

Interview with Earl McBride
September 26, 2005
Conducted at the Kinsley Library
Interviewed by Joan Weaver

(Earl began by reading a history he had prepared.)

My name is Earl McBride and I am 90 years old. I was born in Edwards County and have lived most of my life in Edwards County. When I retired from farming, I moved to Larned, which is in Pawnee County, an adjoining county.

My parents came to Kansas in 1913 from Indiana. My grandparents, on the McBride side, were moving to Kansas. Dad and Mother ran off and got married. They were 16 or 17 years old. They arrived in Kinsley in 1913. I think it was in the fall of the year. They had less than five dollars. Dad went over to the old farmer's commission company at that time and got a job unloading carloads of coal. I have often thought if I had to unload a car load of coal with a shovel into a bin that I'd of probably crawled off the side and went someplace else. They came to Kansas in a boxcar with their dads, parents' livestock, 2 horses, a cow, and their furniture. They ferried across the Ohio River from Mauckport, Indiana, got on the train at Brandenburg, Kentucky and came out through that way to Kansas.

I was about 9 years old when I first got to go back to Indiana to visit my grandparents. I remember very well going to Brandenburg, Kentucky and ferrying across the Ohio River in a row boat to get to Mauckport, Indiana.

Dad, after he worked at the co-op for some time, got a chance to carry the mail from Kinsley to Fellsburg, which they called the Star Route. A fellow by the name of Levet had the route, and he was wanting to sell it. He had two little teams of mules. He drove one team one day and the other team the next day, in a covered buggy. The banker, Mr. Tubbs, who was the banker here at that time, came to Dad and asked him if he'd like to have that route. Dad said he didn't have any money. He couldn't buy anything. Mr. Tubbs told him that he would buy it for him, take his note that he could pay for it. I know that he gave \$90 for the outfit; the 2 mules and the buggy. But I don't know what kind of note he had or anything. But he carried the mail for about 4 years. He made a trip every day but Sunday. Like I said, he drove one team of mules one day and drove the other team the next day. The railroad came through from Wichita to Kinsley. They had a spur at Trousdale, then it went up to Zook, Belpre and up that way. They, of course, got the contract for the mail. The postmaster at Kinsley at that time wanted Dad to take the examination. They had an opening for a mail route out north of town here. He had all the mail carrying he wanted. He turned it down. In doing so, less than a year's time, the fellow that got the route had a Model T Ford and started carrying by automobile.

During that time when he wasn't working for anyone, he hauled water for Mr. Akins, who had a thrashing machine and thrashed wheat up north of Kinsley. Dad got a job of hauling water for the steam engine. They called him the water monkey. Mother had a job cooking in the cook shack for the men on the thrashing crew. Of course that job ended in the fall. After it closed, there was a bachelor out south of Kinsley by the name of Frank Shipley, who was looking for someone to shuck corn for him.

Dad went out and shucked corn for him. Then through that acquaintance he asked him the next year if Mother would come out and cook for him for harvest. Dad could work the harvest field which the both of 'em accepted that job. They went out there and went to work. Through that friendship, in order to keep them so he would have a cook and a hired man, he offered them a third interest in the farm if they would stay with him. That's how Dad got his start in farming. That partnership lasted from the time I was 6 years old until I was a sophomore in high school when we moved to the Taylor farm, south of Kinsley. I lived there until the time that I got married. But those were trying times during the time that we moved to the Taylor place in 1931. Dad let me plant 80 acres of wheat. That was my experience in farming. However, when I graduated from high school, I didn't want to farm. I wanted to be a lawyer. Probably if I would have had money enough to do that, I might have been a politician. But who knows, at least history that I missed out on.

