: But you know then we had canned vegetables, and we had canned meat. And at that time we always kept bread and baked things. And so that's– Even then I didn't have a refrigerator.

PD: You didn't have to have much trash hauled did you, in those days.

AP: [laughing] No, I didn't.

PD: What about– I presume that you had hay crops?

AP: Yes. They would mow their hay. And then they would have a rake that would put it–which I've been many a time on those rakes, too–and they'd put it in rows. Well, then when it would dry, why they would go out and they had–we always had a machine where it would go along and pick up this hay and put it up high over into a hay rack. And then most always about two men on the hay rack. And they would keep walking and pressing it down and they would get the hay rack full and then they would go to the house. Most always you had barns, we did, to put the hay in, but that's the way it was done then.

PD: Was this a neighbor type thing also?

AP: No, we just did that ourself, yes. But that's one other thing that– With these bales anymore it's a lot easier.

PD: Of course you've mentioned that Don went to college, and I can tell you're very proud of that. And I'm sure that that's a result of some of the things that you've instilled in him when he was young. Tell me a little bit about the educational system in those days. Rural schools I presume?

AP: Well, I think Grinnell has had a good school. I had one man remark that his son went up to Iowa State, and he said that they didn't have it good enough in Grinnell school. And I said, "Don took the courses that he needed and he just got along fine." He of course went less than a year when he was drafted. But he came right back and went right back to school. But, I think Grinnell has had, myself, I think Grinnell has had good schools.

PD: Tell me a little bit about the schools themselves. Obviously Don went to country school through–

AP: Yes, all three of our children started to country school. And the two, Don and Norma–at that time you went to kindergarten and first grade all in one. So they graduated younger than some of them. But when Roger, of course, is thirteen years younger than Don, and by the time he got to school, why they wouldn't allow this. They made them take those years separate. So he was a little older than the others. And then of course our school closed. They came out and wanted to close our school. And they wanted them to come here. And I know some remark was said afterwards about the country children coming to school. And I said, "Well, they came out from town." Leonard–they talked to Leonard and they wanted him to close the school. And, well, he didn't know and he said, "Well, we really wished you would." So I said, "We were asked from Grinnell to close it." So they didn't say anything more then, because it wasn't us trying to get in. It was them coming out and asking us.

PD: Tell me a little bit about how the schools were managed and how the teachers were secured and who the teachers were and things like that.

AP: Well, when they had these rural schools, why a teacher had all grades and even had in between. And they had to do all their own janitor work. They even had to fire their own stoves and everything. And then they would– If they– When you lived close to town, of course, then they would stay either at home or a place. But before that sometimes they used to stay with

neighbors. Of course when we lived out here– Well, no. I can't say that I didn't have a teacher because I did have. When we lived just about two miles east of the middle school there was a Mrs. Spadey [sp?]. She was from Malcom. She taught our school, and the school was on our property that we farmed. And so she stayed with us. But I enjoyed having her. And of course she's retired now. but–

PD: In that rural school system, of course, they weren't under control of the town school. There was, what, a rural organization?

AP: Oh yes. They–each school had their own hiring and everything. Each school did. Because Leonard hired teachers, too.

PD: About how big were the schools, do you think? How many children?

AP: Well, they just ran from a few students, up to– Well, one school I happen to know of, they had thirty some youngsters with one teacher. But they had two families that had a *lot* of children. [PD laughs] So that made a lot. But our children never went to that many. There would probably be–eight or ten was perhaps about–

PD: In all grades, scattered through the grades?

AP: Yes, yes, in all grades. But they varied. It all depended on where you was at, but I should think eight or ten was about the average.

PD: Let's see. Something they're asking is about the expectations for boys and girls in those days.

AP: Well, I don't know whether there was a lot of difference, but like I said, our son thought that the boys were better sociably for the entire–than the girls were. He thought girls were more clannish. Or– Now that's–now others maybe would have a different opinion.

PD: No, that's fine. I appreciate that comment. I think that's very frank. That's what I'm looking for is your family's recollection of this. Did you have any particular hobbies that you or your family–

AP: No, this is what was bad. Leonard didn't completely retire until he was eighty-nine years old. He used to go out and help at the farm. And I know our son says, "When Dad couldn't come out, why," he said, "he didn't have any hobby. His hobby was work." And of course when we moved to town he was in a lot of different things. He was assessor, he was on the ASC, and he still went out to the farm. But now as far as I'm concerned, yes, I have hobbies. Mine especially is quilting.

PD: Yes, I was just going to come to that. Tell me about quilting in those days.

AP: Well, I really started piecing, which doesn't seem possible– But when I was five years old my grandmother and another woman had a class down in the library, which a lot of people don't

know about. My sister and I were staying with her, and I couldn't be left alone. So she took me, and she said, "You can't set and not do anything." So she cut these patches for the quilt. So I started piecing, and I pieced lots of quilts. But my joy is quilting them. And I've quilted four quilts since June in my own house.

