

**Interview with Gordon Lee Coats**  
**December 29, 2009**  
**Conducted at his home in Kinsley, Kansas.**  
**Interviewers: Rosetta Graff and Joan Weaver**  
**Present at the Interview: Bea Coats, spouse**

Interviewer: What is your full name?

Gordon: Gordon Lee Coats. I live in Kinsley and was born in Fellsburg, Kansas on the 9<sup>th</sup> (September) and 21<sup>st</sup> of 1927.

Interviewer: Were you born in the country?

Gordon: Well, Fellsburg is kind of in the country.

Interviewer: Were you born at the farm rather than...

Gordon: No, I was born at the edge of town. We lived just outside the edge right by the high school building, if you know where that is.

Interviewer: What were your parents' names?

Gordon: My mother's name was Bersheba Lucille. She was a Bartlett.

Interviewer: And your father's name?

Gordon: Clyde Monroe Coats.

Interviewer: And your grandparents?

Gordon: That was Monroe Coats and...

Interviewer: Can you remember Grandma's name, or was she just Grandma?

Gordon: It's in that book.

Interviewer: Was it Anne?

Gordon: I think it was Anne. She had a maiden name. She was a James. Her dad, my great-grandfather, is buried there in Fellsburg. He was the custodian at the school for some time. They had two schools; there was a grade school to the south of where the high school is at that time. I don't know when they tore it down. It disappeared while I was gone.

Interviewer: Was this your granddad?

Gordon: My great-granddad was the custodian. He died about a year before I was born. Matter of fact, I was born in his house. My folks lived there at the time. He lived in behind the school about a quarter of a mile into that field. Back towards the cemetery, if you know where that is. Back in that field is where I was born, the house and everything is gone now.

Bea: This book doesn't have any names...

Gordon: No, I'm talking about that old Bible of hers.

Interviewer: And the other side of the family?

Gordon: My mother's side? My grandmother was a Hagar. The Hagers of Belpre were her folks.

Interviewer: Do you remember her first name? We run into this, everyone just calls them Grandma and Grandpa.

Gordon: Well, that's about it. I was five years old when she died.

Interviewer: And your grandfather that was married to her?

Gordon: My grandfather married her and then he died and she married another Bartlett. That grandfather's name was John Bartlett.

Interviewer: And the other grandfather was who?

Gordon: Russell Bartlett from St. John or Stafford, over in there somewhere.

Interviewer: Were they related?

Gordon: No, not that I know of, but they might have been, because they go back quite a ways. The Bartletts do. It just says, "Annie and Mo", that is all I know, here in the book. 1891, that's when they were married, that's my grandparent's, dad's folks.

Interviewer: Did you have any brother's or sisters?

Gordon: No, I was an only child.

Interviewer: What was it like growing up in your household? She described her house.

Gordon: I grew up during the depression, and I don't remember the first few years too well because we moved back to Missouri. Her dad came from Missouri. Most of my grandparents' folks all were southerners. Mom's side came from the north in New York and Philadelphia and that area. They came from England. I was almost school age before it began to bite down hard on us. My granddad owned that grocery store in Fellsburg, and they had that for quite a few years. Dad came back about the time I started school, I started school in Fellsburg. He came back and hauled coal in the winter and ice in the summer for the store and for people who wanted it. He worked for farmers and stuff. It was the best living he could make at that particular time. He was working for his dad part of the time and then haul ice and coal for whoever who needed it besides. Most people burned coal at that time, because there were few trees at that time. Matter of fact, later on when Roosevelt got elected, Dad got on with the forestry.

Interviewer: With the WPA?

Gordon: Well, he got involved before that, when the trees were planted, he worked for the WPA. He worked all over the country planting shelter belts. That was before a lot of them got tore out after irrigation got started.

Interviewer: Jeff Meade told us they were planted out by him.

Gordon: There were shelter belts all over the country. About every mile had at least one, some of them had two or three. But those trees were all planted in the thirties. Prior to that there were hardly any out. Some of the old homesteads had a few cottonwoods, that they had to plant to get the land and stuff. But that was before my time. What few trees there were were large by then. I remember coming to town and it was all grass, when I was a little kid.

Interviewer: What was Fellsburg like then? There was a store, what else was there?

Gordon: A thriving community. A high school and grade school. A couple of churches.

Interviewer: What were the denominations?

Gordon: I can't tell you, I didn't go. That was one of the problems we had. I didn't just go to church. Mom was married to dad out to Red Mound, and that was a Quaker Church, and I think it might have been a Quaker Church at Fellsburg, I'm not sure. You'd have to ask somebody that's been down there, Jake or somebody like that.

Interviewer: So you had the store and the railroad...

Gordon: The railroad came right by the store and the elevators, two elevators as a matter of fact.

Interviewer: A bank?

Gordon: Oh yeah, a bank. The store, it was solid buildings from the store down to the bank. The only thing that separated them was the road. The guy on the end, that was also the post office, that was Albert Huffmaster had that post office at the time. My uncle was the butcher in the store. My cousin Jack was born there behind the store. They had living quarters in the back, and my Uncle Clen stayed there. That was Dad's brother.

Interviewer: Was the store everything, you know, dry goods to groceries?

Gordon: As I recall it was just a general store for whatever they could get. I think dry goods and stuff, people would come to Kinsley. We didn't come to Kinsley very often. It wasn't too long after that, I can't remember exactly, I was in the third grade or something like that. My folks moved to Kinsley. I went to the farm where my uncle was, and I stayed with him and went to school at Red Mound, a country school.

Interviewer: Rather than come into town with your folks?

Gordon: Yeah, I didn't want to come to town. I didn't particularly like it here. I liked the country better. When they closed the schools, they closed them down, and I had to come to Kinsley. But as soon as I'd get out of school, I'd go back to the farm for the summer. I didn't stay in town.

Interviewer: So you did chores for your uncle? “Yes” What kind of farm did he have?

Gordon: Just a general farm. A little bit of wheat and corn. Of course, we lived in the sand out there. Back in those days, in order to keep it from blowing, you planted third row corn. That left a row, then nine feet of space, then another row of corn. You used a nine foot drill and drilled wheat in between. That kept the ground from blowing. That was the only smart way to farm in that part of the country at the time.

Interviewer: It wasn't irrigated, there was enough water.

Gordon: There was no such thing as irrigation in those days. The farms, they weren't big. The big farms were strictly cattle. Dad worked for one guy; he planted feed and stuff for his cattle, but the old man had all kinds of land. It was all pasture land. He offered some of it to Dad, but Dad wouldn't take it, he didn't want it. Dad said, when he got some money, Dad would rather have the money. That same ground sold for around \$1,500 an acre when irrigation got started.

Interviewer: So, you're on the farm there. Do you remember what that was like during the Dust Bowl? Can you describe that a little bit?

Gordon: They were bad. When we'd see the dust coming...of course, if the wind blew, we had a sand problem. It'd cover everything up. The fencerows were covered up pretty much. If you parked something for two or three sand storms, it would cover it up. But, no. Between the sand and the dust, I remember when we used to hang gunny sacks on the windows and throw water on them and keep them wet to keep the dust from coming in the house so bad. It was bad anyway. And, a lot of people, when they'd go out, you'd have to wear a neckerchief to cover up your face with. It would choke you to death. There was a lot of people died of dust pneumonia. They called it dust pneumonia, I guess, it just killed them. That's about all I remember about the dust.

