

**Interview with Jack Miller**  
**April 10, 2009**  
**Conducted at the Miller home**  
**Interviewed by Interviewer Weaver and Rosetta Graff**

Interviewer: When and where were you born?

Jack: Edwards County, Kinsley, Kansas. December 13, 1917

Interviewer: What were the names of your parents?

Jack: Hugh Miller and Ruth Peters Miller

Interviewer: Who were your grandparents?

Jack: Abe and Emma Peters.

Interviewer: And on the other side? The Miller side.

Jack: Richard and Annie Miller.

Interviewer: You started to tell us before, what brought your people to Kansas?

Jack: The only recollection that I have is what my maternal grandmother gave to me. She came here as a small child with her parents from Washington D.C. on then what they called then an immigrant train. On that immigrant train they had their own oxen, the farming equipment that they going to need on the homestead. She was 12 years old.

Interviewer: Where did she come from? What country?

Jack: Now I'm going to...they never said in particular, but I believe they were English. I've often thought... now she gave me a lot of her history growing up and her educating, which was more of a self-education. I graduated from a school, I'm getting ahead, but it goes along with the story. I graduated from a grade school a mile and a half from where she and her folks homesteaded.

Interviewer: And what school was that?

Jack: Hope Place. There, the teacher had all eight grades. Really, we had an opportunity to get a fine education from the first grade to the eighth. People don't realize, they say, "Oh them poor kids, to go to a country school. Eight grades!" But that teacher heard recitations from the first to the eighth grade. The first grade would get up, then the second grade and the third, it was a wonder they got their own grade accomplished.

Interviewer: So they came out here, how big was the homestead?

Jack: One quarter. It seemed like they all kind of lived close by, so they could help each other.

Interviewer: And where was this quarter?

Jack: 12 miles straight south of Kinsley. The reason they brought their oxen from Washington, D.C. was, well he talked about a trader back here or a promoter. He had to be slick. People wanted to come to Kansas. All of them got to have oxen because the Indians would steal your horses. My grandmother said, "Oh, I felt so sorry for the day loading up a bunch of water to go to town with," for the oxen took so much water for the trip to just get the supplies you had to have: salt, flour, sugar.

Interviewer: Do you know how many days it took them to get here?

Jack: My grandmother didn't say; she was just a 12 year old girl, you know. I think she did well to remember where she came from. Her childhood growing up was very limited for it took place outside of the fact that she had to help the many neighbors. She helped with the nursing, doctoring, laying out the dead. We had no professionals back then. We had no professional and didn't go to town back then except to buy supplies, and they had just a few dollars, I knew, straight on.

Interviewer: Now, do you know if they lived in a soddy? Of did they live in a...

Jack: They lived in a soddy. She used to tell about they swept that floor and that dirt would get in the eyes. Then she used to tell about the times they had prairie fires. But they never talked much about the production of agriculture. I think her dad must have had buying real estate on his mind when he was coming out here because he owned the land right south of Hopewell School. Only dividing his land and the school was just the road that is now 183 Highway. He amassed a lot of land, but I don't know if he would buy it or trade for it, barter for it 'cause he didn't have no money, he traded and bartered for it. Because he ended up with a lot of land. My grandmother ended up with a half-section of land. I didn't know earlier that I was going to get a quarter of land. She never told me she was going to give it to me. But she instilled it in me to take care of the land, to be a soil conservationist. And when I was.... I started riding pastures when I was 12 years old. My dad had the saddle horses and he was grazing cattle, and he was glad to see me get up to riding pastures, "Oh, that's fine." It wasn't fine; it was cold. Well, I learned real well how to take care of pastures riding fences. Checking the water, first thing I done was check the water; make sure the cattle had water. Then I rode though the fences and checked them. Then I went and checked my head count. Then it got around that a 12 year old kid was riding fences. They called taking care of the cattle, fences, and the pastures "riding fences." And I was a 12 year old fence rider.

Interviewer: So you were a 12 year old cowboy?

Jack: I was a cowboy, and hallelujah, I got to use my dad's own saddle horses. I learned that profession real well, and I learned that I liked cattle. And I saw those old sand hills out there. Oh, they're a miracle. I'd seed the blow outs and then see a little rain and here comes some grass. They can heal themselves. Well hell, I'm going to stay in the cattle business, and I did, my whole life. I became a cattle trader. And them days there was a, why a farm, a hawho building, and farm couple generally and a lot of kids. They had milk cows and they had chickens, and they had enough grassland to furnish grass for power, their own power. They farmed. They didn't have pastures. They didn't buy gasoline. The reason they got along so well during the Depression, if they had had enough crop to raise grain for the chickens, they had meat; they had milk. The reason they would go to town was they could buy their supplies and the kids' clothes. They were more or less self-supporting.

Interviewer: How many were in your family?

