

Interview with Jeff Mead
October 30, 2009
At the Mead home in Centerview Kansas
Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff

Interviewer: Jeff, would you tell us your full name.

Jeff: My full name is Jefferis Michael Mead.

Interviewer: And where do you currently reside?

Jeff: 1715 U Road, Edwards County, Kansas

Interviewer: Where and when were you born?

Jeff: July 5, 1930 in Spearville hospital.

Interviewer: What were the names of your parents?

Jeff: My mom was June (*Darlington Jefferis*) Newsom. She was a registered nurse.

Interviewer: And your grandparents?

Jeff: My grandparents were Lawrence W. and Eva Jefferis.

Interviewer: Do you know the other side? Grandparents? Or not?

Jeff: I believe it was Otto and Anna Mead. Grandparents. (*My Dad wad Devere Mead.*)

Interviewer: What brought your people to this area of Kansas? Your grandparents or whoever came here first.

Jeff: My great-granddad (*Darlington Jefferis*) lived in Dark County, Ohio. I don't know why he came here, but he came out here in 1903 and bought this quarter of ground that we live on northwest ¼ of 14, 26, 18, in 1903. And this house that we're in right now, I understand was built in the fall of 1903 and in the spring of 1904.

Interviewer: And he came here to farm.

Jeff: Yes.

Interviewer: So he had been a farmer in Ohio too?

Jeff: Yes, the family did. He came out here and bought this quarter, and then he went back and got the family, put them on the train, and I don't know why, but they got off the train in Belpre. And he bought a team and a wagon, and my granddad was, I think, eleven years old. He told me, this country was all grass at that time. When they came across the creek right north of Centerview, Grandpa said the water

was running fast enough that it floated the wagon. But the team was a big strong team, and they got across okay.

Interviewer: Describe the household that you grew up in. What was the family, brothers or step or whatever?

Jeff: Okay, my grandparents, Lawrence and Eva Jefferis, came to Spearville Hospital. My mom and dad were split before I was born. I was born at Spearville hospital, and the folks came and got us. I was born on the 5th, and on the 20th, they came and got us and brought us to this house. My mother was here until I was a year and a half old, so I was told. Then she went to Springfield, Missouri to the Burge Hospital to take nurse's training to become an R.N., which she did. But my grandparents, Lawrence and Eva Jefferis, did not adopt me, they just raised me. And I'm so thankful.

Interviewer: Were you the only child then in the household?

Jeff: Their younger daughter, a daughter younger than my mother, was here until 1938. Then she went to college. She graduated from Centerview in 1936. Of course, the folks didn't have the money to send her to college, and finally somehow they got it lined up to where she worked there in Hutchinson and she graduated from Hutchinson JuCo and then went on and graduated from Manhattan, K-State. So she helped raise me, somewhat, you know.

Interviewer: Yes, she would have been older. So what was life like growing up in this house? When you were a child?

Jeff: I have nothing but good memories. Of course, I didn't know it at the time, but there was so much love in this home. My grandmother was not able to carry a baby full term. The two females, you know, females have more will to live, they both made it, but the three little boys didn't make it.

Interviewer: Okay, you were born in 1930, so do you have any memories of the Dust Bowl?

Jeff: Oh do I!

Interviewer: Let's talk about that a little bit.

Jeff: Okay. Three or four years ago, in the Hutchinson paper, there was a big article about Palm Sunday of 1935. That particular day, my Aunt Joan hadn't graduated from Centerview yet, so she was in a quartet. This was Palm Sunday, so the quartet was to meet at the Methodist Church in Centerview that afternoon and practice Easter music. And so I went with Grandpa, and we had an old rickety building out that where he kept the car. We got the car out and as we came around to park in front of the house here, so my aunt could take the car and go practice music, and there, I wish I knew how tall those clouds were. That rolling dust. It was coming toward us. Grandpa told me, "You get in the house, and I'll go put the car away. And it hit before he got back to the house. In this house, at 3:00 in the afternoon, of course, there wasn't any insulation in the house. When they built in those days, there was a wall, and it was all lath and plaster, that was the only insulation. But in this house, right here where we are setting, I would not have been able to see your face. You people would have been just a shadow in the dust.

Interviewer: And we're only about three feet away.

Jeff: Yes. And even if you got right against them, you're still not going to see the face right away. It was dark enough, of course, everybody had chickens in those days; the chickens went to roost. I'm not quite five years old, but the folks are down in the dumps. I heard them say, "Well, another crop gone, you know where." And the wind is just blowing terrible; I suppose 60 or 70 miles an hour. I don't know. But I do remember the folks had told me... we had a wooden windmill derrick. But the folks told me, even though that's wooden, do not touch that windmill derrick in a storm. The static electricity was just snapping off of everything because it was dry and dirty. Like I say, I wasn't quite five years old, but it comes to me, "Is this the end of the world?" It looked it.

Then, after that, long about '39, when things kind of turned around a little, Grandpa and I were in Centerview. I think we were in Tom Stade Garage. I can't remember what neighbor that he's talking to. Grandpa's dad had given him this half section and the quarter north of it and that quarter west of Dodge City. I heard Grandpa and this neighbor talking, and Grandpa told him... the guy said, he wanted to know how much ground his dad had given him, and he said, "Well, I would have walked away and left it, but where would we have gone?" It was pretty bad in the thirties.

Interviewer: Do you remember? You were living on the farm stuff? Did you still have plenty to eat? Or was it hard to grow things?