Interviewer: Do you remember grasshoppers?

Gordon: Oh yes, one year plagued real bad. They ate everything, even wood. Back then when they built those lines, the telephone lines, they had those old long phones that you rang. They had those two big batteries in them. They were six or eight inches long and two or three inches in diameter. They just used cottonwood limbs or whatever they could stick two wires on. Everybody had two shorts and a long on the ringing note. Half a ring was a short, and the other was a long. If the neighbors picked up the phone, you couldn't hear who you were talking to because it drained the batteries down. My uncle, he'd get on the phone and he'd ring whoever it was he wanted to ring, then he'd start cussing everybody up and down the line. He'd get them off, you know.

Interviewer: I guess we'd better know your uncle's name, being that you're living with him.

Gordon: Hebrew Bartlett. Actually, there were nine all together, two girls and six boys, in my mom's family. The last three were half-brothers. My mom and her sister was the only two girls. There were four boys of the original bunch. That second bunch...and that one other boy was staying with my uncle too, which was actually my uncle. He was about my age; he was a little older by a year or two.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Gordon: Milton Dean. He died when he was a young kid.

Interviewer: That was a Bartlett too. "Yes." Did you have an aunt that you were living with?

Gordon: Well, he got married during that period of time. I can't remember the exact date.

Interviewer: So when you first went to live with him, he was a bachelor.

Gordon: Yes. But, he married a gal from Oklahoma originally. We just stayed there and went to school. He'd like to play baseball. He was on the town team down there. I don't remember which town.

Interviewer: Fellsburg's town team?

Gordon: I don't know whether it was Fellsburg, Centerview or Trousdale. Whatever it was.

Interviewer: And they'd play neighboring towns?

Gordon: Yes, they'd come up here

Interviewer: We haven't heard that before. We'd heard of school teams.

Gordon: No, they'd come up here. Nall was the pitcher. He was the Kinsley town team. Al Nall. I knew him and some of them others. Offerle had a town team. Yeah, they played all over. Greensburg. We went to Greensburg quite a lot because we only lived a couple... Well, the house was only a mile and a half from the Kiowa County line. But we were still in Edwards. Red Mound was just a mile from the county line.

Interviewer: What was that school like?

Gordon: A little old one room school. Four of us, four boys.

Interviewer: The whole school was four? How many grades supposedly?

Gordon: One teacher.

Interviewer: How were your ages? Spread out or all together?

Gordon: Dean and I was, no. Angel Allison's boy, Pete Allison, he lives in Greensburg right now, we were pretty close. I don't know whether ... I think we were either in the same grade, or he was one grade ahead of me. He was color blind worse than I was. I could tell the colors pretty well on the Crayolas. But he couldn't tell a thing. He'd turn around and ask me. We did the color geography maps you know, by color rather than name, and he'd turn around and ask me the color. Gail Graff was my teacher. No wonder she's (*Rosetta Graff*) shaking her head over here. He was the last teacher we had. Yeah, that Bob Smith was one of them.

Interviewer: So how many years did you go there?

Gordon: I only went there a couple of years.

Interviewer: That would be different, only having four kids in the school.

Gordon: Well, when they closed it, I had to come to Kinsley, because my folks lived here.

Interviewer: And you moved in with your folks then again rather than going back and forth?

Gordon: The thing I remember about Kinsley was, back in those days, there was the haves and the have nots. About two thirds of this town were people who had a cow in the back yard and chickens and what not. You know, so they could eat. The cattle wasn't worth anything. You couldn't get anything for them. But they kept food on the table. We were the have nots.

Interviewer: Where did you live in Kinsley?

Gordon: Oh, dad rented two or three different houses here in town. When we first moved to Kinsley, we lived along the overpass, and that was about the year they were finishing the overpass up. The first one. I think about '35 or '36. Then we lived down on the south end of town; he rented one down there for a while. Then he rented one on the north end for a while. You know where Bowman's house is? Darrell Bowman? What's his first name? Darren. Darren Bowman. We had a house there. That house is inside the other house. When Schaller rebuilt that house, he just went around it. It's just a small place, and there was no other houses in that whole entire block. I mean no where out there. You go clear down to a two story house there. There was a lady lived there that I called Grandma Avery. Avery was her name; she lived there at that time. But there was a lady that lived in Larned that owned that house. Dad could have bought that whole block, house and all, for \$1,000. But he didn't. He only paid \$5 a month rent.

Interviewer: What did your dad do in Kinsley?

Gordon: Well, he worked for the WPA. When they quit that, he worked for Lindas Lumber Company for a while. Then he started bootlegging and got involved in that.

Interviewer: Did he get away with it?

Gordon: Pretty much. He knew my mother, when I got through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade I went to work south of town and worked for Clarence Worlein. I didn't go to the farm that year. When school started, my folks had separated. Of course, as soon as they got a divorce, Dad got drafted. So, they came out there and was going to make me go to school. I wasn't old enough to...I was 15. Well, actually, I was 14, but I was 15 in September. School always started the first of September back then. But Clarence came out to the field, and I had an old car. I just took out. He filled me up with gas and paid me. I told him I wasn't going back to school. The teacher was there back at the house waiting for me.

Interviewer: And you were going out the back door?

Gordon: Well, I was in the field. I was out there drilling wheat.

Interviewer: So where did you go?

Gordon: I went to Oklahoma.

Interviewer: Did you have relatives down there?

Gordon: No, I just went down there and went to work for a farmer.

Interviewer: And this would have been what year, about?

Gordon: Well, '42 I think.

Interviewer: The war started in '41...

Gordon: When the war started, I was in school here.

Interviewer: Do you remember Pearl Harbor?

Gordon: Yes, but to me it wasn't anything...I kind of made it a habit to spend a lot of time with older guys that hung down around the pool hall and stuff. There was older man Wagner, and bunch of that them that...they were immigrants from Germany. They were talking that Hitler was a pretty good guy, they thought. Anyway, after a year or two, they didn't do that. But there at first, he was a godsend to the country. But he was what Roosevelt was to us.

Interviewer: Well, he pulled the country out of WWI was what Hitler was doing.

Gordon: Yeah, he made a pretty good deal for all of them they thought. Anyway, that was the bunch of 'em that I listened to quite a bit. Pete Wagner, I liked real well, he was a nice old fellah. There was a couple others, but I can't think of their names now, that was involved in that, but they immigrated over here. Anyway, World War II, to me, didn't start too much thinking.

Interviewer: So you picked up and went to Oklahoma and worked down there. You were 15 at the time.

Gordon: Yeah, but I was 16 by then.

Interviewer: Then you turned 16 that month. Did you register or did you go in early?

Gordon: I worked around there a little while. I worked in Wichita. You couldn't find a job very well. When the job was done. I worked on the road construction for a while.

Interviewer: What road?

Gordon: Out here around Pawnee Rock and down to Rozel. I worked on one out here west of Dodge. And I run around with Don Mathews. He quit school about the same time. We went to work for the railroad, but we lasted about a week, and we got fired. We were a little to small for that kind of work.

