

KANSANS TELL THEIR STORIES

Project Director Evaluation Report

1. Did the project meet your goals and expectations? What were your biggest successes?

Patchwork of Dependency exceeded our goals and expectations. We interviewed 22 people who lived in Edwards County during World War II. This was two more than our original plan. These people represented 13 men made up of 8 veterans, 1 farmer, and 4 teens; the 10 women representing 4 military wives, 1 farmer's wife, and 2 engaged to service men, and 3 teens. They lived in all parts of the county including Kinsley, Offerle, Lewis, Belpre, Centerview, Fellsburg, and the Zion and Sts. Peter and Paul Church communities. They represented various economic levels from very poor to farmers and business people who were a little better off during these times. We were able to interview one Hispanic. We were disappointed in not being able to interview an African-American. From what we could learn, no one is living of that generation. Also some other people we had hoped to interview died before we received the grant.

It's difficult to say what the biggest successes were as each and every interview was successful and added to our knowledge of what life was like for the World War II generation. Some successes might include:

- a) Digitally recording 22 interviews successfully and linking them to the website
- b) Photographing the interviewee and displaying the portraits on the website
- c) Producing 23 *You Tube* clips and linking them to the library website
- d) Scanning personal pictures of interviewees and linking them to the library website
- e) Entered interviews onto the Kinsley Library on-line, searchable catalog.
- f) Building attractive, navigable web pages to make the project accessible
- g) Bringing some members of the older generations into the digital age
One 91 year old interviewee is a specific example. She came to the library and was shown her *You Tube* video clip on a library computer. She was so tickled and amazed when she discovered that her nephew did not have to wait until he came to the Kinsley Library to see it. He could access it on his home computer. At least 2 others saw their videos for the first time at the open house.
- h) Preserving personal and community history not only for the public but for families
Several participants told us how excited their children and grandchildren were when they learned that these memories were finally recorded. Some children told us that they heard stories they had not heard before.
- i) Stimulating intergenerational discussion and appreciation within the interviewee's family, the participants, and the community. Sixty-five people attended the open house and were completely engaged for two hours.
- j) Building community pride by recognizing the worth of our citizens' lives and their place in history
- k) Further enhancing the library's reputation and building more support for the library in the community
- l) Stimulating interest and participation in continuation of local history research. Many volunteers helped to add previously recorded interviews and to do supporting research.

2. How many of the activities in your work plan were you able to complete during the grant period? If additional work remains, how do you plan to complete the project?

We were able to complete all work in the grant by February 28 and held the public open house on March 23, 2010. Final press releases went out that week.

4. What format (newspaper publicity, publications, displays, etc.) did you use to share the project with the community? Were any public meetings held, and if so, how many people attended?

We publicized the project in the following ways:

1. The local newspaper was used to announce the grant award and to inform the public of its progress and the developing website.
2. The project was and is featured and linked on the library homepage and library calendar.
3. The library staff took every opportunity to show the website to the citizenry and share the excitement of the project as it progressed.
4. Press Releases announcing the completion of the project and an Open House on March 23 were sent to the Edwards County *Sentinel*, Dodge City *Daily Globe*, the Wichita *Eagle*, the Hutchinson *News*, and the Great Bend *Tribune*. The Sentinel, Daily Globe, and Hutchinson News all did feature stories.

Press releases were sent to Southwest Kansas Library System, the Kansas State Library, Kansas State Historical Society, Kansas Humanities Council, National Endowment for the Humanities, KGS Treearcher, and the Legend Magazine.

5. Eighty personal invitations to the Open House were sent to:

U.S. Senator	U.S. representative
Kansas Senator	Two Kansas Representatives
Governor of Kansas	NEH Executive Director
Kansas Humanities Council staff	KHC western board members
Kansas State Librarian	Kansas State Historical Society
Kansas Heritage Center	Southwest Kansas Library System staff
Edwards County Commissioners	Kinsley City Commissioners
Kinsley City Manager	All 22 interviewees
KHC Humanist for the project,	World War II veterans in Edwards Co.
Edwards Co. Historical Society Board	Kansas Folklore Society
5. A display was mounted in the library before, during, and after the March 23rd Open House. It featured vintage pictures of participants and quotations from the interviews.
6. The project and open house were publicized on bookmarks, flyers, and posters throughout Edwards County.
7. Announcements of open house were made at public meetings.
8. Program on the project was given to the local Rotary Club.
9. During the open house the library computers were used to access the project. Paper copies of the interviews were available on the tables.
10. Interview video clips were projected in one area.

11. Printed transcripts and other research and pictures on tables during open house.
12. The open house corresponded with a Kansas Library Association *Snapshot Kansas Library* project. The Kinsley Library was the first library to have their *Snapshot* day and the project was featured on the *Snapshot* project website, *Facebook* and *Twitter*.
13. An 80 second video on the open house was created and is featured on the *Snapshot* website.
14. The open house video is also on *You Tube* and linked on the Kinsley Library website.

5. If appropriate, which statewide repository has been notified of your project?

The Kinsley Library has delivered archival CD copies of the oral interviews and electronic and hard copies of the transcripts and images to the Kansas State Historical Society, the Edwards County Historical Society Museum, and the Kansas Folklore Society.