I started to grade school in a country school in what was known as the Nursery School. It was school district on the land of the late Will King, Sr. I think he homesteaded that quarter of land and homesteaded it as a tree claim. In doing so, he planted a lot of trees on it, and it was always known as the Nursery School. I went to school there three years. My first teacher was Alice Smith. She later got married that year and then ran for County Superintendent and was County Superintendent all the time that I was in county school. My first second grade teacher was Elsie Wright. She was also my third grade teacher. Then we moved to the Wendell District. The Wendell School District was on the original town site of Wendell, which there is a lot of history about that I have heard, but I couldn't vouch for any of it. But I do know that some of the buildings from the Wendell town site was purchased by Parvin Belcher and moved to his farmstead which was ½ mile from the original town site of Wendell. He still owns the land. Lee Belcher, his son owns the land now. They have some of those building that are still there. I'm not familiar with which ones they are.

I graduated from the 8th grade at Wendell in 1929. There was four of us in the 8th grade class: Vivian Belcher, Vern Livengood, Raymond Mettling and myself. Centerview had come into being in the meantime and that was the original place for everyone in Wendell to go to high school. Dad wanted me to play football, and I wanted to play football myself, so I went to Greensburg High School. I started driving back and forth down there which was 12 miles. I drove for about 6 weeks in a Model T Ford. Then Dad traded for a 1929 Model A, and drove that Model A all the time I was in high school. I started high school on my birthday in 1929, and I graduated from Greensburg High School in the spring of 1933. Many enjoyable days were spent in Greensburg. Our football team wasn't too whoopy, but I played it anyway. Basketball, baseball (*I played too.*)

After getting out of high school we were in the middle of the Dirty Thirties. The Depression, as everyone knows about. The younger generation doesn't know about it, but they have been able to read about it. One of the things that I remember about it was Dad and I were working on the windmill one day. We could see what looked like a black cloud coming from the north. He said, "We probably better get down off here; that thing is going to hit here pretty soon." We got down off the tower. When it hit, it just turned the afternoon into darkness. I never will forget the chickens. They were running to get to the chicken house and go to roost because they thought it was night.

On my first wheat crop, it made thirteen bushels per acre. Folks were worrying about whether I would be able to go to Greensburg to high school or not. I said, "Don't worry. I'll use my wheat. I'll go on that." We had a Model A Ford truck which held 60 bushels of grain. Every Saturday, I loaded it up with wheat to take it to the elevator. I got anywhere from 18 to 25 cents per bushel for wheat. So you

can see how much money I had. When Christmas came, I was out of wheat and broke. But my folks did manage to let me finish going to school in Greensburg which I have always been grateful for doing that.

For entertainment during this period of time we had a town baseball team at Centerview. I played on that. We also had a basketball over team there, and I played on that. During this time Dad got a job working on the WPS on the highway, building it with horses. Of course, I was young and wanted something to do, and he would let me go and work in his place. I had four big horses. Dad always had good horses. I had worked horses in the field so it was no new venture for me. After the road was finished, the road boss got a contract to build a curve around 183 Highway for the Leo Kraft family. I remember working on that for about six weeks, building that curve in there.

During this time that I was traveling around with the basketball team, playing basketball games, I met a young lady at Fellsburg who was senior in high school. Her name was Fern Myers. We started a friendship at first, and later it developed into more than that. She was a school teacher, and she taught school at the Charlet School, which is a country school. It is no more in existence. That school was in Mr. Scott's territory in a little town called Williams. It had two elevators, and it had a lumber yard. I don't remember whether it had a grocery store or not. It wasn't as big as Centerview, however, it was bigger than Hodges. Later years, my dad brought the land Hodges sat on. The two pits and the silo are still out in the field. He bought it from Henry Sater's son, John Sater, who owned the place originally.

Fern had to walk to school. She stayed with a family with the name of Mead. Mead's wife taught school at the Taylor School, which is close to where we lived. I don't know why they called it the Taylor School. It didn't set on land that Taylor owned. It set on Eslinger land. But it was always known as the Taylor School. The Meade's would take her up to the corner and let her off. Then she walked north for ½ mile. She would get pretty cold. She could tell you a lot of stories about having to build a fire and prime a pump to get water to drink as the pump outside was froze. She taught there two years, and then we decided to get married.