Interviewer: Were you working with the Hispanic guys at that time?

Gordon: No, we didn't last long enough to get very much going really. Anyway, we went to Texas and went to work in the oilfields down there. Don worked on the drilling rig, and I worked on building them. It was Gillock (*Oil Field*), Texas. The Pan American Oil Company we worked for. I decided that the war was going bad for us right about that time. There was a lot of recruitment going on at that time. So I decided if I could get in, I would try. So I lied about my age.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Gordon: I was 16. They took me. I convinced them that my folks had separated, of course, and I had

my rights and authority. They said well, go ahead. I enlisted that afternoon at 3 o'clock in Dodge City, and at 6 o'clock, they gave me a ticket to get on the train in Kinsley.

Interviewer: What day was that?

Gordon: Same day!

Interviewer: Do you remember the month?

Gordon: It was in December of '43. I spent a month or two in Farragut, Idaho, when I went through Basic.

Interviewer: And this is the Navy?

Gordon: Well, I went to Kansas City, but I was only there for a day or two, taking physicals, and they shipped us to Farragut.

Interviewer: This is the Navy? In Farragut, Idaho?

Gordon: Yes,

Interviewer: I thought they would put you with water!

Gordon: Well, we weren't far from it. Farragut is clear up north in the top end. We weren't very far from Canada. When I got out of there, they gave us about five or six days to go home and take care of our business, because we were going overseas. As soon as we got back...

Interviewer: Did you go home?

Gordon: Yes, I was home a couple days.

Interviewer: Did you take a train or drive...

Gordon: I took a bus, I guess. It was between a bus and a train, but the biggest share of it was the bus. The train had to take us the last part because that was a dead-head. They just went up there so far and they stalled. That was it. Our camp was about two or three miles from there. Coeur d'Alene and Sand Point wasn't too far away, but they were just little old bitty burgs like Fellsburg, would be a good size. But they are quite a bit bigger now. We went up there, I wanted to see the base, but it's not there.

Interviewer: Yes, that's... the Native American population up there, were you in the service with Native Americans from there or not?

Gordon: There was a few, but I don't know where they went. We went from Farragut, when we got back. I just got in there that night about midnight, and the next morning I was on the outgoing unit to go to Seaside, Oregon. They put me on an aircraft carrier, which was a new ship, Kaiser Shipyards. It was the Steamer Bay CVE 87, is the number. They shipped us, we went right out. We picked up some ammunition and stuff for the guns and picked up a whole load of airplanes, fighter planes. The hangar deck and the flight deck was clear full. They loaded them up. That ship had, they had to have "shake down" cruise to see how it was. They sent us to Guadalcanal because they needed them down there, needed them bad. We got down there part way, most of the way, and there was a PB Y5 flew around us.



They signaled there was a submarine trying to get in contact with us because of the Jap submarine. So we out run it and went in to Sidney, Australia, just overnight we anchored. The next morning a British destroyer went with us and they escorted us the rest of the way down.

Interviewer: What was your job on ship?

Gordon: My battle station was... I was a pointer on a 40 millimeter.

Interviewer: A pointer. Is that somebody aims it?

Interviewer: Well, it took seven of us to operate that gun. Six of us to actually operate the gun and one man on what they called the Mark 14 Sight. There was a sight that had a *reticule* in it, and if you moved slowly, it was a real good sight. If he had a plane in that ridicule, it was done for. But if he moved too quick, that ridicule flew out, and it would float clear out of the picture. Then the barrel would go crazy. I had three levers I could select on the side; I could select three different speeds. I could go from full automatic to semi automatic and to manual. I had to fire the gun; whenever he had a target in place, he'd push a button and there'd be a light come on on the gun and then I'd fire it. Otherwise, if we were to operate it myself, I'd elevate and decrease the barrels and the guy on the other side would train the gun. We had to work together on the open range sights. Of course, as soon as I could get it in my sight, I would fire it. Anyway, that was my battle station.

Interviewer: Let's see. You went in in December and what time is this that you're on the ship going?

Gordon: Oh, around the first of April.

Interviewer: So there was a training period in there, but not very long.

Gordon: About three months was what it amounted to. Yeah, they shipped us right out. We didn't have any training on anti-aircrafts guns. I didn't know anything about it.

Interviewer: Really? What was your training in?

Gordon: On the way over, we'd get close to another ship or something. There was three fleets on the Pacific. They'd get a plane towing a sleeve for us to practice shooting that sleeve. We got to where we was shooting the sleeve all right. Then they just wanted us to just get close. They didn't want us to knock it down. We shot several of them down. We had some good gunners on there because they for all from the Midwest: Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas. Used to shooting guns.

Interviewer: Were you used to shooting guns? Were you a hunter?

Gordon: Oh yeah, I hunted since I was big enough to carry one. But I hadn't shot a 40 millimeter, no. That was a little different gun. But it didn't take long to get used to it. But everybody had to do their job or the gun didn't work. That's all there was to it. If one man dropped another would have to take over pretty fast.

Interviewer: So you went to Guadalcanal?

Gordon: That's where we unloaded the planes.

Interviewer: And you had that one brush with a submarine? That was it?

Gordon: That was it. The destroyer took care of the submarine.

Interviewer: Had it actually sunk the submarine or just got him out of the picture, scared him off?

Gordon: Well, he got rid of it. We couldn't see it, it was off... They had sonar gear and stuff, and they'd go after it. They didn't wait around. They had a pretty good idea. That PB Y5 that flew around us, is that sea plane that you see on some of these pictures. He could spot that submarine from the air, the water's pretty clear. You could see down in it, but looking out across it, you can't tell. Unless the periscope's up. If you see several of them you're in trouble, bad trouble. We went from there back to Honolulu, to Hawaii. We picked up, well we had qualified for a squadron, and they sent us into combat.

Interviewer: Did you see Pearl Harbor when you were there?

Gordon: Well, we were in Pearl Harbor. Well, we saw, the Utah was still there and the Arizona, the superstructure was sticking out. I haven't been back; I've been in there a couple times. We got damaged pretty bad one time, and we went there for dry-dock period for about a week. Fixed the ship back up in shape. We were in that storm, the typhoon that hit Halsey's. I think about everybody, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> fleet, all three of them was in it. We operated mostly with the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> fleet. They were mostly the old ships. The new ships and the fast ones that they had to start with, Halsey (*Admiral William "Bull" Halsey*) had them. He commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> fleet. The old ships, the old wagons they had that came out of Pearl Harbor, they all got the blunt end of everything it seems like. That *Missouri*, it didn't come out until the latter part of '44. Then it got into Okinawa you know.

Interviewer: Now what was the name of your ship?

Gordon: It was the *Steamer Bay*.

