

**Interview with Thelma Sheufler Negley**  
**November 14, 2009**  
**Conducted in the Negley home, Syracuse, Kansas**  
**Interviewed by Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff**

Interviewer: Okay, we are having an interview today with Thelma Schuefler Negley, and it is November 14, 2009, and we're at her home in Syracuse. I guess what we want to start with are some basic questions. Give us your full name.

Thelma: Thelma Marie Schuefler Negley.

Interviewer: And when were you born?

Thelma: November the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

Interviewer: Forgot to get my questions out, just a minute here. And, what were the names of your parents?

Thelma: Charley and Mary Schuefler.

Interviewer: And Mary, what was her maiden name?

Thelma: Spacil.

Interviewer: And your grandparents, what were their names?

Thelma: My dad had one, his mother is all I ever knew, and her name was Emma Schuefler. My mother's parents were Wenzel and Josephine Spacil.

Interviewer: Wenzel. Is that...?

Thelma: W-E-N-Z-E-L. I think that's how they spell it.

Interviewer: And what brought the Wenzels and the Scheuflers to the Belpre area or wherever you started out?

Thelma: They were from Ellinwood, and when my dad and mother were married, they moved to Belpre..

Interviewer: And were they farmers?

Thelma: Yes.

Interviewer: And so, your grandparents were all from up around Ellinwood?

Thelma: They lived back there, but some of their children all moved around Belpre. I don't know why.

Interviewer: What year did they get married? Do you know? If not, that's alright.

Thelma: It's either 1912 or 1914.

Interviewer: And then they moved right after they were married; they moved down?

Thelma: Yes.

Interviewer: And then you said you were born where?

Thelma: In Pawnee County, just about three miles from Edwards County.

Interviewer: Is that the first place that they lived when they came here?

Thelma: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: And then you said they moved to...

Thelma: Hopewell.

Interviewer: And who was born there then?

Thelma: Charles and Josephine were born in Hopewell. And then they moved north and west of Belpre and that's where Paulie and Bernice and Ed were born.

Interviewer: How old would you have been when they were living there? How many years between you and maybe...?

Thelma: Well, there's nine year's difference between me and my younger brother.

Interviewer: And those were all single births?

Thelma: That's right. We were all just about two years apart, but when you have a birthday in January, now it's my brother that's next to me, he always calls me on his birthday and tells me that he's gonna catch up with me 'cause he's one year behind me. But a few months after he's that way, I go another year ahead of him.

Interviewer: Can you describe a little bit your family, you know. You did show us this picture a little bit ago, but what was it like growing up in this family of six kids?

Thelma: Well, it was busy and we learned to take care of one another. And then when my mother died...

Interviewer: How old were you when she died?

Thelma: I was about 9 ½.

Interviewer: And what did she die of?

Thelma: She had some kind of a...the doctor gave me the name. It was a big long name, but I never, don't know just what it was.

Interviewer: And Ed was only...?

Thelma: Ed was only 13 months practically to the day that she died.

Interviewer: And so, you were the big sister?

Thelma: Yup.

Interviewer: Was there a grandmother or something involved too?

Thelma: My dad's mother came and lived with us, but she was deaf. She could not hear at all, and she stayed with us. But my dad did the washing while we went to school.

Interviewer: And the washing would've been at that time, did you have?

Thelma: We had a washing machine, a gasoline motor on it. So it...and my grandmother baked the bread. She'd make donuts and different things for us. On my weekends, I would bake cookies and things to get us kids to pack our lunches for school. And we got along just real, real well. But my baby brother, Ed stayed in town with my mother's sister...well because he was so tiny. But he wasn't there too awful long. He wanted back out with the rest of us, so he spent the summer out there with us when we were all there.

Interviewer: And you had a farm?

Thelma: Yes.

Interviewer: So, what did you raise?

Thelma: Well, my dad had wheat and alfalfa.

Interviewer: And the animals?

Thelma: We had cows and chickens and...

Interviewer: Pigs?

Thelma: Pigs. We had to go pick up the corncobs out of there to burn in our cook stove. Kids nowadays wouldn't like that very well.

Interviewer: Well, I think that's the first mention we've had of the cook stove, which...

Thelma: The corncobs burnt, so it made a faster heat that...

Interviewer: So you did not have electricity at this house?

Thelma: Oh, no, we had no electricity until, well I don't think, we never had any until after I was gone from home, before they got electricity. We had kerosene lamps and then a gasoline Coleman lamp.

Interviewer: And for your refrigerator, you used?

Thelma: We had no refrigerator, we had an icebox. A guy would come and bring in about a 100 pound of ice and put it in there, and it would last about all week.

Interviewer: And you heated with...coal?

Thelma: We had coal and then Dad got a kerosene burner in through that was in the dining room.

Interviewer: And what was your house like? How big was it for you?

Thelma: We had two bedrooms; and my dad and the boys slept in the one bedroom and my grandmother and the girls slept in the other bedroom. We had two beds in each room. Then the living room, we never used it, only the summer 'cause it was too cold to heat. We lived just in the dining room and the kitchen. Had a real big dining room and a real big kitchen, so that was...

Interviewer: Was it a two-story?

Thelma: No.

Interviewer: Just one story?

