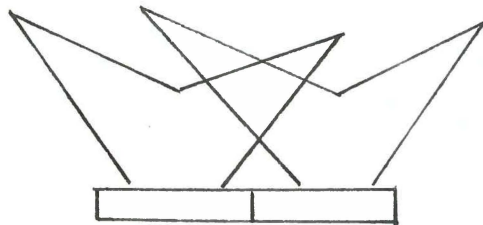




PROJECT INTERACTION

"What was life like for a child sixty
years ago?"



A project sponsored by:
The Poweshiek Council of Camp Fire Girls, Inc.

February, 1979

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Interview by Kiala club of Camp Fire (4th grade, Fairview): Jill Reams, Michelle Richards, Stacy Littke, Joelyn Eperson, Susan Kies, Kristin Wubbels, Lisa Galassi, Robin Chriswell. (Leader: Jean Littke)

Henry Alden
833 East Street, Grinnell
Birthplace: Topeka, Kansas
Birthdate: August 12, 1907
One brother

Are you married?
No, and never have been. An old bachelor.

What were some of your hobbies when you were a kid?
Well, I liked to draw and I liked to read books, if you consider that a hobby. And I got interested in collecting stamps when I was pretty young. I was never much of a sports person, although I played tennis a little bit.

What kind of toys did you play with when you were young?
Well, particularly I had a little taxi cab that I would push around and play with and it was quite fancy because it had brass lamps on it and brass trim, and it must of been, oh, maybe, two feet long and a foot high. I also had some building blocks that came from Germany, those cement blocks used to build bridges and cathedrals and all sorts of things with these blocks. And I was very fond of that.

What did you do for fun?
Well, a lot of the time I read. And I'd play out in the yard some and we always had a dog. I had fun doing that. And like I said, I always liked to draw and paint a little bit. I think those were mostly the things I did for fun. There was no television and that made a great difference of course, from what you children would have. We had things around the house--we had what we called a magic lantern and we could put postcards in that and throw them on the wall and we learned how to make shadow pictures. My father was very adept at manipulating with his hands in making the shadow of a rabbit on the wall, the shadow of a donkey, things of that sort.

Were you an "A" student in school?
I was a pretty good student in school.

What did you want to be when you grew up when you were a little boy?
It was very strange, but I think from as far back as I could remember I wanted to be an architect but I never became one.

Would you rather have been a child then or a child now?
I think that's a very hard question to answer. I don't know that I can say. I certainly enjoyed being a child when I was, but I think you've had a different kind of childhood that is also interesting. I don't think there's much difference, really; people are pretty much the same all the time. You find different things to do to amuse yourself, but all children have a good time.

What were your favorite foods as a child?
That's hard to say, too. I remember particularly Cream of Wheat was a great favorite of mine for a breakfast food. I was a rather strange person, I think, because I liked vegetables much better than I did fruit. And I was always, very, very fond of spinach which is not supposed to be true of children.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

When we celebrated Christmas we thought we ought not begin celebrating it until the night before Christmas. Now I think its partly because you're in school and you want school celebrations and so on and you have a vacation. But we never did anything about it except behaving very much the way we were supposed to behave so that Santa Claus would pay us a visit. We were put to bed as children on Christmas eve about 9:00 if we were really young, and lo and behold when we got up the next morning there was a tree with lights on it and candles on it and all sorts of presents under it, but that's what happened--we never saw the tree until we woke up on Christmas morning.

What types of clothing did you wear?

Well, we wore mostly little suits with short pants. There weren't any jeans then. I got my first long pants as a present when I graduated from high school. I never had on long pants until I graduated from high school. I had little knickerbockers that buckled just under my knee, and long black stockings and of course, your shoes. And by the time I was half way through grade school I would be wearing an overcoat or a jacket and a tie and a shirt.

Did you live in the country or the town?

I lived in a town. I lived where I was born, Topeka, Kansas, which is the capitol of Kansas and it had about 50,000 people. It is much larger now.

What is your job?

I was the librarian at the college here and I retired seven years ago.

What kind of school did you go to?

I went to a grade school in a city. It was about six or eight blocks away from where I lived and it had eight grades in it then. And it was the same school what my mother had gone to. We were still in the same building and one of the teachers had been my mother's teacher as well as being our teacher.

What jobs and chores did you have as a child?

Well, the only paying job I ever had, and this was by the time I was in high school, I worked in a book store during Christmas. Before, right around the house I had to clean up, pick up things, things of that sort. I didn't have very many jobs outside of the house until I got one at the book store in town.

How did your family heat your house?

When I was growing up it was heated by a coal furnace. You had to go down and shovel coal into the furnace and take out the ashes--when it had burned down to the ashes--and you had just the splinters left and put on more coal. It was a hot air system. From the furnace we had hot air registers in the floor.

Did your family have a horse?

Not to begin with. I was just on the borderline between the time when you had horses to get you places. And a matter of fact, when I was going to a kind of kindergarten before I went to school, and then there was a neighbor woman who drove me there in her horse and buggy. That was the only time I regularly rode with a horse and buggy because they were going out by then. My grandfather got a car before we did but you didn't use them the way you do now. That car, which was a Cadillac, was parked downtown

in the garage of the company where he bought the car, the Cadillac Company, and on Sunday afternoon we would call up and they would send somebody out with the car to take us on a Sunday afternoon ride. And that was the only time we used that car. It was never seen during the week. We didn't use it to go to the office or to go downtown to the grocery store. It was entirely a pleasure vehicle and it was kept stored somewhere except for the weekends. And as I say, my grandfather never learned to drive. We had a boy who used to work down at the garage who would come out on Sunday afternoon and take us for a ride out in the country. And of course, in those days, it always involved, among other things, stopping to change a tire, cause we always had a blowout. You could never get through an hour and a half of driving without having a blowout.

What were your favorite subjects in school?

I always like reading, literature, very much. And I liked mathematics quite well. I really liked all my subjects.

What kind of candy did you eat when you were a child?

Most of the candy I remember would have been a homemade candy. There weren't many things in the way of candy bars that you could buy. But I also remember, of course, there weren't any supermarkets then and we always bought our groceries from a neighborhood grocer, a small little grocery store. And quite often he would call up in the morning, because they would make deliveries, and he would call up in the morning and my mother would tell him what she wanted him to bring and he would bring the groceries-- the grocery boy, the delivery boy, but they would always let me go down to the corner store at the end of the month and pay the bill. They charged things. Because that always meant that the man who owned the grocery store would say, "Now come over Henry to the candy counter and pick out five cents worth of penny candies." And I would pick out five cents worth of penny candies. You can't get any for five cents now. But there'd be all sorts of little things--licorice balls, and caramels, and there'd generally be two or three for a penny, and as a reward for my going down and paying the monthly bill, I got five cents worth of candy.

How many uncles and aunts and cousins and grandparents lived near you?

My father's mother and father died before I was born. For that reason I never knew them, but they would have lived in the same town. My mother's parents, my grandparents, lived in the same town where I did. All my father's brothers and sisters lived in the same town where I did and all my cousins on that side of the family lived on the same town where I did. My mother had two sisters and a brother, and the two sisters did not live in the town where we lived, although they had grown up there, and the brother lived in a ranch about fifty miles away out to the country from where I lived. Families lived closer together then than they do now. My mother lived in the same town in which she was born until she came to live with me here in Grinnell at the end of her life.

What experiences have you had as an adult?

Well, very soon after I graduated from college I got a job teaching and I've been a teacher ever since. I taught English here at Grinnell before I became a librarian. So I've always been connected with academic work. When I graduated from college, my grandfather gave me as a graduation present a trip to France and I lived in Paris for about two years which was a very interesting experience. And I've travelled quite a lot at various times during my life. And I've always had a job that was connected with a college, either teaching or being a librarian.