Jeff: No. We had a big garden. I don't know if it was $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre, I have no idea. I just know there was a lot of garden and of course, Grandma had me out there in the summer time, you know, hoeing. The windmill run most of the time, watering it you know. I think it was long about 1936, that the government decided the only way they was going to stop this sweeping wind was to plant trees. My Granddad Lawrence W. Jefferis was a big worker in Farm Bureau. And Grandpa and Willie Weyrich and Leo Craft, or course, nobody had a pickup in those days. They was lucky to have a car; they were all Farm Bureau workers. The tree seedlings came into Fort Hays. They took the back seats out of the cars and they went to Hays and got those seedlings and brought them back. And in that day what used to be the ASC office and later was the FSA office was in the basement of the courthouse, as I recall. And they brought those seedlings there, and people picked up the seedlings there. Okay, from this house west to the road, my grandparents planted those trees. I'm sure I was a lot of help, I was there. Anyway, the jackrabbits were numerous, I mean big jackrabbits. And so, every tree we planted, we had to cover it with chicken wire, or the rabbits would eat it right into the ground.

Interviewer: And that was what year did you say?

Jeff: Well, that was about 1936 or '37, as I recall. (*Later stipulated to be 1935*)

Interviewer: Those trees are still standing, the one's we've seen?

Jeff: Yes, now later, the WPA started planting trees. They planted the trees that go south and then a half mile east. And the WPA, that gave men jobs. They called them "hoeing." They kept them "hoed" and you pulled their, it was called a "hoe." It was like a grader blade. Anyway, you either pulled that with a team of horses or your tractor. We had a tractor. Grandpa pulled it with that when the trees were little.

Interviewer: But your grandfather wasn't part of the WPA.

Jeff: No.

Interviewer: He would help keep the trees up after they were planted, or the WPA...

Jeff: The windmill was never shut off, and he had a 200 gallon tank in the back of this old Model T Ford truck. And I don't remember how much water we gave each one of those trees. Now we didn't water the WPA trees, we watered these trees. And every day or two, that was just one of the things we did.

Interviewer: And the trees were cedar and Russian olive and locust and...

Jeff: Locust and cedar and elm and there's some elm trees. ..

Interviewer: So it was a mixture.

Jeff: Oh yes, everybody took a mixture. At that time, I don't think they were sure what trees would survive. I believe that was the reason we had a mixture.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Anything else about that time period? You were in elementary school.

Jeff: At Centerview. But see, at the age I was, I didn't know we was poor. How would I know? Because of that big garden, we never went hungry. Grandma canned all summer, and that's what we ate during the winter.

Interviewer: And did you have cattle too? And hogs and chickens?

Jeff: Yes, we always had three milk cows, and we had chickens, and I don't recall what year, late '30's or early '40's, anyway, ahead of the Second World War, I'm guessing it was about 1938. This three acre lot, the middle of that big shed goes almost to Lynn's house. There's three acres there. And Grandpa never had sows. We full-fed pigs, hogs. We had self-feeder, and we kept water. In those days, there was a livestock sale pavilion in Greensburg on Friday, one in Kinsley on Saturday, and one in Larned on Thursday. When you had some fat hogs, you raised them to 350 pounds, approximately. You'd take them to the sale. And Grandpa always bought some weanling pigs home. So we had them all sizes, you know. It was a continuous thing.

Interviewer: So what were your chores during this time period then, besides weeding the garden?

Jeff: Of course that wasn't every day. But when I got home from school, it was my job to gather the eggs and make sure the chickens had water and whatever the hogs needed. Grandpa went to the Lewis Co-op and they had a grinder, you know. They'd grind milo and wheat for hog feed and put supplement in it.

Interviewer: Who did the milking?

Jeff: It was my job to help. I was never sent down there alone unless Grandpa was sick. I was never sent down there until I got older to milk by myself. But the one thing, maybe you can tell me, I never could quite understand. This intrigued me now, that was the pasture where the cattle roamed. When I got old enough to drive and maybe date. If I was crowded for time, the cows were always standing clear against that east fence with their back to the barn. You could holler, you could honk the horn on the car or do whatever you wanted to, and they'd never look at you. But, on the evening when you had all evening, they were standing at the barn door trying to knock it open to get in to get the feed. Nobody's ever been able to tell me why it's that way, but that's the way it is.

Interviewer: Just a woman thing.

Jeff: Well, I never thought about that, but that's probably right.

Interviewer: Okay, so...do you remember December 7, 1941?

Jeff: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Can you tell us what you were doing that day?

Jeff: Yes, but to back up just a little bit. Devon Stade grew up in Centerview. His dad had the garage, so he had gas pumps and sold gas and did all the mechanical work for this area and welding and kept things going. Anyway, Devon and I grew up together. My grandmother was one of 11 children. I can remember her telling me one time, I suppose I was around 10 years old. She said, "I don't want you playing with any boys that's more than a year older than you are. Because they'll tell you things you don't need to know. So Devon was the one I played with.

Rosetta: Why not more than a year older than you?

Jeff: Because they would tell me things I didn't need to know. Remember, she was born in 1890 and she was one of eleven children. And this was her house. You abide by those rules or you could pack your suitcase and leave. That didn't really appeal to me. Because there was something good to eat here and people to take care of me and they were very good to me, probably too good. But I love the memory of those people. You bet.

Interviewer: So you were leading up to December 7.

Jeff: Oh yes, if, I hate to tell you this, but I was never a good reader. I read what I had to; it wasn't a joy to me. I'd rather, when I got home from school, set in there...Grandpa had an Atwater Kent Radio. Of course, this was before electricity, and it ran on a six volt battery. And a lot of times you'd get right in the middle of a program and it would just start fading away. And we had no way to recharge a battery. But...

Interviewer: So you had no electricity in this house.