I don't know. We were kind of like my dad. We got married on nothing. But I did have a farm rented. The farm was known as the Wright place. It belonged to Donna Anderson's parents. I don't know whether they had a mortgage on it or not. Anyway, they turned it over to the Warren mortgage Company. Ed Taylor and Hugh Taylor in the abstract business there known as Taylor's and Sons had the mortgage. They had the agency from Warren Mortgage Company. That is how I got the farm. I had it planted to wheat, a beautiful prospect of a wheat crop. I thought I had everything under control. We got a little rain and hail. I did have it insured for hail. I called up to get the hail adjustor to come out. When they called and said he was going to come, I didn't know how I'd talk to a hail adjustor. I had heard they were hard to get along with. So I called my dad up to have him come over when the adjustor was there. It was a beautiful wheat crop, not headed out yet. The fellow said "I don't think you've got much loss here. When in heads out, I don't think you'll be able to tell it. I'll give you 18% loss today if you want to settle." Dad was standing around behind him nodding his head up and down to take it. So I took the 18% which paid for the premium. I wasn't out anything on that. The wheat, due to that little shot of rain and we had black rust got in it, made 4 bushel per acre and it tested 48. *(I had 320 acres, and tested 40 pounds per bushel. No one would buy it.)*

A fellow that came out to buy wheat at the elevator was looking for a place to board, and he would sleep in the elevator office. He went up to Scott's. Mr. Scott said they would feed him but told him there was a young couple, just gotten married, moved in down south, and if she would want to cook for him, he would recommend that he go down there. So he came down to talk to us. And of course, Fern was tickled to death to make a dollar. He was a real nice old gentleman. He bought my wheat. I couldn't sell it anywhere else 'cause it was so light (*such poor quality*). I won't tell you how I got rid of it because that's a secret amongst millers (*grain buyers*).

We lived there one year and the farm sold. We moved to the Ed Hill farm, which was closer to Kinsley, about six miles south of Kinsley. The farm at the present time is owned by Herman Kastner. We lived there two years. Then one day a fella I knew when I was a kid asked if I worked for 50cents a day wherever I could get a job. I always liked to work for Rollin D. Ogden because he would pay me 75 cents a day. His son stopped and wanted to know if I would be interested in renting another farm. I said, "When you're living on a rented farm, you're always looking for a better place." He said his grandmother's farm was for rent. His dad and his mother were in Texas, and they'd be home in a few days. Why didn't I come down a certain day and talk to his dad, which I did. His dad wasn't home yet, so I had to go back the next day. He told me that he was the administrator of the farm and looked after it for his mother-in-law, but he was forbidden to come on the place. He'd had some trouble with his sister-in-law. He said he wouldn't take the place away from him, but he'd heard that he was planning to move to a place he'd bought south of Greensburg. He said, "If anything happens, I'll let you know."

We were at the breakfast table one morning, at the Hill place, kind of the end of the line 'cause the road didn't go north from there. It either had to turn and go west or go east or come to the south. We saw this light coming from the south. We made the remark, "Wonder who is out that early in the morning?" They drove up in the yard, and Fern said, "Who is it?" I looked out the window and saw it was Rollin Ogden. She said, "You don't suppose he's come to rent us the place, do you?" And that's what he came for. We rented the farm. It was about half way between Fellsburg and Centerview, 4 miles south. It was a modern home, had a basement, furnace that burned coal with registers upstairs. We had a bathroom. We were absolutely thrilled to death. We move there in 1941. We knew when we moved there when Mrs. Kuykendall died the place would be for sale. However, she lived to be a ripe old age. We lived there until 1951. And the place sold, and we tried to buy it, but I ran out of money before it sold. Then Fern's folks moved to Kinsley, and we took over their farm which is known as the Shera farm. Sylvester Shera homesteaded that place. He was the grandfather of my wife, Fern. He homesteaded it in the 1800's, had accumulated a section of land and some land out west. Fern's dad had bought a quarter of land. We was farming three quarters of land when we moved there. A short time later we rented the half section north that belonged to Fern's aunt and later on we bought it.