You lived during World War I and during the Depression which were some different periods of history. Can you remember anything about either of those that...? (Leader)

Yes, of course when World War I began in Europe I was about seven years old; I was four years older when it ended in this country, and my mother was interested in war work. I can remember volunteers with the Red Cross--they went down and had food at the station when the troop trains went through and I can remember that very well. And I can remember the false armistice, because there was a false word that got out in the newspapers that an armistice had been signed two or three days before it really happened. So everybody celebrated it and then they learned that it really hadn't been signed yet, that was at the close of World War I. And I can remember parades in connection with World War I; I can't remember a lot about it. I myself served in World War II. And it was very interesting-- I went to Iran which we're hearing a lot about in the papers now. I was there for two years helping unload the ships that were sending supplies to Russia who was our ally in World War II. The Depression I remember because that was just when I got back from Paris and it was very hard to find a job. As a matter of fact, the only thing I found that I could do was to teach French to some small children. And I went down to the state university which was about thirty miles from Topeka and began a little class of teaching French to some of the faculty children. Before I had done that for very long I got a chance to come to Grinnell and join the faculty here at Grinnell which I did. I gave up teaching the children French and began my career as an English teacher although I'd really started it before when I was doing graduate work at the University of Kansas. I can't remember a lot about the Depression except that--we didn't suffer particularly, we had food and so on, but prices were, of course, cheap and it was hard to find a job.

In your home, was it big or small or what was the biggest room in your house and did you sleep with your brother or did you have separate rooms?

That's a lot of questions. I don't know how big to say the house was. It was a good-sized house. We had a living room downstairs and the parlor and the dining room and the kitchen and pantry. And upstairs we had two bedrooms and then two little sort of playrooms that were for my brother and me. And that was the day when they thought it was very healthy if you would sleep outdoors. And we had a sleeping porch on the house. And all the time I was growing up my brother and I slept in two different beds out on the sleeping porch which was all windows of course, the walls were all windows. And quite often we would wake up in the morning with snow all over our blankets. And that was supposed to be very healthful. It was good for you to sleep out in the open air. And then we would jump out of bed as quick as we could and rush into the house. It was wonderful how nice and warm it was in the house when we did that. And we'd get dressed, of course, inside the house. So my brother and I didn't really have separate bedrooms because we slept on the sleeping porch, but we did have really two small rooms that were joined together and I don't know that we ever divided them between us, but they were the playroom.

How many people were in your class at school?

I would guess maybe, around twenty-five people. It probably varied a little bit. We stayed in the same room. Do you have your assigned desk at school? (Yes.) We had that, and we kept our books in the desk. And we had inkwells, of course, because there weren't any ballpoint pens--there weren't even that many fountain pens. We had a little inkwell in the corner of our desk which we kept filled with ink so we could dip our little pens in it.

Were you a younger or older brother?

I was older than my brother. I am three and a half years older than he is.

Did you have any pets?

Yes, we always had dogs. For a little while I had a pet bat that lived in the dog house that I used to go out and feed bacon to.

Did you have electricity?

Yes, although when we moved into that house I was telling you about that we moved into after we left my grandparents, we had both gas lights and electric lights side by side in the house. We never used the gas lights very much and we didn't keep them very long. And incidentally in that house when we moved in, the bathtub was made of wood and it was lined with zinc. It wasn't a porcelain-covered bathtub. It was a big wooden bathtub with a zinc lining in it. We did not have an outdoor toilet. We had a toilet in the house.

Did you ever have any activities, like sports?

Not much; I played tennis a little bit but I was never much of a sports person. I did a little acting; I was in plays when I was in high school.

When you went to the movies did you ever see the movie, "The Wizard of Oz?"

Yes, but that would have been much, much later. I was a grown man by then.

But did you still see it?

Yes. I see it on TV once in a while. I read the Wizard of Oz when I was little. That was one of my favorite books. You remember, of course, the pictures when I was growing up had no sound. They had someone playing a piano in the theatre and there was no sound from the pictures. What the people said to each other was printed across the bottom of the picture. We had silent movies as we called them; we didn't know about anything else. They were just moving pictures; they didn't call them silent until they had talkies and then they had to talk about silent and talking pictures.

What did your mother and father do?

My father was the freight officer for the Santa Fe Railroad and my mother did not work; most women didn't. But she spent a lot of time in charity work. She was in charge of what's like Aid for Dependent Children now. But it was not a paying job; she volunteered it.

Did you have a vegetable garden?

No, raised flowers mostly. We didn't have many vegetables. We had a garden of tea roses which took up quite a bit of time to keep them going.

In Kansas, how warm was the weather in summer and how cold was the weather in winter?

Very much like Iowa, but I would say a little hotter in the summer and not quite so cold maybe in the winter, but not appreciably different. We would have days quite often, say, 100 degrees Fahrenheit and maybe for a week at a time in August.

Did you have cigarettes back then?

Yes, they certainly existed. My father smoked cigarettes, but he rolled his own. He did buy them already made. And they had different ones than they do now. I first learned to smoke when I went away to college. I don't smoke now. I gave it up a few years ago.

How old were you when you went on your first date?

I don't know what you'd call really, the first date. Once maybe when I was paired off with a girl for a party--but I certainly didn't go on my own and pick her up and take her to the party. Our parents would have taken us. It might have been when I was in the fourth or fifth grade. But by the time I was in high school, of course, I could ask a girl to go to a party with me and go and pick her up and take her.

Do you remember the names of some of your favorite friends?

Oh, yes, I can remember lots of them. I don't think they would interest you particularly, but I could name them. One of my best friends was a boy named Alexander Harvey. He was a very close friend of mine. And another one was named Harrison Morgan. They won't mean anything to you.

When you were born did you have to have glasses?

No, I never had glasses until about ten years ago. Incidentally, one thing that was interesting then, I think I was about the first person I knew in my generation that was born in a hospital. Babies were born at home generally, then. But I was born in a hospital and that was quite something. That was quite a new idea. Because I discovered that most of the people my own age were not born in a hospital, they were born at home.

Is there some thing you'd like to tell us that we haven't asked?

Well, I tried to think of things that made the most difference, and I suppose the thing that I would think of as making the greatest difference between your lives and mine is the automobile. The fact that you go everywhere in cars and get around that way. And use them all the time and not just as a pleasure vehicle. And television, which must replace a lot of books. We spent the evening at home with my parents reading to me, or once in a while, reading to them. We read lots of books. And another difference, I think, has been the fast food stores. We never went out for a meal. It seems to me when I was a little child it would seem very strange if I ate away from home more than two or three times a year at the most. It would be when we had a birthday

party for somebody or my father would have somebody visiting the town that he wanted to take out and we would go down to his club for dinner. But there was none of this going out to MacDonald's two or three times a week. And as yet, even now, I have never had a MacDonald's hamburger.

When you were little, did you ever learn to play any musical instrument?

I learned to play the piano a little bit, but not very well. I was never much of a musician. And unfortunately, after I had had lessons for a couple of months, I got chicken pox and I had to stop the lessons and I never went back.

Do you travel very frequently?

I try to visit my brother once a year in Spain, although its been about two years now, since I've been there.

Have you been to any other foreign countries recently?

Well, England. And I went to Russia about three years ago, just on a week's trip.

February, 1979

Interview by Rachel Kintzinger, Waditaka Club of Camp Fire
(5th grade, Bailey Park.) Leader: Janice Martin

Katherine Kintzinger Cramer
Mayflower Home, Grinnell
Birthplace: Chicago
Birthdate: November 14, 1901
Youngest of eleven children, five brothers and five sisters

What toys did you play with as a child?

I had a nice, big doll and I had lots of little dishes. And, you know, I must have been a little old maid, because I still had those dishes when I was growing up--a cocoa set and a dessert set of little tiny dishes.

What types of clothing did you wear?

Well, for gymnasium I wore great big bloomers and white middy blouses. You'd just laugh if you could see me in them today.

What kind of school did you attend?

I attended a public school in Chicago, but my father always had a farm and two years I went to a country school where all of the eight grades were in one room and they drilled us and drilled us on multiplication tables. So when I came back to the Chicago school I was way ahead in mathematics.

How did your family heat your home?

We had a furnace and we burnt coal. We always had a fireplace, too, that we'd gather around in the evening and pop corn and just have a good time.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

Oh, all my sisters and brothers would come home--some of them were married because my oldest brother was twenty years older--and we'd have about thirty people at our house for Christmas. All kinds of good food--big pies and cakes and turkey and lots of good things.

What experiences have you had as an adult?

Well, I had four nice boys and fourteen wonderful grandchildren and I've travelled quite a bit and I've been in all the states of the union. And Rachel's other grandmother and I went to the Scandanavian countries and to Russia and we had such a wonderful time! And our plane was grounded in Brussels so we had a whole extra day in Brussels and because of that, Grandma bought more than she should and she had to pay duty to bring some of those things into the United States.