Jack: Two boys and two girls. My brother was 19 months younger than I, I was the oldest. I was the first grandchild. Then, ten years later, came two sisters. Today, one is ten years younger than I am, and the other is deceased. My brother under me is deceased.

Interviewer: So there were four of you, and you were living next to your grandparents or on the same place or...?

Jack: My grandparents, Emma and Abe Peters, bought a half of section. Now they didn't buy that. This Jim Taylor, of Taylor and Sons, they knew was my grandmother's brother. He sold them a half section of land which was a mile from where my grandmother's folks had originally homesteaded. So as I told you, he accumulated a lot of land. He was a land tycoon, but that was where I was raised primarily. I went to school out there in the country school.

Interviewer: Can you tell us more about the Depression and the dust bowl?

Jack: I'll get to that, but let me get this cattle raising part first. I'll tell you, my mother and my dad and my grandmother were kind of, I guess you'd say they kept their... My mother's dad eventually bought the 12 mile south that my grandmother and father originally lived on. And we've always owned that I guess since the Taylors got it and bought it. Sure that's where they homesteaded. So it has always been (I didn't really think about that) I guess it's always been in the family.

Interviewer: Now, you said the Taylors were related to you? How?

Jack: Yes, Well, my Grandma Peters was a Taylor.

Interviewer: So that would have been part of the Taylor Ranch?

Jack: Yes. I will never forget Grandmother's brother and the family accumulated all the land down there. They were buying land while I was riding fences. Well anyhow, I grew up with the sand hill grasses. That's why when I got some, I hung on to it. People call me a sand rat and all that, but I've seen what that sand hill land grass can do. Well, I couldn't ride fences the year round, so I became a cattle trader. To put some dignification to it, I was a "cattle broker." And I traded cattle right up to the beginning of WWII. And the day I graduated high school, the kids were starting to talk about going to college. And I said, "Well kids, I don't have to go to college. I'm going to be a cattle broker." Hell, they didn't know what broker meant in those days. Anyhow, I brokered cattle up to the beginning of WWII.

People say, well, what was you doing on Pearl Harbor Day? I remember exactly. On Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock, I had 3 people helping me and I was building a cattle holding pen out on the east side of Kinsley. Because I needed a place to put cattle, I would assemble three or four head and put them together. I was taking cattle at that time to Wichita. But there were not these sale barns then but prior to the big communities, there was these country farms out there all had milk cows, but there was no place to sell those cattle or the calves or the old cows. They needed a cattle buyer. It looked real good to me, and it was. You had to out-guess the owner, but most of us got to where we could. The market for those cattle was Kansas City or the local butcher shop. That was the only place you could get rid of livestock. So I had it made because I was competing with them old people. They had me beat by a long way, but I didn't know it. I thought I would, and I could. The sales got better. They'd say, "That young whippersnapper, he don't know nothing." Well, I knew if I get a load of cattle once in a while I could think I was doing all right.

Interviewer: And the cattle went on the train?

Jack: Nearly cost me my life, but they did. On December the 7, 1941, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I had three or four guys helping build these cattle pens. I looked up and here comes a friend driving a '34 Ford. He had the doors wide open yelling "Pearl Harbor has been bombed." Well, when they had the draft, my name was next to the last to being called out. So I knew then I didn't have to go to the war until it was time, and we knew within ourselves that that war would be miserable. I listened to the radio, I read the papers quite diligently, and I knew just the minute the war was declared, I was going to have to go 'cause I was free, white, and 21. I had a girl wanting to get married, and I said, "I'll tell you what. I wouldn't leave a wife behind me." She said, "You don't know there's going to be a war." And I said, "The hell I don't."

I had a car radio at that time, and long about 11 or 12 o'clock at night, we could pick up a radio broadcast station over in Great Britain. And they kept telling you how bad the war was going to be because they were involved in it. And I said, "There's no way in the world we can get out of that thing." And low and behold, Pearl Harbor. So I told the boys "Throw those shovels down. We're going to go to town and have a drink on this." Because I knew what we was doing would be there when the war was over. Well, as I said, I'm second from the last in the draft and there was twelve or fourteen left in Edwards County yet to be called. And when Roosevelt declared war on the fifteenth, they froze everybody, the draft and all those who wanted to volunteer. There was some who knew they would be drafted, as I was. If you volunteered, you could take your choice. But they wouldn't let you do it. So in about two weeks, here comes the letter from the government. We was to go to Wichita for an examination. We was to meet at the hotel or at the county courthouse on a certain date at 9 o'clock in the morning. So we was all up there and we didn't know what the procedure was going to be or anything. An examiner by the name of Harry Johnson walked close to me. He had a great big bound manila envelope, and he handed it to me and says, "I want you are to take these boys to Wichita and take them to this location. You'll be alighted two blocks from there, and you'll take your examinations. You are to see that they get there on time and get every one of them back here." Now, I had heard many times from old WWI guys that when someone tells you something that's affiliated with the Army, you do it. So I didn't question Mr. Johnson's command at all. I took them to Wichita, got them fed and brought them back. Then we got the letter from the government whether we had passed the examination or not and to report to the courthouse on a certain date and which we did. It was three.... Mr. Johnson handed me another envelope and said, "I want you to take all these that's in here and they'll be here. You are responsible until we get to Leavenworth. Why I don't know how come Mr. Johnson picked me out, but nevertheless, he did. Mr. Johnson came here from Dallas, Texas, and he was the secretary of the construction company that built the first overpass here. He eventually married Gertrude Beale. So he was here until he passed away.