Thelma: One-story.

Interviewer: Any basement or anything?

Thelma: No, we had a cellar right out around the corner of the house.

Interviewer: It's always good for tornadoes.

Thelma: Yes and we went there one time too.

Interviewer: You did?

Thelma: It was on I believe it was Easter, I believe it was, Easter evening. Daddy said "We're goin' to the basement, to the cellar" and we all went, and my little brother he did not want to go. I grabbed him, and I pulled him down there with us. When we came back up, it looked like somebody took a saw and sawed the top of our barn off. It knocked several buildings down, but it did not blow out the light in the stove in the brooder house where we had little chickens. Isn't that strange how things would do?

Interviewer: Tornadoes are strange.

Thelma: Yes, they are.

Interviewer: That's a good story. Okay, what were your chores then. You've already told us you made cookies and things for your lunches. Did you take care of the chickens or?

Thelma: No, my one sister did gather the eggs mostly and fed the chickens. But my main deal was to help my grandmother do the cooking.

Interviewer: And dishes?

Thelma: That, and my one sister she, on Saturday, my one sister had to clean the bedrooms, and I baked and cleaned the dining room and kitchen, so that was...

Interviewer: So you didn't do any of the outside of the farm?

Thelma: I didn't. I'd milk cows, help 'em once in a while, but I hated that. I never did like that.

Interviewer: What about a garden?

Thelma: Yah, we had a real pretty good size garden. We had a big strawberry patch. And we had radishes and carrots and...

Interviewer: String beans?

Thelma: Um..hum.

Interviewer: And would you weed the garden and that sort of thing?

Thelma: Yah, it was watered through the horse tank...the tank. And Daddy put us up a barrel on the windmill, and we'd pump it full in the summer, and that's where we'd take our showers. So that was quite a treat when we had...

Interviewer: Did you grandmother or you can from the garden or?

Thelma: She canned some, yes. And us kids would help, but then I wouldn't say we ever did the canning. But Daddy always went back to Ellinwood and got Sandhill plums, and then she'd make Sandhill plum jelly. He'd go to Hutchinson to the apple orchards and bring home a bunch of apples, and they would be kept down in the cellar for our lunch buckets. We usually had a sandwich and an apple and probably a cookie. That was our lunch. And we rode the bus and had to be ready for it at 7 o'clock in the morning. And we'd get home about 5 o'clock at night.

Interviewer: First on, last off or something?

Thelma: We were about the middle. We were about the middle of the route when it started out.

Interviewer: How many kids were in your class at school or...?

Thelma: I think there was 19 of us. Did you know Malloy Breitenbach?

Interviewer: I know descendants.

Thelma: See he graduated with me, and I seen by the paper where he died just the other day. I don't know whether there's very many of 'em left in my class.

Interviewer: I would hazard to say not.

Thelma: They're gettin' very scarce.

Interviewer: If it'd be alright, what do you remember about your mother dying and the funeral and that kind of thing?

Thelma: Well, I remember she died in Great Bend in the St. Rose Hospital, and Daddy had us kids all up there that night. It was on a Friday. What stuck in my mind was you could hear her breathing, and she'd breath real heavy. But we never did go in that where she was at. And to describe what my mother looked like, I could not describe it. As the years goes, and we didn't have a lot of pictures like they do nowadays, where you could... The day of the funeral, I remember that. We had a lot of rain, and we had a real long lane. And we didn't think everybody was gonna get through the big ruts in the road and it was...

Interviewer: Where was she buried?

Thelma: In Belpre.

Interviewer: She was in Belpre.

Thelma: Uh huh. And then my mother's brother, he wasn't married at that time. He came out and stayed all night with us that first night. I remember those little things, but that's just about the size of it. I know I went to school when my little brother was at my aunt's. She only lived a block from school. So at recess and at noon, we would run over and see him, 'cause we got permission to run over there and see him there a lot of the times.

Interviewer: What do you remember about the Dust Bowl days?

Thelma: Well, not too awful much about them. The dustbowl days mostly that I remember were the ones we had out here in Syracuse, because we had really bad ones out here, but more so than the ones I remember at home.

Interviewer: You don't remember having to put up sheets or...?

Thelma: No we didn't. But here when they would come in, my one little girl was just about two years old and one of 'em came up. She come looked out the window, and she looked back at us 'cause she couldn't see the neighbor's house. She was just kinda puzzled that, you know, that the dust was so bad. And then we were gone one time when one of 'em came up and the basement window blew out, and we had a lotta dirt to scoop out. But then it's easier to scoop dirt than it is to have water, I would think.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about the Depression and if it affected your family or not?

Thelma: Well, yes. My Dad was.... I graduated in '37 and I wanted to go to college. I wanted to be a home economics teacher, but Daddy said "I just can't afford it." So I didn't go to college. I went to work at Posey's Café there in Belpre, and I cooked and baked pies 'til I met Paul. And then Paul and I were married in '41.

Interviewer: On the farm you probably...because you had a farm, you probably never went hungry or?

Thelma: Oh no. When our chickens got up, we always had a chicken for dinner and a chicken for supper. You had nothing to keep 'em cold with, so we just had one and killed another one. We kept our milk and our cream in a big long trough that had pumped water through it to keep it cold.