February, 1979

Interview by Ann Stefani, Waditaka Club of Camp Fire (5th grade, Bailey Park.) (Leader: Janice Martin)

Elizabeth Hempstead Ernst
Mayflower Home, Grinnell
Birthplace: Victor, Iowa
Birthdate: November 14, 1908
Three brothers, one sister

Where did you live as a child?

My father was a minister so we moved a lot when I was a child--the farm over here in Victor which is fifteen miles away. And then we moved to a little town in northern Iowa and then Waverly and Muscatine and Stewart and Mitchellville--just moved a lot.

What toys did you play with as a child?

I think I'd have to say that my favorite toy would be a doll, but the thing that I liked about dolls was making clothes for them. I just made all kinds of dresses and clothes and bathrobes and things like that. But I liked to play out of doors I think about as much.

What type of clothing did you wear?

We did not very often wear pants. We had to wear dresses made out of, what you would call, percale in the summertime. And then in the wintertime we always had woolen clothes. We'd have a woolen dress that we'd wear on Sunday and then we'd have cotton dresses that we'd wear to school but in this kind of weather we'd always wear long underwear. Oh, how we hated long underwear! Now that I'm old and it's cold, I'm back to wearing it again but since we have pants to cover it up it isn't so bad. And I remember once after I was all grown and we were talking about being children and I said something to my mother about how I hated long underwear, she said, "Why didn't you tell me about that and I wouldn't have made you wear it!" And I know that's not true.

How did your family heat your home?

We didn't have a furnace until clear up until the time when I was in high school. In fact, I don't think we even had a bathroom in the house until I was in junior high. And so the way that we heated our house was just two or three stoves that you just stood in the middle of the room and you'd use coal to heat them. And a stove that you'd always love to have was one that had little Eisenglas windows that you could look through and see the coals on the inside. But we never had money to have one of those kind, we just had a cast iron stove and you'd just love to stand around it. Of course, it wouldn't keep the room very warm--like you girls are around the table, we'd stand around the table and you'd stand facing the front of it until your got your front warm and then you'd turn around with your back to the stove until your back got warm. And then it always had a railing around sort of the bottom and you could

sit on a chair and put your feet up on the railing and get your feet warm. The floors of the house were never warm with that kind of stove. And then you didn't have heat upstairs and in the ceilings, like these lights are around here, that would be an opening register, and the heat, you know, raises and so the heat would go upstairs. And that was the only heat you had upstairs. And it was really cold.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

Pretty much the way we celebrate Christmas nowadays although of course, you made more of your Christmas decorations--you strung popcorn and cranberries. Our parents would never allow us to have candles on the tree, so that we never had candles like lots of people did. But you made snowflakes out of tissue paper and just the same sorts of things that youngsters make in pre-school. And you had a big family dinner and things like that. But I remember one Christmas one of our grandparents died in Ohio and my father went back to the funeral and we decided that we would not have Christmas until my father got back. And I remember, it was one of the soberest Christmases I've ever had.

What did you do for fun?

The same things you kids do! And in the wintertime we went ice skating a lot. Almost all the towns where we lived had rivers, and the river would freeze solid and you'd skate on that. And one of the most fun we had, one time we lived where we had a swamp alongside of the river, and so the water would be there, and we could skate on what we'd call "rubber ice." And there would be reeds that would freeze right into the ice, you see. And when you'd skate across the ice, the ice would go up and down with you as you went. The only trouble was sometimes you'd go through and you'd get your feet wet and you'd have a couple of miles to walk home in the cold, but rubber ice was lots of fun.

What experiences have you had as an adult?

Oh, all kinds. My husband was a college professor and so we had all kinds of interesting experiences. Since our children have been gone and away from home, we've had an opportunity to do some other things--we like to be outdoors, and we hike and we canoe, and we've been able to go to Sweden, and we took a ten-day canoe trip in the fjords, in the lake area of Sweden, and then we took a train up above the Arctic Circle, and then we hiked for fifty miles--and here it was, the middle of August and we had weather like this, we got into snowstorms, and we wore our down jackets and, oh, it was really cold. We happened to be above the Arctic Circle the day President Nixon resigned. And we'd walked about fifteen or twenty miles in this cold, cold weather, and it was going to be on the radio about 2:00 in the morning and we would have listened to the announcement on the radio, but we were all so tired we couldn't get up to hear President Nixon resign!

Thank you.

It's been a pleasure.

February, 1979

Interview by Michelle Kiger, Waditaka Club of Camp Fire (5th grade, Bailey Park). (Leader: Janice Martin)

Lucille Potts

1830 Country Club Drive, Grinnell

Birthplace: Grinnell

Birthdate: October 19, 1910

One brother (six years younger, lives in Pennsylvania)

Where did you live as a child?

Grinnell.

What toys did you play with as a child?

Money was very scarce in those days and the toys that I remember most--catalogues were sent out--Montgomery Ward and Sears and Roebuck catalogues--and I would cut out the women and then cut out all the dresses and then try to make them match. And that was the toys we had.

What types of clothing did you wear?

Well, we didn't wear jeans like you girls. We always wore dresses but in wintertime I can remember we had long underwear which I disliked very much and then we had black hose that we put up-- and this underwear was always bunchy at the bottom of the leg and it was uncomfortable, but it was warm. But, once I was very grateful for it because I got bit by a dog and he bit through the heavy wool stocking and the heavy underwear and took a hunk out of my leg. So I was very grateful at that time to have heavy underwear.

What kind of school did you attend?

I attended Davis School and graduated from Grinnell High School and attended business college in Quincy, Illinois.

How did your family heat your home?

By a furnace with coal. But we had to put the coal in by shovels and I remember helping do that, too.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

We always had a Christmas tree except one year when the war was on and money was very scarce. And we took a large washtub, a great big galvanized tub, and put our presents in and covered it up with cotton. And as long as I can remember, that's the only year we didn't have a Christmas tree.

Interview by Lori Bergley, Waditaka Club of Camp Fire (5th grade, Bailey Park.) (Leader: Janice Martin)

George Ernst
Mayflower Home, Grinnell
Birthplace: Des Moines, Iowa
Birthdate: October 15, 1905
One brother (three years older)

Where did you live as a child?
Des Moines, Iowa.

How did your family heat your home?
Well, they heated our homes with coal in those days.

What jobs and chores did you have to do as a child?
I helped my mother, quite frequently, with the weekly washing that she did, laundrying, dishes and other chores that were always around the home.

How did you celebrate Christmas?
We had a good Christmas celebration. Father and Mother were always interested in having a Christmas tree with, at first, lighted candles. But these were dangerous, and finally when electricity came we had electric lights.

What experiences have you had as an adult?
Beginning with graduation from high school, I decided to go to college, and I went to college for two years and then after being somewhat tired of college, I worked as a clerk for two years and then went back to college and completed my education in engineering. Then worked for the Interstate Commerce Commission in Washington, D.C. for a while and also with a private consulting firm, and ended up as a teacher of civil engineering in a number of different colleges throughout the country.

February, 1979

Interview by Sina Martin, Waditaka Club of Camp Fire (5th grade, Bailey Park).
(Leader: Janice Martin)

Hester Sparling Wells
Mayflower Home, Grinnell
Birthplace: Marshall, Minnesota
Birthdate: 1899
No brothers or sisters

How many of your aunts, uncles, grandparents lived near you?
Only my grandparents on my father's side lived in the same town I did,
and that was only until I was six years old.

Where did you live as a child?

I lived in Minnesota until I was six, and then we moved to Langdon, North Dakota where I lived all the rest of my life until 1966.

What did you play with as a child?

Since I was an only child I had a lot of toys because my parents were very anxious for me to have a lot of fun with things because I was alone most of the time. But I had playmates in the neighborhood who shared my toys with me. I had dolls, beautiful dolls because my mother was a seamstress and a person who did a lot of fine needlework and she dressed them beautifully and we took great care of them. And those dolls had china heads; if I had dropped them they would have broken. So I had to be very careful with them. But I also had child-sized furniture—a little table and three little chairs that were just right for six-year olds and so my playmates and I had tea parties out on the porch. And in the yard there was a swing and a teetertotter and we played a lot in a vacant lot near my home where we played with balls and other things like that. We rolled hoops for instance.

What types of clothing did you wear?