Interviewer: So how many guys were you responsible for?

Jack: If I can recall, I think there were fourteen of us left from here. But the Greyhound Bus Company started gathering them in Syracuse, Kansas and come this way. They picked them up at Lane, Meade County, Garden City and Ford County. There were three busloads that left from here.

Interviewer: Who were some of the guys that were in there? Are some of them still around?

Jack: There were six or seven of us that lived here, but I couldn't remember their names. But as I went to Leavenworth, we had a sack lunch 'cause the bus didn't stop at noon. We got into Leavenworth long about 7 o'clock. In the summertime, it was dark. And do you know what? We were civilians at that time, and by one or two o'clock in the morning, we were in the Army. We had army clothes on, we was

told to go up there and sleep in the barracks and make our own beds. We didn't know how to make those army bed, my goodness. We had taken a tetanus shot, and those tetanus shots in those days hurt. Oh, my goodness they hurt. And we was carrying all those army clothes they had given us in barracks bags. And our arms hurt! You call that an induction, whew!

Interviewer: And how old were you? About?

Jack: I was young, 26 or 27.

Interviewer: Were you older than the other guys? Or were you about the same?

Jack: I was a little bit older. I had all my hair then. But I thought, "My goodness, this is the army life." And I don't know why, but I had never been a pusher, I'd been a fence rider out there all the time, I'd let those strippers go ahead. But they kept on a picking on me. I was one of the first to make corporal. Well after I made corporal, it wasn't much of a stick to make sergeant. And then I made Staff Sergeant; and then pretty soon I made Master Sergeant. And before I left, I was First Sergeant. My first assignment when I got overseas was Company L of the 19<sup>th</sup> infantry.

Interviewer: And where were you?

Jack: Oahu, Hawaii. We were the first draftees over there after the war (*started*). And do you know what? If the Japanese had had as good of intelligence for the Army as they had for the Navy, you and I wouldn't be sitting here talking today. Because they would have walked in and taken Oahu. We had to, and why I don't know, build barb wire entanglements over there around all those coasts in Oahu 'cause, there was no defenses, not one. Kinsley's got more defenses than Oahu at that time. So all the Japanese would have had to do was just walk through.

Interviewer: So you put the barbed wire on the coasts? All the way around it?

Jack: 18 hours a day. We had training at Camp Walters. They gave us good, basic training. But, I guess the biggest surprise in the army was when I walked out and started training at Camp Walters, Texas, on an anti-tank gun. This is in April of 1942. The war has been declared about seven months. They come dragging out a toy (I says to myself) a toy? The United States Army is training on toys. You know what? That is as much of a plan that our infantry had at that particular time. Now they had pretty good airplanes. They had pretty good artillery. But we didn't have any infantry training. And we had very, very few weapons for us, you know. The way they was going through this thing over in Oahu, we were all kind of scared we didn't know what to do in this situation because, my goodness, but the United States Army, I forget the regiment, I think it was about the – oh, I won't say, what difference it makes --over to the Guadalcanal, and they was using WWI tanks. How they got those kids to ride in that... When we got to Oahu, we'd had good basic training. We helped build the fortifications for Oahu to where at least they would have a chance to defend themselves. And we had built some defensive artillery around there. They shipped us to Australia and for another eight weeks we were retrained on tactics stuff to fight the Japanese because they didn't want to go through another Guadalcanal. At that time, Macarthur thought we will do this. We were in Australia taking basic training again on how to fight the Japanese. We were in defense of Australia because they had no defenses. If the Japanese had hit the Australian coast the 24<sup>th</sup> Division would have been insubordinate. But Macarthur would leapfrog an island ... then he would go get another island, he would leapfrog, leapfrog, he would leapfrog. That's why I was in Oahu. That's why my outfit was in the first wave. We were all over New Guinea. Our regiment was over at (*unintelligible*); that's the big island of the Philippines. Then we were in the

first wave of Luzon which is the Philippines.