Interviewer: Anything else about your...before you graduated from high school in that time period you'd just like to tell us, or...?

Thelma: Well, my brothers used to love to play basketball, but I never did get to go watch 'em because my Dad would take 'em and I'd have to stay home with the little ones. So I never did get to see 'em play a lot of basketball. But I guess that's what comes when you're the oldest in the family.

Interviewer: How long did your grandmother stay with you?

Thelma: She stayed with us 'til...she left before I graduated outta high school, I know that. I don't remember for sure what year she did leave. But she got married to her sister's husband 'cause her sister had died and she lived in Ellinwood then.

Interviewer: So, you got married in April. Alright, well tell us a little about, let's see...where'd you meet Paul, was he from...?

Thelma: He was from Zook.

Interviewer: Okay, Zook, that's only 7 or 8 miles?

Thelma: Our school busses met every morning, but I never knew it. We were on the county line and our school busses met every morning, but I had never met him until after I graduated.

Interviewer: How'd you meet him then?

Thelma: He was working for the same man that I was for the restaurant that I was at...Posey's. He was driving a gasoline transport and that's where I met him. And then he went to driving, hauling Fords outta Kansas City. Of course the big trucks nowadays carry a lot more than they did. We lived, right after we were married, we moved to an apartment in Emporia 'cause he had to stay there.

Interviewer: Tell us a little bit about your wedding and honeymoon or whatever.

Thelma: Well, the next morning we got up, and there was snow on the ground. It was in April, we know that.

Interviewer: It was April 19<sup>th</sup>.

Thelma: Uh huh.

Interviewer: And you got married in Stockton. Why didn't you get married at home?

Thelma: Well, there's a lot of religious problems.

Interviewer: Oh, I take it the Scheuflers were Catholic?

Thelma: The Scheuflers were Catholics...Paul wasn't, and there was a lot of...

Interviewer: Your Dad didn't approve?

Thelma: Well, my Dad wasn't a Catholic when he was married. He'd joined the church then. But Daddy liked Paul real, real well. He got along with Paul real well; and he never, never, ever said anything to me about it, so I couldn't...

Interviewer: So you drove up to Stockton and a Justice of the Peace or...?

Thelma: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Did you take any friends with you for witnesses?

Thelma: Yes, we had Kenny and Helen Smith. They were from, at that time, Kenny was running an elevator in Zook and they worked there. But my sister married a Smith too, brother to the guy that stood up with us and...

Interviewer: Why Stockton? Why not some place closer?

Thelma: Well, we just took off one Saturday...

Interviewer: Did anybody know?

Thelma: ...and started goin'. No, nobody knew...

Interviewer: You just eloped?

Thelma: ...'till we got home. Mmm..hmm.

Interviewer: And then, did you come back and tell them or...?

Thelma: Yes, we did. Came back and I told my dad. He never, ever said anything, unless he said something to the kids. He might have, but he never, ever said anything to me about it.

Interviewer: And then when did you move to...you said you first lived in Emporia, is that where he was working at that time?

Thelma: That's when we moved there and we lived there not very long and that's when he was called up for the service.

Interviewer: And he was drafted?

Thelma: Mmm...hmm..in '42. We were only married just about a year.

Interviewer: Do you remember what you were doing on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941?

Thelma: No, I cannot say I really remember that. When you don't have TV's and radios and stuff like they do nowadays, you don't remember a lot of it.

Interviewer: And you didn't have a radio then?

Thelma: We had a radio, but we never listened to it very much, but my Dad always watched (*listened to*) *Amos & Andy*. So after us kids went to bed, *Amos & Andy* came on, and that's what he watched.

Interviewer: And you lived in where while your husband was in the military?

Thelma: I stayed with his folks.

Interviewer: Okay.

Thelma: They lived between Belpre and Larned, on a farm.

Interviewer: So, you lived in Emporia for a year...?

Thelma: Not quite a year.

Interviewer: And then he went in the service and when he went in the service you came back?

Thelma: I stayed with his folks and worked in Larned.

Interviewer: And you worked at drugstore?

Thelma: Drugstore. Uh huh.

Interviewer: What was the name of it?

Thelma: I can't think what the name of it was, but Vince Houdeshell owned it. It was on east side of the road of Main Street there. And then when he came home from the service, he was in Brooklyn for about a year. Then Bill was born in Great Bend. Then Bill was three months old when he come outta the Army. There was no ground 'cause he was a farmer, and his dad went with him and his brothers came out here in Hamilton County. We bought about 6 or 8 quarters and they broke it out. Then they ventured farther and went to Wylie, Colorado and bought 6 or 8 more and that's why we moved.

Interviewer: And that was right after the war?

Thelma: Uh, huh. And we moved out here...well, Bill was three months old, we moved out here in '45.

Interviewer: And you broke the sod out

Thelma: He broke the sod, him and his brother.

Interviewer: There weren't too many people out here then at that time.

Thelma: Well, there was quite a bunch. But when we built our house here...we lived in a little tiny house down there with four kids and that was two little tiny bedrooms.

Interviewer: Hey...your family did six in two tiny bedrooms.

Thelma: I know. But when we built this house, we didn't have Judy yet. But she was three months old when we moved in this house.