6. Describe any kinds of follow-up activities that you anticipate in your community.

“Follow-up” activities began even before the project was over. In November the local VFW Auxiliary mounted a display of veteran pictures in a downtown store front. When the display was over, the library requested that participants bring their pictures to the library for scanning. We recorded basic information about each person to accompany the pictures which were then archived in the library collection. We also linked the WWII veterans’ pictures to the *Patchwork* website.

In January we discovered the Kansas State Historical Society World War II site of enlistees and draftees by county. Edwards County was linked to the *Patchwork* site.

Several years ago the Kinsley High School Senior English class conducted. Library of Congress *Veterans History Project* interviews which were also archived in the Kinsley Library. Volunteers retyped and they are on the *Patchwork* site. The Vietnam and Gulf War veteran transcripts are in progress now.

The library director gleaned information from the 1940 and 1943 Twenty Year Class Reunion books that revealed how the war affected lives during the five years post graduation. The information was retyped and is accessible on the *Patchwork* website.

Permission was given by the author of a book on the history of Belpre to place excerpts relating to the war on the *Patchwork* site. He also suggested and gave permission to place on the website material from his book on the history of St. Bernard’s Catholic Church in Belpre.

A volunteer researched the local newspapers from the era and made photocopies for the library files of articles of interest to World War II including letters home from soldiers and sailors.

Service personnel wrote letters to the local newspaper from 1941-1945. The letters from the 1941 have been typed and are on the Patchwork website. Plans are to continue to type remaining war years for placement on the Patchwork website.

Because we missed the opportunity to interview many WWII veterans by waiting too long, we hope to begin interviewing Korean War veterans as soon as we find the funds for transcriptions. We are soliciting donations in our counter “piggy bank.”

The interviews gave us more opportunities to ask for pictures of local businesses for our Historical Digital Photographs and Digital Map collection. Many participants got out the photo albums and rewarded us. Some images generated great interest in the community. We hope this stimulates others to look through their old albums with a researcher’s eyes and brings forth more gems.

7a. Were there any public programs given? Is so, describe the event. How Many people attended?

On March 22, Joan Weaver provided a program for the local Rotary Club which consisted of a tour of the Patchwork of Dependency website projected on a screen. Sixteen people were present and they were issued an invitation to the open house.

We held a *Patchwork of Dependency* Open House on March 23, 2010. The foyer display contained a WWII uniform and legging along with vintage photos and large, printed quotations. More quotations and photos were displayed on the ends of the stacks and on a large display board. In this fashion all 22 participants had a quotation on display.

Presentation folders with a current 8” X 10” photograph of each participant on the cover and the transcript inside were available on the two large library tables for people gather around and read. Other research was also printed and on the tables. Framed, vintage photographs of other WWII veterans who were not interviewed went placed down the center of each table. The casualty list and a composite picture of 39 WWII veterans were also displayed.

The refreshment table had a bouquet of daisies in a blue mason canning jar, a vintage toy tin WWII tank and War Bond pins. The Friends of the Kinsley Library group provided and served homemade cookies, coffee, ice tea and water.

One side of the room had a digital projector with a volunteer accessing the interview video clips. People gathered to watch, listen, and discuss those. The six patron computers were reserved for people to access the project.

Nineteen of the twenty-two interviewees attended. Three could not come because of illness and age. Forty-six additional people attended, packing our little library.

7b. How did the audience respond to the program. What kind of discussion took place?

Most everyone was there for the whole two hours. Animated conversations were going on all over the room. Other people were engrossed in reading the interviews. People mingled and reminisced. Participants stood by their quotes and told the story behind the quote. People who were not participants also shared their stories and brought it mementoes. Some participants

saw their videos for the first time. Grown children and relatives of participants were equally engaged in the stories. Some school children came for the cookies and stayed for the stories. It was a true celebration and a joy to go around the room and see the pride and warmth of community. A video is available on the Kinsley website which captures the event quite well in 80 seconds.

8. Summary of Project Findings

The interviews found that Edwards County was indeed a patchwork of small closely knit communities that took care of each other. People within each town or rural neighborhood built around a church supported each other and the war effort. Bad economic conditions during the Depression along with gas and tire rationing during World War II tended to keep people within their own community, but each community was supportive and loyal to its community.

We began the interviews with remembrances of the Dust Bowl and Depression Era. We learned that the people of Edwards County did not go hungry as they did in the big cities. However, Gordon Coats remembered that in Kinsley there were the *haves* and the *have-nots*. Everyone including the children was expected to work hard. Whether the people were living on farms or in towns, they had gardens and canned the harvest. Belpre had a community garden with an irrigation ditch that ran down the middle. Everyone raised and ate a lot of chickens, milked cows and butchered hogs. Gordon Coats said that about two-thirds of the people had a cow in the back yard and chickens. People sold eggs, cream, and dressed chickens to have a little bit of money coming in. It seemed that families that owned their farms and businesses or had stable jobs were able to hang on and survive. Ironically the segregated Hispanic community worked for the railroad and they had steady jobs through the Depression.