I cracked up after a bad battle over in the Philippines, and when you cracked up they had a name for it, they called it psychoneurosis. Meaning, you've lost your marbles. Well, when we got back to the hospital, the next morning, the doctor come up and looked at the chart and said psychoneurosis. And he scratched that and said "battle fatigue." I think you need to go back to the States." I said I didn't want to go back to the states. I want to go back to my outfit. He said, "What?" And I said I want to go back to my outfit. Well, he said you're going to be here for a while anyway. Well, the second night I was there, the Japanese come over and bombed the hospital. And they had incendiary bombs they were dropping to set us on fire. They were dropping those pipes about four inches long and big around as three quarters, and they were filled with phosphorus. And that phosphorus would burn to 1700 degrees. It'd just kill us in the hospital. They dropped one of those right over the stretcher I was lying on. And by The Boy Up Above Running The Show, that piece of phosphorous just hit the arm of that stretcher and bounced away. If it hadn't bounced the other way, it would have cut my leg off! The next morning that doctor came back and said, "You want to go back to your outfit, eh?" I said, "Yep." ...well it wouldn't burn, just kind of big L where it hit well. Anyhow, I lay there for three or four weeks. Finally broke the fever, and he asked me for the third time, "Do you want to go back?" I said, "Yep." He said, "OK, I'll have to sign the orders for you."

I went back, and you know, I didn't know anybody left in the company. I walked into the company commander, and he said, "Oh, you're from the hospital. I've been looking for you. You're my new first sergeant." I said, "Oh, I was shocked. "Yeh, I'll give you time to get over the shock." I said, "I don't know anybody." And he said, "That makes the best first sergeants." And so I was from then on until I was relieved from hazardous duty.

When I got back there to the demarcation place, they said there are two ways to go home. You can go home by plane, but you have to wait for 30 days, or you can go home by ship and leave tomorrow. I said I'd take the ship because I know it'll be there before 30 days. We got a brand new ship, the *Ernest Hinds*. Oh, it was the slickest thing you ever saw. I think we shipped out of, oh I don't know, somewhere in the Philippines, we got out about three days and the damned ship broke down. They had to get a tug to come out from what they called Burns Island. Now Burns Island was an island where the Navy had taken over to repair the ships that got shot or something like that. And we sat there for three or four days until parts got there. But it didn't take long once they got that big new motor and put it together.

And we were out on the way for about one day from Burns Island, just all in the big cabin down there. Over the PA system, they wanted to know if anybody knew how to run a certain kind of ice cream machine. One of the sailors or soldiers says, "Yeah, I knew how to run one." They said, "Come here; the captain wants to see you." So he gets up there, and the captain finds out he can operate this ice cream machine. He comes back in about thirty minutes or maybe an hour and says "Boys, you are going to have ice cream forever. We got ice cream. And guess what it's going to be?" Nobody knew or could guess. "Tomato! Tomato ice cream. They've got more tomato juice on this ship than I ever saw in my life, and we've got enough to make ice cream all the way." And you know, we hadn't had ice cream in what, three years, something like that? And it was, beyond all doubt, the best tasting ice cream I had ever had. And he got to be the best ice cream maker I ever saw in my life. I don't know how many hundreds of dollars that machine cost, but he said, "That makes all the ice cream anybody on board should want." We had ice cream for breakfast!

And those barb wire handling gloves -- they were the best gloves I ever saw for handling barbed wire. And do you think I could ever find a pair of them when I got back? I don't know how come the government disposed of them. But they surely did. They had surplus everywhere. They made thousands of dollars handling that surplus everywhere. But they never had any gloves.

Interviewer: When did you come home? When was the ship, what month or year? Did you say three years? Was it '45?

Jack: I was overseas 47 months and never had a furlough.

Interviewer: That's about four years.

Jack: Those draftees that got sent with me overseas where I was, I was put in the regular army, now we had been overseas over two years and the government said they had a new program. If you will serve overseas for 24 months, you shall be rotated back to the states for a 30 day furlough, and then we'll ship you back to your regular army. Well, we was all so happy to hear that. But by being in the regular army, we were serving over there for 36 months or 46 months. There was one old sergeant that had been over there for I don't know how many years. He was serving two or three years of bad time for coming back with gonorrhea over in China. He walked with a cane. So there goes rotation. I can remember very vividly some guy that had been overseas there 42 months rotating. There I was; I'd been there just as many months just waiting. But I can't, well I can tell you, when the ship docked, or got, I think, one day outside of Pearl Harbor, it come across the radio that they were going into Pearl Harbor, and those that lived on the west side of the Rocky Mountains would get off, and those who lived on the other side of the Rocky Mountains would go to New York. So, I was going to New York. Well, I got to go through the Panama Canal. We was outside the Panama Canal, we had just went through it, I'm going to say we were six hours out, when pretty soon all the lights came on. I wondered what in the world had happened. Well, we knew that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. We knew that had taken place, but we knew when those lights came on that something big had happened. And sure enough, the war was in cessation. That was August the 13<sup>th</sup>. So I got to go through New York Harbor. That means I left the west coast. I saw the bottom of the Golden Gate Bridge, I came around and debarked in New York Harbor and got to see the Statue of Liberty. I went through Camp Joyce Kilmer. And they said, you boys that just got back from overseas, you can have all the beer you want, you can have all the steak you want. Anything you want, you can have for your meal. Well, beer, beer and steak, you bet. I was able to drink maybe half a glass of beer. And I couldn't opened up, well there were German prisoners serving at Camp Joyce Kilmer. He's the one with the tree poem, remember, "I think that I shall never see." They had that camp named after him. And these German prisoners would take your order and they hadn't learned English very well. I ordered an 8 ounce steak; I thought I could surely eat an 8 ounce steak. Well, I was just able to, and half a glass of beer. Then I got back to Kansas City.

