

Interview with Marcile King
January 5, 2010,
Conducted in the King home, Kinsley, Kansas
Interviewers: Rosetta Graff and Joan Weaver
Present at interview: Keith King, spouse

Interviewer: What is your full name?

King: Vineta Marcile Kazmaier King. 500 East 9th Kinsley, Kansas. I was born December 24, 1928, in Belpre, Kansas. My parents were William and Mary Kazmaier. My mother's maiden name was Spencer.

Interviewer: Do you know the names of your grandparents?

King: My Grandpa Kazmaier was Andrew. His wife was Sophia, maiden name Krueger.

Interviewer: And the other side?

King: Albert Burr Spencer and Lillie Imel.

Interviewer: Describe your household. You had a brothers and sisters?

King: There were seven in the family. I had four older brothers: Wilber Kenneth, Cecil Wayne, William Andrew and Robert Lee. My sister was Mary Darlene, myself, Vineta Marcile and Catherine Irene.

Interviewer: Do you know what brought your parents or grandparents or whatever to Edwards County? Why did your people end up here?

King: My Daddy grew up in Dundee; I guess you would call it, out on a farm. His folks died when he was very young, and a half sister helped raise him and his two younger sisters.

Interviewer: And then she lived here?

King: She lived there by Dundee, and then they...I don't think they lived in the house because they were kind of catty-corner across the road from each other, the farms were. I don't know how Daddy ended up in Spearville, but that's where he met my mother then; he was farming there. He lost his first wife. They were married and coming home from Kansas City on the train on their honeymoon and she got sick. He never ever took her to his home. She died. Then her parents were the ones then that suggested that my mother, because she had these two little boys, go and keep house for Daddy then. And that was by Spearville. Mom said that when she went to keep house for him that Daddy had the table all set with white linen table cloth and had fried chicken. She was thinking, "Why does he need a housekeeper?"

Interviewer: And your mother was in Belpre?

King: No, she was in Spearville.

Interviewer: What brought her family to Spearville? Were they farmers?

King: They ran a cheese factory as I recall. And then her parents were divorced then too.

Interviewer: So how long was she a housekeeper?

King: Well, apparently not very long, because there's only two years' difference between Cecil and Andrew. They were married September 22, 1920 at Great Bend. So she would have only been 19 at that time. So she was married, I think, quite young the first time.

Interviewer: Well yes, if she already had two children and was being married a second time at 19.

King: She left her husband while she was pregnant with Cecil. He was a drunken Indian, the way she described him. And he beat up on her, and she left him. So Cecil never had any kind of relationship with his dad, even after he was grown up. He didn't choose to have a relationship.

Interviewer: It was quite unusual at that time to be divorced.

King: Yes.

Interviewer: What was it like growing up at your house with all those kids? Any special memories?

King: Well the folks, Daddy, was a very protective father. He didn't care how many people we had come there to play, but we didn't go other places that much. Nobody wanted seven people for dinner. Or it would have been nine.

Interviewer: And he's farming at this time?

King: No, in Belpre he worked...

Interviewer: When did he move from Spearville, or why?

King: He went broke farming. They lived in Spearville, and then they lived...the house is still there. It's an old brick house north of Lewis. Kind of over by, what is it called? Nettleton. He farmed and he went broke there. And then they moved to Belpre and Daddy did several different jobs. He worked on the railroad. He did carpentry work. He worked in the locker.

Interviewer: Would this have been during the depression? Or would it have been before that?

King: I would say, in the Depression, in the '30's, was when he...

Interviewer: So that may have contributed to losing farms and...

King: Probably, yes. Because, I think...

Interviewer: But you were born in '28, in Belpre. So this would have been before the Depression.

King: I'm thinking Robert might have been born in Belpre, I'm not sure.

Interviewer: So what was he doing in Belpre? Was he still farming?

King: No, like I say, that's where he had numerous jobs. He worked on the railroad, and he did lots of carpenter work. Just a day laborer I guess you would call him. We were a very poor family. But what we lacked in monetary stuff was more than made up in love.

Interviewer: So what was your house like in Belpre? How many bedrooms?

King: Two bedrooms, and I slept in the same bedroom as my folks did until, oh my, I was in high school. There was one big bedroom which had two double beds plus the baby bed. Darlene and I slept in one bed and Catherine slept in the baby bed until she was big enough she slept with us. The other bedroom the boys slept in was very small.

Interviewer: And then a kitchen and living room and...

King: Kitchen, well, it was more of a pantry and a great big kitchen thing and a living room. There were five rooms.

Interviewer: Indoor plumbing while you were growing up?

King: No. No plumbing. I never had a bathroom in the house until I had Bill.

Interviewer: Which is what year?

King: 1960. Daddy worked on the WPA.

Interviewer: What did they do on the WPA?

King: They planted trees and ...

Interviewer: Around Lewis?

King: Well yes, and around Belpre and Trousdale and through that area, yes.

Interviewer: We jut got through Christmas. What was Christmas like in your house? You said you were poor...