The less fortunate struggled with poverty, lost farms, and found work in the WPA (Works Progress Administration) or CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) planting trees, building roads and bridges and constructing the Highway 50 overpass. Kenny Dupree's father worked for the WPA building roads for 18¢ an hour and hiring out his horses for \$1 a day. Later he worked on soil conservation planning trees. Gordon Coats' father planted trees for the WPA, but also supplemented the family income by becoming a bootlegger.

Kenny Dupree remembered that his brothers weren't old enough for the CCC, but they got in the NYA (National Youth Association) which was for boys 16-18. They got 10¢ an hour and did projects around the school. Big bricks were brought in from Hodgeman County and the NYA boys used stones to square them up. The Community Building in South Park was built with these bricks. When the Dupree boys became old enough, they joined the CCC and built lakes in western Kansas.

Robert Stach's father lost his farm and his family went back to live at the old home place with their grandmother and then into Kinsley. His father worked for the WPA building roads and bridges. Marcile King's father was a day laborer in Belpre, and she remembered their large family getting commodities. They also ate rabbit, squirrel, pheasant, quail, fish, frog, and turtle. Norma Gatterman remembered her father picking up day laborer's for the farm from the men lined up on the main street in Lewis.

Many country people did not have indoor water, toilets and electricity until after the war. Even people who lived in town had water pumps. Thelma Scheufler Negley spoke of picking up corncobs to use in their cook stove. They used kerosene lamps and then gasoline Coleman gas

lamps before getting electricity. “Daddy put us up a barrel on the windmill, and we’d pump it full in the summer. That’s where we’d take our showers.” They heated with coal and had an ice box which used a 100# block of ice each week. “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 pumped water through it to keep it cold.”

Kenny Dupree described his house in Kinsley as a shack with tar paper on the outside. They had no electricity, a water pump in the house, an outhouse, and heated and cooked on a wood stove.

Bea Basgall Coat’s father, who owned a general mercantile store in Offerle, saved a lot of people by giving them food on credit. He told her that one woman came into the store saying, “Joe, could I have a little credit. My children are starving.” People were suppose to pay him back, but reported still finding old bills in the basement when he died.

Bob Weidenheimer’s dad had a grocery store in Harper, Kansas and lost money charging groceries. “I use to wonder why he let people do that, but later when I was in charge, I remember lots of times I did the same thing. People would come into the store with a big family, had children and sad eyes and a little bit of groceries and what can you do?” When his uncle was drafted into the army and had to close the store in Kinsley, Bob’s family moved to Kinsley and reopened it a year later.

The Depression affected Thelma Scheufler Negley who graduated in 1937. She said, “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 in Belpre, and I cooked and baked pies ‘til I met Paul, and we were married in ’41.”

People found creative ways to solve problems as when Virginia Lippoldt and Howard Rapp had a beautiful wedding with all the trappings becoming the surprise climax to a wedding dress fashion show, a fund raiser put on by the Methodist women. The church women supplied the flowers, music, and minister. Women creatively sewed clothes for their families, usually out of the feed and flour sacks. They would continue this practice during the war years.

Everyone who recalled the Dust Bowl told stories of hanging wet sheets over doors and windows to keep out the dust. Virginia Lippoldt Rapp said, “You cleaned dust before you could set your table and eat. You just wiped off a place and your dishes.” When poeple went outside or to bed, they would cover their faces with damp cloths to keep from inhaling dust and getting dust pneumonia. Several interviewers knew people who died of this disease. Wilma Kuth Lancaster’s brother lost his hearing in one ear from dust-induced mastoiditis.

Sometimes school was canceled. Several remembered being caught away from home and having to stay until the storm ended. Robert Stach had to push his bicycle home with his mother holding his sister and all of them fighting the wind and dust. Norma McClaren Gatterman was injured in a car wreck during a storm. Paul Scheufler recalled the difficulty of finding the milk cows in the pasture, while Jake Roenbaugh told of holding unto his grandmother to find his way from the chicken coop back to the house. Gordon Coats said it was not only dust, but sand that blew in the Fellsburg area. “The fencerows were covered up pretty much. If you parked something for two or three sand storms, the sand would cover it up.”

Gardens were watered, but there was no irrigation for crops. During the drought years, Gilbert Herrmann herded cattle on the road because there was grass there and not in the pasture. Gordon Coats helped his uncle plant 'third row corn' every nine feet in wheat fields to keep the ground from blowing. Kenny Dupree's brother-in-law farmed north of Kinsley and did not make a crop for 9 years. Kay Martin Carney remembered her father standing outside as crops were ruined and always saying, "Well, there will be another year." Five year old Jeff Mead recalls hearing the grandfather who raised him saying, "I would have walked away and left it, but where would we have gone?"

Grasshopper hordes came with the draught. Paul Scheufler remembered one day the tree belt looked beautiful, and that night the grasshoppers came in and ate all of the leaves off making them look like winter trees. "The dadgum grasshoppers ate the cork out of my water jug sitting at the edge of the field," he said. His brother Ed recalled, "The telephone poles were just lined with those large yellow grasshoppers clear to the top, and they followed the shade around as the sun went around." Buford Brodbeck had a different experience sweeping dead grasshoppers off of the Merry-Go-Round platform in Guymon, Oklahoma. Kenny Dupree said that poison didn't help much, but then the farmers brought in turkeys and they ate the grasshoppers.