Interviewer: How did you get back here? By train?

Jack: I come from Kansas City to here by train. There were a lot of soldiers on the train, and a lot of civilians. I remember one lady, how well I remember her. Now, we were told those poor civilians at home had no cigarettes, no silk stockings, no booze. Well, I thought them poor things. Now I had about 10 or 15 cartons of cigarettes in my barracks bag, and they cost me four dollars and a half a carton, no taxes. But the service men bought them from the Navy. And I had any kind of cigarettes you'd want. And this lady sitting next to me, she smoked. And I said, "They tell me you haven't got cigarettes back here. And she said, "Yeh, we don't have any." And I said, "What kind do you smoke?" "Oh, Camels. Do you got Camels?" "Oh yeh, I've got Camels; I'll go get you a pack of Camels." And I went and got a pack of Camels out of my barracks bag and come back and said, "Here, they didn't cost me outside of 30 cents or something like that." I don't know; she had to go to the restroom or something. But she had her purse there, and she left it open, and I looked over and saw that she had a package of Camel Cigarettes. I thought, of all the bad names I'd been called, but that was my first association with a

“stupid idiot.” And my mother, and Bert Lewis, and his wife Thelma met me at the depot, and I come home on what they called the Doodle Bug from Newton. Took a passenger train out of Kansas City and got on what the Doodle Bug at Newton and come home.

I looked at Main Street and said it hasn't changed one bit. I went all through that war and told how the phosphorus bomb about getting me and I was shot at point blank by a little Japanese that looked to me about 12 years old but must have been 15 or 16, and he was shooting at my head instead of shooting at my chest like he should have been. Carl Gene Griffen, from Waldron, Arkansas was my runner. And I had lost my platoon leader, so I was taking charge of the platoon. I went into that battle, with about, I had practically a full three squads. "Carl Gene," I said, "if you don't get him this time, he's going to get me." I hear those shots going over my head. Well, those two times I told you, do you think, I couldn't even get a scratch, and I heard bullets go by me I don't know how many times. Limbs caught, fee-uw right by my head. Of course I was trained real well. When you was supposed to get down, I got down. And I guess that's why I'm here today shooting off my mouth.

Interviewer: Now was there any kind of a celebration when you came home?

Jack: Very little. The celebration we made ourselves.

Interviewer: What did your family do? Or what did you do? How did you celebrate?

Jack: Well, I guess I ought to tell you a story about my wife. I saw her about a month before the war was declared, or something like that. But I knew that she was going to marry one of these Gleasons up north here. What would a cute girl want to marry that no-account bastard for? That's what I thought, so why can't you say it? Well, none-the-less, that was then. Offerle had their annual, I guess it was a the (*perhaps Labor Day celebration*) And I was there with Buss Feldman that summer, and here was the girl, mother I should say now with two boys. There she was with Virginia Dolechek. So, back then, we'd been back from the Army I think two or three months. He and me was over there, and I said, kind of stag isn't it?

And he said, well, there's that Dolechek girl over there and there's that Gleason girl over there. Let's go and see if we can get a date.

Well, I was all for it. I hadn't seen a white girl for quite a while, or to be close to one at least, outside the one that hooked me for the cigarettes. So we went over and I introduced myself. ...Buss Feldman he knew Virginia Dolechek, and he hadn't met Marie Gleason, so we all introduced and we made our descent and I was in. I don't guess I ever, oh I had a girl that wanted to get married in Hutchinson before the war. I guess, well, Marie took my eye. She was right there and available. The other one lived a million miles from here, you know.

Interviewer: Did you say that her husband, was she divorced or did he die?

Jack: Divorced.

Interviewer: She divorced. That was a little unusual.

Jack: Oh yes, she was so scared to death that you wouldn't want to be seen with her because that divorce was public opinion you know. ...And the background up there, and the Gleasons all together. But nevertheless, to make a long story short, Buzz married Virginia Dolechek and I married Marie Gleason.

Interviewer: Now it took a little while, you said. Were you engaged or dating?

Jack: I went with her for two or three years. I went with her so long that I was embarrassed.

Interviewer: Was that your fault or hers?