Interviewer: There was several of those, 105 of them to start with. Some of them they converted. They got different insignias, different classes. The one I was with they called the "Casablanca Class." Anyhow, we rode it until the war was over. We got sent back to the states after they dropped the first bomb. I think Truman found out that was pretty effective. We were ganging up there in order to make an invasion, but they decided against it. Truman would have bombed them until they finally did give in. The first bomb they didn't. They said no, they wouldn't. They was waiting for us to invade. But when we dropped the second one, we were sent to the states. We were sent back right after that first bomb. We got back into the states just right when the war was over. We got into San Diego. They put us into dry dock and welded a whole bunch of bunks on the hangar deck. That's an awful big deck. It's wide open, kept the airplanes in underneath the flight deck see. But we didn't have any airplanes; they just welded the bunks all over. All the guys went home of course. I was in the first division; I was a regular, so I had two more years to do. So there was one guy in the second division which was on the fantail. I was up in the fo'c'sle. He had the second division. We got some new recruits and the exec took over the ship pretty well. Mostly, I don't think our war-time complement was gone. I don't think all together we had a hundred men on there. It took about that much to run it. Anyway, we went over, and they loaded us up with guys that was coming back. They called it the "magic carpet" fleet. And we brought them back for, we made two trips. One to Honolulu and I forget where the second one was.

Interviewer: How long did it take to get from Honolulu back to the states?

Gordon: It's not bad on a ship, you know, you can go straight. Like when we went to the...when the war was going on, you had to take a zigzag course and you change it every so often so it fouls the submarines up. It took about a month to get somewhere. Like from here to Guadalcanal, but you're going halfway around the world and the farther yet. You got to go past the Marshalls to get down to Guadalcanal you can't go the other way, because you would run into Europe over there. You go so far west that you wind up East.

Interviewer: Did you cross the equator? Did you have that celebration?

Gordon: Oh yeah, they like to beat us to death.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Gordon: Yeah, I got those pictures somewhere...

Interviewer: If we can borrow them, we'll put some of them on the net. Is there any action that you were in that you'd like to put on this? Any other high lights of your service in the Pacific?

Gordon: Not really, I don't guess. I was in the...that boy you mentioned a while ago, Gerald Speck. We were all in the same battle at the same time when he got killed. The reason he didn't come home was because he was a fireman on a sister ship of ours. We were sailing together, and they got hit. He went down with the ship.

Interviewer: So you saw that ship go down?

Gordon: Oh year, we were right close to it.

Interviewer: Did you know he was on there?

Gordon: I didn't know any of the Speck family at that time at all. Charles and I got to be good friends, his brother. His brother joined the navy after the war was over, I guess. Anyway, he served 20 years. He was a cook and came out. He had that restaurant over there at Offerle. Good cook. We went over there quite a lot to eat. But anyway, he was invited to a reunion and that was the Ommaney Bay that Gerald went down on. He told me he didn't think he'd go because they was out in California, and he wasn't too crazy about it. I told him he ought to go, because those guys was what survivors there was and they could tell him... At the time, I didn't know what happened to him. But they told him that he was a fireman on there. So he had been down below decks. He didn't have no chance to get out. Because that plane that hit them came right down through the elevator and it strung fire from one end to the other. (*The Ommaney Bay was sunk by Kamikaze attack south of Mindoro, Philippine Islands, 4 January 1945*)

Interviewer: Was that the Kamikaze?

Gordon: Suicide. It was burning. As a matter of fact, we sunk it ourselves. Because we were getting ready to go through the straits. I got a picture of part of the battle on the internet. The ship I was on looks like it was, whoever took the pictures, it looks like we're sitting out there by ourselves, but we were out on the edge. Actually, we were rendezvousing, getting ready to go through the straits at the Philippines. We were going to make an invasion from the Lingayen Gulf. That's up in the China Sea. They had already gone in on Leyte Gulf. MacArthur was pushing them to the north, or whatever

direction it was. To me it was east. Anyway, we were rendezvousing; we had to go through those straits single file because all the land on both sides was occupied by the Japanese. We went through at night, and of course they caught us there that afternoon. We went up and made our invasion. We lost several ships in the Philippines.

Interviewer: And your ship was an aircraft carrier, so planes are taking off and landing?

Gordon: Yeah, there's a picture of one in there that was landing on the ship. Not like, I can't remember what particular time that was, but it was a calm sea, somebody decided to take a picture one night and they made a few copies, and I got one.

Interviewer: Did the planes usually make it on and off?

Gordon: Oh yeah. Course, we lost several of the airplanes, but that was a different bunch. See, the squadron is different from the ship. They only worked about six months and they got to go back to the United States.

Interviewer: Is that navy air corps at that time.?

Gordon: Yeah. Each individual branch had their own air force. They didn't have the air force like it is now. That's just like, the ratings have even changed. I was a right-arm rate, that's the highest rate, now they're all left-arm rates. They don't have insignia on the right side.

Interviewer: I was wondering why you were saying, you actually mean left arm and right arm.

Gordon: Yeah. The right arm rates was bos'un's mates and gunner's mates. C & R people, guys that prepare the ship and stuff.

Interviewer: When you were running the ship there were about, what did you say, a hundred?

Gordon: Well, when we were on that magic carpet fleet after the war there was only about a hundred of us in there.

Interviewer: What was it when you were in battle?

Gordon: With the squadron, it was about eleven hundred, twelve...

Interviewer: That's quite a difference!

Gordon: Yeah, eight hundred was the actual ship's complement. The rest of them was Airedales. But we didn't... Airedales was a short term for people that...well, they only had 25 or 30 pilots all together. The rest of them were the landing crew, everybody that took care of the planes and stuff.

Interviewer: And by Airedale, how would you spell that? Airdale?

Gordon: Airedale to me is like the Airedale dog. I guess I should call them air personnel.

Interviewer: No, we like the color.

Gordon: I think that's about it.

Interviewer: Is that about it for the war years? Is there anything you would like to add?

Gordon: Well, from the Philippines we went to Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Before that, we hit the southern Palah Islands. We struck Japan twice.

Interviewer: You were in the thick of it all the way through.

Gordon: Part of it. The last two years, not to... Really, the losing years were the first two years. We lost everything, and a lot of those guys were captured. They're the ones that suffered, more so than we did.

Interviewer: So then the last two years after the war, what did you do during those two years?

Gordon: They sent me to Guam. I had to trade with a guy. They wouldn't let me go unless I traded with someone my same rate. I figured they'd never let me off the damn boat. But they uh, finally there was a guy that came in off a destroyer. He didn't know his seamanship. He was in trouble, and he was restricted to the ship. One of the guys I'd met at the beer bust told me about him. So I grabbed a boat and took out to the ship. We got together, and he had wanted off. He'd made his rate on land; he didn't know his seamanship. So, we got trade, and I didn't know at the time where that ship was going, but we went to China. There was another war going on between the nationalists and the communists. Chiang Kai-shek and Mao.

Interviewer: What was the name of that ship?

Gordon: That was the *Sutherland*.

Interviewer: What was your job? Were you still part of a gun crew?

Gordon: Well, I had the front gun turret. It was a five inch .38. I had to familiarize myself with it, which wasn't too hard to do.

Interviewer: You weren't fighting, so there wasn't too much to do anyway?

Gordon: Well, no. We polished up our guns and done a little practice. I had to have a little practice on it myself anyway. And the guys that I had were green; they didn't know anything about it. So, I was gun captain; they depended on it. So I had to brush up on it myself. I didn't know much about a five inch .38. I knew the nomenclature of it. We had one on the aircraft carrier was all, on the fantail. Otherwise, we had all forties and twenties. But I wasn't on that five inch.