Jeff: Not until after I graduated from high school. We had coal oil (*Coleman Gas*) light, which was good, bright light. But, now where were we? Oh yes, December 7. Devon Stade, had an uncle that he thought the world of. He was a brother to Tom Stade, his dad, who had joined the Navy in 1938 to make a career of it. So, when this hit, especially when the Korean thing hit, we had, because we were together a lot, we had talked about it. Well, if you and me, if we have to go to the service, and this is not knocking any branch of service, I'm just telling you what our desires were. Well, it wasn't any question for Devon. He said, "Uncle Orton was in the Navy, and that's what I want to join." And I wanted to join the Air Force. I thought that would just be all right. Anyway, on December 7, now, I kind of got off the story there. I do not know if I had ever heard of Pearl Harbor. I'm not sure, until then. I might have, but if I did, it was because of Devon's uncle. His ship might have went through there of something. But it scared me so because I didn't really understand about war. I guess that's...I wasn't used to what happens in a war. I wondered, would they come marching down our road? What the heck did I know that they wouldn't? And I knew if they did, you know, we're in big trouble. It just swelled up my chest to where I could hardly breathe. So that's what I remember the most.

Interviewer: Did you hear it on the radio? Or were you told?

Jeff: No, I think Grandpa heard it on the radio. As I recall, Grandma had me out where those bushes are. In those days, you know, our deep freeze was to go get a hen or two and kill them and fix them. Pull their heads off and...that's what we...that was the deep freeze. If company pulled in, which I suspect they didn't very often, but if they did, you killed more chickens and that's what we ate. But as I recall, the way I remember it, of course this was before electricity. So Grandpa was shaving with a straight edge. And he come busting out the door. He run towards Grandma and he said, "My god, Eva. I just heard that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor." That really got my attention. I didn't understand about war. Later, it came to me, that if they came marching down our road, we're in trouble. So I think that's the way I heard about it. Like I say, I don't know if I'd ever heard of Pearl Harbor before that or not. But it did instill in me, after the war was over, and we had won, that I have got to see Pearl Harbor. It was just one of those things I've got to do before I leave this world. And I've been fortunate enough, we've been there twice. We saw the U.S.S. Arizona memorial, and it just blows me away. We were there in '96, the last time. There's still diesel fuel coming up out of that ship. That just doesn't hardly seem possible to me.

Interviewer: After Pearl Harbor, did you have other cousins, uncles or whatever that were drafted or did go into the service?

Jeff: Well, my Aunt Joan, who was here till '38 and went on to Hutchinson Juco and then K-state. There was a young man that grew up in southern Nebraska, by the name of Martin V. West, who grew up in a big family. Of course, nobody, you know, didn't have much money. So in December of 1940, he joined the National Guard. And, 'cause he loved horses, so he joined the cavalry part of it, and he was stationed at Fort Riley. And that is how my uncle by marriage, Martin V. West and my Aunt Joan got acquainted and married. I wish I could remember, now at first he was in the cavalry. Then they did away with the cavalry, and he was in amphibious tanks. He hauled troops and supplies in and he was in the Pacific. I cannot even remember all the names of the islands he went in on, but he was in a bunch of them. I can remember Leyte and Truk, that's two that I can think of that he was in on. (*Others were Midway and Wake.*) He never got hurt. In fact, this fall, in August, we celebrated his 90th birthday. Now my aunt's gone, been gone since '96, but he's still going. We had a big celebration. Now I have thanked him many times for what he did for the United States of America.

Interviewer: What did you notice during the war? What were the changes in the county?

Jeff: Well yes, a few. I wrote this down, and I don't know what else was rationed. Of course, there was no new vehicle sitting around to buy. No new tractors and all that bit. As far as I know, the only thing I can think of was white sugar was rationed, tires were rationed. And the only reason I know this was because my Uncle Bill Nichols run the pool hall in Kinsley Beer was rationed. I don't have any idea what the quota was or anything. His beer came from Dodge City. But I don't know; there wasn't such a thing yet as tubeless tires. Every tire had a tube in it. In our car, you had what I call a bicycle pump, so you could pump it. And you had patching and glue that was all in a kit in the car, and when you had a flat tire, you jacked it up and you took the wheel off the car, and you laid it down. Now you had tire tools, and you got the tire off the rim on one side to where you could get the tube pulled out. You patched the tube and put it back, put the tire back together, and you pumped it up by hand. That was how things were done in those days.

Also, as far as gas rationing, you had a sticker. Every car had to have a sticker (*on the windshield*). Oh, let's back up a little bit. It was 35 mile per hour. You did not drive over 35, as far as I know, ever. Because if you did, and they caught you. They took your gas tickets. So when your tank run empty,

there sat the car. So everybody was dedicated to winning the war, as far as I know. I never heard anybody say anything to not wanting to win the war. There may have been some, you know, but I don't know them. In the windshield of the car, you had a "A", that was the smallest amount of gas. But if you had a "B", that was more gas. And then there was also a "C", and that's what we had, because we were full-feeding hogs. Okay, like I told you, we raised fat hogs up to 350 pounds. I wish I knew when this happened. They put out the word, "We've got to have 'em to 500 pounds." As I understand it, that extra fat made explosives. We didn't have the very best of loading equipment. We had this two wheel trailer. I still have it out there. Grandpa had it made when we started full feeding hogs. A blacksmith made it in Greensburg. We would back up; mark the ground. We had no pickup, we had a trailer hitch put on the car. And then we would dig holes down for the trailer tires to drop down in so the trailer was setting down on the ground. That way, you could encourage the hogs to load, and when you're loading fat hogs, you do not get them excited. If you do, you can lose 50 pounds of weight. You just kind of nudge them along, you know. You may want to say something, but you don't say it. You encourage them to get into the trailer, and then when you get them in there, you get the end gate in and if it's hot weather, we'd drive around here to the windmill and we would water them down and keep them cool. Because if they get hot and upset, they lose all that weight. Then we would head for the sale. The men that worked at the sale pavilions, anytime I was there, they knew what was expected. They didn't try to get them all upset or anything.

Interviewer: What did you do during that time for entertainment? What was going on?