King: Our main Christmas was Henry Laird left a big endowment at Belpre. At Christmas Eve we always went to the Methodist Church, and we had a great big tree, thanks to him, and that basically was our candy and nuts and fruit and then we would get one gift. One year, I remember, Mom cut her hair and made wigs for the dolls we had got the year before for Christmas. I have no idea what happened to our dolls. But that's what our Christmas was like.

Interviewer: And I bet you made doll clothes. You said she sewed.

King: Yes. And she made candy if...we got commodities. And if she got enough stuff, why she made candy and things. She was a very good cook, for not having much to cook with and that big a family.

Interviewer: Did you have a garden?

King: Yes. In fact, they had a community garden back of us. And they had an irrigation ditch that ran down through the middle, and different ones from the community planted gardens in it then.

Interviewer: So then she canned and did all that too? Where was your water? Did you have a pump in the house?

King: Yes, she canned. The pump was outside.

Interviewer: What was washday like with seven children?

King: That's what I said! I can remember we would pump water and she would heat the water on the wood and coal stove. She brought it into the house. Then she washed in the kitchen part. And she always set bread.

Interviewer: Did she do the washing by hand?

King: No, we had a washing machine. We always had electricity. We didn't have water or anything, but we always had electricity. So she had an old Maytag washer. So she would set bread first thing in the morning and pump the water and carry it in and heat it, and then she would wash, mop the floors then with the wash water. By noon, we always walked home, we lived six blocks from school, and by noon, she always had what we called "dough doings" or something. She would cut off hunks of the bread dough and fry it. We would have that with butter and syrup for our lunch every Monday. I don't know how she did it, because like I say, she would do the wash, mop the floors, bake bread...

Interviewer: All by noon. What was Belpre School like?

King: Well, it was a small school. Even when I graduated, there were only nine in my graduation class. There were eight girls and one boy. I had really close friends in high school and grade school. In fact, we stayed friends, the four of us, and visited back and forth. I still call and visit with the one in Salina, but the other two girls have passed away. Like I say, we were so poor, if it had not been for my friends, I would have never gotten to go to ball games and things, because they did not provide busses and things to take you. If you didn't have parents that had a car to take you to ball games, you didn't get to go.

Interviewer: You didn't have a car?

King: We had a like a '28 car. But I'm not sure we always had it, because we never...we always walked. My brothers were all very good athletes, and I guess Mom was so tired of all the noise and stuff. I can remember Daddy washing our face and combing our hair and walking us to the home ball games. And mom didn't go to any of the ballgames. I guess she wanted some peace and quiet.

Interviewer: So they played football, basketball and baseball?

King: Mainly just football and basketball. That's all they had at Belpre.

Interviewer: And what about the other schools they played? Do you remember?

King: Not really. Not until I was in high school. I can't remember what my brothers played. But to this day, when I go places, people will remark about good athletes my brothers were. Especially Robert, he was really tiny and fast and good. In fact, in the service in the Navy, I don't think Robert did

much except play basketball. He was never deployed anyplace. Andrew ended up instructing. I think the C2's was what he flew, a transport plane, and he ended up being an instructor. Cecil and Kenneth were the only two that ever went over seas. Kenneth, like I say, I can remember him being in China. In fact, I think I have a fan that he brought back from China. Cecil was in Germany, and I'm not sure what other places he was.

Interviewer: Let's see, '28. So you were elementary school age during the Depression. Are there any things you particularly remember about the Depression? The Dust Bowl days?

King: I can remember them hanging wet sheets up to the window because we were the house clear on the far end of Belpre. We lived next to a field. They would hang wet sheets up over the windows to help keep the dirt out. That's about the only thing I remember. I don't know whether this was Depression years or not, but they would put up snow fences and they would have rabbit hunts or whatever. They would get them in this big fence and club them. That took place just next to us.

Interviewer: And you would watch that?

King: Yes.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel? Watching all those bunnies?

King: I can't remember any feelings; I just remember that they did it.

Interviewer: Did you eat rabbit then?

King: Yes. We ate everything because my four brothers, they all hunted. So we had rabbit; we had squirrel; we had frogs; we had turtles...

Interviewer: Were there deer then? Or were the deer sort of scarce?

King: We never did have deer.

Interviewer: Pheasant?

King: Yes, and quail.

Interviewer: Did they fish?

King: Yes.

Interviewer: Where did they fish? In the Arkansas?

King: Must have been, or some kind of creek. I'm not sure, but we had fish. And that's where they would have...

Interviewer: Rosetta's saying no. But there's no water in Belpre, and to fish, they had to go somewhere.

King: Keith, do you know where the boys would have fished?

Interviewer: The Rattlesnake?

King: Yes, that would probably be where they fished, and they would have caught frogs and turtles and things too. And at that time, the boys worked for farmers and I don't really remember that much about them being home, other than their ball stuff, because they milked cows and did things for farmers all the time. And I did too. They would take me on the bicycle, and we would go up about a mile. I'd put kickers on the cows and I'd help them milk cows.