Jeff Mead told of being warned not to touch the wooden windmill derrick because the dry dirty air build up static electricity making it snap. Robert Stach said you had to be careful touching a fence for the same reason.

Rabbits were also a problem during the drought years. The courthouse gave \$1 for a pair of coyote ears which eliminated the rabbits' predator. As the farmers planted tree belts to save the ground, rabbits would eat the young trees if they were not covered with chicken wire. Rabbit drives were held. Kenny Dupree said he went on one where everyone from town went out to the Sts. Peter and Paul area for the drive. They would walk about 10' apart and drive the rabbits to a fence where they would club them. They sold them for food. Marcile Kazmaier King also remembered them putting up a snow fence in the field beside her house in Belpre. They would drive them into this fence and club them to death. She doesn't remember it bothering her, but Robert Stach couldn't think about going on a rabbit hunt, even though they ate a lot of rabbits.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor was heard on the radio. Jack Miller recalled "On December 7, 1941 at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I had guys helping me build 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.' I told the boys to 'Throw those shovels down. We're going to town and have a drink on this.'"

Jeff Mead said that he was outside with his grandmother getting a chicken for Sunday dinner. His Grandfather was shaving with a straight edge. He came bursting out the door and runs towards his Grandma and said, "My God, Eva, I just heard that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor."

Thelma Scheufler Negley remembers that day because her husband lost two cousins at Pearl Harbor.

Buford Brodbeck was driving around with some friends that Sunday morning. They had the radio on, and the program was interrupted to say Pearl Harbor had been bombed. "Boy, right quick, all three of us were going to go enlist," said Buford. "We were still 15 or 16. You had to

have your parent's permission. We all went home, and the next day we all said we had to stay in school. Our parents wouldn't let us."

Bob Stach (10th grade) and Kenny Dupree (9th grade) were attending school in the old Methodist Church because the high school had burned. They heard President Roosevelt say, "This is a day that will go down in infamy," during a school assembly held in the back behind the congregational seats.

Norma McClaren Gatterman remembered that "Everyone went up to the (*Lewis High School*) library. It was the largest room up on the third floor. Even the little kids were up there. And we heard President Roosevelt declare war." Other younger interviewees heard about Pearl Harbor, but they did not understand all the ramifications because of their age.

The draft was already in place and men immediately enlisted and were drafted. Men had physicals and were inducted in Leavenworth, Kansas. They traveled there by train cars and Greyhound buses which started in western Kansas and picked up inductees as they traveled north. Some had never been away from home and were homesick. Buford Brodbeck was put in charge of the group he rode on the train with. He said, "I had a couple of kids from Lewis that had never been out of the county. Can you imagine that? They cried the whole first night they were in the service. I didn't know what to do for them." Paul Scheufler recalled traveling to training camps by troop trains which were coal-burning. "You could get real black from riding on them. There wasn't any air conditioning in those days, and you opened the windows and everybody just got black from the smoke."

Bea Basgall Coats remembered the troop trains going through Offerle. "They went with their windows wide open, and some of the soldiers would throw out their addresses hoping some girl would write to them." She picked up one and corresponded with him until he found out she was only 14. She also remembered one night the train stopped for some reason, and all the men got out and walked around town looking young and handsome in their uniforms. "We sold out of all the candy in the store." Marcile Kazmaier King also remembers going down to the tracks in Belpre and waving at the soldiers on the troop trains.

Most of the young men in the Edwards County went into the service. In the class of 1940, 22 out of 24 served. In the class of 1943, 32 out of 34 served. One woman was a WAVE and several were Army nurses. Most of the women graduates married men who served. Thirty-one Edwards County men died in uniform. Hispanics and African Americans served. Frank Castaneda said that Mexicans often returned home and joined the Mexican Army.

The families of the interviewees served our country. Three Scheufler brothers served, four Brodbeck's brothers, three Dupree brothers, four Kazmaier brothers, and two Herrmann brothers. Brothers Gilbert and Gerald Herrman were able to meet up a couple times in Manila as they served at opposite ends of a Philippines. Gordon Coats joined up at age 16 and served in the Philippines. About the same time, his father Clyde was drafted at age 35 and served in Europe.

The war depleted the local labor force in Edwards County. War plants enticed both men and women away from the rural community to the city. Sons and farm laborers were called away from farms to military service. Teachers were scarce, and to fill the need, some teachers delayed retirement while others were recruited from men physically unfit for military service. One interviewee indicated that some of the recruited teachers might even have been a little crazy. Teachers at Sts. Peter and Paul parochial school were nuns and so they experienced no shortage.

Older men had to be the fire fighters at the Kinsley station. In the summer during high school Marcile Kazmaier King worked at the laundry in Larned, Kansas washing the Pratt Air Base laundry. It paid better than working in Belpre.