Jeff: Of course, at Centerview, we had basketball and baseball. A boy growing up, you know, you wanted to be part of it; it was a big deal. Bernard Martin was the principal and the coach for a long time at Centerview.

Interviewer: How far did you go for games and things? I was thinking about the gas and...

Jeff: One time I really remember, we went to Radium, I believe it was, which was quite a ways away, up northeast. This was after I was in high school, and this is something that you wouldn't even contemplate doing today. We had a school bus. We left Radium when the game was over, and we got about a mile, and the headlights went out. We had clearance lights, and it was a moonlit night. This bus, instead of having fuses, it had something new. It had breakers. Well, if you had a short, the breaker would open up and the lights would go out and then after it cooled down, it would go back on. We drove from Radium to Centerview with kids on the bus that way. But we had clearance lights. We played Zook and Trousdale and Fellsburg and Greensburg and Kinsley, and I can't tell you if we played Haviland though. Up to Lewis, we played Haviland; we surely did because that wouldn't be so far away. And of course, that was a big entertainment. Parents wanted to see their kids perform, you know. And so, not many people drove their cars because you didn't have the gas.

Interviewer: Lewis, they were busy on Saturday night and stuff like that. Was Centerview still enough of a town?

Jeff: No, not really. I can remember once in a while being in Lewis, or Kinsley, and everybody is in town...this is Saturday Evening...They were sitting on the front fender of the car visiting with the neighbors you know, and getting groceries. You could get your hair cut until 10 or 11 o'clock at night I guess, you know. That's just the way it was. No, Centerview wasn't in on that.

Interviewer: About how many people were in your graduating class?

Jeff: At Lewis?

Interviewer: No, at Centerview. Before you left here. How long did you go here?

Jeff: Well, like I say, there were four of us that were to be seniors that went to Lewis. There was already 16, that's the biggest class I'd ever been in. The class of '48 at Lewis. There was 20 of us graduated. And that was the biggest school class I was ever in until that fall when I went to Pratt Juco. Of course, when you get to college that's a whole different ball game. But that's what happened. Centerview just run out of kids.

Interviewer: So you would have just been starting high school at the end of the war.

Jeff: Well, the first fall was '44. It was still going in '44.

Interviewer: But you weren't probably dating or anything like that yet.

Jeff: No. Grandpa told me, he said, "I can't let you take the car at night like that because if you have any kind of a wreck, they'd take our farm." Which was true.

Interviewer: When did you start driving for the farm? How old were you?

Jeff: Well, in 1936, in the good ol' Dust Bowl days, this half section and Grandpa was trying to get enough wheat to plant wheat that fall. He put me in the seat of that Caterpillar tractor. Okay, it has a straight exhaust, bellerin', and the combine's right behind me with a straight pipe, and it's bellerin', and it took me a while to get used to all that racket so close. The only ground we cut was the low ground. I don't know if he got enough wheat to plant that fall, I don't remember that. I just know that was why we were doing that. So I started in the harvest of '36. Then later, most ground had a barbed wire fence around it. 'Cause you run the milk cows and the fence was, you know, practically a half mile long here. And in the spring, he'd put me in the seat of Model T Ford truck and we had posts and wire and staples and all that good stuff to repair the fence. Because during the winter, the thistles blowing through it would tear staples out and...so anyway, he didn't have to drive and fix fence. So he put me into the old Model T truck, going with him, you know, to build fence. Because that was the main thing I drove, but that was not out on a public road. That was in the field.

Interviewer: So during the war, your life didn't probably change too much, did it?

Jeff: Not really.

Interviewer: Did your grandfather use hired men?

Jeff: Oh yes, for harvest.

Interviewer: Were they still available during the war.?

Jeff: There was young men came from most generally Arkansas. And there was two young men, they weren't related, but they worked for Grandpa two or three years. Must have started ahead of the war, anyway, this one that we liked, his name was Bill Burke. He evidently got drafted. He was in the Pacific; I don't remember where it happened. He wrote the folks, near as we could figure out, he'd been machine gunned, 'cause he knew about this full feeding hogs, you know, because we'd butchered. The neighbors would get together and spend a whole day, butchering and getting meat.

Interviewer: And you had a smoke house?

Jeff: No, finally the Lewis Co-op put in a locker in Lewis. That was so wonderful. But anyway, this Bill Burke wrote the folks and said, "I sure wish I had some of those innards of those hogs." Anyway, we never heard from him again. We just figured, or the folks did, that he'd been machine gunned. And those Arkansas kids, another thing that I couldn't hardly believe, they were barefoot. And they carried a pair of shoes with them. Where they grew up, the only time they wore shoes was to go to church. They could walk through Mexican sandburs and just rake 'em off and hardly miss a step! Boy, not me...I was never that tough.

Interviewer: Did you see any changes at school during the war? Or did that go on pretty much the same? Did the teachers stay the same?

Jeff: Well, We had a teacher or two that got drafted from Centerview. A math teacher I remember, Mr. Dodge, he went to the service. And another thing about my Aunt Joan and her husband, Martin V. West. He shipped out for overseas, and two days later Aunt Joan was in the hospital there in Fort Riley. That's where their first daughter was born. And he never saw Nancy, their first daughter, until she was about three and a half years old.

When I was in the Air Force, he got a hold of me one time when I was home, and he said, "Whatever you do, when you get discharged, keep your G.I. insurance." When he come in on the ship to Seattle, and it was, I suppose, Bedlam, I don't know, and he said, "Anything they shoved in front of me, I signed." He signed away his G.I. insurance, and he regretted that, but it was too late to do anything about it. So he said, "Be sure to keep your G.I. insurance, it's the cheapest insurance you'll ever have."

Interviewer: That's health insurance (N) or life? (Yes). Do you remember the end of the war? VE day or VJ day? Do you remember anything that went on when people came home?