Interviewer: What are kickers?

King: Well, they had a metal thing (*hook that goes around the hock*) and then a chain that they hooked over the leg and then you pulled it tight so they couldn't kick. Then you had a milking stool, which was a peg up with a seat across it like a "T". Then you sat on it and milked the cows.

Interviewer: How many did you milk in a session?

King: Probably a half a dozen. Not that many, but...

Interviewer: Do you know who you did that for?

King: I know we went up to Rudd's. And I know we went to Elmer Lunz's. Not at the same time, but we milked up at Rudd's, and we also milked at Lunz's. And we always had a milk cow at home too. I always liked money, so I didn't mind working. So I'd get a penny or a nickel and I would milk cows. I would carry coal and carry in the wood. I'd do anything to earn some money. The boys worked for farmers, so they usually had a little bit, so they were willing to pay me. Not very much, but they paid me, and I did the work.

Interviewer: So your brothers paid you to do their chores?

King: Yes, I was the only girl that milked and did these things. With the boys being older, I always worked with my Daddy. I shingled roofs. I run cement. I tore down buildings. I did a lot of things in my life. I worked in the restaurant. I worked in the laundry.

Interviewer: Were the restaurant and laundry in Belpre?

King: The restaurant was in Belpre, right there at the curve. The laundry was in Larned. We did the laundry at the Pratt Air Base.

Interviewer: What was the restaurant called? Do you remember?

King: I can't remember. (*Later recalled it was Posey's*)

Interviewer: Well, I guess we'll go on. Do you remember what you were doing on December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Day?

King: I was at my girlfriend's, Bonnie Davidson's, when they did it.

Interviewer: Did she have a radio?

King: Evidently, 'cause her dad run the lumber yard and she was a late in life baby. Her brothers and sisters were way older than her. So she was more or less raised alone, and I stayed with her a lot of times and that's where I was when...

Interviewer: Do you remember what you thought or felt at that time, or your understanding of it...I'm trying to think, '28 to '38, so you were 12?

King: I don't remember having that much...

Interviewer: Did you have a radio at your house too?

King: Yes.

Interviewer: Your brothers, we talked about it before we started the tape. Kenneth was already in the service in China, and your other brothers had all graduated. So why don't you tell us what you know about their service. Kenneth was a marine you said. You already mentioned that he was in China. Is there anything else you know?

King: Not that much.

Interviewer: Did he stay over in that area during WWII or did he...

King: Do you know, I can't tell you. I don't really remember that much about Kenneth. Cecil I remember more about being in Germany and in different places. Cecil went through officer's training. He went in, well he was drafted, and then he went into officer's training school and he ended up being a 2nd lieutenant in the army. Some Colonel Peppers took him in under his wing, and he excelled very much in the service doing things.

Interviewer: Where was he?

King: He was in Germany, I remember. That's about the only place overseas that I can remember that he was. Andrew was in the air force and he also was a 2nd lieutenant. He ended up being an instructor for the C2's. He was stationed in lots of different places. I have it written down someplace, but I can't remember. I think he was in Wichita Falls, Texas, at one time. It kind of seems to me that that's where he ended up when he was an instructor. He never was overseas. Robert was in the navy, and he never was overseas. The main thing I remember about Robert is he played basketball.

See, we moved to Idaho in '41. That was the only year that we left Belpre. We lived kind of in what I would call a labor camp. When I was there I picked up potatoes. I picked up onions. I picked hops. Do you know what hops are? And then you were paid by the pound, and they weighed like a feather.

Interviewer: How do they grow? They're a grain, so how do you pick hops?

King: Up on a ladder. They were up on a trellis thing of some kind. We climbed a ladder to pick them. We had a bag. The potatoes, we would just go down a row. The onions were the same way, with bags, and you picked them up.

Interviewer: And your brothers?

King: They weren't there, just us three girls. And then Daddy got his finger cut off, and the boys were all going to have to be going to the service. So we left Idaho on April 17, 1942. I was an 8th grader and we lived in an apartment because that's where the boys were at that time, in Wichita. There was nothing that coincided with the things I had in Twin Falls, so my Daddy and I came back to Belpre. 'Cause, we had kept the house in Belpre all that year we were gone to Idaho. I don't remember who cooked, what we ate, or anything. But I stayed from April till school was out in Belpre with my Daddy. Darlene, Catherine and Mom stayed in Wichita and they went to school. Then they came to Belpre when school was out. Then the boys were deployed. The main thing I remember was Mom would write carbon copy letters to the boys and then write a personal thing to them.

Rosetta: Was the labor camp part of the WPA? In 1941?

King: In Idaho? I don't know...

Interviewer: It was a harvest crew; they were migrant workers.

King: Yes, we were migrant workers. It was a long...we had two rooms, and you had to go outside to go to the bedroom. The other room was the kitchen and living room. You went to a bathhouse.

Interviewer: About how many laborers were there?