While we were living at the Kuykendall place, our children were born, Terril and Bonita. I never will forget when they started to school what a thrill it was for them, and their mother didn't think it was much of a thrill. She watched Terril get on the bus every morning and had to have a little cry. I think she did the same thing with Bonita. They went to Centerview to school. Terril was in the fourth grade when we consolidated the district with Lewis. Bonita was in the second grade. I never will forget one night I was out in the yard when Bonita got off the school bus and as soon as she saw me she started crying. I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "I hate those Lewis kids." I said, "Why? Why do you hate them, Bonita?" They had moved the playground equipment from Centerview up to Lewis

so they'd have more of it. She said, "They think they own the slide and that merry-go-round. It's ours." I had a hard time convincing her that she was a part of that now, not to think anything about it and go ahead and play on the grounds.

We had some good times and some bad times in farming in our years at the Shera place. We farmed it until 1980. When we retired, we had a sale. We didn't know where we wanted to go. We stayed there on the farm until 1988. In the spring of 1988 we built a home in Larned. In the meantime, we had started traveling. We would go some place in the wintertime every year. We bought a 5th wheel trailer and a pickup to pull it with. We had some wonderful travels. We traveled with a couple from Cullison. They also had a trailer. One time we went on a trip to Canada. We were gone seven weeks. We traveled 8,000 miles. We went up to Yellowstone National Park, up through Kalispell, Montana, over into Canada. We came down Fraser Canyon in Canada to Victoria and Vancouver, came back down the west coast of California. One day we only traveled 200 miles. I think we stopped at every pull-off along the ocean to look at whales and the sea lions. Just a wonderful trip. We took an airplane and flew over Mt. St. Helens not the year after she erupted. That is a sight I'll never forget. Trees at that time were still smoldering there. They were having to haul them out because they didn't want to lose the lumber. Termites would get in those trees and eat the lumber, so they had to get them out of there.

After we moved to Larned, we rented our farm to Tom Stejskal, a young fellow from Larned who was running the small farms in our neighborhood. We rented Dad's place near Kinsley to Jay White. He was a neighbor. The last 25 years we have spent in Mesa, Arizona. The park has changed hands twice. It is now known as Mesa Spirit. It was Trailer Village when we first went there. We have made a lot of wonderful friends out there. Our rent is paid, and we plan to go back again next year. When we first started going out there, when our parents were still living, we didn't go till after Christmas. After the parents were gone, our grandson said the best place in the world to go was to Grandpa and Grandma's at Mesa, Arizona at Christmas time. They still come out there. We look forward to it. There are only seven in our family. We have a little family reunion every year at Mesa, Arizona.

We still belong to the Methodist Church in Lewis, which we joined when the school consolidated and moved to Lewis. Roy Brown bought the old original wood church (*in Centerview*) and moved it to the Historical Society in Kinsley. People of Centerview came up one year, and we painted the church. The school house that I went to school in Wendell was moved (when we consolidated the district to Centerview) to Centerview and became the hot lunch kitchen. It is still there but not taken care of. Its in pretty bad shape, dilapidated, faded out. As I said, we both belong to the Methodist Church at Lewis, and we still go there. We praise God all the time for his goodness and blessings to us not only for all our years of life but also the health we have.

I think I've talked enough. I thank you very much for your time.

Interviewer: You were going to tell me about your parent's courtship.

Earl: They walked. They were young. This was in Indiana. Mother's original address was Laconia, Indiana and Dad's was Mauckport. In reality, they just lived across the creek from each other. But if you lived on one side of the creek you were from there. One of the interesting things about people back in those days, every family was trying to live in a community of their own, and they all had their

own cemetery. You know, like where they were buried. Like my mother's name was Miller, and there was a Miller Cemetery. After my mother died, my dad remarried. He married a wonderful lady from Hot Springs, Arkansas. When she died, we took her back to Arkansas for burial where her first husband was. It was in the Young Cemetery. We don't do so much of this in our area, but that is the way it was back there.