Jeff: I might back up a minute, before we get into that. In the wheat harvest of 1944, the Caterpillar tractor and the old combine. The old Caterpillar tractor was getting pretty tired. It went down before we got done. A neighbor down south, good friend, Carson Reed, came. Grandpa called him and they decided it was on its last legs pretty well. It would take quite a bit of repairing, but they didn't have time to do it because they were trying to finish wheat harvest. So Carson had two D John Deere's. A '28 and a '32, and he told Grandpa, he said, of course now, our whole combine was on steel, you have to remember that that pulls harder than rubber tires. Carson said, "Come get that '32 D, it'll pull that combine." Grandpa didn't think it would. But, his back was against the door, trying to finish up wheat harvest. So, Grandpa was still debating when Carson drive in with this '32 D. Hooked on, and it did. It pulled. Maybe not as good as the Caterpillar, but it pulled it. And so, Grandpa went to the ration board, I tried to find it in his diary. I thought he went to the OPA office, the price of administration, but he went to the ration board and made application to buy a tractor. They had to approve his application. You didn't go in and five minutes later, it was approved. I don't know how it was, the board met, and they decided that he was entitled to a new tractor. It said in the diary that he went through Weyrich and wanted to buy a D John Deere. This was the fall of 1944. And in that day and age, Bill Fravel sold new Minneapolis tractors. And George Fox sold Case and I thought Grandpa applied to each one of those, but according to the diary, I was mistaken. And when you signed up at a dealer to buy a tractor, if you turned it down when it got here, then your name went to the back of the list. I do know that. And so, the first part of September, Weyrich called when I got home from school, and said, "Lawrence, your D is here." In those days, you didn't haul it on a trailer. Tractors were moved on the railroad. They parked the flat car and you had, I don't know how much time, I suppose you had a day, I don't know about that, but you had to get that tractor off of that flat car or they started charging you I think they

called it demurrage. So, when we got there, the dealer had got it off so Santa Fe could hook on to that flat car and get to going. And we went up to see the new tractor. And they had it jacked up on the back end and both wheels lying flat on the ground. And they had run the inside of the wheel full of cement. For weight! We didn't have iron weight in those days. This was before they decided to use iron weight, so he used cement to weight the rear wheels of the tractors. That's the way they did it. And they had just finished trailering, and Weyrich John Deere was in Kinsley where the Santa Fe Railroad and Main Street meet, Weyrich building was right here, just north of where the Kinsley Bank is right here. And, I'd never had an opportunity to run a new tractor. 14 years old, and I'm going to drive that new tractor home. You didn't haul them, you drove them. 16 miles. So in the next day or two, I went up there and the only thing the tractor didn't have...it just so happened that that particular D John Deere, and they had sold other 1944 D's, and I think John Jay Riisoe's dad was one of them, up until then, they had all be hand cranked, this particular D, and I have it restored out here, had an electric starter. Some of the other '44 D's had lights and a generator and battery, but didn't have electric start. That electric start on that tractor had never really given any problems. It has always worked. And so, of course, the parallel was paved in those days, and I came south of Kinsley and down the parallel. I came through Centerview to show everybody our new tractor. That was the first new tractor I had a chance to run. I'd run a lot of different tractors, but that was the first new one.

Interviewer: Now, would he have bought that on time? Or would he have had the money.

Jeff: Well, if he didn't have the money, he would have gone to the bank and borrowed it. There was no John Deere Credit or anything like that in those days.

Interviewer: But the bank would have loaned money for something like that.

Jeff: Oh yes, so I don't know if he had to borrow some money at the bank, or if he had the money. I don't know that. But anyway, in those days, when you drove a vehicle away, the dealer had the money.

Interviewer: Okay, you were going to tell us something about the end of the war. What do you remember about...anything...?

Jeff: I remember pictures in...Grandpa was a reader, and he always subscribed to *Life Magazine*. The pictures of the happy people. I remember some of those pictures; that's the main thing I remember. Of course, this is before TV and all this bit, so now, if somebody hiccups in Segovia, within three seconds we know it. I don't know if communications are too much or not.

Interviewer: Do you remember how the community reacted to the soldiers returning? How did the community react if there was a casualty?

Jeff: Well, Centerview was a small school, but there was at least two and maybe three young men that went to service in the Second World War that never came back. And I can't remember there, one of them was an Elmore that they raised watermelons over east here south of Fellsburg in there someplace there. Of course, everybody that had somebody in service, they had some kind of an emblem in the window, you know. And you just hoped and prayed that the government man wouldn't come knocking on your door.

Interviewer: Was it mentioned at school when somebody who graduated was lost?

Jeff: Surely was, because a close community like, every community...everybody was wanting to win the war, so I'm sure there was that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Then after the war. Let's see, you graduated in '48. Then we'd like to talk a little bit about why you signed up for the Air Force. What year was that?

Jeff: Well, the Korean thing started in June of 1950. That spring (*my grandfather planned an anniversary trip for my grandmother.*) My grandparents that raised me were married in Kinsley in 1911 like that one picture there showed. (*At the time*) Grandpa had some relation that owned a cabin on San Francisco Bay. He contacted Grandpa and said, "You can use that cabin for your honeymoon." And so they were there a week. So in 1950, in the spring, Grandpa pulled me aside one day, and he said, "Jeff, you're not married, and if I have a wheat crop, I'm going to buy a new car, and I want you to drive Grandma and me to the west coast. Grandma had a nephew in Seattle and, like I say, Grandpa was a reader and it was different things along that he wanted to see, and then we came down the coast. Grandma loved flowers, and she had read how beautiful the flowers were at the Washington State Capital and the Oregon State Capital and the California State Capital were. And she wanted to see those.