Cordelia Froetschner recalled that her father hired Lutheran Seminary students from St. Louis for labor during the war. Bill McLean, whom we interviewed in 2005 before he passed away in 2007, invented, patented, and sold a silo unloader to compensate for the labor shortage.

Many German people had settled in Edwards County. The Scheufler children recalled stories of their parents first living in Hopewell, Kansas where they were not welcome, and they finally ended up in the Belpre area. Offerle had many Germans, and there was the rural German-Lutheran neighborhood of Zion Church located south of Offerle and the rural German-Catholic neighborhood of Sts. Peter and Paul located north of Offerle. These were farm communities, tightly knit and self-sufficient. Grandparents, parents, and some interviewees still spoke German. During this time, church services were conducted in English and German. The churches had parochial schools which the children attended. Social events and things like Walther League provided activities.

Wilma Kurth Lancaster remembered her father talking about Anti-German feelings during World War I. Bob Weidenheimer didn't think there were too many instances of prejudice against Germans during World War II because so many lived in the area. He did remember that his grandpa would sit on his front porch in Kinsley talking in German with friends. Somebody turned them in to the federal authorities who came to question them. His Grandpa escaped but "most of those other fellows were held and questioned because they weren't speaking English all the time. My Grandpa said 'You can't deny us our native language,' and they didn't do anything to them. But they were watching them and anybody else who spoke German."

Gordon Coats hung out with old Germans at the pool hall in Kinsley before the war began. He remembered that they talked about how Hitler was a pretty good guy because he was pulling Germany back after WWI. He noted that "After a year or two they didn't do that."

Cordelia Gall Froetschner said that World War II didn't affect her neighborhood much because the men were farmers and did not have the education to leave and work in war plants. Many of the men also had farm deferments. The people still had close relatives in Germany, and after the war, Cordelia reported sending relief packages to German families through the Lutheran Church.

Everyone said that Saturday night was important in Belpre, Lewis, Kinsley, and Offerle. At this time these towns had bustling business communities. Everyone came to town early to get a parking place on the main street. Businesses stayed open late and movies were shown at the Palace Theater in Kinsley, the opera house is Belpre, and outdoors in the summer in Lewis and Offerle. The city band played in the Lewis bandstand. Kinsley and Lewis had roller skating rinks. Norma McClaren Gatterman talked about drug store owner Pop Barnes wrapping packages for the boys overseas for free. Families sent cookies, shaving supplies, and soap.

Sports were important in the small communities. Baseball, basketball and football were played both on school teams and town teams. "My brothers were all very good athletes," remembered Marcile Kazmaier King. "I can remember Daddy washing our faces and combing our hair and walking us to the home ball games." Centerview School had a bus going to the games, but Trousdale relied on parents driving cars. Marcile continued, "We were so poor, if it had not been for my friends, I would have never gotten to go to away ball games and other things

because they did not provide busses. If you didn't have parents that had a car to take you to ball games, you didn't get to go."

Many of the interviewees were musical and provided entertainment. Kay Martin Carney played the clarinet in the city band. The Belpre music teacher had a small band which Marcile Kazmaier King played clarinet in. They performed at the Pratt Air Base and even in the Belpre Honky Tonk. She also played in a harmonica band on the radio. After her marriage, she played in the Christian Church orchestra in Lewis. Wilma Kurth Lancaster learned to play the organ and used her talent at Zion Church. Bea Basgall Coats was a pianist and would major in music in college. Norma McClaren Gatterman was a soloist and played string bass. During the war, Robert Stach sang in a quartet in Weiblingen, Germany.

The war brought shortages and rationing. There were no new cars or tractors to buy. Jeff Mead's Grandfather went before the ration board to make application for a new tractor when their old one broke down in 1944. His application was granted, and the tractor was delivered to Kinsley by rail. Fourteen-year-old Jeff drove it home to Centerview.

Gas and tires were rationed. Teenager Irene Fisher Woolard did not learn to drive because her father said they had to conserve both. The speed limit was lowered to 35 mph to save gas and tires. Farmers had priority access to gasoline and tires for agricultural purposes. Also Buford Brodbeck remarked that "they did give his family's carnival business quite a bit of gas because they were entertaining the people to keep the morale up." Old tires meant a lot of patching of worn out tubes beside the road. People stayed within their communities and car pooled for trips to the city or out-of-town work. They also traveled by train to conserve gasoline coupons. More than one person recalled having to sit on their suitcase on the train.

Frank Castaneda said that chrome was not put on cars produced during the war. He went on to say that cars were not painted green and Lucky Strike cigarettes, which came in a green package, changed to white because green was needed for the army. Buford Brodbeck remembered that also and added that they had a hard time getting paint and parts to repair their carnival equipment.

There were coupons or ration stamps for meat, different canned goods, sugar, coffee and even pepper. Norma Gatterman reported that they could get all of the white syrup they wanted, so they attempted to substitute it for sugar, not always successfully. Beer was rationed, and cigarettes were limited as they were all going overseas. Bea Coats remembered that the store did not have butter very often. They sold oleo which looked like shortening. You broke a tube of yellow dye and kneaded it in to make it look like butter. Shoes were hard to come by. Some mentioned stores saving things back or selling under the table, and individuals selling rationed items in a kind of black market. Ration stamps were saved and shared.