Dad had an uncle who had one leg shorter than the other. He was a mail carrier. He had a horse and buggy. Dad said he remembered three or four different times, his uncle loaned the horse and buggy and Dad could get mother. He really had a courtship in that buggy. Other than that, they walked. Mother's dad and her younger brother, the only brother she had, developed pneumonia. Her dad died and her brother lost a lung from it. He ended up crippled. He was drawn real bad to one side and never really did fully mature in stature. He got pneumonia after Mother moved to Kansas and died then too. The only relative she had back there was a sister and her mother. In my lifetime, we made three trips back to see them.

Her mother was pretty perturbed about her running off and getting married at that young age. She wasn't too friendly with her for quite some time. But she finally got over it. She had some property back there, and when she died, she left it all to her younger daughter, my mother's sister. We got a letter, her sister and I, from a lawyer there back there saying that we had been willed out and wanted to know if we wanted to contest the will. We had a talk. Grandmother was blind the last five years of her life. Her daughter and husband took care of her. We figured they bought the land. We wrote back that we weren't interested in it at all and won't contest it. However, unusual circumstances happened a year ago. I got a letter from an oil company in Texas stating that I had some drilling right to some land in Indiana, and they wanted to lease it for gas. I couldn't imagine why there. So I contacted a cousin back there and asked him about the deal. When my Granddad died, he never did anything about his estate. My Grandmother just took it over, and she never did anything. What happened, the mineral rights were still in my Granddad's name. Of course, Pauline had passed away by that time, but her son and daughter got the same letter I did. We leased the ground. What it amounts to, I've got a lease on two and half acres of ground. But I have a gas well back there. At the present time, I got seventy-some dollars on the two and a half acres from the gas well.

After the folks move here they got an apartment. It's an upstairs apartment in the house. There were three houses back where the Oak Manor is now. In fact, they tore those houses down when they built the Oak Manor. They lived there all the time that Dad carried the mail. We're talking about 1913. I was born in 1915. My sister was three years younger than I was. She was born in 1918 and that was the year they moved to the farm. They stayed in that house in Kinsley all that time. There was a doctor that attended my mother when I was born. I don't know the doctor; I would have to look it up. But the doctor when my sister was born was Dr. Detar. Mother had typhoid fever. Dr. Detar was the doctor who was giving the physical exams for World War I. She had typhoid fever, and we didn't think she was going to live. Dad came up for the draft and had to take a physical. Dr. Detar said, "Edgar, I think you need to be home more than it the service."

The same thing happened to me in World War II. I received a letter in the mail on Monday. I was 1-A. Fern and I started making plans with what we were going to do and how we were going to do it. We were living on the Kuykendall place at that time. I receive another letter from the draft board on Saturday. I was ready and wanted to go, but it's another one of those cases of (*inaudible*) farm deferment.

Interviewer: You said Fern was born where I live (1588 P Rod). Who owned that property?

Earl: Fern's father and mother, grandfather and grandmother were Sheras. They came from Indiana too. There were 6 girls and a boy in their family. The mother died when she had the 7th baby. The older sisters and their dad kept them all out there on the farm. The oldest girl's name was May; the second one was Oma. Then they had a boy Ray. He fell off the windmill and had seizures. He died during one of his seizures. Fern's dad and mother got married in Greensburg. Got on the train and went to Preston. Got married there. One of them, I think Fern's dad, had a friend over there they knew. When Fern was born, 2 years later, she went up to her older sister's May to have the baby. (*This was 1588 P Rd. Lewis belonging to Schallers and where Joan Weaver presently lives.*) Who was the doctor? I can't tell you.

Interviewer: That's where I live, the Schaller place?

Earl: We know it as the Dimmick place 'cause they homesteaded there. Down in our country, Ron Miller owned some land that we lived on at one time when I went to school to Wendell. We called it the Demain land. It was homesteaded by John Demain's father. He had pasture rights on pretty near all the land to Greensburg. I don't know how much land. I think 240 acres. I think a quarter was all they could homestead. He probably bought another 80 acres, but he had the pasture rights to all that portion. His daughters (*Catherine, Rose, Josphine*), 3 of them married George, Pete and Eddie John Welch

When I quit farming, I was farming about 2200 acres of land. One day my dad and I got to figuring up, and on the 2200 acres that I was farming, he could remember when there were 11 families living on the 2200 acres. I know some of them. In fact, I had destroyed the home sites of three of them.