Jack: Well, when I asked her to marry me, she said "Yes," right fast. I told you to start with because her husband's dad was Tom Gleason. Tom Gleason, even today, I respect him just tremendously because he was such a gentleman and a fine man. But this son, he was a no-good S.O.B. In my opinion and hers too for that matter. Well, he damn near beat her death that last time. That's when she got the divorce. But here I was, a wild-ass cowboy. And Marie a grass widow with two boys. Come to think about it, the old boy took my job over.

Interviewer: It seemed to work out.

Jack: 50 years? 60 years? I've been married all the way through. For a long time, we never even had an argument. Of course, I think a marriage is supposed to be 50/50, you know. And I knew an old codger like me ought to at least go 60%, and I did. And it worked! It worked.

Interviewer: Now, did you have any problems when you came home from the war dealing with your war experience?

Jack: Yes, I can talk about it now. I can talk about it now. I had one show that just scared me all for twenty years. I just...I didn't talk about it at first. I went to a picture show with Marie, and I don't know, very shortly after I got back. And a plane came over in the show, and I got under the seats, just slick. Well a plane, that's your impulse. And I'd been strafed once, in the service. And I'm telling you, that's an experience and you can't begin to explain it ... instinctual. Hell, there's no cover for it. No cover for it. And I always took good care of Maria. I had this one kid who always kept, "Get down, Get down, Get Down." I told him to get down and he didn't get down, and he got shot. And when he died in my arms, he said, "Sergeant, I should have got down." But he died. That..damn. That still bothers me. But I didn't have to have any psychiatry. I kept thinking what that doctor said over there in the Philippines, "You can go when I tell you you can go." So I'm a cattle trader when I got back.

Interviewer: Let me ask you one more question. Did your brother go into the service.?

Jack: He went into the Navy shortly after he graduated from high school. And he stayed in the Navy all through the war. He was discharged out of there during the war.

Interviewer: What theater was he in?

Jack: Pacific. I come home and went right into trading cattle. But it was a lot different then than today. You got the cattle trader beat, now he's an order buyer, 'cause you can't trade in cattle. And the market we went to in Kansas City, and we sold to the pack houses. Those pack houses now are out here. They're at Liberal, Garden City and Holcomb, Dodge City.

Rosetta: Your dad started the sale pavilion? That was before the war. Did you help him start the sale pavilion?

Jack: I worked at the sale pavilion. I made acquaintance at the sale barn with an old Colonel Sims, P.C. Sims. And he and I were good buddies, and he knew that I was a sand rat, and after the war, very shortly after the war, I don't remember how many months, he walked up and said, "Jack, come here a

minute.” He said, “I bought you a pasture.” Well, hell, I hadn’t got money enough to buy a pasture. “Well, you’d better find it because I bought you one.” He said, “Come back tomorrow, I want to talk to you. Come down.” He had a bank under the old bank building on the south side of Main Street. And I went down there. He told me what place he’d bought and what it cost. And I said, “Colonel, I don’t know how I can swing that.” And he said, “Well, you go find a way, son, ‘cause you got it bought.”

Well my Mother had sold her property out west that my Dad had bought through the war. My brother and I went out and looked at the property and my goodness, there was 35 miles right straight north out of Colorado, and that was about 12 miles west of where the government had put all of these Japanese.

Interviewer: An internment camp.

Jack: Exactly. I said, well, them damn little things I chased all around the jungles over there, and I didn’t know where they was and .... I just don’t want to come out here. I’m just not interested in this place at all. I told my mother that’s not for us out there. So she sold that land after the Colonel had bought this grassland I said, “Mom, maybe you buy half of that, and I’ll buy half.” So my mother and I were partners in that Charlie Smith place. About five miles straight south of Kinsley. It lay on both sides of the highway. There was 1,300 and some odd acres in it. So then I said, well, I got my pasture. I got my ranch. Got a wife.

Interviewer: Got two boys.

Jack: Got my boys.

Interviewer: And that’s what we call, that’s the house that’s still there? Right on the curve?

Jack: Yes.

Interviewer: Just wanted to be sure I knew where I was at.

Jack: I bought a house and moved it in there. Yes. After the tornado hit and tore the barn down. Well, that just about covered my life. I left out a lot of parts that I’m not proud of.

Interviewer: That’s all right, that’s your right. We’ve got a couple other questions that we’d like to ask. Rosetta had one about going back. When you left on the bus to go to Leavenworth, did the town give you any kind of a send off? Or did you quietly just get on and go?

Jack: Oh no, there was a gathering of a couple hundred people I would guess. No band, but well-wishers...

Interviewer: Your families and...

Jack: No, my family wasn’t there saying goodbye. See, they had it rough. They had two boys, both of them in the service and operating with no help with a war on. People at home had it rough.

Interviewer: How did it affect your mother and your family? Having the men folk gone?

Jack: My dad was another casualty of the war with both of his sons gone. He died when he was 46. My mother was left there with a farm and a ranch to run, two girls and having that business in Colorado.