Interviewer: So, it was 1952.

Thelma: '52. But we debated a long time when we built this house, whether to build it in town or in the country. And we sit down and figured and figured. A lot of people lived in the country, but there was also a lot of rattlesnakes. So we sat down and we figured that with five kids, or four kids at the time, it would be a lot cheaper and a lot better to build in town because the kids would be at school and their activities and stuff. He would only have to drive to the farm in the summertime. So that's what we did, and we never regretted it. And the water was hard to find out there and everything.

Interviewer: And you just had crops?

Thelma: Yes, we had a...

Interviewer: You couldn't have livestock?

Thelma: No, we had no livestock. But in the wintertime, they would take people's cows in and graze the wheat down. But we never had any. We just had milo. We never had corn. Milo and wheat is all we ever raised.

Interviewer: And it was dry land farming?

Thelma: Uh huh. I even drove the truck in harvest. Heavens, couldn't do it nowadays.

Interviewer: I don't know about that. What enabled you to be able to come out here and buy land? Did you have money from him being in the service?

Thelma: No, his Pa's Dad, when their note...and with that why we could...

Interviewer: 'Cause that was pretty good to be able to have land and then build a house within a few years.

Thelma: Ya.

Interviewer: And then you had electricity and everything in your new house...

Thelma: Oh ya...

Interviewer: ...'cause you were in town.

Thelma: We had this, we lived in a little ole tiny house on the west part of town. When we moved up here, you could hear yourself echo. We didn't have any furniture hardly for a quite a while, but we were never sorry that we did build.

Interviewer: Well, it's a lovely home.

Thelma: I'm the only one in this whole little neighborhood here that was originally here. All the whole rest of 'em have either sold or gone.

Interviewer: Well, school isn't every far away, so...

Thelma: No, my kids walked. Nowadays, they don't walk; they get taken every morning. I think that's so silly. My kids walked to school and when we first moved here there was...when you came from the swimming pool, the swimming pool didn't used to be there, it was down farther. But, there was a barbed wire fence across the road here, There was no road up north here yet. And the kids would climb over and under that barbed wire fence, and it was always tearin' their clothes, 'til they finally got a road through there. But no, my kids walked to school every morning unless it was real cold or raining or something like that. Then I'd go ahead and take 'em, but...

Interviewer: Okay, let's go back to the World War II years. He was drafted, and I suppose he went to boot camp or something. Was he ever stationed in the United States where you would go and visit him?

Thelma: Well, I was never outta the State of Kansas 'til I was married. And then when I was married, I went from coast to coast.

Interviewer: Okay, well tell us about that.

Thelma: He was stationed at Camp Roberts and I went out...

Interviewer: Where is Camp Roberts?

Thelma: California. And I went out there and he was only in the service...well he went it in April and October he was already headed for overseas. And then I came back here or to (*Belpre*).

Interviewer: Where did you live...or what was your life like in California?

Thelma: Well, I was with a whole bunch of Army wives. My first bus ride I went out with some people from Wichita that were real good friends of ours and stayed with my, I had an aunt out there in Los Angeles, and I stayed with her.

Interviewer: You rode the bus?

Thelma: I rode the Greyhound bus to go to Camp Roberts I believe.

Interviewer: Once you get to California, did you take the bus?

Thelma: No, I rode out with some people from Wichita. Me and a cat.

Interviewer: Your cat?

Thelma: Nope, not my cat. And that cat laid up on the back and that was her place, and my place was over here and we kept that all the way down, but when I rode the bus and I'd never been any place like that, I got on the bus and went to Camp Roberts. Well, Paul had an apartment in a little town from there. I got off the bus and my name came over the loudspeaker. I was scared to death. I went over there. Paul had left a note. He said get on a certain bus and come to there and I'll be over there. So, I got my suitcase and I started. Some soldier came up to me, and he said "You're not going over to"...*Paso Robles* is the name of that town, and I said "Yes, 'cause my husband's over there". He said "Well my wife's over there and I'm goin' home; c'mon I'll help ya." So he picked up my suitcase, and took me over there. I told Paul I was never so tickled to see him standing there. 'Cause you know it's scary

when you've never...nowadays kids...but I stayed out there until he was shipped overseas and then I came back to home there.

Interviewer: Now did he ship out of California?

Thelma: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Now you said he went to Africa right?

Thelma: Uh huh. That's where he left from and I didn't hear from him from October 'til after Christmas. They never let mail get out then. And that was the longest time to not know where he was or what was going on or anything. But when I did get some letters I got a whole bunch of 'em.

Interviewer: And you were writing him everyday or...?

Thelma: Oh, yes, I wrote him everyday...probably 'bout everyday. He got my letters, but I never got his letters back from him. That was a long time.

Interviewer: So then you found out he was in Africa?

Thelma: Ya. Then we found out where he was all at.

Interviewer: Were your letters censored or do you know?

Thelma: I only had one letter that had something cut out, and I think it was probably where they were stayin'. That's the only thing I could figure out. But other than that, I don't think I had any more of 'em that were...but I did have one that had some stuff cut out of it, but that was it.

Interviewer: And you didn't have any children during this time.