We wore dresses. Nobody had heard of jumpsuits of course, no pants or anything like that. Our stockings were full length, long stockings. I remember that my shoes were always the little slippers with a strap across the ankle. When winter came—we had long winters in North Dakota—we wore long underwear with black stockings over them for our school clothes. And we wore woolen dresses that had little blouses underneath them. And when we came home from school we put on what we called a pinafore, or pinny, to protect our school clothes when we played. And we had overshoes that came up well above our ankles and had buckles to hold them on our feet. We had mittens and scarves—oh, lots of scarves—because they were wrapped around our forehead, and around our noses, and when we got to school our teachers had to just unwrap us like a package. And they'd have us get wrapped up the same way before we left for home.

What kind of school did you attend?

I attended a school in town which included all the grades and high school. It was a wooden structure in two parts with a corridor between. The high school was in one of the buildings and the grades, as they said, were in the other part of the building with a platform that ran across both buildings and that was where we gathered before the doors were open for school.

What kinds of subjects did you study?

We studied reading and penmanship. That was very important. And geography and American History and composition, that was what you might call an English course nowadays in the grades. And a music teacher came in every day to each of the grades and we had a short period of music--singing as a group and I can't think of any other particular subject we had. (Gym?) Gym, honey, wasn't even thought of, but we had recess and we had plenty of gymnastic activity when we got out of the schoolyard, especially when it was wintertime and we were very lively. No, there was no gymnasium until I was in high school we began to have gymnasium activities. The girls wore costumes of big old bloomers that extended below their knees and middy-type tops. We played at a sort of basketball-like game and did some bending and twisting and raising our arms and bending over. There was very little of it because there were no showers, you see, in the school building as you have it now. There weren't the facilities to have those activities. The boys had track team but they didn't have football. They played baseball a lot but it wasn't related to school. Baseball was not part of a school activity.

What were your favorite foods as a child?

Cinnamon rolls and fresh bread. My mother always baked the bread for our family and we'd come home from school, there was never a more delicious smell to come home when she had just put all the fresh rows of bread and cinnamon rolls out to cool. That was my favorite food.

How did your family heat your home?

We heated our home with a coal burner, a hard-coal burner. That stood between the living room--what we called then the parlor--and the dining room and it was put up in the fall and it attached to the chimney with a metal pipe and taken down again in the spring and the cooking was done on a range, a wood and coal range.

What jobs and chores did you have to do as a child?

Well, I always had to wash the supper dishes and I didn't like doing it because the evenings are long in North Dakota and daylight lasted a long time and that was our favorite playtime to go out on that vacant lot and play games like Tom, Tom Pull-Away and I just hated to stay inside long enough to wash the dishes. There were just three people at our table and there weren't that many dishes but it was just my favorite dislike. Another chore was, my mother would give me a little basket that grapes were sold in and I was supposed to go out and pick up twigs and chips or whatever for making the fire in the wood range, and that was one of my chores. And another one was picking the currants and the gooseberries that were in our garden so that we could make jelly.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

We always had a Christmas tree in our own home and at that time it was lighted with candles so we didn't have the brilliant lights you have now, and you had to be very, very careful for the danger of fire. But the candles were bright and twinkly and the trees to our eyes were very, very pretty. We always had a Christmas program at school and then a Christmas program at the church and then those of us that went to one church always went with our playmates to the program at their church. They were held on different nights because the town was small. So as children we really made the rounds of all the Christmas programs and all the Christmas celebrations.

When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I didn't think too much about it, but I thought I would probably be a teacher. I had some teachers that I thought were just so pretty and so wonderful and so nice and everybody treated them very nicely—all our parents were always talking about Miss So-and-so who was a teacher in the fourth grade and that sort of thing, so I got the idea that teachers held a kind of special place in the town.

What did you do for fun?

Well, I think I've described that pretty well. As a group our idea of a real celebration would be to go for a sleigh ride. We lived in a small town and some of my classmates lived on farms about a mile or so from town and their fathers would have bobsleds which was the way they came to town with their grain or other produce and on business. And they would pile first some straw in the bottom of the bobsled and then a lot of heavy robes—buffalo-hide robes or horsehide robes and we children would pile in. The very accomodating and kindly father of someone would take us riding around on the roads near the town and through the streets of the town and if they had bells, they would put sleigh bells on the horses and we just thought that was wonderful fun. And then we'd go to one of the children's homes for cocoa and cookies afterward—it was a big party!

Would you rather have been a child then or now?

I think that's an impossible question to answer. I was a child when I was a child and I enjoyed it very much. And I notice that my children enjoyed the period of time when they were small, and my grandchildren and great-grandchildren—all seemed to be having a very pleasant period of childhood and I think they're different, but I think they're all just as nice.

What experiences have you had as an adult?

I did become a teacher and taught for a while before I was married. And I raised my family and then later when our country moved into war, I was called upon to return to teaching in World War II. My children were big enough so I could leave them and I taught in high school again all during the years of World War II and then beginning in the 30's I was urged to go into welfare work which I continued for several years. And those were the periods of my employment.

What other special things can you tell me that I haven't asked?

I think that one thing throughout my life from my childhood on that I am thankful for is that I have had good health. I've been sick, I've had accidents, things like that, but I've always been blessed with good recovery and come back to activity with enthusiasm and joy, especially an experience like this interview.

February 1979

Interview by Jabberjaws club of Camp Fire (3rd grade, Davis): Tammy Benson, Deanna Burkett, Allison Harter, Michelle Pickens, Lora Stevenson, Kristine Tait. (Leader: Bea Tait)

Mrs. Van Nimwigian
Mayflower Home
Birthplace: Souix Center, Iowa
Birthdate: September 1, 1900
Five brothers, one sister (all deceased)

Where did you live when you were growing up?

Sioux Center, where I was born, until I was eighteen years old, and then I moved to Orange City and I was a telephone operator. I met my husband at Orange City and then we were married in Orange City and then we moved to Alton, Iowa and lived there until my children, John and Marilyn, were six and two. Then we moved to Eagle Grove. My husband worked for the railroad.

How old were you when you got married?

I was twenty-three.

Where do your children live?

My son, John, lives in Des Moines. He works for the telephone company. And my daughter lives in Marion, Iowa.

What pets or toys did you play with when you were a little girl?

Well, a doll. We always had pets. We were very busy children. We played. We lived out of town a way and we had sleds, and of course, wagons and things like that. It's very difficult when you're—it's been a long time.

What type of clothing did you wear? Is it different from what little girls wear today?

Yes, indeed. I can think more about my winter clothing than my summer clothing. I remember that we had very warm clothing because we didn't have furnaces or anything like that. Then to school—we walked nine blocks to school. That's a long way. So we had "tassle caps," well they look just like they do now. And then we had a long thing, you know—what my mother called "fascinators" you would call now a wool scarf—that she would put in front of our faces and then I had a complete red outfit. I had a red plaid dress and a red coat and a red tassle cap and a red scarf. And then we had leggings. Do you know what leggings are? No? Well, they're just like the snow pants, but they had little straps under the shoes. And then we had buttons all the way up to here so we could put our feet in them. So we were very warm when we went to school.

Did you have to button all the buttons?

Yes, I did. And it's a little thing with a handle and then it has a little piece of metal with a hook on the end of it. And then we would stick that in there and grasp the button and pull it through. And you do that—but pretty soon they were more pliable and we'd just fasten them up with our hands. But it was a long job!

What kinds of shoes did you wear?

Just button shoes. They came up quite high. (Did you have to use a shoe horn to button them?) Yes, a shoe hook, that's what it was.

What kind of classes did you have in school?

I think they were a lot like you have now. Instead of kindergarten we had the first three grades in a room and that was class A, B, and C. And that was class kindergarten, first and second we would say now. And the next one would have three, four and five. And then the next room had six, seven and eight. And that's as far as our Christian school went. And then the public school took over, you know.

What kinds of subjects did you have?

Well, we didn't call it science, I don't think. But we didn't call it math, we called it arithmetic. And then the other subjects were more or less like you have today: Geography, reading, yes, yes, indeed.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

As my mother was very good--she wasn't a registered nurse--but she took care of sick people very much and she loved it. And so, naturally, I wanted to be a nurse. But my limited education didn't allow that because I could only have eight grades. You are so lucky because you can go to high school, you can go to college, and that just wasn't for us. Most boys went to high school, but not very many girls went to high school.

What did you eat when you were a little child?

