

## **Interview with Irene Woolard**

**February 16, 2009**

**Conducted at the Kinsley Library, 208 E. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Kinsley, Kansas**

**Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff**

Interviewer: What is your full name?

Irene: Irene Emilie Fischer Woolard, I reside at 714 Marsh Avenue, Kinsley. I was born in rural Stafford County, north of Hudson, a small town, at home. My father's name was Arthur Christian Fischer; my mother's name was Emilie Frederica Aleck before she married my dad. My mother's parents was Frederica Aleck and Eugene Aleck, my father's parents was Christian Fischer and Margaretha Fischer. My father's parents lived in the Hudson area, and they migrated from Germany. There were four brothers that came from Germany and they all settled in the area. My mother's parents came from Germany and settled in Indiana. Then from Indiana, they came to the Hudson vicinity. He was a pastor and the pastor of this church. When he left there, they moved to Nebraska, but when they lived in the Hudson area, that's when my mother met my dad and they became a couple.

Interviewer: So you grew up in Hudson, do you remember anything about the Depression or the Dust Bowl?

Irene: I remember one distinctly. I don't know how old I was, I couldn't have been maybe nine or ten, no... I wasn't that old. All I remember is it started to get dark and the sun went away and it started getting darker and darker. My mother said, "We need to hang wet sheets up by the window because there's going to be dust." And there was, it was just like night. She hung wet sheets and blankets up by the window because the dust was so very fine it seeped through everything. It wasn't like sand, it was like talcum. I remember thinking this was really kind of neat, all the windows covered up. I don't think my parents thought it was too neat, and then there were drifts but I was kid enough that I thought it was kind of fun. But it wasn't fun, because a lot of crops were ruined. That's about the only one I remember.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about the Depression?

Irene: No, actually, somehow my parents managed very well. My daddy farmed, and the only thing we ever bought when we went to town was flour and sugar, because my mom baked bread. We had pigs and cattle that we butchered, and we had chickens and eggs and milk and cream and a garden and fruit trees. Maybe it was difficult for them, but maybe I was young enough that everything seemed fine to me. We didn't have everything, and I knew that, you couldn't ...but I didn't miss it, because I never had it. We didn't go for food, we always had plenty of food. I had one good Sunday dress and four school dresses. I could wear a clean dress every day, but then I had to go back and wear them and rotate because that was all I had. It didn't bother me, because everybody was doing the same thing. If you don't know any better, you don't miss it.

Interviewer: Your mother sewed your clothes?

Irene: Yes, she sewed my dresses.

Interviewer: How old were you on December 7, 1941?

Irene: I think I was probably between 14 or 15. Like I was gonna say, I went to a country school when I started, out in the middle of the section. There was like 14 kids in all eight grades, and the teacher we had at that time had one other little girl, no it was a boy, that was six. There was Louise Grow, and myself, her birthday was the day after mine, we were both born in August, we were five. So the teacher said, "Well, I only have one little boy, and why don't you just send them for a little competition, or three in a class. Next year we'll put them back in the first grade." They could do that back then, so I started first grade when I was five, but they never put me back, so I was about 14 when I started high school, so that's how old I was when the war started, I imagine, because I can remember just starting high school. I am sure I had just started. I can remember when it was over, when the peace was... I can remember that.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about Pearl Harbor that day? Do you remember that day? Listening on the radio?

Irene: Yes, we listened on the radio, but again, not that I am stupid, but when you're a 14 year old kid, you hear this, and yes, this is terrible. But, what is war? Of course, my father served in the first world war, and he served his time over in Germany and France, so they knew what war was, but I... it was terrible, and we knew that this ship had sunk, but you know, like I say, we weren't as informed as kids are now days. We had the radio and the newspaper, but that was about it, as far as knowing what was going on in the world. We lived in our own little world out there in the country. I know that some of the high school boys were a little bit shook because they were talking about having to sign up and enlist and be drafted. I know my parents said that it was...my brother didn't have to go because he had lost his hand in a grinder when he was 14. So he was ineligible, he was 4F. If you were 1A, why then you got ready. I don't remember how they called them back then or how they drafted them, if it was alphabetical or by number. There again, I wasn't really that close. I had a lot of second cousins that went. My dad's cousin's boys, there were three of them that went, and another cousin of his, his boy went and they went overseas. I know a couple of them. My brother came home from college and brought a young man with him. Of course I was a silly little teenager you know, and he was a college boy, and I thought he was so cute. But he was so nice to me, just because he was nice. But he got drafted, and he was killed. It was kind of a sad thing. My brother didn't go, of course.