King: There must have been a bunch of us because I've got pictures somewhere of the camp we stayed in. I don't know whether it's in this book or not. It was just a long row red wooden buildings. Also there, they had somebody that taught us crafts and things. The two bowls up there up high, (*indicating across the room on shelf above the fireplace*) I made them on a lathe when I was out to Idaho. Then the second semester of school, I went to school at this labor camp, and Darlene was a freshman in high school then, so she rode a bus and went into Twin Falls. And then the second semester, when we got to move into a little house, we did have a bathroom. For that second semester, I lived in a house that had a bathroom. I went to Twin Falls. The thing I can remember that was so scary, see it was so big. I'd never been in a...I don't know how big Twin Falls is now, but to me it seems like it was so big, and they would have these air raid things where they would do the siren and then we would all have to go to a shelter for a drill at school.

Interviewer: Was there a base there? Is that why you were having the drills?

King: Not that I'm aware of. I don't know, but we had those periodically, and those were really frightening to me because I wasn't sure where I was supposed to be.

Rosetta: Did you drive to Idaho from...

King: Yes, and, you know, it was during the war. So you couldn't get tires. We just had flat tire after flat tire after flat tire getting there.

Interviewer: I'm trying to figure why there were air raids out there. You weren't close to the coast right? There should have been some reason.

King: I don't know.

Interviewer: You said you went to the school for migrant workers. What was that first semester like? How many kids or teachers...Do you remember?

King: It seems like we had more than one class, you know, more kids than one classroom. But I can't remember how many or anything. I remember when I went into Twin Falls and it seemed like it was overwhelming to me, because... It's hard to believe, but I grew up being a very shy little girl. In fact, when I went to interview for my job at the bank, Keith went with me because I did not want to go by myself.

Interviewer: Now, you're picking things. But part of the year, did you plant too? There isn't harvest all the time.

King: No.

Interviewer: So what would your dad have done during those months?

King: He worked for a farmer, and I can't remember what he...but see, that's when he got his finger cut off. That partly and because of the boys all leaving to go to the service. It did not turn out to be like what they thought it would be, I guess, when we were in Twin Falls. Because he basically, he didn't do this picking stuff like the rest of us did. He was working for farmers, and they had hay and cattle. My mother picked also with us.

Interviewer: When your brothers left, do you remember any...did you have anything special to send them off?

King: No.

Interviewer: Were they in Belpre at that time?

King: No, they were in Wichita. So they just left from Wichita. It seemed like they were working in the factories there. They were going to be drafted, and Cecil was the only one that was drafted. The rest of them went ahead and enlisted to they could pick their branch of service.

Interviewer: You said your mother wrote carbon copy letters. How often did you get letters back from them?

King: They wrote quite often. Kenneth, since we were so poor, he sent part of his check back for us girls. I can't remember exactly the amount or anything, but out of his check, he always sent money home for us.

Interviewer: Were any of the boys married?

King: No, but they got married while they were in the service. In fact, all of them did. They knew their wives a week or two before they married them.

Interviewer: So they met them wherever they were stationed in the states?

King: Yes. Cecil was in Pasadena, California, and that's where he met Donna. He only knew her two or three weeks and they got married. Andy the same way. He was in Illinois and went to

Lawrenceville, where Ruth was from. He knew her just a very short time. Robert the same way.

Interviewer: So you did not attend their weddings?

King: No.

Interviewer: Did they have weddings? Or small family affairs with the girl's families? Do you know? Or did they just go to the justice of the peace?

King: I think maybe Ruth and Andy might have had a church wedding. And probably Robert's too, because...But Cecil probably not, and Kenneth probably not.

Interviewer: And then their wives, let's see, I'm trying to remember now, Andrew's wife would have been able to stay with him, because he was a teacher.

King: He didn't get married until about the time that he was going to be discharged. And all the boys they home came back to this little five room house and stayed. That's when I slept on the divan in the living room. Cecil and Donna came, and they had Mike, and they stayed with the folks for a while. And then when Ruth and Andy came, they stayed for a while. Robert never did come back. He always stayed in Ohio where his wife was from. But Cecil and Andrew both did. And Kenneth was always in California. Kenneth died in his fifties. He died before the folks died even, and nobody got to his funeral either. I asked Cecil, and he said he was buried in Twentynine Palms. I didn't even know where he was buried until the last few years.

Interviewer: And they all had children?

King: Yes. Kenneth was divorced different times. I think he ended up with four children. Cecil had three boys and a girl, and they lost their little girl three days before she was a year old to pneumonia. Andrew had five children; Darlene had three; and Catherine had four, and then they raised a little boy. And I have three.

Interviewer: So during the war years, you were back in Belpre. What did you do during that time? Were you still in school? You were in high school by this time, what was it like going to school during the war? Was anything different?

King: Not especially that I remember in Belpre. But like I say, that's when I worked at the laundry in Larned during the summer.

Interviewer: Larned was an air base?