Interviewer: So you spent the last two years on that gunship. Did you get any R & R? Did you get to travel at all?

Gordon: Not particularly, only when we were damaged or in dry dock or something like that. A couple times, like I said, we went to Honolulu. The first time was to get a squadron. We were up there less than a week on that. Then when we got damaged in that storm, we spent about a week there. They overhauled us. Boy, they worked around the clock during the war.

Interviewer: Yes, to get you back out.

Gordon: They got yard workmen to come in. When you got dry docked, why they'd be all over the ship. They knew more about them than what we did.

Interviewer: Is there anything else in that time period that you'd like to add to that last couple years?

Gordon: No, I don't know what we were doing over there. There was only two destroyers as far as I knew. We had a net tender and a mine sweep. We were in Sing Tao when it fell. The communists took it over. There were more Russians in there than there were Chinese as far as I'm concerned. But they used to like to go ashore in Tsing Tao. Then we moved down, and we operated out of Shanghai. But when Chiang Kai-shek finally gave up and went to Formosa, we escorted him over there. And then we went to Hong Kong. But I never did see any American ships over there other than the four of us. We did take a bunch of army personnel off of Tsing Tao when it went down. But when Shanghai went down, there wasn't any around that I know of. At least we didn't get them. But I think we just over there to observe, I don't know.

Interviewer: And to be there if something was needed.

Gordon: I don't know, I wasn't an officer, so I don't know what went on.

Interviewer: Where did you muster out?

Gordon: Me?

Interviewer: Yes, when you came back.

Gordon: I was in San Diego, I guess it was.

Interviewer: You had been gone for four years. Had you been able to go on leave during that period? Back to Kansas?

Gordon: I had four months leave coming. They got me back in the states; so they let me go three months early because I only had three months left. But I couldn't go to work anywhere. There weren't anybody would hire me because I was still in the service. They paid me double for that one...

Interviewer: While you were gone, did you write letters? Did you have communication with Kansas?

Gordon: Oh yeah, I wrote to my mother once in a while. And my dad. It was kind of hard to get a letter from him. He couldn't get one from me too often. I wrote some that didn't get nowhere, I'm sure.

Interviewer: And you would have got your mail, but oh, you had the airplanes to.

Gordon: Well, he was in Europe while I was in the Pacific. It was kind of hard..

Interviewer: How often did you get mail on the ship? Did they fly it in on those planes, or did you have to wait until you got to port?

Gordon: No, we'd pass that stuff. There'd be ships come in, maybe on oiler bringing oil supplies or

food or ammunition something like that. They'd bring the mail with them and we'd just pass it back and forth. We'd take oil and stuff at sea. We never went to port. We was always underway somewhere.

Interviewer: Maybe we should get this on the tape, because we talked about it beforehand. Your father went in about the same time you did?

Gordon: Well, he went in ahead of me. So he was in there three or four months before I was.

Interviewer: And he went to Europe, so you're saying...

Gordon: He was at St. Vith at the Bulge.

Interviewer: And he was army infantry?

Gordon: Infantry, yeah. They pretty well wiped his outfit out at St. Vith. Then he didn't have any infantry outfit left, much, but they volunteered what was left of his bunch for artillery. And it wasn't long till they went into the engineers. He served the rest of his time in the engineers.

Interviewer: Do you know what infantry he was in or anything?

Gordon: He was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in Patton's bunch.

Interviewer: You told me earlier, but what was his name?

Gordon: Clyde. Clyde Coats. He was drafted from here, Edwards County.

Interviewer: And you said you didn't get much mail from him, and your mother was divorced, so she probably didn't relay messages from him either.

Gordon: No, they didn't write each other. My mother died pretty early. She died just before we were married. (Bea adds, "She moved to California.") Dad, he was down in Missouri for years. He was 92 when he died.

Interviewer: After the war, did you get together with your father?

Gordon: Oh yeah, several times.

Interviewer: Did you notice if there were any change in him? Had the war changed him at all?

Gordon: Oh yeah, quite a bit. For one thing, he quit drinking. It wasn't religion that done it, well he got religion. He went to church shortly before he died...a year or two before he died. He figured he'd better...

Interviewer: I'd heard of a lot of men that the war caused them to drink, but this was the opposite, huh?

Gordon: Dad was pretty much of a heavy drinker. He had been all his life. Most of, my mother's family was heavy drinkers. Dad associated with them a lot. But Dad's family really weren't heavy drinkers at all. I'd better be careful, or I'll be telling on myself.

Interviewer: Well, there's nothing wrong with a little drink. How about you? Did the war change you?

Gordon: I don't know. I kind of grew up with it. I don't know whether it changed me or not.

Interviewer: She didn't know either, because she didn't know you.

Gordon: No, she didn't know me.

Interviewer: Well, when you came back, did you face life differently than you had before?

Gordon: The only thing, I made up my mind to when I came back, was I was going to find a job that was permanent. If I couldn't, then I would have stayed in the service. I made two applications, one with the power company and one with the telephone company. The power company came first and a week later the telephone company wanted me to. The reason I chose those two was because when I was looking for jobs, I noticed a utility man always had a job. They didn't, they weren't making the biggest money, but they made money all the time.

Interviewer: So maybe the depression affected you more.

Gordon: More than anything else because I know when I started out as a kid, jobs were hard to come by, especially for us. When you was an adult, like I say, I got a couple road work jobs,

Interviewer: And what was the power company called?

Gordon: Kansas Power and Light

Interviewer: It was KPL at that time. And you operated out of Kinsley?

Gordon: I worked here for about three years and then we moved to Hutchinson. We were getting ready to get married pretty seriously.

Interviewer: She hadn't convinced you yet? Or was it the other way around?

Gordon: No, it might have been the other way around. I didn't set good with her dad right off the bat.

Bea: You weren't Catholic.

Gordon: No, I wasn't Catholic. But it didn't really matter. I didn't go to any church. One was as good as the other.

Interviewer: So did you join the church?

Gordon: Yeah, I told her I'd join the church. I joined the church a little bit before we got married.

Interviewer: She told us how you met. Do you want to tell us how you met too?

Gordon: Well, that was through Carol, her girlfriend. Tom and Carol were going together pretty heavy. In fact, they got married shortly...

Bea: They had stopped to see me in Salina.



Gordon: They didn't go together very long. Anyway, I went on a date with her through Carol and Tom.

Interviewer: Love at first sight?

Gordon: Well, it was interesting. I stuck around.

Interviewer: Did you like a gal who could play piano?

Gordon: I didn't pay much attention to that.

Interviewer: You weren't musically inclined?

Gordon: No, I'm still not. I wasn't musical at all. As a matter of fact, I couldn't carry a tune in bucket, I don't think.

Interviewer: I haven't known this about you, but I've known Bea quite a while. You're actually very much opposites, aren't you?

Gordon: The only thing was our dad's worked at grocery stores, I didn't think about that until just now.

Interviewer: Well, I thought of that too when you said it.

Gordon: Well, that was my granddad, it wasn't my folks.

Interviewer: Well, now, did you win her father over eventually?