I usually ate loads and loads of oatmeal in the mornings. And you could always have a warm drink, because you had to walk so far in the cold. My mother was very careful that we would have a warm drink, chocolate milk or something like that. And vegetables, we had a lot of vegetables because my mother always had a large garden. With a family like that she'd have to have. We would make our own ice cream. And sometimes when it would hail, we would go out and gather the hail in big pans and we would use that to make ice cream which was much better than if you'd have to chop it. You'd already have the little balls, the little hailstones. That was fun. We didn't have the quick rices like Minute Rice and things like that. We had the longer cooking rice, which even today I prefer to Minute Rice and things like that. With raisins and cinnamon and butter. My mother would very often make what she called--a soup cake, but it was more or less of a--ginger and things like that. And cookies. My mother was a very good cook. I think our health had a lot to do with what she cooked for us.

What jobs and chores did you have to do?

Well, as long as our stoves were wood stoves and coal stoves and things like that, the children would have to go into big shed and get basket after basket of cods and wood and coal. And that was a big job. And then my mother always had chickens, so we would gather the eggs. We made our own beds. We couldn't leave until our beds were made, as it is today, I guess.

Did you do any fun things when you were a child?

Oh, yes. We had fun. In the winter we had a very good time. And in the summer, of course, we had our rope swings. We didn't have bicycles--there were a lot of bicycles, but we didn't have them. Of course, our dolls. We had a large dog and we would harness him up with two ropes and he would pull our little wagon and we would sit in the wagon. We had lots of fun that way.

What did your family do for fun?

We didn't have a car like you do now. You can go out and go somewhere in your car, but we didn't do that. I remember, my brothers worked on different farms and each had a horse and buggy and I would walk about a mile up the road on Sunday before noon when I knew my brothers were coming and I would walk way out there and they would pick me up and take me home and that was just wonderful! And sometimes they would let me drive the horse. Our family was very busy because as soon as the boys could leave to work for other farmers and things, they weren't at home anymore and I hated to see them go.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

The churches were very strict about having a baby in a cradle in the church and things like that. They were very strict and very old-fashioned. But at Christmas time in church all the children got an orange and some little present—it wasn't elaborate. The churches were so strict that we didn't have anything like it is today. Our mother and father would give us a present, and our grandparents. But it was never very elaborate because—it was something useful to wear or something like that, something that they had made.

Would you rather have been a child then or now?

I think that is pretty much—I enjoyed myself very much when I was a child. And being a babysitter I love—I would like to be a child today, too. I don't know which one I would rather be. We didn't know all about the things you girls can do like swimming and things like that, and all the toys you have.

Do you have anything else to tell us about when you were a girl?

Yes, the things that I did. I roller skated very much. And afterwards, when I was older, I would do fancy skating and things like that. And I've always loved to roller skate.

Have you talked to anybody in Dutch?

Yes, I still talk and read and write Dutch. And I'm awfully glad they did us do that, because knowing two languages is better than one, of course. During the second world war, the Hollanders weren't treated very nice, and they were very, very poor and so many families in the United States would send them clothing. So when I lived in Eagle Grove, Bloomfield (or Goldfield?) was just five miles away from there, would send boxes of clothes to Holland. So they would get a Dutch letter and they didn't know what they were talking about because they didn't understand Dutch, so they found out I was Dutch and so I would go over there and interpret their letters. And that was really fun! And so I got to write to some of these people in Holland and I got lovely letters back—they were very thankful. (Do you still have opportunity to talk to anyone here?) Oh, very, very little. There's a man that goes to our church always talks Dutch to me, but he speaks a very fine Dutch where mine is rusty.

Would you like to hear the prayer we said at the table?

(speaks in Dutch) In English you'd say, "God bless this food, Amen."

February, 1979

Interview with Magical Blue Birds (3rd grade, Bailey Park): Beth Czechowski, Tracy Gorsh, Karla Manning, Kristy Manning, Richelle Mason, Nikki Seaba.
(Leader: Leslie Czechowski)

Edna Tinnes

1527 Spencer, Grinnell

Birthplace: Brownston, Minnesota

81 years old

1 brother, Harry (died as a youth), 1 sister, Pearl (ten years older than Edna; died a few years ago).

What subjects did you study in school?

Actually, there were the four R's: arithmetic, writing. We had everything-- grammar, English, mathematics. I loved arithmetic! Most of anything: geography. Just like everybody, only it was a long time ago and a lot different than it is today.

What kind of school did you go to?

It was just a public school and it was in a small town about the same size as Kellogg. It had, well, I don't know how many rooms it had--eight-room schoolhouse, I think, in a town. But every morning they read from the Bible and we sang hymns. And we girls all took piano lessons after we got to be your age and then when we got so we could play, then we'd play the piano for the singing. Oh, that was a big thing, you know.

How many kids were there and how many were in each class?

I don't know if I can remember. I would probably say around twelve children in each class. It was a small town about 750, I think. We each had our own room.

What jobs and chores did you have to do at home?

Actually, I was kind of a spoiled little girl. I came along ten years after my sister and brother and they were so happy to have me. My father had died when I was four years old so I think my mother spoiled me. I didn't have to do too much, but I did dishes and weeding in the garden and helped with the lawn. I had an older sister that did a lot of the housework. I played a lot.

How many of your aunts, uncles, grandparents lived near you?

Well, we had a grandmother that lived with us, and my grandfather was dead. My father had died, so my mother and my sister and my grandmother, we lived together. She was crippled, she couldn't walk for ten years--she had arthritis. She had come from near Boston and then they moved to Wisconsin. Her husband was in the legislature and she used to tell me stories about when the Indians used to come to their house and she had to feed them all, no matter how many there was. And she was afraid, and her husband would be gone. She really was quite an interesting woman. This was in Wisconsin, Fond-du-lac, Wisconsin.

Why did the Indians come to their house?

It was wild. See, my grandmother died in 1911 and she was 86, so it was in the '80's. It was prairie. The Indians were hungry, and they would come to these houses and they had to feed them, so they'd get busy and get out something.

Did you have any of the rest of your family living near you?

I had an aunt that lived out in the country and then my other grandmother, she had come from Norway. My mother was five years old when she came from Norway with this grandmother. But I don't remember her so much. In those days you didn't have cars to get around and if you went anyplace you had to get a horse and buggy, you know, and it would take at least an hour to go four miles.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

We went to a little Congregational Church there. This town was a German community and all the churches were in German, and we couldn't understand it. There was one English-speaking church, that was the Congregational Church, and they always had a Christmas Eve service which was a big thing for us. We all went to church and they had a Christmas tree and it was lit with candles--there were no electric lights in those days, you know--It's a wonder the church didn't burn down with the candles but they were so careful, I don't think they ever had a fire. One night I was so excited! I was probably your age or a little bit younger, and I got so excited because Santa Claus was coming to the church and we heard him coming and I got to the aisle and here he came in, riding on a pony and I got so close to him the pony stepped on my foot! I was pretty excited. And then, of course, we all had presents on the tree. Our parents would bring those. At home, we hung up our stockings. But I usually got up about 2:00 and got my presents.

Did you have any pets?

Yes, I did. And I brought you a picture of it. I had a dog, and we lived on the farm until I was four years old, and then when my father died and we moved to town. But one day I wandered away and my folks couldn't find me. I was out in the meadow and here I was, sound asleep, and the dog was right beside me--he hadn't woke me. We took the dog to town and that picture was made when I was about your age.

What was the dog's name?

It was Buck. I don't know why. My mother made the dress, she did all the sewing. She was a beautiful sewer.

What toys did you play with as a child?

My mother made me a great big doll. She made the body, and it had a china head. That was one of my Christmas presents once. I've got it yet. That was my favorite. And I had a bicycle. We played games mostly. See, there were no children in our family--I was the only one--and my sister was ten years older, but we had a lot of neighbors and they all had children just about my age and every night we used to play games outside. We'd go and have picnics and we had a woods right on the edge of town. Oh, there were beautiful wildflowers. We used to walk out there and take our picnic lunch, all the girls and I. Then afterward, we got bicycles and then we'd ride out into the country. And then you didn't have any traffic in those days. I remember seeing the first car when I was about seven years old. The first electric light--we didn't have any electricity--everything was lamps. You don't know how lucky you girls are living in these days of micro-ovens and everything. And you had to wash those lamp chimneys every day otherwise if they'd get smoked up, you couldn't see anything, you know.

What kind of stove did you have to cook on?