King: No, the laundry came from the Pratt Air Base. And another thing I remember is, our music teacher. We must have been really good, because we went and played in a band at the air base in Pratt. We also had a harmonica band, and we played over the radio at Great Bend. I'm sure we must have been really good there too. We even played at, it was called the honky tonk there in Belpre, for dances.

Interviewer: How big was the band?

King: Five or six of us.

Interviewer: What did you play? And what were the other instruments?

King: The clarinet. There were two clarinets, a saxophone, a trumpet and the drums. That's five.

Interviewer: So this was while you were in high school, and you were playing for dances in what you're calling a honky tonk. Describe the honky tonk! Was there liquor?

King: Yes! Belpre was noted for their wild honky tonk.

Interviewer: Where was the honky tonk? Do you remember what building?

King: It was on Main Street. VanArsdale was the one that owned it.

Interviewer: Did they pay the band?

King: No. And I guess they were so drunk it didn't make any difference what our music sounded like because I can't imagine that we were that good.

Interviewer: Your band teacher would have known Jerry's father. Because he did all the bands in Pratt, so I'm sure they would have known each other.

King: Well, my band teacher's name was Lucille Breitenbach. She had us doing everything.

Interviewer: So they took the laundry from the Pratt Air Base to Larned. And what was the laundry like?

King: It was big. I remember that you got a bag of clothes, and they were marked, and you put them in different slots according to whose they were and what they were, like socks and shorts. I did a lot of that, and then I also would do a lot of the sheets as they came from the mangle. There would be two of us and we would grab and fold the sheets. That was the two jobs I did: I sorted clothes from the bags and folded the sheets from the mangle.

Interviewer: Now would this have been from all the airmen? Or just the officers? I'm trying to think. Did the regular airmen have to do their own laundry, or was it all...I never thought about laundry in the service.

King: I don't remember. I rode with a couple, the Bowman's, from Belpre, and we would leave at like 5:00 in the morning and drive to Larned and get up there to work.

Interviewer: And have an eight hour day?

King: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you remember how much you were paid an hour?

King: Not really.

Rosetta: That's a long ways to take your laundry. (*56 miles*) It looks like Pratt would have had...but they didn't.

King: I don't know why, but they did it at Larned.

Rosetta: That was a big facility.

Interviewer: So you would have been how old at this point?

King: Junior or senior.

Interviewer: So this was in the summer time.

King: Yes.

Interviewer: Now we've been told that things were rationed. Do you remember anything about the rationing during the war?

King: Yes, but see, with as big a family as we had, and as poor as we were rationing didn't affect us that much. We always got commodities and things, so I can't remember that the rationing things affected us that much.

Interviewer: Except for the tires...

King: Yes, the tires.

Interviewer: Now, gasoline was rationed, but you were riding with somebody else to get to Larned.

King: And I paid to go, but I don't remember how much I paid, and I don't remember....But I remember then, being raised so poor then, I ordered my little sister from the catalogue. I can remember cutting out a baby picture. That's why she's five and a half years younger than I am. Darlene and I were 18 months apart, and when she was going to start to school, I knew I was going to be lost. So I can remember cutting out this baby picture and walking with my dad to the post office and ordering this baby. She was born the 21st of May.

Interviewer: Did your dad know she was coming at that time?

King: And so, I always wanted Catherine to have what I didn't have, so I bought her a watch for graduation. I paid for her a wedding. She was the only one of us kids to have a wedding. I bought her a wedding gown so she could have a church wedding. So she was always my baby. 'Cause I ordered her.

Interviewer: From Sears.

King: There was another family, it must have been a Lane Bryant catalogue, we were visiting and they had a new baby and they had this catalogue, so I tore out the picture.

Interviewer: And before we started the tape, you talked about your mother doing sewing in Belpre.

King: Yes, with a treadle machine. I never had a boughten dress till I was a senior in high school. I was always dressed very nicely, because Mom worked for Maloy and Gloria Breitenbach, (nee Gloria Brodbeck). And so she would give her clothes and Mom would always take them apart to make them to fit us girls. So, even though we were very, very poor, so I was always dressed very nice. But like I say,

I don't know how Mom did all this stuff with the treadle machine, working for other people, and having seven kids, and cooking and canning and washing and all the things she did. It was, oh gosh, they didn't have a bathroom in the house until I was out of school, and then they finally got a bathroom in the house in Belpre. Then when we were married, we lived in Centerview and I didn't have one, and then on the Wood's place and we didn't have one. Then when Jo Lynne was about two, we moved over to the farm. That's the first time we had a bathroom in the house.

Interviewer: And you said that was in 1960.

King: No, we moved there in 1955. Well, did I tell you Boyd was born in '52 and Joelynn in '55? I think I said '50 and '52. I think they're '52 and '55 and '60.

Interviewer: I had Boyd down in '50... And Jo Lynne in '52. So what's she?

King: Boyd in '52 and she's in '55. And Bill's '60. He's the only one I had right.

Interviewer: So, how did you meet Keith?