Another upheaval and hardship during the war came when the Kinsley High School burned in 1941. Robert Stach spent all 4 years of high school going to classes in churches. There was no money to build during the war and limited materials after it. He said they even debated making wooden lockers because there wasn't the wood.

The county was involved in efforts to support the war. Many told of buying war bonds. Marcile Kazmaier King remembered buying stamps for bond books in high school. She also had the Larned Laundry regularly take a war bond out of her pay check. Jake Roenbaugh remembered iron drives. Our interviewees did not remember wrapping bandages or similar

activities. However, research in local papers revealed that this was going on. Our interviewees were teens and young women often with small children. We surmise, it was the older women who had the time for these activities, and unfortunately they are no longer here to be interviewed.

Family life was disrupted by the war. Marriages were hurried up or put on hold. Kenny and Mildred Winters Dupree got married on a weekend plus 3-day pass. Wives would try to be with their husbands when they were stationed in the states. Thelma Scheufler Negley remembered, “I was never outta the State of Kansas ‘til I was married. And then when I was married, I went from coast to coast...I got on the bus to go to Camp Roberts, California where my husband Paul was stationed. Well, Paul had an apartment in a little town away from there. I got off the bus, and my name came over the loudspeaker. I was scared to death. I went over there, and Paul had left a note. He said to get on a certain bus and come to there and he’d be over there. So, I got my suitcase and I started. Some soldier came up to me, and said ‘You’re not going over to *“Paso Robles?”* I said ‘Yes, because 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 traveled.”

While the men were in service, the wives lived in different places. Thelma Negley came back to live with her parents in Belpre, but then lived with her in-laws in Larned where she had a job. Kay Carney and the baby lived with her parents. Jean Titus and the children lived in a rented house. Vera Brodbeck and Virginia Rapp stayed with their husbands stationed in the states. Children, like Linda Carney, were born while fathers were away. Fathers were absent so long that Jean Titus reported that her grown daughter had recently commented on being afraid of her father when he finally did come home.

Communication with home was by V-Mail. Paul Scheufler recalled how he would write a letter and then they would photocopy it and reduce it into a little letter to send home. Mail was also censored so as not to give up strategic information. Kenny Dupree said that the mail came in bundles that they distributed on the front lines. “I got my mail regularly. That didn’t make it so bad.” Thelma Scheufler Negley didn’t hear from her husband from October till 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.”

Marcile King had 4 older brothers who all served in the military. In 1941 her parents, sisters, and she moved to Twin Falls, Idaho and lived in a migrant labor camp picking potatoes, onions, and hops. They came back in 1942.

The veterans we interviewed had a range of experiences. Buford Brodbeck was a mechanic stationed in Florida. Jack Miller (infantry) served in the Pacific Theatre. Gordon Coats was an anti aircraft Navy gunner in the Pacific. Kenneth Dupree (infantry), Robert Stach (lineman), Gilbert Herrmann (tank driver), and Paul Scheufler (infantry) were all at the Battle of the Bulge. Paul Scheufler carried ammunition. He lost several of his gunners, and all but two of his squad were killed. Ed Scheufler was a typist at headquarters in Occupied Japan. Each has a unique story of their military experience.

Those who saw battle implied more than described the experience. For example, Kenny Dupree said, “On my 19th birthday the order came to ‘fix bayonets.’ You shouldn’t have to fix bayonets on your 19th birthday.” Other stories they told were humorous. Robert Stach heard nearby sneezes while on guard duty in German territory. He was relieved when he learned that

sheep can sneeze. Jack Miller showed courage when he was hospitalized with battle fatigue and insisted, “I want to go back to my outfit.” And he did. He also remembered eating lots of tomato ice cream on the ship home.

When the war ended on VE Day and VJ Day, the towns reacted with spontaneous celebrations. On VJ Day, Kenny Dupree was in Kinsley, home from Europe, on a two-week furlough before going to Japan. “I tell you, the shouting and whooping, you never seen nothing like it in your life. The church bells rang; the fire whistles rang. The war was over. I didn’t have to go to Japan! That was the best time of my life.” Church services of thanksgiving were held. Irene Woolard was at the University of Colorado where there was quite a celebration on campus with people yelling “The Peace Treaty has been signed! The war is over!” Bob Weidenheimer had been swimming in Hutchinson at the Municipal Swimming Pool. “The news came on while I was on the bus, and boy, people were hugging and kissing and having a real field day.” Later, as the soldiers came back one at a time, no big community celebrations were held. Families had their own small celebrations.

Some soldiers did not return home. Kenny Dupree lost his brother Arthur who was fighting in Germany about 50 miles from Kenny when he was accidentally killed by a mortar. Kenny did not find out for about 2 weeks. Later his body would be brought back to Kinsley. Kenny was not there for the funeral, but another brother who was able to attend said the community all showed up to support the family. Jean Titus thought that the small communities were “close knit” and helped the widows go on with their lives.