And so, we had a good wheat crop and he bought a new Ford car. We left here on the 22 of July, and we were gone three weeks and two days. We went to Denver, Cheyenne (*and on to the Black Hills*); we went the northern route over the Big Horn Mountain. I can't think of the name of that, that Grandpa had always read was big there on that Big Horn Mountain. Him and I walked up to the grave; he wanted to see it.

Then the next thing that like blew me away, was Bonneville Dam. I'd never seen, you know, the only water I'd ever seen while I was growing up was in the tank for the cattle to drink. Well, when I played in the water, my feet would pull my head out of the water, so I was all right. Man, oh man, we got to that Bonneville Dam and the gentleman was taking us through, and he took us down by the turbines down underneath. They're spinning, and water's coming through, before you get in there, you can hear the roar of the water after it comes up through the turbines. Then everything comes up there at the lake. It was a whole new experience for me; I'd never seen anything like that. And this gentleman told us, "Now you might be the last civilians to go through here, because we're expecting a call anytime now from Washington D.C. because of sabotage to not take anybody down here anymore. But we got to go through it.

And then we went to Seattle, and we visited Grandma's nephew there. And then we went on the mountain that here a few years ago blew up. Then we had a family picnic. Then we were ready to take the highway scenic route all the way down to Frisco. San Francisco. We leave Grandma's nephew and family that morning, and as far as I know, we're headed for California. After we get away from the family, Grandpa said, "No, we're not going to Oregon today. I've read about it, and I want to do it while we're here. I want to ferry across Puget Sound. So, we go around over, and as we're coming down to where the Second World War ships were tied up, I can't think of the name of that big ship, the U.S.S. Yorktown, is the one we're facing, which later in the Vietnam thing, my little brother Keith is on for three years. He helps take it out of moth balls, and then he helps put it back, and then he finishes on the U.S.S. Raleigh. Anyway, we go past the Yorktown there, and we get over to where the ferry is. And the ferry across Puget is pretty good sized. The people are up on top, and the vehicles are underneath. Okay, we're out a ways from land, and the captain comes on, the captain of the boat, and says, "Right here, the water's 100 feet deep." And I immediately think, "I don't think my feet would keep my head out of water here. I'd be in trouble." And about that time, Grandma decided that she'd left something in the car that she wanted. So I go down to get it, and the car right behind us was a new '50 Pontiac. Four door. And these people were traveling with a cat, a family cat. Now that cat could not see water, but you're not kidding him. He was sitting up on the back of the front seat and his eyes were huge. And the

claws were dug in. If I'd opened the door, he'd have just...he was so scared. So, I got to see the U.S.S. Yorktown before Keith got on it. Then we go to Oregon and see the Capitol grounds. Then California was next. When we get to the California state line, you have to open up the trunk and they have to inspect for certain things that you don't carry into California. And we couldn't get the trunk open. The trip there, it had come off. I wasn't too sure they weren't going to...we were not going into California until they got that trunk open. We worked and worked and worked and finally got it open. So that was...oh, after we got into Frisco and were starting home, we came across the Golden Gate Bridge. So I got to go across it one time. And I just heard a couple days ago that part of it fell. A lot of people who use that to get to work were in trouble. They were unhappy. I don't know if they had another way around or if it was going to take forever. But anyway, I remember the sign saying when we got out on it, if you have a flat tire or the car quits or anything, it was so many dollars. You don't do anything to your vehicle. You wait until the wrecker comes and gets you. We came on east and came through Colorado. Oh, another thing about that particular trip in 1950, growing up in the Dust Bowl. We got back to Eastern Colorado and I had been on a motor cycle through Colorado to Denver and Pueblo and Colorado Springs. Gypsy tours. That's a motorcycle gathering in '47, '8 and '9. And ahead of this trip, then in '47, '8 and '9, when you went through eastern Colorado and western Kansas, everything was burnt up. It looked like winter. Okay, this 1950 car trip, we leave Pueblo and everything is lush green. We didn't think too much about it. Then out in eastern Colorado, it's still lush and green. I began to check the map to see if I am on a different road or...there's something wrong here. Then we get into western Kansas and it stays lush and green. And we get home, and the mud holes are all full and everything. And while we were gone those three weeks and two days, it had rained over 11 inches of rain here.

Interviewer: You couldn't have been farming anyway.

Jeff: Well, my mother and step dad and their four kids moved into this house while we were gone. My step dad was going to keep the farming done. And he farmed one day.

Interviewer: So what made you sign up? Were you drafted or...

Jeff: That's plain and simple. Devon Stade and I, we had talked about it. We knew what we were going to do. Like I say, this is not knocking any other branch of service, but he wanted to join the Navy and I wanted to join the Air Force. And the first thing we know, we get the little post card in the mail, and we're both 1-A. So we get together and it goes on a little while, and we get another post card in the mail. 1-A. It puts a date on that one when we're going to have to report for a physical. Devon had a car, and in that period of time, the recruiters were also in the post office building in Dodge City for this area. So Devon and I decided it was time for us to go talk to a recruiter and see what we could find out. And we go to the post office in Dodge City, and we go right to the Navy because he already knows for sure that's what he wants. And we start telling the recruiter our sob story or whatever you call it, that we're about to be drafted. And he said, well, one of you is in really good luck, because I had a young man from Bucklin that was supposed to leave (this was on a Saturday) this evening to go take his physical. And he showed up with appendicitis. So he said, one of you can sign up right now and leave this evening.