King: At ball games and different places. But I don't know why he kept persisting, because my dad always said, "If you're not good enough to come after, you're too good to take home." I would be at ball games and different places, and he would want to take me home, and I would always have to refuse him because I couldn't come home with him. Finally there was a tournament at Macksville. We went to the restaurant there and he finally asked if he could come and get me. Because we didn't have a telephone either. So, then I could say I could go.

Interviewer: So you were a senior, and you graduated in '46. So finally in '46 a senior gets up the courage to ask.

King: Oh he had asked me lots of times, but he never asked to come to my house. And so I never could go. He had asked me, I don't know, a half dozen times maybe. One time I had a these flowers you know, gardenias, and they'd glow in the dark. He took one of them. Finally at the Macksville Tournament he asked. Then he'd always have to ask for, you know, if he wanted to date me the next... So once he asked to come and get me, he asked...

Interviewer: He planned a date ahead. Because without a telephone.

King: Yes, he would have always asked me then for the next week.

Interviewer: And he was a senior also?

King: Yes. And he was a baseball player, so our dates mainly were that he would come and get me Sunday morning, and then I'd go eat dinner at his mother's house, and then I would go to Kinsley with him and watch him play ball. That was our date, mainly. Because, see, his sister had lost her husband. They were hunting or spotting coyotes with an airplane, Vernon Hagedwood and Kenneth Lambert, and they were both killed. She had been married six or seven years and had just gotten pregnant, and he was killed, I think, the 31st of December and their baby was born then in August. So she was there a lot, and that's why she would go with us and come to the ballgame and watch. And that's why I went there every Sunday, mainly to be with his sister to have something for her to do. So that was our dates.

Interviewer: Okay, so you graduated right at the end or after the war, in May or June of '46. You didn't get married until December of '47. That's a year and a half. What were you doing at that time?

King: He went to Hutchinson and went to Business College, and I went to Hutchinson and worked for Kansas Power and Light.

Interviewer: So you were still dating since you were both in Hutchinson.

King: And he gave me my diamond on his 18th birthday, so we were engaged for 14 months before we got married. Because he was 19 and I had turned 19 just a few days.

Interviewer: That's something, that he was able to get you a diamond at 18. Even a small one!

King: Yes, it was a small one.

Interviewer: What was your wedding like?

King: We went to the Christian Church in Lewis and got married at 8:00 in the evening. Paul Brockhausen, I think was his name, was the minister.

Interviewer: About how many people came?

King: Just my family.

Interviewer: You said you didn't have a wedding dress, was it a suit?

King: My mother made a grey suit. I still have the grey suit, but not the blouse or the hat. But I have the grey suit that she made for me that I got married in.

Interviewer: Did you have a reception or anything?

King: The following week, Darlene made a wedding cake, and we all went to Belpre and had what I guess you'd call a reception. It was a really foggy night. We ended up spending our wedding night in Lewis with Cecil and his family. We'd planned to go to Dodge City. And his folks didn't even make it in to the wedding. But they were at the reception the following Sunday over at my folks'.

Interviewer: So your honeymoon was that one night at your brother's?

King: Yes. And we'd bought a house in Centerview because he was working for his dad on the farm. So we lived in Centerview. And like I say, his folks didn't want me to work when we were first married. So I crocheted and went to quilting parties with his mother. Because, there weren't any young kids, they were all drafted, so my entertainment was quilting and crocheting.

Interviewer: But you weren't working as hard, it sounds like.

King: No, except that I helped his mother. And then we helped...his sister, they'd bought a farm. She had cattle and stuff, and so during the summer we'd get up at four or five in the morning, because it was 16 or 18 miles to her farm. We did her farming and his dad's farm work and I cooked. I dressed chickens every morning and baked bread. His mother was a worker too. We made bread every day and

dressed chickens every day. We would take cookies and lemonade to the field in the afternoon at 4:00 and at 10 or 11 at night you didn't fix sandwiches, you fried potatoes and steak and you fixed big meals. And when you took meals to the field you didn't fix sandwiches, you'd take mashed potatoes and gravy and...I think we fried chickens every day. And then we would get together, I can remember dressing 100 chickens. It was Keith's mother and myself and Mabel Brown and her daughter. We would dress them for the locker.

Interviewer: Did you have to kill them also? The whole process.

King: Yes, I would put a stick over their neck and pull to break their neck. I'd stick them in a pail of boiling water and then pick their feathers off. I got pretty good at cutting up a chicken.

Interviewer: Where was the locker?

King: Kinsley. It seemed like they had a locker in later years in Lewis, but they always, as I remember, took their chickens to Kinsley. Because they milked cows too. That was before I got into the family, and they brought milk, cream, and eggs to Kinsley.

Interviewer: Was Keith drafted? You said he didn't pass the physical.

King: He just went. He had to go for the physical, so I guess you could say he was drafted, but he didn't pass. Him and Gerald Olson were at the same time,

Interviewer: That was actually after WWII, in 1950 was it?

King: Here, I have his letter. December 28 of 1951 is when I got it.

Interviewer: So they were drafting him for the Korean War.