Thelma: No. I stayed with a lady there in Belpre when he first went overseas and you maybe knew them. They were from Cimarron. They moved to Cimarron. Art Shartz, you've heard of Shartz? I'm sure 'cause there's a lot of 'em. I stayed with her and kept her kids while she was havin' another baby. I stayed with her kids and did that.

Interviewer: And then you went up to his parents?

Thelma: Mmm...hmm...ya I went up and stayed with them.

Interviewer: And that worked out well?

Thelma: Yup, worked our real well. His folks were, well they weren't real young, but his dad loved to go to town, but he didn't like to drive. If I didn't work that day he'd say, "Are you goin' to town today?" and I would say, even if I wasn't goin', I'd say, "Yes, I'm gonna go to town." . And he'd say "Could I ride along?" So, he went along with me. He liked to go to town.

Interviewer: So...let's start with Belpre, 'cause we're interested in Edwards County. What was the town of Belpre like during this time and then we'll talk a little bit about Larned too.

Thelma: Well, there was a lot of stores in Belpre at that time.

Interviewer: Like what?

Thelma: Oh, there was two grocery stores and a post office and Loren's Realty store . There was the grocery store; it had material and stuff like that in it. And they had the jail, and they had the telephone office.

Interviewer: Hardware?

Thelma: Ya, there was a hardware store. It wasn't very big, but then they were...

Interviewer: Did people go there on Saturday night like...?

Thelma: Yes, but we usually went to, when we were little smaller...Daddy always went to Macksville. We'd go there to Macksville. They had a theatre there 'cause Belpre didn't have a theatre. Us kids would go to the show for a dime or a nickel.

Interviewer: Now you had brothers also, but you had already left, but what was it like having...you had brothers...I guess they sort of went in one right after the other spanning the whole World War II, didn't they?

Thelma: Well, this was real odd. When Paul went in the service, my brother was in the service then. Charles was.

Interviewer: He had already gone in?

Thelma: He was in the service, and Paul hadn't even gone. Well, he called and he told Daddy he wanted him to come see him because he was gonna be shipped overseas. So Paul and I took my Dad to Fort Hood. We seen Charles and came back home, and Paul went in the service, overseas and was on his way home before my brother (*Charles*) was ever shipped overseas.

Interviewer: Oh my word.

Thelma: And I said now that was really something because we took my Dad back there to see him. And Paul went in the service and was gone for a little over two years and was on his way home before my brother was ever shipped overseas. I don't think that probably happened very many times.

Interviewer: No.

Thelma: Now I don't know why. I don't know why it was that way either.

Interviewer: So you drove down to Fort Hood?

Thelma: Uh huh.

Interviewer: And spent a few days with your brother?

Thelma: With my brother down there.

Interviewer: Now did you write to your brother like same as your husband, or?

Thelma: I didn't write to them as often as I did to Paul, but I did write 'em some.

Interviewer: You worried about 'em I bet?

Thelma: Well, think everybody does when they go in the service.

Interviewer: Did you see your father and your family much during that time when your husband was gone?

Thelma: Oh ya, I wasn't that far from them. I drove there a lot. My Dad and them moved to the place where the rest of the kids were at about the time that Bill, my oldest one, was born in Great Bend. And then I went out there to see 'em quite a bit, but I didn't ever live in that house out there.

Interviewer: So you'd go like on Sundays or Saturdays or whenever you didn't work?

Thelma: Well, we were a family who always got together for Christmas, for holidays as a rule. We always got together. And now to this day, we have a family reunion every year the first part of August. We started with me and then go right on down the line so you know when it's your turn to have it. 'Cause last year we were out in Phoenix with my brother. I think here was 80 some there.

Interviewer: So this year it'll come back here?

Thelma: No. Next year will be my sister that's died. Her family will host it. 'Cause they said to me, since Mom's gone, can we still be in the family. And I said you'll always be in our family. She had three girls. And we told her, there's just no way you're gonna get out of our family. So they have it next year.

Interviewer: Where do they live?

Thelma: Well, one of 'em...well two of 'em live at Abilene and one of 'em lives north of Fellsburg. Then their Dad is, what is that big home there in Hutchinson? I know what it is too, but I...

Interviewer: I should know that...got Prairie in it?

Thelma: No, it's...we know what it is...right? But he is the home there. He has an apartment in there. But they will have it next year. And then the following year, my brother in Hutchinson will have it. And then the next year, my sister in Ottawa will have it or Williamsburg. And then the next time it'll be my little brother Ed. But we always know.

Interviewer: That's a good way to do it.

Thelma: Uh...huh...And we used to always have a covered dish. And I said I live way out here. I said whenever you guys come to my house, don't bring anything. I'll just have it all. And I said when I come to your house, I'm not bringing anything 'cause it's such a chore to get something to take every time. So, I think everybody does that same thing now 'cause you only have it once every six years. So it's much easier to do it that way.

Interviewer: Okay. Your husband...let's see, we'll go back to your husband. Your husband came back you said to Brooklyn?

Thelma: He was in Brooklyn and he used to run convoys through the town of Brooklyn. He was a truck driver and drove a tank.

Interviewer: He drove a tank in the war too?

Thelma: Mmm...hmm...