So there wasn't any question. Devon signed up and went out. I went to the Air Force recruiter and told him my sob story. He said, well, I'll tell you what. I can guarantee that I can have you gone by next Saturday night if you sign up right now. So I signed up. We came home, and Devon told his folks and grandmother goodbye and I took him back to Dodge City and made sure he got on the Santa Fe Chief, and away he went. Then so a week later, they took me to Dodge City and I got on the Santa Fe Chief and we went to Kansas City. Of course, they put us up in the Hotel Phillips, which was a nice

hotel. This is a little bit ahead of TV. There were no physicals on Sunday. I don't know if I told you that or not. At about 3:00 in the afternoon I get so bored that I think, I'm going to go out and walk, and you know, see some of the town. I went out and started walking on the sidewalk. I don't think I got three or four blocks from the hotel when I go around the corner. And this was a good life lesson for me. I go around that corner and I meet Hooks (*Grover Sr.*) McClain, who was Bob and Bill McClain's dad. He was in Kansas City to sell the cattle. Why that was a good life lesson for me was, it taught me that no matter where you are, you'd probably better mind your manners just a little bit because, and you might not even see that other person, but word's going to get back to the folks if you're doing something that you shouldn't. So, probably better just fly right.

Interviewer: How did your grandparents feel about you enlisting?

Jeff: I really don't recall because Grandpa, like I say, he lived out at Dodge City in the First World War. I kind of think that he maybe regretted not being in the service. They didn't seem to have...they weren't overjoyed about it...but they didn't have any control. That's just the way it's going to be.

Interviewer: And you think having grown up during WWII made you more inclined to want to go into service, or was it a way to get away from the farm?

Jeff: No, because in the back of my mind, the main thing I always wanted to do was farm.

Interviewer: So you wanted to go out, then come back and farm.

Jeff: Yes. I remember, I don't know what year it was, it was during the Second World War, Loy Dale Doughty, he grew up here in Centerview, a little older than me. I don't remember the other two boys' names. Anyway, there was three of them, and I think they were seniors. But they joined the service at Christmastime. The year they were seniors, and went to service. Loy Dale was in the Navy. I'm not sure, maybe they were all in the Navy, but I remember everybody telling them goodbye at school. And they were on the way.

Interviewer: Well, I know of something else we, I know that there were parts of Edwards County that B29's went over. Did you see that when you were...

Jeff: When we were out here, we didn't have that shop, and the old granary, it's in pretty bad shape now. That was the only place we had to get anything in, so when we were working on machinery or anything, you wouldn't go in there anyway, outside. During the Second World War, it was all prop jobs. Airplanes, and you could hear them. There was B-17's, B-24's. The B-25's and B-26's were two engine. Dodge City had 26's, and I don't remember exactly where 25's were. But there was airplanes in the air practically every minute of the day and night. On my 13th birthday, we had come from the harvest field and got out to see something at the house, and this airplane was coming over from the west. And I happened to have a flashlight or something, and I pointed it, turned it on you know, and this was my birthday. And they winked back. But there were just...now Ralph Baird told me, you know, he flew 23 missions over Germany, out of England. And he told me one time that he took his final training in Liberal. He flew B24's. It was a box tail, four engine, big. When he came to Lewis you know, he could fly a single engine, a twin engine, four engine. That was a big deal, and he flew...I thought in my own mind that he flew 25 missions, but I found out later that he flew 23. But he never got injured. You know, that just blows me away to think that anybody could be with that many bombs and grenades and bullets and not get injured. Very lucky.

Interviewer: This is a question we haven't asked here. I know in Pratt they had the blackout stuff because of the air base. Did you have to do blackout things here?

Jeff: No, I don't recall that we did that.

Interviewer: Nobody has mentioned that before, but I know in Pratt, Jerry said.

Jeff: No, because the airbase was right north of Pratt there. And I'm not sure what planes they had; I've kind of forgotten. But I can remember when we would go to Pratt. See, in those days, for us to go to Pratt was most generally through Centerview and east of Fellsburg and Trousdale and through Byers. Then they built a separate road for us to go by the base. We went to Pratt for repairs and things like that.

Interviewer: So after you came here in the Air Force for two years, is that right?

Jeff: 16 months.

Interviewer: And then, when did you start dating your wife?

Jeff: When I got home.

Interviewer: As soon as you got home?

Jeff: She was a senior and I was back in the Air Force. After our engagement was announce, of course, the word in Lewis was, "It won't last a year." I'm very thankful that that was not true. I don't know if some of that was because of my dad. I don't know. I'm just very thankful that it didn't pan out that way. One thing my grandparents taught, of course they had gone through this thing because my mom was...two weeks after she graduated from Lewis High School, her and her boyfriend run off and got married. So in 1929, I'm just sure that her folks, my grandparents, were not overjoyed. They would not talk about it, not to me. And so, they were split the afternoon before I was born. So I've been told, I was there, but I don't remember. But I've lived a charmed life because of my grandparents. They took me in and listened to a smart mouthed teenager and all this bit, you know, I'm so fortunate. Because of, in those days, as far as I know, the only jobs for a female was a waitress or a secretary probably. I think that might have been part of the reason that my mom went to Springfield. Grandma had a sister that lived right across from Burge Hospital. She became a registered nurse because that was an honored thing, as far as I could figure out. If you were a registered nurse, you know, you deserved respect, was the way it looked to me.

Interviewer: So during the Korean War, what did you do? We might as well just keep going, get this over with. We won't have to come back.