During the Dirty Thirties, shelter belts were planted. Now, this generation is taking them out, maybe not the whole tree belt, but they are taking out the center of it where their irrigation system can make the circle. Dad came out several years before he died, and we went on a little tour. He said, "There used to be an Allison that lived down here. Where did he live?" And I said, "Well Dad, we went by his place. Everything is gone. All the trees they dug up were put on top of the house and barn and set the whole thing afire to put in an irrigation system." He was lost. He didn't know where he was even though he had that mail route. It had sure changed.

Interviewer: What were the hardest times you went through?

Earl: Dirty Thirties. We went through seven years without raising crops. We were living on the Taylor place. Dad was broke. He told Mr. Taylor and said, "I can't go any longer and I'm broke." He said, "You can't quit." He said, "You stay with me. We'll come out of it." He had the bulk agency for the Home Oil Co. in Kinsley. He furnished Dad with all the fuel, oil and grease. We gave him everything we made, which was nothing. We sold hogs, \$3 a hundred weight. We had to haul them in a wagon to Greensburg to get rid of them. *We had cows, about 20 total, about 9 milk cows which we milked. There was no rain to grow feed so we stacked Russian thistle to feed the cows.* He gave Dad all he made. We were milking cows and there was a fellow by the name of Guy White at Trousdale. He was one of the original citizens of that area. He gave up completely. He said (*to Mr. Taylor*) that he

couldn't pay his bills. He had a herd of Jersey milk cows. They were good cows. He said, "You take them and forget my bill, and I'll give them to you." So Mr. Taylor came out, and he told us, "Guy White has quit, and he's given me his cows. If you want those cows to milk, you go get them and you can have them." Dad said, "I don't know how to get them. I don't have any horses or anything." He said, "I got a saddle horse up north of Kinsley that a guy gave me, and I'll give it to Earl if he wants it. So I was a cowboy. I was a cowboy a lot of times 'cause I broke colts for the neighbors to ride

When I started to school Dad brought me a Shetland pony. I rode that pony all through grade school until my sister got in school. Then he made a little cart for it, and we both rode in the cart. When I was in school, it was tied outside. At Wendell School we had a barn; at Nursery School I tied him to a tree. I was so proud of him. I would take him an ear of corn at noon. I forgot one morning, so I went down to Bill King, JR. and borrowed an ear of corn to feed my pony with.

We broke colts for the neighbors to ride. I did break some for Mr. Taylor. He had one he wanted broke for Julia Westphal, a crippled lady. She rode that horse in the parades for a long longtime.

Interviewer: So how did you break them, get on their backs and ride?

Earl: Yah. You didn't want them to buck somebody off.

Anyway, when I was riding this pony to school, I froze my ears one morning. It was a mile and a half to school, both to Wendell and to Nursery. As I got older in the eighth grade, I was pretty smart by then. I was drivin' automobiles. I was 14 years old, and I was drivin' a Model T to school. It was quite a thrill.

Interviewer: Were you driving the family car to school – did your family have 2 cars?

Earl: I took the family car. It was unusual, but I was trustworthy. I had wonderful parents. We had a loving family. I never thought any more about loving my mother and I loved my wife. That was the atmosphere I grew up in, and I tried to pass that on to my own children. Of course things have changed so much from what they use to be. Over half the marriages end in divorce.

Interviewer: What was Christmas like in your house when you were growing up?

Earl: Everything was decorated up. We had a tree. We went someplace where there was a cedar tree and cut one down. That's the tradition that we've passed on. Our daughter was married, divorced. She has never remarried. She has a home in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she works. She has a Christmas tree every year. She puts up a Christmas tree and decorates it. Then she comes to Arizona for Christmas. When she goes home, she has to take the Christmas tree down. We have to put up a Christmas tree in Arizona. We live in a park model which is just a glorified trailer, three rooms. We have that thing all decorated. The streets in our part are decorated at Christmas. We live on O Street. About 15 years ago, T Street decorated up, and we had to beat them, you know. I'm telling you, we had people coming through the park about every night for two weeks time. They would open it up and people would come to see the beautiful decorated trailers. This was the olders one decorated; I'm afraid the competition has died down now. But they still have it some now.