King: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, well we've asked this question of everyone because we're interested in race relations in Edwards County at this time. Do you remember blacks or Hispanics or how the two races...?

King: Well see, my daddy worked on the railroad. I think he probably was the only white man there. He worked with the Mexicans. We had Mexicans in our school, and I don't remember... But they learned we did not baby them, I guess you could say, at that time. They learned our language and adapted to our culture. Nobody spoke Spanish, and I don't think that the Mexicans that Daddy worked with...he didn't come home learning any Spanish. He was raised German, he didn't speak English until he started to school, so he taught us all German. I think I'm the only one that can remember. I can count in German and he taught us a little prayer in German. But we didn't learn Spanish. But there were Spanish kids in school, so I don't remember. It's kind of like the old Mexicans in Lewis. They adapted to the culture, we didn't spoon feed them the language.

Interviewer: And where did they live? Did they have special housing in Belpre?

King: Yes, down by the railroad tracks.

Interviewer: Do you remember what that was like? Were you ever in their homes?

King: They were kind of like track homes, kind of similar to the homes that we stayed in when I lived in Idaho. They were like this long track home. They were always neat and clean. They did a lot of handwork and embroidered. They were clean and nice families.

Interviewer: And blacks in Belpre?

King: I never remember any blacks.

Interviewer: Do you remember the end of the war at all? VE day or VJ day? Victory in Europe or Victory in Japan? Do you have any memories of that?

King: Not especially.

Interviewer: Do you remember any celebrations when men came home at Belpre?

King: No. I can remember going down to the railroad and watch and wave at the soldiers as they went by on the troop trains, but I don't remember any kind of celebrations.

Interviewer: You would have been in high school then.

King: Yes.

Interviewer: So they never stopped or...

King: No, for some reason we would know when the troop trains were going to be going through. I don't know how we knew, but then we'd go down and wave to them.

Interviewer: In Offerle, they told us that soldiers sometimes threw their name and address out the windows and girls would pick them up and write. Do you remember that at all?

King: No, I did write to one of Robert's buddies in the navy at one time. For some reason, he sent me his name and address, and we corresponded back and forth some in high school.

Interviewer: Can you think of any changes that WWII brought to your life? Ways that it affected your life.

King: Not really.

Interviewer: You were already working pretty hard before.

King: Yes, well, I always liked money, so yes, I always worked. So I don't remember anything, other than that I worked at the laundry when it became available. It paid more than what I had been getting other places. In fact, I had them take a bond out of my paycheck every so often. That was another thing we did. In high school then we would buy these stamps and put them in books until you got enough for a bond.

Interviewer: Was there anything else the women in Belpre did for the war effort? Such as knit socks? Or roll bandages? Do you remember anything like that?

King: No, I can remember, but I think that was another WPA thing, 'cause we were so poor, we made mattresses in a building in Belpre.

Interviewer: Just regular mattresses? Or were they for the soldiers?

King: No, for us. Just cotton.

Interviewer: How about the county? Did you see any changes that the war brought by having the men leave? Did they come back?

King: Not having a vehicle to go anyplace with, you know. Keith went to movies about every Saturday when they'd bring their produce to town - Kinsley. But see, I never did do any of that stuff when I grew up. We never went anywhere. If we went out of town, we rode with somebody else like the mail carrier, Allie Mitchell and his wife. We would go to Larned occasionally with them on Saturdays. And that's the only out-of-town stuff that I can remember doing. Except, like I say, when friends took us to out of town ballgames.

Interviewer: None of your brothers came back to Belpre to live, right?

King: Yes they did. Cecil and Andrew came back and they owned a grocery store in Belpre at one time. And they also owned a service station in Lewis. In fact, Cross Manufacturing first started making their cylinders in the room where they did their repair work at their service station there in Lewis.

Interviewer: And this would have been in the '50's?

King: Yes, early '50's.

Interviewer: How about the other young people that you grew up with? Did they come back after the war? Or, like two or your brothers, did they stay away?

King: Well, yeah, some of them came back. Some of the Shaver boys came back, and in fact, I think the boys maybe sold the grocery store to one of the Shavers then, when they bought the service station in Lewis.

Interviewer: When was the population declining in Belpre?

King: Well, in the olden days it was a thriving place, it was noted for the drinking and partying and things.

Interviewer: Were there any houses of ill repute?

King: I don't really know if they did or not.

Interviewer: So this would be back at the turn of the century?

King: Well, reading in that book that David Kearney wrote, yes.

Interviewer: But it was pretty small when you grew up. There wasn't a big difference in like the '50's or '60's.

King: You see, when I was little, there was a grocery. In fact there were two grocery stores in Belpre. I can remember two grocery stores, and I can remember a drug store, and I can remember the post office. And a Doctor Mettling.

Interviewer: There was a Catholic church, a Methodist Church...

King: A Christian Church and a Baptist. Four churches. And, like I say, for some reason in later years, everybody but me went to the Christian Church. My friends went to the Methodist Church, and I never did change. The folks, rather than battle with me to go, because I wanted to go. If you didn't go to church, when you didn't have a telephone, you didn't know what was going on.