There were other casualties of war who were not soldiers. Wilma Lancaster recalled that “Otis Kurth, my cousin, was shot down over Germany. His cousin, Herman Weiss was a pilot and flew 17 missions over Germany. Herman saw Otis’ plane go down.” Cordelia Froetschner said, “Otis’ father, my uncle, just lost all interest when he lost his son. Then he lost his farm after the war.”

When the Miller family sent both sons to war, Jack’s father was left to do all of the work. He became another casualty of the war from stress, working too hard and hearing the rumor that his pasture south of Kinsley was to be commandeered for a bombing range.

Many veterans did not believe the war affected them that much except that it made them older, grow up, responsible, disciplined, and able to take care of themselves. “We just wanted to get home and get on with our lives.” Paul Scheufler said. “I did not want to take orders any more.” He was tired of people telling him what to do and continued, “When we came home, we felt like we had our freedom; we wanted to run around; we wanted a bit of fun.”

Gordon Coats, who had known poverty during the Depression, made his mind up to find a permanent job not affected by the economy. He chose the power company. Gilbert Herrmann, who didn’t see that much actual bad combat, “Wouldn’t take a million dollars for the experience. It was good for me to get out like that.”

Others told of psychological effects. Jack Miller, shortly after returning, recalled diving under a movie theater seat when an airplane came on the screen. Gordon Coats reported that his father stopped drinking after the war, but Ed Scheufler thought there was increased alcoholism in those who had seen heavy combat. He also said that most men had become smokers because the government issued cigarettes.

Wives reported men coming back with some changes. Kay Carney thought that her husband “was more abrupt and not as gentle a person as when he left because they had to go up into the caves there in the Philippines and roust the Japanese out.” Wilma Lancaster said that when the alarm clock would go off, it would remind her husband of the sirens that went off on the ship when a Japanese plane was in the area. “It would really set him off; it really got to him.” Jean Titus said her husband “came back with malaria and rheumatic fever. It was tough for him. He would have nightmares.” Thelma said when her husband first came home, it took him a while to adjust. “I know one night, I woke up, and he started beatin’ on me....I jumped up outta bed and I said ‘Paul, wake up!’ And he did, and he never would talk about it though. And after a while he didn’t have those.”

After VE Day, Robert Stach was billeted with a professor’s family in Occupied Germany. “I met the people. ... They were all Lutherans, and I’m a Lutheran....The professor was an older fellow and his wife was kind of the old ‘Dutchy’ people like all of my grandmothers ...I got to eat some meals at their home...Herman and I, like my dad had a fairly bald head....In basic training in Texas we learned how to kill the enemy. Your enemy was Japanese, and that’s what did get me off balance when we went to Europe. I would have a hard time fighting in Europe again. Jamming bayonets into those bags was all right when they were little yellow men, but when I looked at people over there, and I could understand their language, that put a different tune on things.”

During the war and on the way home, Jack Miller and seen numerous guys that all had something wrong with them due to the horrors of war. He wondered what they would do when they got home. He wanted to help. He became instrumental in founding Jones-Barnes-Gasser VFW Post 7349 in Kinsley and later was Department Commander in Kansas. The Kinsley post had over 300 members and would have over 100 at a meeting. It helped with veteran administration, hospitals, doctors, and getting the men integrated back into the community. Kenny Dupree thought it was important because it recognized the men for being overseas and fighting in a war zone.

Some Edwards County veterans came back to farms and businesses. Others found jobs and lives away. Many took advantage of the GI Bill. Jake Roenbaugh talked to the Dean of Women of Washburn University in Topeka who said that “teaching really changed with the G.I. Bill. Students were older; they weren’t just out of high school. They had spent two or three years somewhere and they were coming back to get an education. They were serious about it.” However, none of the veterans interviewed for this project pursued a college degree. Some did take classes using the G.I. bill, e.g. welding and agriculture. Duane Lancaster, who was drafted after his junior year, was paid while he finished his senior year of high school. Gordon Coats bought their first house and Paul Negley bought a tractor with the G.I. Bill.

The interviewees sited some effects World War II had on Edwards County. They pointed to a steady decline in population since 1930 when the population was at its highest of 7,295. The Depression with its drought and Dust Bowl found 918 people had left so that right before the war in 1940 the population was 6,377. During the war years many people left for military service and war-related jobs. Some did not return to live here. When the war was over by 1950 the population had declined by 441 to 5,936. (The population has steadily decreased since then to 3,318 in 2006.)

Another effect was the loss of the business communities in the towns. Buford Brodbeck said that “After the war the economy was real good. Everybody had money.” Cars were better

and faster. Gas was cheap. People could now afford to shop away from home. So the businesses were starting to feel the decline in population and revenue.

Another factor was the Wichita Northwestern Railroad went from Kinsley to Trousdale and up to Belpre and Larned. It was sold and removed in 1940 isolating Trousdale, Fellsburg, Centerview, and Belpre. David Kearney in his Belpre history book writes of houses and buildings in Belpre being moved out to other cities or torn down for the valuable lumber and sold for building in cities.