Interviewer: Did the early Christmas trees have electric lights, no lights, or candles?

Earl: No, we never did put candles on. We had ornaments on them until we got electricity. Dad had a Kohler light plant. He had electricity for some time before we did. Then when electricity went by where we were living on Kuykendall place, we knew they were going to sell when Mrs. Kuykendall passed away. And they didn't want to spend the money to wire the buildings, so they didn't take on electricity. I got Dad's Kohler plant, and I ran a wire up through the basement for a plug-in and then we had floor lamps.

Interviewer: What is a Kohler light plant?

Earl: It is a electric generator. When you pull the switch on the light, it started the motor burning propane gas. We got electricity in 1951 when we moved to the Shera place. I had gone over there and remodeled the barn so I could sell Grade "A" milk to Fairmonts in Dodge City. I put so much more on the line than I had before, it kept came out to find out what I was doing I bought an electric milking machine with 2 buckets and milked 30-40 cows the whole year. That's another sideline the farmers had that's come and gone. At the time I was milking cows, there were three dairies south of Kinsley and in the Sts. Peter and Paul area north of Kinsley there were a whole bunch of dairies. We were all getting gypped selling milk to Fairmonts, so we formed the Southwest Milk Producers Association to get a better price.

Interviewer: And you raised the feed for the cows.

Earl: We raised the feed for the cows.

Interviewer: How many cows did you have?

Earl: I had 50. The most I ever milked was 37.

Interviewer: Was this using milking machines?

Earl: Yes.

Interviewer: When your dad had the cows, were you still hand milking?

Earl: Yes. We milked them by hand. I was told that I had to milk the cows. He'd be working in the field. I had to milk the cows morning and night whether I got home at midnight it was my job. I milked the cows by myself.

Interviewer: How many were there then?

Earl: I'd milk 9.

Interviewer: so how long would it take to milk 9 cows?

Earl: Oh, not too long, *forty-five minutes*. I was a good milker. I'd go to milking for mad money or spending money. I came home one evening just about dark, and Dad was there, and he hadn't milked any cows. He said he hadn't milked. And I said, "If I was going to run a dairy, I'd run a dairy; and if I

was going to run a farm, I'd farm!" Years later when I was milking cows, dairying and farming, I had to shut the combine off and come in to milk the cows. Then go back out and turn on the combine until 10-11 o'clock at night. Then I would come in and go to bed and get up the next morning at five o'clock to milk the cows. Dad was out there one evening, standing there in the barn while I was milking, and he said, "You know, 'If I was going to farm, I'd farm. If I was going to run a dairy, I'd run a dairy.'" Then he started to laugh. He remembered what I'd told him.

Interviewer: When you were young married, what was your social life like?

Earl: Well, your social life when you were first married, you made it yourself. We had about 4 couples that were all young married like we were, and Booth Estes and his wife, they lived down close to Greensburg: Elmer and Vivian Huckstep, Bernard and Doris Graff, Harold and Florence Sweeney. We would get together. Fern would play the piano. Estes would play the saxophone. The different places we would go, they'd have some kind of music machine, like the Edison. We did a lot of dancing in the home.

Then before we were married, there were skating rinks, roller skating. The first time I went to get a date with Fern, she had a date that night and couldn't go. I got a card from her about a week later which said that her class was having a skating party at Greensburg skating rink. If I knew how to skate and would like to skate, to let her know, and I could be her partner. That was the first date I had with her. I went to the skating rink in Greensburg. I went to school at Greensburg. That was the common place to go. You could skate all night for a quarter. You rented the skates, and skated all night for a quarter. Now our entertainment is playing bridge.

Interviewer: Were there movies in this area?