Gordon: Well yeah, after a year or so, why things. Well, it wasn't even a year.

Interviewer: Did you have a baby? Sometimes that helps.

Bea: He joined the church. That helped.

Interviewer: And he had a steady job.

Gordon: Well, he got a different opinion of me than what he had to start with.

Interviewer: I bet there was some stories going around about you. Were there?

Gordon: Not good! Some bad ones.

Interviewer: I guess we didn't even talk about (we did beforehand) that you had a motorcycle, right? When was that?

Gordon: Oh, I had that for awhile.

Interviewer: Before going in the service?

Gordon: Well, I had one before I went into the service.

Bea: Afterwards too. He broke his foot.

Interviewer: Gilbert Herman. Were you in that group?

Gordon: Well, I sold my motorcycle before I went into the service to Tom Mathews. Tom sold it to Gilbert.

Interviewer: He told us a little bit about this motor cycle business, but I don't think we got the whole story from him. It was pretty innocent when he told it.

Gordon: We all run around in the same group. But that wasn't my particular group.

Bea: That was the St. Peter and Paul guys. Catholic kids.

Gordon: Well you know, we had different times to get around. I worked from eight to five and a lot of times in-between time. 'Specially back then; we worked a lot of overtime. Those guys farmed, and they could run together, daytime or night. But there was times we would all get together at different times. Wasn't very often.

Interviewer: Was yours a Harley too?

Gordon: My first one was a Harley, and then I bought an Indian. I bought two different Indians. Well, I bought a third one in later years. But I didn't keep any of them.

Bea: You broke your foot on one.

Interviewer: Gilbert manages to use the motorcycle during the service and everything. He was able to keep that up.

Gordon: Well, I couldn't do that.

Interviewer: You couldn't on a ship.

Gordon: I took up flying and that was my sport more than anything else.

Interviewer: Did the war give you that interest in flying? Or was that separate?

Gordon: I'll have to say it was because I was forced to take my first ride. I would never have gotten it otherwise.

Interviewer: When was that?

Gordon: When I got off of the ship in Washington, up in Bellingham. I sent the...the exec gave us five days to get to San Francisco, but he put us down there that afternoon. He made us, I and this other guy, we were the only two original crew members and was left on the ship. So he just done that as a favor. I tried to beg out of it, but he wouldn't hear. He said, "You're a coward, aren't you?"

Interviewer: You'd seen those guys go into the drink!

Gordon: So I didn't want nothing to do with it, but in order to get my five days, I had to take it. But I really enjoyed it. We flew right over the tops of the mountain range down there to San Francisco.

Outside of freezing to death in that thing it was beautiful.

Interviewer: What kind of plane was it?

Gordon: C48. C47 I guess, twin engine big airplane used for paratroopers. No upholstery or nothing in it. It hit altitude why it just got frosty inside. We was sitting there with no coat or anything. There was only two other guys flying it. One of them came back and asked where was our coat. We told him it was in the baggage compartment. We couldn't get at it. So anyway, he came back with a couple of big old fur coats to put on us. Anyway, they were warm. And a thermos bottle full of coffee. That's when I began to enjoy it, watching the mountain range and stuff as we went over.

Interviewer: So the service did affect you.

Gordon: Well I did. I took it up.

Interviewer: Did you travel much after you were out of the service? You did sort-traveling while you were in the service, but you didn't get to see much.

Gordon: Well, I went out to see my mom, once in an airplane. That was an old Connie. When they started the jets, I didn't like them. I still don't.

Interviewer: They go down pretty fast.

Gordon: Well I don't like them at all. We've taken several trips, but every time I get on an airplane, I swear up and down that that is the last one I'll ever be... well, I just don't care for it.

Interviewer: Well, let's see. When you came back, did you notice changes in the county?

Gordon: Not right off the bat. Yeh, it gradually changed. I remember this out here was all field. None of these houses were over here in the Hart addition. That old house there was on the corner. There was one down there that was here. Hazletts had two out there. And Riisoos, there was the two on down. That side of the street was a few houses. But nothing out here. This was all field. Wobbly Hartwig used to live out here, I remember.

Interviewer: So when did the building start?

Gordon: Oh, I'd say probably about '49, '48 or '49.

Interviewer: So was it when people came back from the war?

Gordon: Well, I think most of these Hart houses were bought by veterans because they were kind of government financed or something.

Interviewer: And you called them what kind of houses?

Gordon: Hart. That was the contractor. Probably, I would say that half of the houses in town didn't have plumbing. They just had outdoor privies. And most of them, I know the ones that we lived in at the time, they just had a pump in the sink, drilled right down into the ground. Of course, like here, you only go down about, well, back then, you'd go down about a foot and you was in water. So you could

drive a sand point down about 15 feet or so and pump water right into your sink. It was hard, but it was good water. Since they've irrigated, this surface water is putrid. It's no good anymore. As a matter of fact, it would kill you if you drank very much of it. Take anybody that's got water on this side, like this place here is outside the city limits see. I could get by with a home water system a lot cheaper than getting it off of the city, but I gotta drill a well down to second water and then seal it off. Then it's questionable. It depends...

Interviewer: You have to go down further every few years.

Gordon: The good water is on the other side of the river, but I don't know how long that's going to be good.

Interviewer: Awhile I hope.

Gordon: Well, they're having to redo the wells and stuff over there now. They're having problems with them.

Interviewer: So did guys come back here? You didn't take advantage of the G.I. Bill.

Gordon: I did, I bought our first house that way. I took commercial license training flying, but I didn't use it.

Interviewer: And the G.I. Bill paid for that?

Gordon: Yes. Well, I had an old airplane that I bought. But of course, when I got married, I had to get rid of that. I didn't have any money.

Interviewer: Were you involved in the VFW at that time? In the early days of that?

Gordon: Yes, I joined the VFW while I was still in the service, out there in San Diego. Friend of mine sent me an application and I joined. The name of the post was the Chip Ingram Post in San Diego. But I never was even inside the post. I don't know anything about it.

Interviewer: How important was this VFW after the war to the guys?

Gordon: They formed this one in '46, but I didn't get out until '47.

Interviewer: Then were you active in it?

Gordon: Yea, I was already in the VFW.

Interviewer: No, I mean were you active in this one here when you came here to live?

Gordon: Of course back then, you talk about right now for instance, for the past 30 years I've been on the honor guard. It's getting tiresome because you get older you know. There's only two of us. Me and Riisoe, that's on the honor guard now. Art Stiebe's on it, but then he's just there whenever there's nice weather. He won't come otherwise. Which you can't blame him; he's 90 years old.

Interviewer: I'd say you guys should consider yourselves fortunate if you can still be out there.

Bea: If you can still stand.

Gordon: Well, we don't march anymore. We quit that

Interviewer: I don't think anybody can blame you.

Gordon: We go a lot. Back when there was over 300 members, you very rarely ever had to serve on the honor guard. We did, but back in those days about the only guys you ever buried was WWI guys. They were dying off. We had quite a few around here.

Interviewer: The other guys who came home. Today, we talk about post-traumatic stress. Did you see that with the WWII guys?