A coal or wood stove in the kitchen. We had tow stoves to keep our whole house warm. We had seven rooms all on one floor, though. And one was a hard coal heater and that was so warm--I always dressed by that, and undressed by it. You'd get into bed and your bed would be cold. You'd have to get your feet down quick then lay still til everything got warm. Another thing we did when I was a girl--we had a lake rightbbeside our pond and a stream that went through there. Oh, we had ice skating. We used to go ice skating from the first of November--its in Minnesota, it's a lot colder than here--and we'd skate until March. And we had a lot of skating parties and bobsleds. Life was a lot different, but a lot simpler. We weren't rushed around very much in those days. We had plenty of time to do everything we wanted to do. And I think that was kind of nice.

Would you rather hadve been a child then than a child now?

I think I would; of course, I don't know. But I think so. It was really-- life was very simple.

When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a teacher, but my mother died. And then later my sister and her husband moved on the farm--it was my folks farm and it was wartime and I had to be out there with them. And then my sister got sick and I was going to go to college then. I had to be home with her, they were afriad she was getting tuberculosis, you know. We went out west for one winter. I loved arithmetic in school; that was my favorite subject. And reading. I read a lot. Little Women, The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew, those kinds of books. They were great! I was trying to think if there was something here I was going to tell you. Another thing we wore was long underwear. I'll bet that's something you never even heard of. It was long underwear way down to here. It had sleeves and everything. See, there wasn't the heat there is today, so you had to keep warm and you didn't have snowsuits, you just had a coat over your dress.

Didn't your legs get cold when you went to school?

We wore long stockings over the underwear of course.

Because you didn't wear long pants, did you?

No, uh-uh. Never thought of such a thing. Only boys! Another thing, they never let school out for storms. If it stormed, you went to school anyway. And it was a small town, you know, and there was a banker lived right next door to us and he had two girls close to my age, and he used to take us to school. He would tie a rope around his waist if it was stormy and he would walk ahead and each of us would take hold of the rope and he made a path for us walking. He'd take us to school and then he'd come and get us. You never had a ride to get anyplace in those days. You did all your walking. And we had a train and we were about as close to Minneapolis as we are to Des Moines. And that train went twice a day into Minneapolis. I really miss the trains now. I love train trips anyway--out west. We have a daughter in Oregon and one in Florida. And we used to always take the train and go cause we like it so well, in the winter, you know. But that's a thing of the past.

What did you do for fun?

We had fun all the time! I was a real happy little girl. I don't remember being scolded very much. See, I was younger and my mother felt so bad after her husband died and her son, and that's why I think I was spoiled. I don't remember being too naughty, but anything reasonable I wanted to do, I could do. We used to have the children next door come over and we'd play card games. In the summer we played hide-and-go-seek and run-sheep-run; I'll bet those are games you never even heard of!

You said you had to walk to school all the time. Did your legs get tired? We were used to it. See we walked everywhere. At first, we had some horses in town, but after my brother died we didn't have it. But could always hire or rent one, you know. No, I'd run downtown for groceries and carry them home. When you went to the grocery store in those days and your mother would buy the groceries, the grocery man would always give you a little sack of candy. If you went along with your mother.

Describe your favorite toy.

My doll, I think. You see them now in a collection. My mother had made a body that had joints in it and everything. It was beautiful! She was a beautiful sewer.

Did she make clothes for it, too?

Uh, huh. And all tucks and lace and everything. She loved to sew! It had eyes in it and it would go to sleep, you know. And then it had a nice head of red hair. It was real pretty.

When you said your china doll had clothes, could you describe them?

The dress it wears now is a pink dress, it has a high neck, but it's straight. The doll is at least three feet long. Then it has petticoats, you call them slips now, and they were all fitted to the body you know. And it would be real full with tucks and lace and everything. It was real pretty. That was my biggest Christmas. I got up, like I said, about two o'clock and there that doll was. Oh, I was happy!

Did you have any boyfriends?

Oh, sure. There were boys in our class as well as girls, you know. I don't remember any when I was too young, but I had boyfriends. We went through the tenth grade. We had eighth grade, and then we had two years of high school in this town. So then I went to Hector, and an aunt and uncle lived up there, and I stayed with them to finish high school and that's when I met Mr. Tinnes. I met him--they had a big picnic that night--the first day of school. We were all out there and that's where I met him.

How long was it before you married?

Oh, that was in 1913 and we were married in 1919 after the war. He went in the service. He went to England.

What were your boyfriends names?

One of them I like real well, his name was Herschel. And, oh, I had one that was John--that was in Brownton where I lived. The other one was in Hector. Had one Walter. Mr. Tinnes was a Boy Scout. He joined the Boy Scouts when it was first organized in 1910. He was one of the first Boy Scouts in the country.

Were there any organizations or clubs that you belonged to when you were younger?

No. So that's what made life simple. You did really what you wanted to do without having to go someplace, be at a certain time. We didn't even have movies--a movie in our town until oh, maybe, I was fourteen. And then they'd have it in the city hall and the whole town would go to that, you know. We didn't have movie houses or anything like that.

Did you have TV's?

Oh, no. We had a radio after I was married. We lived in Stewart, Minnesota. Howard got one and he could get England on it. But not TV that way. No, our first TV we got here in 1950.

February, 1979

Interview by Tanda club of Camp Fire (4th grade, Bailey Park): Darci Benson, Kelly Brooke, Kristin Foss, Laura Graff, Michelle Harbin, Heidi Pederson. (Leader: Ruth Graff)

Veda Hyde

1531 West Street, Grinnell

Birthplace: south of Searsboro in Poweshiek County, Iowa

Age: 77

three brothers and three sisters

Where did you live as a child?

Well, down that way, in the southern part of the county on a farm?

Did you live in the city or the country?

Country.

How many aunts, uncles, cousins lived near you?

Oh, several. I would have to count them up. I don't have any grandparents here living. See, they're all gone now. Oh, when I was a child? Well, I lived down close, we could drive our team of horses, you know, and go see each other because we didn't have cars. We used to go to the grandparents on Christmas Day with the sled and the horses hitched to the sled. And had sleigh bells on the horses and that was a lot of fun.

What type of home did you live in?

Well, it was pretty good for those days. You know, it was pretty much like the houses now, but no inside toilets and no sinks and no built-ins.

How many rooms were in your house?

Different, sometimes there would be eight. We did move three or four times; didn't always live in the same house. And then we lived in one house that was small. And the last house was a large one.

How did you heat your home?

Some wood, but coal mostly.

What kind of school did you attend?

Oh, the one-room, rural school. The only school! It was great. We had all eight grades, we didn't have kindergarten, but we had first through eighth all in that one-room schoolbuilding. All those children, all those grades mixed in there--sometimes there would be just one to a class. But you know, they got through and lots of times the children from these rural schools came into town and they would be on the honor list just as much as the town children would be. And then when it came graduating from high school, the valedictorian a lot of times would be a country child. So they really learned.

How many children went to your school and how many were in each class?

Well, I didn't go to school where there were a lot--sometimes I guess they used to have around twenty, but as a rule not that many more, twelve to fifteen, and sometimes there would be two or three in your class; you might be the only one. We didn't have the class because we had all the grades--all eight grades.

What kinds of subjects did you study?

All of them, like you have now--starts out with reading and arithmetic, and then physiology. I think you call it something different now. Geography, history and arithmetic. We used to spell down then a lot-- find out the best one.

Did you have a special girlfriend?

Yes, I usually did, or two or three of us. And we had good times.

Did you have special boyfriends?

No. Oh, I might have towards the last. We just all played together and had good times.

At school, we had to go outside to the toilet. No inside, so in the wintertime you had to put your wraps on to go. There'd usually be toilets in the back two corners of the playground, one in each corner, one for the boys and one for the girls. It's a lot different.

And you'd want to know what we played. Oh, we'd get outside and play hide-and-seek and we'd choose up sides and play charades. And then we'd play Annie Over. And then we'd play Fox and Geese when the snow was on the ground. And then we would go coasting downhill; everybody took their sleds and we'd have a little knoll or little hill. And we really thought we had fun.

What dances did you do?

Oh, they really didn't do any dancing--I think maybe some square dancing in the town, but our people didn't dance.

What jobs did you do at home as a child?