Earl: Oh yes. You bet. Kinsley had movies for 25 cents. There were good movies. No coke or popcorn. *The Ziegfeld Follies*, *Gone with the Wind*, Bing Crosby, Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, Bob Hope, Betty Davis, Marilyn Monroe, Connie Francis, all good actors. I used to get to go to the show Saturday afternoon when the folks would come to town to shop. I could go to the show for a dime. A hamburger place over there where the beauty shop is now, you could get a hamburger for a dime and coke for a nickel.

My Dad bought me a .22 rifle for my 12th birthday. Rabbits were so thick at that time. The county was paying a bounty on rabbit ears. They'd give a nickel for rabbit ears. You'd get a dime for a crow head or gopher. I had this little Shetland pony and cart, and a little slick-haired dog I called *Rover* that liked to ride in the cart. He was the runningest little rascal you ever saw. If I crippled a rabbit, he would jump out of the cart and run him down. I drove round in the field, and those rabbits would jump up and sit down. I got pretty good. Every Saturday when we'd come to town, I'd go to the courthouse to sell them my rabbit ears. Once in a while I'd have a crow head, very seldom a gopher. I'd get 3 boxes of .22 rifle shells for 29 cents. I got them at the variety store. Then I would have enough money to go to the show and buy a hamburger.

Interviewer: What kind of rabbits were there?

Earl: The rabbits were jack rabbits, they didn't pay for cottontails. They got so bad that during the Dirty Thirties, they organized rabbit drives. In fact, we had the first rabbit drive out on the Taylor

place. It was the beginning of it. They covered too much territory. More rabbits got away. I think they got 900 in the pen. I've been on rabbit drives. The biggest one I was every on, you know where the road ends coming south from Belpre on the parallel in there, that's where the pens were. I have no idea how many people they had on the drives. They gathered around so many sections and drove them in there. They got, if I remember right, around 3,000 rabbits, and they got 5 coyotes on that deal.

Interviewer: They would shoot them?

Earl: No, that was the bad part of it. They would let the kids in there with ball bats to kill the rabbits. Then they loaded them into trucks. The mink farm out at Garden City bought the livers. I don't know what they did with the meat and furs. They shipped the meat some place in the East.

Interviewer: Did they use the furs too?

Earl: No, they skinned them. The rabbit drive people did. There was a fellow by the name of Roe Welsch who lived south of Fellsburg that bought the rabbits. We had a snow storm one year. Loren Shannon called up and said lets go rabbit hunting. He had a Model A Ford with a trunk on the back. I know you have seen them. With the side folded up and end folded out. He had 100 rabbits in that thing in 2 hours time and went down there and sold them to him. Went back and got a whole bunch more and sold them again. He was skinning them. I don't know what he did with the meat. But the livers is what he sent to Garden City. They went to the mink farm in Garden City to feed the mink. They would buy the livers. I never did find out why.

Interviewer: Maybe it produced a really good fur. What was the best day of your life?

Earl: There have been a lot of good ones. You live to be 90 years old and be able to sit here and talk to you like I have. I have to watch myself because I see a fella all stooped over, walking with a cane, and I think, "that poor old devil here I am 10 or 15 years older than he is." I had a lot of good days. I suppose the happiest day of my life was the day I got married. The wedding day, you won't believe this. Where we lived on the Taylor place, Michaelis lived in the same section south of us. **Bus Sykes**, he married one of the King girls. If anybody would see a coyote they'd call up and say there's a coyote at such a place and away we would go to get that coyote. Of course, Michaelis was my best man. Pauline, my sister, was the maid of honor. He called up and described this coyote on Leo Craft and are you ready? No. I only had one shell, shotgun. Shorty Machaelis rode down through the field and run the coyote out. And wherever he went when he crossed the rode, I shot and knocked him down, but didn't kill him. He was out in that field there hidden in the wheat. And Shorty got out there in his pickup and we chased him. I said after it was over I'd taken a bite of wheat (*inaudible, perhaps chasing that coyote*) But we finally got him. Then at 1 o'clock that afternoon, I was to get married. We went over there to Fern's folks. Anyway, it was a great day. I have enjoyed having this interview and hope it will restore memories to those who have experience the "Dirty Thirties."