Gordon: Well there might have been, but you didn't have... I'm not, I'll tell you, I don't like the kind of wars they have now. Because they can't win 'em. Korean and the Vietnam War, they drafted people, and they lost a lot of people. But they were a non-winnable war. MacArthur was a WWI man. And he didn't pay any attention when they put him in charge of Korea, for instance. His whole idea, he was going to win the war. So he went after the Chinese when they came in there and of course, when he passed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, they sacked him. He wasn't supposed to do that. Well, how do you win if you don't do something like that? So anyway, they got a volunteer army now. But if they paid those guys according to what they paid us, there wouldn't be no volunteer army, I can tell you that right now. I got a grandson that went in. He started out at \$1,500 a month. I started off at \$38 a month. I made \$54 by having a percentage of extra hazard pay, as they called it. That was a bunch. Well these guys now, they might get if they sign over, they might get six, seven, eight thousand dollars for signing over. That's ridiculous. The way I look at it, when you're in the service for the country, they're going to furnish everything you need. You don't need any salary. I mean if they're married and stuff, the wives need something, but they don't. But if a guy is serving his country, he doesn't need anything. You couldn't come in, and I don't know what they do because they get on the internet at night and they talk to their wives and call them on the phone whenever they feel like it. Their meals are catered to them. What kind of a war we got? We dumped guys off. The army took a beating as far as I'm concerned. We dumped guys off, they was on their stomachs for two or three months, whatever it took. There was no ifs or ands about it. They won it. Either you win it or you lost it. I mean, sometimes they'd dump them off and sometimes you'd have to bring another bunch in because you didn't go out there to fiddle around. I don't go along with these wars they got here at all.

Interviewer: So you think that maybe it makes a difference to the men that are serving that...

Gordon: I don't know how the other guys feel about it. Vietnam veterans and Korean veterans didn't particularly have a choice. They had a draft at that time. They served same as we did. And I don't think they made a whole lot of money for it, as far as that goes. But this volunteer business, well, I don't go along with the Vietnam War, or the Korean War, or any political war because as far as I'm concerned, let the politicians fight it. I shouldn't get riled...

Interviewer: No, that's interesting. I'm trying to think. There's one other question that going to be off the subject, I guess. But we've been asking it of everybody just to get a feel. You were in more of this area around here. We wanted to know what race relations were like here Edward County in the '30's or the '40's as far as Hispanics or blacks.

Gordon: I know for a long time, they couldn't go in the restaurants or couldn't go into the theater unless they went upstairs. Hispanics, here was two or three here that I personally liked real well, that I went to

school with one. Ray and I used to go down here to the Mexican shacks we called them. They had the foreman in the two story house just a couple of blocks down. That's where the foreman stayed. The guys that worked on the railroads themselves all stayed in those shacks. At that time, most all your railroad people, working class people, were Mexican. Most of them, I think, came up here from Mexico to work on the railroad and they weren't naturalized citizens as far as that matter went.

Interviewer: Did they speak English?

Gordon: Oh year, as a matter of fact, I had some I liked real well.

Interviewer: What were the shacks like? Do you know what Mr. Castenada in Lewis called that? The "Santa Fe Hilton". What were those shacks like, because you said you went down because you had friends?

Gordon: They was just one room, one room shacks was all it was. They could put up dividers in there when they had a family I guess. But they were just little one room places. And they had gardens out there. They had a knack for having fun, especially on Saturday night. Most of 'em would get drunk. Had some good times in there. I remember the only blacks, well, we had several blacks for a while. Most of them lived in the north end. Gaines lived down here on the highway. It was the highway back then, yeah. But the main part of the highway before that over pass came down 8<sup>th</sup> street. But this bunch out here when it came out here in the '20's, it was built before I was born. But it was in the '20's. This used to be the highway; it came across the creek in the buggy days. Right down here to where you turn the corner to Hazlett's or well, there used to be a bridge across there, across Coon Creek. Back in the horse and buggy days, why they'd come down the dirt roads and they'd come in this way. It came over here to Elizabeth, and then it went down to 8<sup>th</sup> street and then down. Well, I'm talking about the horse and buggy days; I'm not talking about Highway 50.

Interviewer: In other words, to get from Lewis to here...

Gordon: But they still used this during the period of time when I moved to town. I was born in Model T days. But they could drive down this road out here where the sewer ponds are; they could drive. Of course back in those days, the sewer went straight to the river. They could drive down this road and come around this way too, either way. Well, if a farmer lived up north here, he'd just as soon take this route as go around by the highway. There'd be no sense in it. I learned to swim out there off of that bridge. We was catching crawdads, me and old J. D. Rushing. I leaned over a little far and I fell in.

Interviewer: And you learned to swim.

Gordon: Yeah, it was over my head. That creek used to run pretty deep. Well, two of Barney Thummel's sisters got drowned out there. It hid that car. That car was about two or three feet under the water. When Rushing drove in that morning, he hit the head right square on top of that car. He would have broke his neck, but he had a cloth top in that '35 Ford. The steel came up a little ways, and then the center part was all cloth. There was a boy and a girl in the car, and they had to drag the creek to get the other two out. So that creek run deep.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Gordon: I'd say, probably, '41. The two girls are buried out here to the Catholic cemetery. It was early.

Interviewer: How about on your ship? Was your ship integrated?

Gordon: During WWII, they were the cooks. They took care of the officers. They weren't treated humanly, I'll say that. But they were good people.

Interviewer: So that was basically their duty on the ship, that of cook. They wouldn't have been on a gun or...

Gordon: No, they took care of the officers. They served whatever they needed. They weren't our cooks; our cooks were white. We didn't have many blacks on the ship, but they had a few. Most of them were cooks.

Interviewer: Did you have Hispanics?

Gordon: Well, we didn't have any. I didn't, oh; we had a few fishermen who were Italians. They took the place of 'em, I guess. Most of all the people on my ship were more Protestant. Well, there were quite a few Catholics. As a matter of fact, we had a Catholic priest who was the chaplain on the ship.

Interviewer: Do you have anything you want to add? Anything about WWII you would like on the tape here? Rosetta may have some Kinsley questions she'd like to ask.

Rosetta: When you lived up where Bowmans live now, do you remember the Negro church that was up there?

Gordon: That was over to the north of us,

Rosetta: Where Riisoes live now, right?

Gordon: Right,

Rosetta: Do you remember what it looked like? We don't have any pictures or anything.

Gordon: Oh, I don't have any pictures of...I have a picture of me standing there in the driveway. All you can see is me and the field. There's nothing out there on the side.

Joan: Do you remember anything about that Negro church?

Gordon: That's all in houses now.

Joan: Do you remember anything about that Negro church?

Gordon: Not much about it. They had, Bus Martin went to it, and Winchesters and of course the Gaines would come over there. There was another Martin; they called him Major Martin. He took a mule around town.

Rosetta: We have a picture of him.

Gordon: Yeah, he went around and collected batteries from them old time ringing telephones. I don't know. He made a little money off of them somehow or other. I can't think of any others.

Joan: Do you remember what the church looked like? Can you describe it?

Gordon: It was just a white, frame building.

Joan: Did it have a steeple or not?

Gordon: I can't tell you. I really don't remember much about it. I don't remember exactly where it was, but I remember it was northwest of where we lived there on the corner.