And she had it rough. And my dad I know with having two sons in the service and all the help gone, he 'bout worked himself to death. He had heart trouble.

Interviewer: What year did he die? It was during the war?

Jack: Yes.

Interviewer: So the strain you think caused an early death maybe.

Jack: I know it did. 'Cause he just knew, this is what that not knowing the truth will do to us. He was just told that the army was going to make a bombing target out of his pastures. See. And he knew then that he'd lose his pastures.

Interviewer: Who told him that?

Jack: Well, it was talk, rumor, 'cause I don't know. I wasn't here. But the rumor was that they would bomb the pastures. But the Army did get some pastures, but it didn't take his. But the rumors and two sons in the service and no help.

Interviewer: Now, was it close to Kinsley where they actually used pastures for bombing?

Jack: Oh yes. Just south of the river, yes.

Interviewer: One question we were kind of exploring, that really had nothing to do... During this time period of the war and shortly after, we were just interested in how, the relationship of the Hispanic and the black community. Did you have any?

Jack: Well, I was in the war when Harry Truman said, what did they call it when they put the blacks and the whites? Combining?...

Interviewer: Integrating.

Jack: Integrate! That's right. Personally, that didn't bother me at all, still doesn't. If colored folks wanted a friend, they got one in me. I was in charge of a combat unit coming back from overseas. All black. They were rougher on their own than we were, but I also saw that the Deep South resented. They even hate them today. I was in Mississippi at one of the livestock auctions they have down there, in the sale barn; I saw a little café right there in the lobby. I go inside to get a cup of coffee. I was just inside and felt give a tap on my back and I turned around. The guy pointed to a sign, "Blacks Only." I thought, "What the hell, a Kansas kid down here." I read the sign. You want to keep me out of the café? What the hell's wrong with you?

Interviewer: Did you have blacks in your class in school and ...

Jack: I went to school with Martha Gains and Bill Gains and Howard Gains. But you know, if I went down to Mississippi, which I did, and told them I went to school with colored kids. "Oh, you didn't!" That was prejudice. Of course time gets away from me, but ten or 15 years ago I bought a lot of cattle out of Mississippi. I couldn't buy 350 pound calves here, 'cause the calves got to be in Edwards County weighing four and a half and five and a half. Now they'll weigh six and a half. I can buy those three and a half calves what I used to buy them in Mississippi; they're getting smart down there too. Now

they're 350 pound calves up to 450 pound calves. I don't know. I just set here one time 'cause I had to have these cattle, as least I thought I did. Those calves were getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And I said, "I'm going to go someplace and find some light calves." And I happened to see and ad in the Livestock Weekly that is printed in San Angelo, Texas, and I saw in there, Mississippi Order buyers. So I called them and told them who I was and what I wanted. And, "You come down." So I flew down. I done business with those Mississippi order buyers for, I guess, ten or 15 years. Went down there because of my being acquainted with ... he'd been down there, what, five, six or seven years? Yes, so I sold my last load of cattle, it's been three years ago I guess. They'd bring \$110.50 a hundred! That means that a thousand pound critter brings \$1,010 dollars! And the last several cattle I sold brought \$47.50. For the same cattle today would bring \$85.50. So I saw my dad sell fat cattle for \$3.75. I ... but they have sold the same cattle that I sold for 47  $\frac{3}{4}$  finally bring a hundred and two or three per hundred weight. So I've been from the top to the bottom.

Interviewer: Okay, just a couple of other things. How would you say that WWII affected your life? Good, bad or what? What did it do to you personally?

Jack: Oh...

Interviewer: This is making you think!

Jack: Yes. I never have given it any thought. I've made a lot of bad deals that I've thought about, but ....

Interviewer: Well, here you were a Kansas boy, and went off across the ocean and came back.

Jack: I've been around the world. I tell you what, I've seen women over in Africa pick up kernels of wheat that the combine left. They should think about this, they get only a handful... I've been around the world, but I've seen out there. I've seen the Golden Gate, been underneath and I've been over it, over the top. I've seen the Statue of Liberty. I've been in Africa and all over the Philippines and all over New Guinea. And Australia.

Interviewer: Does that change you? Having seen the world, did you change?

Jack: I'll tell you what I found out. I worked for John Lund, the only man I ever worked for, outside of myself. He came from Sweden. And I asked one time, "What in the world ever possessed you to come to Edwards County?" And he lived out there on the river, and I run cattle for him. I took care of 807 head for him that one year. And I guess...when I asked him this. He said, "Why, all the good water is right down there. You couldn't find a 22 foot patch of pasture; that you can get all the good water for your cattle. Here I am, 91 years old, and that conversation took place...oh, what difference does it make, we know it was a long time ago. And I can still remember that conversation. The quiet water for the old cattle. I tell you what, in my travels, I have never seen a place that I liked any better than Edwards County. I was a county commissioner for four sessions, four terms. I was a secretary to the Kinsley Co-op. When I come out of the service, and I saw what the service was doing to men overseas, I mean they, oh...the first night I was in Schofield Barracks, that's in Oahu, in Honolulu. I'd no more than got to sleep than I heard the most hideous scream in the world. I jumped up and the feller next to the wall said, "Don't pay attention to that." I said, "Pay attention, what the hell! It just scared me to death!" They said it happened every three or four nights. So the next morning, I said, "Point this guy out to me who was doing all the screaming?" Great big ole fellow over there, six foot-two or four, weight two or three hundred, no he weighed three hundred pounds. And he got drunk and run into a car