Past research had made us curious about race relations within the county. When questioned on this, the initial reaction was there was not prejudice against Hispanics or African Americans. Everyone had attended school with both. The three African American families in Kinsley were highly respected. Bob Weidenheimer said, “We always thought they were just part of the community back then. ...Never thought anything about racial prejudices. We played with all the kids and went to school with them and never heard anything and never said anything about being “niggers” or Mexicans or any of that kind of stuff.”

But when we followed up the first question with: “Well, we heard that African Americans and Hispanics had to sit in the balcony of the local movie theater,” then the interviewees began to reconsider their initial response. We learned that a respected African American man who has a Kinsley street named after him was employed in menial labor only and had to use the back doors of business establishments. Hispanics and African Americans could not swim in the Kinsley city pool. Kinsley was the only place that African Americans lived. In the other Edwards County communities they were not found. Some had heard that this was due to prohibitive city ordinances.

Hispanics were railroad workers and lived in substandard housing by the tracks sarcastically referred to in Lewis by Frank Castaneda as the “Santa Fe Hilton.” He intimated that he “had a little bit of the sweet along with the bitter” living as a Hispanic in Lewis. Despite being a citizen, he had experienced some prejudice when he was young. But when he thought back “perhaps he had dwelled too much on it.” He thought things had changed today.

Kenny Dupree said that in Kinsley the foreman had a big two-story house in the Y the railroads formed going east out of town. He was white and could speak fluent Spanish. There was a long concrete row house with eight or ten units for the Mexican section hand families. Buford Brodbeck described them as “shacks with dirt floors and no plumbing.” These must have been houses rather than the row house which did have a cement floor. Gordon Coats had three personal friends who lived in the “Mexican shacks....They were just one room. They could put up dividers in there when they had a family. They had gardens. They had a knack for having fun, especially on Saturday night.”

Marcile Kazmaier King’s father was unusual in that he was white and worked as a laborer along with the Hispanic railroad men. She recalled the Belpre houses were like long track homes, similar to the homes her family had stayed in when they lived in Idaho picking crops. The Hispanic homes were always neat and clean and she considered them nice families.

Offerle also had railroad houses for the Hispanics on the south side of the tracks. There was a house for the (white) foreman north of the tracks on Main Street. It was described as a big building divided into one-room units. Cordelia Froetchner said that she hired women connected with the Santa Fe Railroad workers to help during harvest. Bea Basgall Coats remembered a

Hispanic grandpa who did their yard work. “He had to eat outside, and we’d go out and eat with him when we were little kids.”

There was some mention of class prejudice and Catholic prejudice. Other research has found that the KKK was active in Edwards County, but the interviewees had only heard talk of it in recent years. The KKK was more concerned with Catholics than African Americans. Catholics were also not hired to teach in the Offerle or Kinsley school system at this time.

The military was segregated during World War II. All the veteran interviewees reported that their units were not integrated. Gordon Coats said that African Americans were on the Navy ships as cooks who took care of the officers. “They were not treated humanly, but they were good people.” Kenny Dupree explained that, “The company beside us had a colored division. It was when they first tried out colored troops. One night the colored troops fought. The Germans couldn’t see ‘em. They went hand to hand with them and attacked those troops and those ack-ack guns. They were good fighters.” Kenny went on to say that one time he stopped and talked to a black troop. The man thanked him for talking to him. When Kenny asked why he was thanking him he replied, “You’re the first white man that’s had time to talk to me.”

The Kinsley Library continuously researches the history of our area and records the finding on our digital map and in our catalogued vertical files. The interviews gave us an opportunity to try to verify research and solve some mysteries of where businesses and streets were located. Rosetta “picked the memories” before we closed each interview. Lots of interesting tidbits of information was gleaned.

Overall, our interviewees look back on life in Edwards County during both the Depression and war years as being good. Many families were large; many were poor; they all struggled with shortages and absence of family members during the war years. But most said they were happy. “We were a very poor family,” said Bea Basgall Coats. “What we lacked in monetary stuff was more than made up in love.” Jack Miller summed it up by saying, “I went all over the world in the army, and in my travels. I have never seen a place that I liked any better than Edwards County.

9. Overall, were you pleased with the outcomes of this project? What might you do differently next time?

We were very pleased with the outcomes of the project. I don’t think we would have done anything that was within our control differently. It was a privilege to record the life stories of the participants.

We had a challenge when the part-time night librarian took a day job and became unavailable as a substitute. This made it difficult for the librarian and library director to get away to do the interviews. (The Kinsley Library has a 2.3 person staff.) One of the library board members stepped in and learned enough to keep the doors open so we could get away.

This project taught us a little about how transcribers work. Our first transcriber was a local medical transcriber who realized that she could not meet the demands of this project. This realization took a little time and put us behind. The second transcriber worked diligently and got us back on schedule. Early on, she committed to all but 4 interviews which we sent to a transcription company in Topeka. All transcriptions were done by the second week in February as planned.

The library director then listened to all interviews while proofreading the transcripts. Many errors had to be corrected due to inaudible speech and corrections in spelling of names and

places. This proved to be a more time consuming aspect of the project than anticipated. There are probably still some errors in the final transcriptions.

We have been very gratified with the public interest and support. The public has shown appreciation for all the work that it took to accomplish this project.