Interviewer: Maybe we should...do you know anything about his service in Africa and Italy?

Thelma: No.

Interviewer: Would he talk about it?

Thelma: He never did too much talkin' about it.

Interviewer: But he drove a tank then too.

Thelma: Uh...huh...

Interviewer: And then when he got back to Brooklyn, then he was driving this convoy?

Thelma: He drove convoys through the town of Brooklyn. And he said, oh he said that was, people just don't, he'd do it, but when they had all of them they 'bout got to, there's nothing. But he used to talk about their convoys through town.

Interviewer: Did you go to Brooklyn then too?

Thelma: I lived in Brooklyn about two months, but I had an apartment. But he didn't get to get in only on the weekends. That was a long time to stay with not knowing anybody and everything. So I just stayed a couple of months and came home.

Interviewer: Did you notice any difference in him when he came back? Had the war changed him any?

Thelma: Oh, only thing is I knew that he smoked too much.

Interviewer: Had he smoked before he went?

Thelma: He smoked, but he didn't smoke like he did when he came home. So, I told him I said, "You have to quit smoking like that." So he went to a pipe, and he smoked a pipe from then on. And now all the kids say you never see a picture of Grandpa that he don't have a pipe in his mouth. No, when he first came home, it took him a while to adjust. I know one night, I woke up and he started beatin' on me, you know. I woke up and I jumped up outta bed and I said "Paul, wake up!" And he did and he never would talk about it though.

Interviewer: He was having a nightmare.

Thelma: Uh..huh.. But it didn't after a while, why he didn't have those anymore. But I can see why they would. But I know I sure got outta there fast.

Interviewer: And how 'bout your brothers? Did you see any difference in any of them when they came back?

Thelma: No, 'cause I was never around them very much. I guess when you're married and we moved out here, I just never was around them that much.

Interviewer: Well, when you moved to Syracuse, what was here? I mean, did you have...were there a lot of stores?

Thelma: Oh, ya, there were a lot of stores here. A lot of things were here. There one whole block torn down out here now. They're getting more things out here. They had quite a deal on our Budget Shop, that's where the churches all went together you know. They tore down a building down here, an old building, and this Budget Shop was part of it. Well, they didn't know that the wall was combined with the two. Well, it caved in on the Budget Shop. Luckily nobody was there at the time, but they had to destroy all of that stuff. So the Budget Shop is now just about ready to start over again. It'll be down over here by the grocery store across the street. It'll be a lot nicer for 'em. But it went along pretty smooth I think. Nearly all the churches were with it; then they all took turns working.

Interviewer: When your husband came home from the service, he came back and was in Brooklyn and then he came home. Do you remember maybe just back in Larned or Belpre do you remember any celebrations or anything, or did the men just come home?

Thelma: Well, the only time, a lot of family affairs would have a celebration for them. They never had...I never knew of any of...you know like a big celebration like they do nowadays when a soldier comes; a lot of them have a big thing. But no, it was more just family related.

Interviewer: Now you said you didn't remember Pearl Harbor too much, do you remember VE Day or VJ Day, the Victory over Europe or Victory over Japan?

Thelma: Yes. I remember that. Paul had two cousins go down with that on Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: He lost two in Pearl Harbor?

Thelma: He lost two cousins. They were from Hugoton, I think. Their name was Kagarice . They used to be from around Hutchinson. There was Kagarices in Hutchinson.

Interviewer: How do you spell that?

Thelma: K-A-G-A-R-I-C-E.

Interviewer: Just like it sounds.

Thelma: Ya, just like it sounds.

Interviewer: And then when the war was over. Do you remember getting that news when Germany surrendered or Japan surrendered?

Thelma: Oh yes, we had a lot of radios by that time. Not that there were any TV's but then we had radios.

Interviewer: Did people celebrate in any way or just happy?

Thelma: I think most everybody was just happy, and they were just thankful that their sons were over there were gonna get to come home. So, but Paul...I think Paul was on his way home when the war ended. But then he had to stay in, and he stayed in the service in Brooklyn for I think a little over a year before he got to come on home. He came home on his mother's birthday. She was so tickled when he got to come home on her birthday. He come home in September.

Interviewer: You were probably tickled too.

Thelma: Well ya...it was kind of a wishy-washy life until he come home. Just didn't know....Oh well, I stayed there at his folks.

Interviewer: What did you do as a young married woman for, you know, besides, did you go out with the other women who's husbands were away or what did you...how did you entertain yourself while your husband was gone all that time?

Thelma: Well, no, I usually didn't go out with very many...I don't know.

Interviewer: Went to work and took your father-in-law to town ha?

Thelma: Ya, that's about it. You know, by the time you get your washing done your days were over. Oh, we'd go to the show once in a while 'cause they did have a nice theatre there in Larned.

Interviewer: And now, some of your husband's pain came home to you right? During the war?

Thelma: Yup. And I remember we had sugar rationing, and they also had coffee rationing.

Interviewer: Coffee?

Thelma: Uh huh, coffee was rationed there for a little while. When we first came out here we could not buy a refrigerator. There was no refrigerator. You could not buy a refrigerator. So we took one his folks had, one of those refrigerators that had that big ole' round thing on the top. We took that off, and we fixed the thing over the top, and we put ice on the top there to keep it.