and killed his wife and two kids. And he would think of that every once in a while, and when he did, he'd scream. Well, I saw numerous guys, that all had something wrong with them. And these were regular army guys that had used the regular army to get away from themselves. Psychotic, some of them. I thought, "My gosh," I thought, "What are they going to do when they get back home?" It's hard telling." But I knew. So I come home, and they was talking about the VFW, and that just sounded good to me, Veterans of Foreign Wars. You had to be overseas, or you couldn't join. So I thought it would be good to work with some of those bastards, and they sure needed the help. And I, gosh, in six years I was Department Commander in Kansas. About 30,000 veterans in the various VFW posts in Kansas. So...

Interviewer: How did you see the VFW helping these guys?

Mr. Miler: Special services, Veteran's Administration, doctors and hospitals, and now they have this Voice of Democracy, all the young kids supporting that. Oh there's a lot of various programs out there. Of course, I'm getting this too. Troops returning, not as they don't do the services like we did.

Interviewer: What's the difference?

Jack: Well, it's hard to say. See I remember I never got a furlough. These guys have been over there for nine or...they got a lot of girls in there in the service now. The only females I saw was nurses. I can tell you what, I'm ready to go on because I don't fit in this psychology of the government, countries, age-wise, speed-wise, the speed limit...I'm a 55 mph man for the highways.

Interviewer: So the VFW that you helped start here in Kansas. You saw that as a way to help fellows that had some problems get re-integrated into the community and I suppose there was a brotherhood there.

Jack: Yes. Very much so.

Interviewer: I can look this up in our records, but the post was started about when here? Would it have been a year or two after? Or sooner than that?

Jack: It was being formed right after the war. There were older guys in there because they had started one after WWI.

Interviewer: Okay, so it was just...

Jack: But they had kind of more or less petered out. Now I can see WWII petering out. But the younger ones, they don't have, like I say, they're going on more on their own. Now they're going to have government programs. But, I'm not acquainted with...I already asked, I'm a life member, but I've never asked, so I wouldn't know what the programs are now. I'm sure they got a lot of good ones.

Interviewer: How do you think WWII affected Edwards County? I guess we didn't really talk about the Dust Bowl and stuff before, but what changes came to the county as a result of WWII?

Jack: I don't think WWII changed the country as much as this human we've been talking about. I can remember people talking about the population is 130 billion now. Can you imagine? I can't imagine it. But now, of course we haven't seen the new census, what they going to do when it's 300 million?

Interviewer: Did the population stay the same here in Edwards County after the war? Or did it start to decline?

Jack: I couldn't answer that as to the number, but I can tell you, the businesses left Kinsley. It took care of our population; we didn't need six car dealers in Kinsley. We didn't need five grocery stores. We would have liked a good dry goods store, but we didn't need it. Of course, we can go to Dodge. People now have good highways. They can drive 65 mph with a good car.

Interviewer: Did the guys you knew and went to school with, did they come back here and live in Kinsley after the war?

Jack: No.

Interviewer: No? What did they do?

Jack: They saw how other boys from various parts of the country and I can remember one of my class, oh he loved the outdoors and hunting and fishing. And he got hunting and fishing to his satisfaction in Washington D.C. when he got out of the Army. So many of them got, well, they had the Army put them here and there; and the Navy put them here and there. And the reason I came back here was because I liked the sand hills.

Interviewer: You had the land.

Jack: Well, I got the land. I had the friend who got the land, I'll say it that way, and the water. I put one of the first irrigation systems here. I didn't put it in for full production; I put it in so I would have feed for my cattle. Oh, they wanted to go for full production, to raise 200 bushel corn. Hell, I don't want 200 bushel corn. They wanted a cabbed machine; I don't want a machine. I'm not a pro-gresser, I'm a de-gresser. I tell you what caused me to quit. I didn't quit entirely, but I couldn't get on my saddle horse. I couldn't throw my leg over. And the last thing I sold at my public auction was my saddle. Might as well, 'cause you can't use it. So that's when I ... but I said I'll keep them pastures until I'm gone. So that's why I'm operating today under a trust. I won't ever sell them acres, I won't, my trust will. They can do whatever they want to, but I want to keep that water and grass as long as I'm alive, I hope.

Interviewer: This is so interesting, my goodness. Rosetta has another question, but I don't think we need to tape that...

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