Oh, we had to wash the dishes and make the beds and sweep the floors. And here's something that I can tell you that's different: washing the cream separator. That was always my job before I went to school. And then we got the cream to churn our butter. I washed the cream separator and the younger girls washed the dishes.

What did you do for fun?

For fun? Well, we did lots of things. We played, of course. And then in the summertime we went up in the pasture and drowned out _____(?). Have you ever heard tell of that? Take a bucket into the pasture and you could see their holes, and pour water down and drown them out. They did do quite a little damage. And then on Sunday we had Sunday School. We had Sunday School in one of our schoolhouses.

What toys did you play with?

Well, with me it was dolls. I didn't play dolls with my sisters too much.

Did you have a pet?

Yes, lambs, we always had lambs. And then I remember one pet--a squirrel. A bad storm one night threw the nest out of the tree. The baby squirrels then fell out and they had to have some care. I used a doll's house for one--we just saved one; I think there were three. My father put wire around it and then we put a tree limb inside it for the squirrel to exercise and play. And then we put a little box inside for its nest. And he died of old age; we had him a long, long time.

What were your favorite foods?

Oh, a lot. My mother was one of the best cooks, and she always made good things for us to eat. Oh, just a lot. Because we baked our own cakes and breads. And then she would cook potatoes and make gravy. Nowadays so many people don't make gravy. And, oh, they had beans and meat, you know. And mother made good pies--chocolate pie, we like chocolate pie. In the wintertime she'd make a big kettle of potato soup.

What types of clothing did you wear?

Oh, mostly the girls had the dresses and the boys had the overalls and suspenders. Our dresses were full skirts and gathered around the waist, called them mother hubbards, I guess. And we didn't change every day. And we had heavier dresses in the wintertime and we had little aprons. And black stockings, and our shoes went up above our ankles. And they were button shoes. You used to button them.

Did you go to church as a child?

Yes. The first piece I spoke in a church was a church in Searsboro and it was "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

How did you celebrate Christmas?

Well, we didn't have an evergreen to start with. We went out into the timber and got a little oak tree, it wasn't too tall, about four-five feet tall and took that in. And of course, no leaves on it at that time. And then my mother put cotton on it. And she fixed it up!

What did you want to be when you grew up?

A schoolteacher.

Would you rather have been a child now or a child then?

Oh, I think there's advantages both times. We had good times; we didn't know better then. And now you do more. As I say, I never did play with marbles or do hopscotch, I never did ice skate (my folks did when they were young), we just didn't happen to. And I never did learn to roller skate. Or jacks--you play jacks now, don't you; and our daughter did, but I never did.

Do you go on vacation when you were a child?

No, but we did get to go to county fairs.

Are there some other things that you would like to tell us we haven't asked?

(Mrs. Hyde showed the girls some butterchurns and described to them and demonstrated how to make butter, buttermilke, etc.)

February, 1979

Interview by Ma Nu Ka club of Camp Fire (5th grade, Davis): Nancy Kephart, Sandra Ringler, Marsha See, Hope Sisco, Chris Stevenson, Robin Weaver.
(Leader: Judy Stevenson)

Dorothy Elliott Sisco

829 Pearl, Grinnell

Birthplace: county around Kellogg, Iowa

Birthdate: January 6, 1913

Five brothers, one sister (four brothers and sister are deceased)

When I was a child and we lived here in Iowa, not too many of my relatives lived close to us, but when I was about ten we moved to Colorado, I had more of my family--two aunts and one of my grandpas, and I had several cousins out there and we used to have a lot of fun. But I didn't have any cousins or aunts or uncles around here. My dad has a cousin here. But most of my relations lived in Colorado and California. I have one aunt that lives in Memphis, Tennessee.

Then as a child I had a doll. But I had five brothers and I'd rather go out and ride horses and play ball and jump out of the hayloft and do the things my brothers did rather than playing in the house.

My mom made part of our clothes and she bought part of them.

I went to a country school and we lived two miles from school when we lived here in Iowa and when we lived in Colorado we had a pony and rode to school most of the times and sometimes we walked. It was a country school and it was generally in the twenties, I suppose, that went to that school. And we studied about the same things, I think, that children do now. Although my favorite subject of that time was physiology. I just loved physiology and I like geography.

My favorite foods were fried pork, and I think that and chocolate cake, those were my two favorite kinds of food.

And when we lived here in Iowa we heated our home (??) and used a wood cook stove. But when we lived in Colorado there wasn't very many trees and we lived on a ranch when we was back there and there was very few trees so my daddy had to buy coal.

And I didn't like to work outdoors. My sister liked to work outside so she helped my mom in the garden and with the chickens, but I just generally stayed in the house, and I learned to cook when I was real young and I did the dishes and just did general housework. And I can remember when I could hardly reach the top of the stove I could cook. I loved to cook; I still love to cook, that's one of the things I do like to do.

We had a family Christmas always. And sometimes we had a Christmas tree. When we lived in Colorado we never did, but when we lived in Iowa we did. And we generally made our own decorations--we strung popcorn and cranberries, and paper chains out of colored paper.

I don't think I ever thought about what I wanted to do when I grew up.

And what did I do for fun? Well, like I say, I had brothers and I really loved to ride a horse.

And, oh, I don't know. I think I'd just as soon been a child then as I would now. I think brothers and sisters enjoyed each other more then than they do now because now they always going someplace else to play, or watching television and they really aren't the companions to each other that we were then.

And since I've been an adult--I was married when I was real young, I was seventeen. And I never worked until after my husband's mother got sick and I took care of her for five years. And then my husband was sick and I had to work doing cleaning for two years for an income until his pension started coming in. And then I took care of my dad for two years before he passed away. And that's about all the work I have ever did. I have been a few places. I went to Memphis to visit my aunt and I've been to California to visit my uncle and I've been out to Colorado several times. I get to Colorado every chance I can get because I just love to go there. And I guess that's just all.

Did you ever have a special boyfriend?

Oh, yea. You mean when I was real young? Well, the very first boyfriend I had that I thought was a boyfriend--I was in the fourth grade and my hair was too long and my mom cut my hair, and he didn't like me with my hair cut!

Did you stay in school or did you drop out?

Well, I went through two years of high school and then I quit. I was too homesick. I had to stay here in town all the time and my folks lived out in the country. And I'd stay in town all week and everytime they came to town I could hardly stand it. So then I dropped out of high school.

February, 1979

Interview by Ma Nu Ka club of Camp Fire (5th grade, Davis): Nancy Kephart, Sandra Ringler, Marsha See, Hope Sisco, Chris Stevenson, Robin Weaver.
(Leader: Judy Stevenson)

Doris White Anderson
RR 2, Kellogg
Birthplace: $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of Grinnell
Birthdate: 1917
Two brothers and two sisters

My relations lived around Grinnell. I had a special aunt that I liked to stay with in Grinnell on Center Street. I lived as a child a mile and a half west of Grinnell and I lived there for twenty years. And then we moved into town.

The toys that I liked to play with were a buggy, wagon, tricycle. I was the youngest in the family, so I had more things than my brothers and sisters.

The types of clothing I wore—my mother made some and then she bought some for me.

I went to school right across the road there from my house. They had thirty—some in the school and there were eight grades. One teacher looked after all these grades. Sometimes there would be six in the eighth grade and four or five in the fifth grade and so on like that. And I was jealous of these kids because in the wintertime they'd go in their bobsled home and I was wishing I lived miles from the schoolhouse. And I always went home at noon to eat.

My favorite foods—mother used to can beef and pork. And I liked that canned pork and canned beef.

We heated our home with—we had a large home and we heated it with a big furnace, wood and coal.

I didn't have as many chores as a lot of kids because I was the youngest—and, oh, feeding the chickens was the main thing.

At Christmas time we always decorated the house with stuff that we made out of crepe paper—we used red and white crepe paper and twisted it and decorated the room that way.

And when I grew up I wanted to work in a store, that was always my ambition.

For fun I had neighbors that had eight in their family and I practically lived at their house—playing cards and playing games. Because my brothers and sisters were older and so that's why I went to the neighbors and played a lot.

I think being a child now is nice because there's so many things like television and everything. I think the present time is really the best.

Experiences that I have had--I taught country school for four years and I enjoyed that. And I used to have to walk there part of the way because I would ride part of the way with another teacher and she would let me off and I generally had to walk a mile in the morning and a mile at night to school. We didn't have many in the school at that time. There was less than when I went to school. Well, one time I had fifteen, but the last few years I taught I just had six. Of course we didn't have all the grades. And then I also worked in the nursery school and have done housework and I worked in an ice cream store in Des Moines. I guess that's about most of the experiences. And of course now, I've been on the farm for 33 years.