PD: Oh my. Tell me about during the– Did you do much quilting during the Depression years?

AP: I've always quilted.

PD: And did you do it by yourself or did you–

AP: Sometimes we'd have help but I've done a lot by myself. Now these that I did now I never had one stitch taken on them. And I've made for my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, and so many of those I pieced myself.

PD: So you do quite a bit in your home then, in addition to–

AP: Yes, I go down to the church and I really enjoy it.

PD: Well that's great, it's nice that you have–

AP: They tell me I do it quite fast. And I think that's the reason that– At home– My trouble is, when I get a quilt started, I can't rest till it's done. And I'll quilt at night until ten and ten-thirty at night.

PD: You don't watch much television?

AP: Well, if I put it in here or here I can kind of watch a little bit.

PD: Well let's get back to the '30s for a minute, and the war. Maybe we ought to talk about the war years here a bit. Of course you've already mentioned that Don went to the service and I presume that probably was a hardship on Leonard?

AP: Yes it was, because–

PD: And was he able to secure other help, or did he have to–

AP: Well, yes, when we needed to, we did. Of course we did a lot ourself.

PD: And this help he was able to get, were they local? Were they, say, migrant workers?

AP: Well, we had some local and we had some that would come from other states. We had some that were local. But we did have some hired help. Because we couldn't do it. We just got so, especially when we farmed more, why, we couldn't always–

PD: Were you affected by the rationing much?

AP: It didn't bother me because we always had our own vegetables. We had our own butter, we had our milk and cream. And, no, it–

PD: What about fuel for the tractors, for example, was that readily available for you?

AP: We never– I know it was supposed to be that you was supposed to only have so much. But we always got by. We never were cut that short but what we always got by. That never bothered us at all.

PD: How about sugar? Did that curtail your canning any?

AP: Not too much. I used to– You could get Karo syrup and lots of times I'd use Karo syrup for the sweetening. So it didn't– Maybe we didn't use as much sugar as some people either, because, I try not to use too much.

PD: What about the farm situation during the years. Now I think you've already said that you worked hard because it was hard to secure help. What about farm prices and things like that. Was the recovery well under way?

AP: Well, we went through some bad times and then we had some extra good times,too.

PD: And these were during the war years, or–

AP: Well, you kind of had– They come and go.

PD: Oh, they still do. [laughing]

AP: Just like they are now. They'd be times if you'd hold it till the right time, but sometimes you couldn't hold it. So sometimes we didn't make much. But maybe again then, then we did well then. So all and all, it has turned out very good for Leonard and I.

PD: Well that's great. Everybody should have such a rich life. Let's–let me just ask you a few questions. We'll wind down here pretty quick now. We're getting well onto an hour and we'll wind this down because I'm sure you're starting to tire a little bit. [AP laughs] Tell me about how the Depression has affected your attitudes about life, about economics, about anything, just how–

AP: Well, of course you know we're all dissatisfied when these depressions are on. But when they're over, you just kind of forget about it. And glad it's over and hope it doesn't come again. But we think too sometimes that it's bad, and then you think of other people that have it so much worse than we do. But at the time it is kind of bad, when you don't know–

PD: Let me ask the question just a little different way. Do you think you would have been different today, your attitudes about things and so forth, had you not lived through the Depression?

AP: No, I think we all learned by this. It's a lesson for us.

PD: I agree with that, and I'm not trying to lead you or argue with you at all, but do you– Having learned from it, does this affect how you– Well, obviously it has affected how– I really am getting in a trap here, because I don't want to lead you. But I'd like to have you tell me what it was you learned there that has enriched your life. I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

AP: Well, I don't know, unless we find out that we can get along on a lot less if we want to, if we have to, let's say. It isn't because we want to. You do. It makes you feel more sorry for the people that don't have as much as you do. I think this is what it kind of brings home to you. That it isn't all given to you freely, because I do feel sorry for people. And I think I do so more because of the time that, there's times that, we never went hungry, but there were times when we didn't have very much, I can tell you that. [chuckling]

PD: Let me ask you this. You already said you'd preferred not to have to go through them and that's of course what we all do and continually do. But do you have any bitterness about having lived through those times or anything like that?

AP: No, no, no, I don't. No, I don't. Because we were happy at that time too.

PD: I guess I'll ask you a question then just to compare those times to today. Do you think people are happier today than they were in those days?

AP: No, I don't think they're as happy today as we were when we went through that. There's the togetherness, and you're more neighborly. No, that's–so many people say that. You know I said I'm perfectly contented here. And I think a lot of people wouldn't be contented in my home. But I am. So–and I think this is the main thing. If you're contented, and of course I'm fortunate, I have my three children right here in Grinnell, which I'm very fortunate. And they're so good to me that–I think I have a lot.

PD: Well, I think we'll discontinue this. We'll visit here a little bit and maybe if something else comes up– We'll just put this on pause.