Interviewer: So you made an icebox?

Thelma: We made our icebox and that first year that we had a crop out here, I had two kids, Bill and Carol. Carol was in a baby basket, and Bill was up walking. I took dinner south of town cause they were farming south of town, I took dinner out to the field south of town then I come home and pick it up and take it north of town. Now I think, how in the world did I ever do that? Fix dinner for, I think I had, 5 or 6 men on both places and take dinner out there.

Interviewer: You hire harvest crews?

Thelma: No, they did their own cutting.

Interviewer: It was, it was all...?

Thelma: Well, they had their own and the hired men would help.

Interviewer: Were there a lot of men that had come home from the service out here at that time that were starting up farms? Or were you unusual?

Thelma: I didn't know anybody out here. But Paul met one man that run a café down here and he was, come to find out, he was in the same division that Paul was in. So they used to have, and then he had another one, there was two of 'em here. He had quite a conversation with them several times. But that was very odd that they didn't know one another then 'cause they lived here, and he lived back there until we moved out here.

Interviewer: The community of Syracuse, was it just mainly young people? Were they all Caucasian or was there a Hispanic population?

Thelma: We had hardly no...we had one colored family here. They were Methodists and she was a wonderful organist and she played there. That's the only one I knew of that was here at the time and I don't think there was hardly any...but now we're loaded with...not colored people, we don't have very many there.

Interviewer: What about Belpre and the Hispanic community?

Thelma: We never had any in Belpre. We had oh, what were their names, they were such a nice family, that run the depot. Gillen, I think, was their name, in Belpre. But they lived in a house. I don't even think the house is there anymore, but their kids went to school there.

Interviewer: They were Hispanic?

Thelma: Uh...huh...They were the Mexicans and they were a real, really nice family, but that's the only one.

Interviewer: And no blacks?

Thelma: Mmm...mmm. You know we always said the blacks, we always call 'em blacks and now the kids say "Mom don't say that; they don't like that anymore." And I said well when you never been around 'em...and this one time, I said somethin' about you know those nuts we call Nigger Toes, the kids said "Mother don't say that!". And I said "When you're born and raised on Nigger Toe, that's gonna be it the rest of your life." It's hard to change those things.

Interviewer: But you said that...was there any prejudice against the Catholics? 'cause you mentioned with your wedding or your marriage there was some.

Thelma: No, I never, ever noticed anything.

Interviewer: Was it down to Hopewell?

Thelma: Yes, now Hopewell, now see, I was too little to know much about it, but we hear more things about it. That Trousdale and Hopewell vicinity did not like the Catholic, and my folks were Catholics. But us kids didn't realize.

Interviewer: Okay, we're sort of asking women, did you see any changes in women because from before and after the war, that brought about by the war? Or was your life pretty much the same?

Thelma: My life was the same.

Interviewer: Although you got to travel which you wouldn't have.

Thelma: I wouldn't say anything about anybody 'cause it was their life not mine. But I would not have done a lot of things a lot of the women did. But there was a lot of difference in the...I guess it's the person. But I never, I never run with the ones...I was friends with 'em, but I just wouldn't...I just didn't agree with a lot of things that they did.

Interviewer: They were doing things maybe their husbands didn't approve of if they'd been home?

Thelma: Well, I would think they would be, that's what my opinion was when they were...But, that's why I thought, no. I wouldn't do things they were doin' so I guess it's according to the person.

Interviewer: Did you have friends that went away to work in war plants? You know like we talked about Ona Cross. Did you have any friends that did that?

Thelma: No. Well, Paul's brother worked at Boeing, but no, most of my friends didn't.

Interviewer: Now you said that you traveled and you wouldn't have done that if your husband wasn't in the service probably.

Thelma: He was with me though.

Interviewer: Ya, but I mean, you, but you did travel...that changed your life...

Thelma: Ya, that changed my life.

Interviewer: You saw California, you saw Brooklyn.

Thelma: I said I was never outta the State of Kansas 'til after I was married. Then I made up for it.

Interviewer: Oh, you've traveled a lot?

Thelma: And then when Paul and I used to do a lot of traveling when Paul kinda retired. And then in the winter we did a lot of traveling and always enjoyed that.

Interviewer: Did he go back overseas?

Thelma: No. I wanted to go on a cruise once, and I could not get him to go. He said, "No, I've rode a ship enough times I don't want to." So, the girls out in Arizona were goin' and I said, "Wouldn't you just go once?" He said, "Ya, I'll go with you once." So we went once, and we flew to Miami...

Interviewer: Jamaica, the Caribbean?

Thelma: Jamaica and all that. We had a room in the back of the ship where we could see the wheel go, you know, look out the little cubby hole window there. And I really enjoyed it. Of course Paul wouldn't own up to that; he did enjoy it. But after we got home, he said, "Well, it wasn't too bad. It was a lot different than the ones I had before."

Interviewer: Can you think of any ways, and this is gonna have to use your imagination probably for Belpre or Larned or here, how World War II changed Western Kansas? Were there any good things or bad things that you think came as a result of World War II?

Thelma: No, I don't think the war caused a lot of our troubles.

Interviewer: Troubles being?