Rosetta: It's where John Jay and Marjory Riisoe live now.

Gordon: That's where they lived?

Joan: I've been told.

Gordon: Well, it could be. That's about the right vicinity of it.

Rosetta: Now, the road and the bridge on Coon Creek and coming down Elizabeth. I've never heard that story before. If you were coming in from Garfield, you could have...

Gordon: Yeah, drove right there past the ponds, the sewer ponds, and turned onto this road, right out here and drove into town this way. Everybody that lived northeast of town came...as a matter of fact, that house is converted from a filling station and grocery store right across the street from the Catholic Church.

Rosetta: The sewer pond now is on the north side of the railroad tracks.

Gordon: Yeah.

Rosetta: So the road would have been on the south side...

Gordon: That's right where it is now. The road was there.

Rosetta: I mean coming into Kinsley, going west, you would have come by the sewer ponds and then what side of the railroad were you? You would have been on the south side?

Gordon: You would have crossed two railroad tracks. The old Santa Fe, well they removed that railroad.

Rosetta: Yes, the one that goes to Larned.

Gordon: By the highway, and you'd have to cross this railroad here too. The sewer ponds weren't there then, I mean. The sewer line was there, but the sewer line went on out there to the river. If you were still driving and using that bridge, as soon as that bridge went down, I don't know when it is, it was while I was gone that they quit using it.

Joan: What was that bridge like? Was it a small bridge, or like the other ones?

Gordon: Just a wooden bridge. They just drove on across the creek and drove on here.



Rosetta: Well, you are the first person to tell us this, and I just didn't know it at all.

Gordon: I used to, at one time; I used to live right down at the end of this street. There used to be a white house set there and then you'd go a block over to the south. I don't know who lives in that house, but that house, it wasn't there then. It was another old house. Strubes lived in it. Old man Strube had nine boys. There's another fellow here had nine boys, if I could think straight, I could think of his name. But anyhow, they'd play baseball together.

Joan: Oh! Two teams.

Gordon: Yeah, each one had their own team. Clark, Bill Clark's family. Between Bill Clark's family, he had nine boys. He worked in the power plant there for a while, until they fired him.

Rosetta: Did you ever go to what we call the Fravel house? Did you ever go up there or anything? It wouldn't have been very far from where you lived.

Gordon: No, it was just another place to me.

Joan: Did you ever get the question resolved about 8<sup>th</sup> street and the over pass out there?

Rosetta: Now I've asked this several times. You go to 8<sup>th</sup> Street west, you go by the high school and you go by the New Grove, the railroad tracks. Now, where did the highway go from there, before the overpass? What happened to the road out there after you passed the New Grove? Did it go straight on west, or did it go kind of like, did you make a turn, like where Jack Moletor had his filling station. Did you always turn and go...

Gordon: No, before the overpass, they had to come in that way.

Joan: Where did the road actually go before the overpass? Was it where it is now?

Gordon: You mean the highway? It was there before, when they done the overpass, they built the highway down to out here. Where Lancaster used to live. There on that corner, what's his name, Parker used to live on it, Sollitt's place? You'd come in there to Sollitt's. When they changed that overpass, that highway came up there then, because they blocked off the, they changed the creek too, at the time, because the creek used to come around. It came across where the company office is now. It came through there and crossed that. They took that bridge out later. As a matter of fact, they took that out during the time that we had the office down there. They took that bridge out that came up Briggs Street. But they built that road when they built that overpass.

Joan: But before the overpass.

Gordon: But you see, that changed the highway then. You could come down over. But they still turned off; the busses would turn off and go to the bus stop, which was at the hotel.

Rosetta: So you still made your corner there...

Gordon: 50 Highway, when they built the overpass, they built that road. They had that road completed.

Joan: But before 50 Highway, when you went down 8<sup>th</sup> Street, past the school...

Gordon: Before that overpass went in, it came right straight down all the way across the tracks to the highway and the highway split there, 56 and 50.

Joan: That's where they met?

Gordon: Yeah, on 8<sup>th</sup> street. But when the overpass was done, they had that other road built. I think they finished that overpass in the thirties. '35 or '40. I know it was about the time I had to come to Kinsley.

Rosetta: Yes, Gary Jarvis compiled a book. He went through the newspapers, and he put in all the articles and everything.

Gordon: Even during the war and after, for quite a while, when the buses, the Santa Fe and the Greyhound, would come in, they'd come in over the overpass. But they had to turn off and go a block over because they had stops at that hotel. You could get on and off the bus right there. But that other road was in there then. The reason that's there's no, 183 was there for years and years. That's the reason there's three other stations right there. Bill's Muffler was a filling station, and over there at the Handy Shop was a filling station. And then that one where the car wash is was a filling station. But that was for 183. But it was handy for them to put that highway in there. But they had to block that, they had to chisel through that creek and change the creek all the way around. It used to come right through the office.

Rosetta: It used to come right behind Doris Hand's house. You can still kind of see where it was.

Gordon: Well, I filled all that in.

Rosetta: So you know all about that.

Gordon: I furnished the dirt for it. What's his name, oh, that used to be, out at the sand pits. Leach, Jim Leach.

Rosetta: I don't think I know that name.

Gordon: He's the one I hired to bring the dirt in to get that filled in.

Rosetta: From the swimming pool back to Jack Moletor's, was that always been just a street?

Gordon: That's always been a highway. As far as I'm concerned, that's always been a highway.

Rosetta: Not everybody knows that, because I've asked other people, and they're not sure.

Gordon: Well, I know it was a highway because a transport truck come down there one day. And Clema Jamison had a wreck with it, and it burnt that guy up that was driving it. It was a gasoline transport truck. Back in those days, transport trucks weren't very big. It probably carried 7 or 8 hundred gallons of gasoline, I suppose. Anyway, it caught on fire and nobody could get him out. He burned up in there.

Bea: That old river bridge then were you go out by where it used to be Lancaster's. They closed that old river bridge out there. Was that the highway?

Gordon: It was built it there in the early '20's. Well, Dupree took all that bridge out. Kenny (*Dupree*) took it out, and as a matter of fact, the framework is around the county shed now. There were two of them, both bridges were the same, they had them deals. He used them bridges to rebuild some of the bridges out here in the country.

Rosetta: You're really good at all this stuff. Do you remember when Nettleton Bridge was torn down?

Gordon: It was in the '40's...

Rosetta: No, it was later than that, because I've been over the Nettleton Bridge, and I was born in '42.

Gordon: I know it was during the period of time that Pete McLaughlin and I used to go hunting out at there, we'd go crow hunting. I would set an owl, a stuffed owl. I'd set him on a post and get the crows to flying after it. We'd hide under the bridge and shoot crows. This was after the war, after we were married.

Joan: So it was in the '50's somewhere.

Gordon: Well, it had to be in the '50's. Then to be right honest with you, I don't know when they tore that down. I know that Pete and I used to hide under that bridge all the time to shoot them. So it was after we were married. As a matter of fact, we were living in, I'd say, '55 or '56, somewhere in there, because we were living in that old two storey house out on 6<sup>th</sup> street at the time.

Joan: Anything else?

I don't think so.