Did your family raise anything besides chickens when you were young?
We had milk cows. We had as many as 28 that my two brothers milked. And my brother was married and his wife milked and my father helped and my mother would help sometimes.

Did you have any special crops?
We had corn and hay and we also raised hogs, too.

What did your friends call you when you were young?
Doty or Dorie--my name is Doris, but they called my Doty or Dorie.

What grades did you teach?
I had primary and I had eighth grade and at that time eighth grade had to take a test and so I had to work with the eighth grade students quite a bit because they took a state test and they had to pass that in order to go to high school. And so we had to do a lot of extra work that year in eighth grade.

Did you have a dunce hat for your chair?
You mean when I taught? When I taught I would put a chair beside and have them come sit beside me if they were naughty. And one little boy, he liked that. I wasn't really punishing him because sometimes he would just go get that chair and put it beside me.

We had a lot of horses, I remember. And we had one special one that my father took and put on a wagon and took the milk into Grinnell to sell to the residents and this horse was called Dawn and you could let him stand anyplace and he wouldn't run away. He'd wait until you came back.

Did you have to share a bed with anybody?
No.

Did you have any pets?
I had a kitten, and dogs. In fact, I have pictures of mother cat and kittens.

Did you like candy?
Oh, yes.

How old were you when you got your first dog and cat?
I really don't remember, about four or five.

February, 1979

Interview by Ma Nu Ka club of Camp Fire (5th grade, Davis): Nancy Kephart, Sandra Ringler, Marsha See, Hope Sisco, Chris Stevenson, Robin Weaver.
(Leader: Judy Stevenson)

Lola Clark Fields
95 Fourth Avenue, Grinnell
Birthplace: Estherville, Iowa
Birthdate: December 21, 1912
5 sisters

My aunts, uncles and cousins, when I was little, lived fairly near us.

I lived in northern Iowa, Estherville, in Emmet County.

Toys? The toys I had were mostly homemade toys--rag dolls.

And homemade clothing we wore. My mother made most of my clothes.

I didn't attend school in Iowa; we moved to Kansas when I was $4\frac{1}{2}$ years old and I went to country school. There were four or five people in the class. We studied about the same subjects that they study now except each thing was separate. They weren't grouped together like they are.

My favorite food as a child was fried chicken.

The way my family heated our homes was with wood stoves.

Our jobs and chores were feeding the chickens, gathering the eggs, milking the cows, separating the milk, bringing in the wood.

Our Christmas was celebrated not as big as they do now. We had a Christmas dinner and had our Christmas tree on Christmas day and not before.

I don't think I ever thought about what I wanted to be when I grew up.

Now, fun was--the neighbors would gather together and have parties.

I think I would just as soon been a child then.

As an adult my experiences have been--jobs, I worked in Montezuma schools for six years in the kitchen and I've been at Friendship Manor for twelve years in the kitchen.

What kind of shoes did you wear?
Button shoes.

Was your hair long?
Yes. We had bows up here and bows in back.

Did you wear bonnets?
Yes, in summertime.

February 1979

Interview by the Rainbow Blue Birds (2nd grade, Davis):
Lisa Buffum, Kindra Bullock, Connie Gilliland Lisa Kriegel, Lori Nelson,
Marcy Schmidt, Jennifer Sommars. (Leader: Dinae Pickens)

Harvey Marcum

Kellogg, Iowa

Birthplace: Wayne County, Kentucky

Birthdate: 1905

7 brothers, 3 sisters; two oldest brothers and oldest sister
are deceased; one brother lives in Indiana as does one sister;
two brothers and a sister still live in Kentucky.

You kids, today, you want a little toy or anything, you go to
mom or dad and they go to the store and buy it for you. When
I was your age I never seen a toy--I didn't know what a toy
was. If we wanted anything, we'd have to get our knife out and
sit down and make it. We enjoyed ourselves. When I was little
like these kids here, we'd get out and play in the sand, around,
in the creek--little shoes running down, we called them branches
at that time in Kentucky. And they'd run over rocks, how pretty
it would be--clear water running over rocks. And we'd go to
work and dam them up with rocks. And make mud. And make us
a little pond back up there. If we wanted something we'd make
it. We never had money to go to the store and buy anything.
A little country store, you know, would be five or six, ten
miles away from where we lived, back in the hills--mountains,
rocks, timber. It'd be something for you to see.

How far did you go in school?

Me? I never got through fourth grade in school.

Why was that?

Well, I had to work to make a living. No chance to go to school,
and what little we did go to which was about three-four miles
walk. You kids are lucky now. You ain't kidding. Lucky kids,
nowadays. You've got everything going your way right now, and
it don't look very prosperous from here on out, though.

How did your family heat your home?

We had a big fireplace made out of rocks, big chimney right
up through one end of the house right up to the top, you know.
And then we had wood. And that's how we happened to heat our
house.

What was your favorite food as a child?

I didn't really have any favorite at all, really. We had to eat
what we got. No favorite food. (Tell them a little about what
you ate.) Cornbread. Sometimes we had a cow, would have a
little milk once in a while. We'd eat bacon. We'd butcher a
hog, pork. Raise our own beans and everything--shell them out,
cook beans and bacon. Bean soup

What did you do for fun?

Getting out and haying fun with our little old flutter mills! Another thing we had fun with--on Sunday, we'd play ball over the house, "annie, annie over"--ever play that? That's what we would play. And then a bunch of us kids would get up and make a big ring around and then we'd drop the handkerchief--did you ever play that? Then we had marbles. And we'd make a square, you know, and we'd put marbles in each corner, and then we'd put one big one in the middle and each guy would take a turn shooting. If there were four playing, there'd be four marbles; if six, then six ones. We'd shoot the big one out of the middle--that the game.

What did you want to be when you were grown up?

There wasn't any plans or anything set ahead cause we was back in the mountains and we didn't know anything that was going on outside in the world. We had our own little world.

When you were little, how many hours did you work after you quit school?

We had ten hours a day. Sometimes we'd work ten hours in the woods cutting logs and timber and cord wood, you know--cord wood for other people so they'd have wood to burn for the winter. And we'd rick it up in ricks, and we'd get \$4 a rick out of it. My daddy would take a contract cutting logs in the timber and we'd cut that for a dollar a thousand which we might make four thousand a day.

How many of your aunts, uncles cousins and grandparents lived near you?

I never seen but one grand--my dad's mother is the only one I ever seen. She lived in Kentucky; I think she lived to be near ninety years old.

How did you celebrate Christmas?

Santa Claus would bring us an orange and an apple. That's what we got. No presents whatsoever unless it was a little bitty sack of this hard candy--you know, Christmas candy. We wasn't that wealthy--we didn't have any money. (But you liked it just as well?) Oh, well, we never knew any difference, you know. And many times what we had for Christmas dinner would be chicken. And maybe we'd butcher a hog, you see, and we'd have fresh meat for Christmas dinner. And that'd be a treat.

What types of clothing did you wear?

I wore homemade clothes. My mother made my clothes. And my sister also. My mother died, you see, when I was 7½ years old. I never knew what a mother was.

What were your clothes made out of?

They were blue jeans, denim cloth. You had to go to the store to pick this out. (Was it costly at this time?) Ten cents a yard. And then overalls that was already made. And then it'd cost us fifty or seventy-five cents for a pair of overalls.

Would you rather have been a child back when you were a child or a child now?

Oh, I don't know. I tell you, I couldn't answer that. When I was a child back in these poor days we enjoyed life. We never had anything to tantalize us, you know. None of this fancy stuff, you know. Going places. I never seen a ball game, basketball game, nothing like in the state of Iowa.

Did you have horses and dogs?

Yes, yes, had jackasses. Little ole donkeys, mules. Dogs, yes, we had dogs.

What experiences have you had as an adult?

I'm all over the country now. I drive a truck--here, there and everywhere. Yah, I have a lot of fun now. We go places, pick up machinery, bring it home.

What chores did you do as a child?

We had dishes to wash, house to clean. (Boys and girls?) Oh, yes, there was only one girl left, you see, when my two sisters got married and left us, my sister Mae was a baby. We had to take care of her and raise her--us boys did.