Thelma: Like your break-in's and your stealings. I don't think that was involved in anything like that.

Interviewer: How about the population decline?

Thelma: Well, out here we grew and then we went back again.

Interviewer: What was the cause?

Thelma: I don't know what the cause of it was. I never could...it was just, the people that we knew, their kids were growin' and they were leaving and that's what makes a lot of... But, with me I would just as soon stay put where I've been all my life. Paul and I lacked a little bit of bein' married 65 years. So that was almost a lifetime with one person.

Interviewer: You were very blessed.

Thelma: My kids wanted me to go to the rest home, and I said "No, I'm gonna stay here as long as I can. As long as I can take care of myself, I'm gonna stay right here." It's a big place, I know, but I just don't wanna go. And Paul didn't wanna...he begged me not to send him to a rest home. I said, "I'm not puttin' you in a rest home; I'm takin' care of you." But he said, "I don't want you to have to take care of me." And I said, "Don't worry about that. I've just taken care of people all my life so it's not gonna bother me."

Interviewer: You started at 9 years old didn't you?

Thelma: Yes. I said I was...daughter had twins and she had trouble with them and I kept them for a while. I just had different things all my life. I said that doesn't bother me. But let somebody, a doctor, or somebody, take blood outta me and show me that little vile, and I just keel over. I said, "If you take it, don't show it to me!"

Interviewer: I'm the same way. You take care of your child who's bleeding, but don't show me mine.

Thelma: I never will forget that...I just nearly passed out that one time. They showed me that vile of blood...Ohhh...I said "I don't want to see that"!

Interviewer: That's a question we've never asked women. You were having children right after World War II. How are things changed in having children? Did you go to the hospital for all yours?

Thelma: Yes. I had Bill in Great Bend and my others are all here.

Interviewer: And how long did you...what was the word they used to use?

Thelma: 'Bout a week. I stayed about a week. But if everybody had kids like I did...

Interviewer: Now who would come and take care of your younger ones when you were having?

Thelma: Paul usually stayed with them. I was in the hospital one time and the kids said "Mom, I'll sure be glad when you get home. Daddy sure can't make gravy. It's so lumpy all the time."

Interviewer: So you did a good job choosing your husband, didn't you?

Thelma: Yes I did.

Interviewer: Didn't need an elaborate wedding, just...

Thelma: I said, oh, people always said, I had heard them say "Well, that marriage won't last". I said I'd like to see those people and tell him just how long it did last. They were wrong.

Interviewer: Okay, you came out here and you started farming. Were there farm equipment stores here so you could buy tractors?

Thelma: They had a John Deere. But Paul, since he was in the service, remember they used to have back by Chicago, I don't remember the name of it, where they had machinery and stuff. The veterans could buy it. So Paul went back there and bought a tractor one time.

Interviewer: So that was one of the advantages...

Thelma: He got something like that.

Interviewer: You're the first person who's told us that. That's interesting. Then there were farm implement stores here?

Thelma: There was a John Deere, that's it. Well, they used to have a Case here too, but the John Deere store's still here. That's what Paul went to is John Deere 'cause that's where you could get service. But they did have a Case place here one time.

Interviewer: It was somebody else that told us that they took some agricultural classes through the GI Bill. Did your husband do anything like that? They didn't go to college but they offered...

Thelma: Ya, he took, through the college at Garden, a welding class. He took a welding class. The teacher that they had here, had a class. So he said, "Well I didn't go to college, but I did get a college credit from the welding class."

Interviewer: Did he do that as a result of the GI Bill or did he just that?

Thelma: I think he just took that, 'cause they offered it here 'cause he wanted to learn how to weld 'cause they used a lot of welding for different things. And he was Mayor here of the town once. He was on a school board. I didn't think he was ever gonna get off the school board. And he was VFW commander here for a while. And he was on the ASC Board. He was always on something, but he enjoyed it.

Interviewer: Did he ever get together with his unit? You know like the men are doing now?

Thelma: No, he never did.

Interviewer: And how 'bout you, what did you do here? Besides raise children?

Thelma: Well, that's about it I think. Oh, and I was room mother. I was room mother from the time my kids started school until they got outta the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. And lo and behold, the last one that was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they decided to have a room mother 'cause they were gonna have a carnival. And guess who got on? I did! Me and another lady, we got on it every time I think. You'd think we were the only ones who ever had children in school.

Interviewer: Now, did your children go to college?

Thelma: Bill went a couple of years. Carol graduated. She went to KU, and she married a guy from there. He was from Hutchinson that she met. And he went to the service, the Navy. So she transferred to Hays, and she finished her teacher's degree in Hays. Mary Jo went to KU, and she's a medical technician. And Patsy just went to beauty school and then she took something else. I forget what the name of it was, but it's where they draw.

Interviewer: Graphics? Graphic Arts?

Thelma: That's it, and Judy went to a junior college for a little while.

Interviewer: So you didn't get to go to college, but your daughters did?

Thelma: Mmm..hmm...When I graduated my Dad said I know I can't help you go to college, and I know you wanna go. And I said well, that don't make any difference, I'll make something else of my life. So my brothers, I wonder are they as smart as they try to give 'em. They might be in certain things.

*(Phone call brings interview to an end)*