Jeff: I was in atomic energy commission, which was a big deal. See, when I was in basic, there was eight weeks of Air Force Basic at Lackland Air Force Base at that time. I think we were probably in the sixth week, and they had day of career counseling, and you went over to career counseling and there was a questionnaire about what you thought you might, what job you would like while you were in the air force. It the way I recall it. So I thought, air plane engine mechanic, because I've always liked mechanics, that's what I want. So, I'm signed up to go to Sarasota Florida for A & E, Airplane Engine, mechanics. And when it comes time...after you graduate from basic, then they put us in barracks, and that's the only people that's in these barracks are just waiting to ship out to go to tech school. You have to keep everything in your duffel back, because you only have 30 minutes when the 6x6 truck comes by

to pick you up. They're only going to wait on you 30 minutes. And if they drive away and you're not there, you're going to go to something else. So, I'm sitting there waiting. It comes time for me to ship out and go to tech school, and a runner comes to the orderly room. Everything comes through the orderly room. When they say jump, you jump. Okay, this runner says, "You are to report to the orderly room." So I go to the orderly room. This sergeant pulls out a sheet of paper, and it's all names. And there is my name, and there is a red line drawn through it. He asked me my name and I told him. You're not going to Sarasota, Florida. You might as well go back to barracks and go to sleep. Tomorrow morning at 08:00, you will report to building no. --, and I don't remember the number. And so, the next morning at 08:00, there were 40 of us in there when I get in there. In the service, you're a few minutes ahead. You're not a few minutes behind. And there's 40 of us, and my god, the rumors. I got in there about 15 minutes ahead of time. The ones us that is in there, the rumors just flying like crazy, you know. We're going to Egypt, we're going to...oh places around the world, you know. And at 08:00, there's a corporal walks in. Of course, (tape blip) he might just as well have been a Two Star General. Of course, when he walked in, he's in a Class A uniform. It's quiet and mute. And he said, "There's a Lieutenant General from Sandia Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico, here, and he looked over all your papers. And he said that's where you're going." He said, "I don't know a thing about Sandia Base, but I guess you will find out." And he leaves. And so when it comes time for us to go to Sandia Base...

Interviewer: Did you know anything about Sandia Base?

Jeff: Oh heck, I'd never heard of it.

Interviewer: And neither had anybody else?

Jeff: I don't think so. And so, there's Lackland Air Force Base and Kelly Air Force Base and its at Kelly Air Force Base, where the planes are. And all night long when we were in basic, we'd hear them revving up the engines and, just mainly prop jobs. This was a little bit ahead of jets. There was a few jets, but the main Air Force yet was a lot of props. And when they're working on them all night long, revving them up and letting them off, but it didn't keep you awake, 'cause you was tired after marching and everything else all day. And so, they put us on a, you have to put your mind back 70 years or whatever. As we load on the old tired DC 3, I suppose these three young men were the crew. Now, they're not servicemen, they're individuals. I suppose they own this plane, I'm guessing, and they have a contract to haul airmen to the technical schools. As we get on, one guy standing there hands each one of us a three packs of Chesterfield cigarettes. And I never really cared for cigarettes. I'm not bragging, I've smoked a few, but I never really liked the taste of them. But there is only two of us who don't smoke cigarettes; we didn't want to be the oddballs, so we set down and seatbelts fastened. I light up like an idiot. And we take off. Now from San Antonio to Albuquerque, if you look at it on the map, if you fly straight across, like we did, you go across some big potholes in southern New Mexico. Of course, I didn't know this ahead of time, and I smoked this cigarette and put it out, and go to sleep. Before I went to sleep, I unfastened the seat belt. Because they had turned the light off, you know. Well, being asleep, I didn't see the light come on to fasten your seatbelt. And when I awake, what wakes me up? I hit the top of the airplane. They're dropping 500 feet at a time, you know, and going over these pot holes. I always liked Bob Hope; I always thought he was the greatest thing on the radio that ever happened, for me. And I heard him say one time, after the Second World War, that he had flew so many hours during the Second World War, that he had learned how to say, "Please pass the cup," in seven different languages. And just as quick as I get my seatbelt fastened, it's right here. And it just keeps gaining a little bit all the time, and I'm swallowing just as fast as I can. Luckily, and I've got the cup ready, we touched down at Kirkland Air force Base, which is right up against Sandia Base

on the south side of Albuquerque. And in fact, I think Kirkland Air Force Base is where the civilian planes land, but I'm not sure. Anyway, as quick as we touch down, and it's right here, and I'm swallowing as fast as I can. As soon as we touch down, I'm okay. So then they get us off the airplane and it's dress right dress, that's standard procedure. And they, cause there's just a fence between them at that day and age, and they march us over to our new barracks and we're marching to brand new barracks. Nobody's ever lived in them before. And cement floors. As we, of course it tickles me anymore, but it didn't then, as we're marching by some of the barracks that's already got people in it. We had all branches of service at the Sandia Base, and we had a lot of brass and you'd go out a door to the outside and you might meet a general. You didn't know who you was going to meet, and as we're marching to our barracks, there was some kind souls in these other barracks that started their, "You're gonna be sor-ry!" Welcoming committee I suppose. I've talked to Keith Newsom; he was in the Navy in Vietnam. Yes, he said that's pretty normal, to welcome you and make you feel good. But it was a good command and one of the first things they told you was, "You will write Mom and Dad or whoever raised you and you will tell them you arrived safely and all this bit. But you will not disclose any secrets of this base."

Joan: Did they censor your mail there? Or did they trust you?

Jeff: I don't think they went through the mail, but I never did write anything, because they told us, "If you disclose any secrets here, and we find out about it...it's really going to be bad for you."

Joan: And you spent your whole time there?

Jeff: Yes, sure did. I'll tell you, I'm very glad to have spent my time there. The folks got me out early because Grandpa had been climbing up in the granary down there and fell and broke some ribs and he wasn't able to farm. So they wanted me to take over the farm. But it uh...I'm glad that I served as long as I did. I did something because I think this country is the best in the world. I'm just thankful that I was born and raised in the United States of America. I may not agree with all the politics, but I love America. She's been good to me.

On this new tractor that he bought in 1944. The Rexall Drugstore was here and my Uncle Bill Nichols had a pool hall. And the Gambles Store, and the only thing the tractor didn't have on it when we got it, was batteries. Of course, there wasn't any 12 volt batteries in those days. You had to hook up two six volt batteries in a series. He got them; it just so happened that Gambles had two batteries, and we got her going. But he wrote a check, as I recall, for the tractor, to Weyrich's, for \$1,870. I think that was the amount it cost him.

End of audio.