Interviewer: Church was where you got caught up on the news.

King: Yes, I would find out what we was going to do in the afternoon. But as far as going out of town and stuff, except when I worked in Larned, I didn't go out of town. There was enough of us, we played baseball; I can remember Mom and Dad getting out, you know, and if there were enough other kids to get together. The only time I can remember mom being in bed was when she twisted her knee playing baseball with us.

Rosetta: So it was always a public school. Not a parochial school?

King: When I grew up, there were a lot of Catholics. But they didn't have the parochial school when we went to school. My Catholic friends, Mary Jean (I graduated with Mary Jean Hirsch *nee Meyer*) and Freda (*Klein*). They were both Catholics, but they were the only two.

Interviewer: Were there any...Catholics and Protestants got along? (Yes) And your dad was German; he should have either been from a Catholic or Lutheran heritage. But they went to the Christian Church?

King: They went to the Methodist first, and then they went to the Christian. I think they felt like they weren't high class enough. More of the moneyed people went to the Methodist Church. And then so they changed and went to the Christian Church. But I don't know what their religion would have originally been. But see, it was real interesting when we went back to my brother's in Ohio. It was called Zoar, Ohio. It was kind of like communal living. They had a ledger book, where my grandpa was a carpenter. He did carpenter work. It was all listed in this ledger and they did it to get the stuff. People were like bakers and different things and they traded their work. It was all registered in this book in Zoar, Ohio. Somewhere, Robert said it got lost. They were supposedly moving to Columbus, Ohio, and in the transition, something happened to the book. But on one of those little things we took pictures with years ago, we took a picture of the information in the ledger where Grandpa Kazmaier had worked there.

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to say about your life since WWII? Are there any highlights you would like to mention? You had three kids.

King: That was highlights.

Interviewer: And you worked for the bank.

King: Yes. After Keith's folks finally decided, I first went out to Minneola and worked for a family. They had a change of life baby and they needed help. So I went out there and Keith went out too. We stayed when the baby was born and kept Lana Shannon, relation to Karen and Darrel. Then when we came back to there I decided if I could work doing that, I could work there. The folks knew then I could work wherever I wanted. So I worked at Kinsley at the co-op until I get pregnant. Then I didn't work, except I would come back over here and figure what they called pro-rations at the end of the year. Then I didn't work until Bill started to school. Then from the time that school started, I had torn down a wash house, I had refinished I don't know how much furniture. By December I told Keith that, I think it was Martin Butler's Julie was working at the bank and she left and there was an opening. So I told Keith that if he would go up with me, I would go apply for the job. Dick Zimmerman was the president at the time, so I went up and applied for the job and got the job.

Interviewer: And how many years did you work there?

King: 27. I worked for four different presidents. And if it hadn't been for Al Hatch, I don't think this move would have been possible, and I don't know why he took it on himself to be so good. Him and Becky both. He put that oak railing down into our family room. He put up my leaded glass front door. He put in little narrow board around where they laid the linoleum. He cut off 16 doors because of carpet.

Interviewer: We should mention on the transcription that Marcile has recently moved from Lewis to Kinsley. Al Hatch was one of the presidents of the bank.

King: The only thing I could figure out was, when I was 70 years old, he called and wanted to know if I would possible work when Hanston bought the bank in Lewis that first month when it opened up. And I said, "Al, I'm 70 years old." He said, "Well, you can do it." So I worked the first month, well then, and I worked vacations and I worked this and I worked that and I was working when Keith had his stroke. I haven't worked since. But, in recent years now, my son is a bank consultant. So he called me two months before we moved. I had no idea I was selling the house. He said, "Mom, I am booked so full. Could you possible help me in Sterling and Chase and Lyons in November?" And I said, "Oh Boyd, I'm 80." He said, "Well, you can do it." So I did.

Interviewer: I think people have been telling you all your life that you can do it. And you did.

King: And I did. I went there on Monday. And this was when we were trying to get moved over here. So I went and stayed all night in Hoisington Monday night and worked. Well, I ended up working about 12 hours because I brought work home from the bank. And then I worked till 11 o'clock on Wednesday and drove home and by then the carpet layer was here. Then, on top of that, Kayla said, "Grandma, could you possible help me make a roaster full of vegetable soup because the seniors are going to sell vegetables." I asked couldn't her mother help, and she said, "You do it better." So we made her roaster full of vegetable soup.

Interviewer: Rosetta, do you have any more questions?

Rosetta: I don't think so.

Interviewer: You never lived at Nettleton, right? It was before you were born.

King: No.

Rosetta: I can just say that she is always at the ball games now.

King: Yes, in fact I'm going to take tickets tonight at the ball game at Offerle.

Rosetta: It's going to be icy.

King: Well, Keith's got a doctor's appointment in Great Bend at 2:00.

Interviewer: It will be okay by then.

King: It will be fine. But this shows how poor we were, because look at us!

End of audio.