Interviewer: You said your family emigrated from Germany. Do you remember any hostility because of all the involvement in the war with Germany? Do you remember anybody saying or doing anything?

Irene: Not actually where we lived. You have to realize, this whole area for probably 12 to 14 miles for any direction was all Germans. They had all migrated and were all brothers or cousins or this or that. Most every one around there was German, and if you weren't, that was unusual.  
So no.

Interviewer: Do you remember any talk about hearing from relatives back in Germany?

Irene: Oh yes, one of dad's cousins had family back there and they were concerned that they would be harmed. As a matter of fact, when I got to go to Germany lots of years later, the wall was still up, and they lived in East Germany. We had to go through the gates, which was scary. But they were fine, they made out O.K. Daddy said that when he was in the war, he was over in France. He didn't talk about it much, usually they don't, but he said one night they were camped. There was a unit camped on the side of a hill resting after dark. They had walked and walked and walked all day. All at once, they heard someone talking. They got to listening, and it was German. He said he moved a little bit closer and there were four German officers. He could speak German, so he said "I don't know what I was

thinking” so he talked to them in German. He said, “What is your group doing here?” They answered back in German, and his unit captured the four Germans. Dad said that was kind of a dumb thing to do. That was in WWI. But no, as far as II, I don’t remember any animosity about our being German, because everybody was German, from Great Bend northwest and all around was mostly German people.

Interviewer: So, how did you meet your husband? You were in school?

Irene: No, actually, I was out of school when I met Ralph. I remember though during the war, if you want some little memories that I had, like I say, we didn’t have a lot of money. But Daddy kind of babied me. They had these little pins. They said, “Remember (then it had a pearl) Harbor.” I thought they were so neat. I wanted one of them. They also had these necklaces. But it had a pearl on it; it said “Remember Pearl Harbor.” I had one of those; I don’t know whatever became of it. Then, I was trying to think, it couldn’t have been very much, but they wanted you to buy war bonds and stamps. I know I had a little paper book, and it had squares in it, that Daddy bought me. You could buy a stamp. I can’t remember how much a stamp cost. It seems like it was a dollar, but now that seems like it was way too much, but anyway you could fill this book in, and Daddy would buy me a stamp every once in a while. It amounted to \$18.75. If you left it for a length of time, it would make you a \$25 savings bond. That was lots of money. So I remember doing that. We had ration stamps for sugar and I remember tires, because as the war went on, I was getting to a driving age. We had a pretty nice car. It wasn’t brand new, but I wanted to drive. Dad said, well no. At first he said, the tires aren’t that good and so on. When time went on to where I could have driven, tires were rationed. You could only get two tires or something. So I never did drive. I didn’t learn to drive until I got married.

Interviewer: That’s a different consequence of the war, one we never thought of.

Irene: No, he said, no better not. You could trade. If someone had some stamps they didn’t think they would use, you could trade, but you only got so many per family. But I didn’t get to drive because of the tire situation. Anyway, I survived. Of course, not every kid had a car then, not like they do now. Just a few got to drive. I graduated high school in ‘45. That summer my grandma told my dad I needed to go to college; he needed to send me to college. (I didn’t want to go to college.) She said I needed to be a school teacher (I didn’t want to be a school teacher.) Well, Bertie Lou was a school teacher and Lynette was a school teacher and Norma was... I didn’t care, I didn’t want to be a school teacher, but she just insisted I go to college. Well, my brother and his wife were going to Boulder for the summer session, they were both teachers.

Interviewer: This was the brother who lost the hand?

Irene: Yes, he went to college and became a teacher, and his wife was also a teacher. So my dad said, okay, I’ll send you out there with Wilber and Eva for the summer session. So we went to Boulder Colorado and I went to Colorado University. I didn’t learn nothing. It was a waste of money. I would have rather had the money. I don’t remember what it cost him, but while I was there, peace was declared. While I was out there that summer on the campus, there was a dormitory that was for sailors. So of course, us girls were like, wow. Sailors lived only a couple blocks down there. So one night we got real brave and ran down there. They had laundry on the line, and I took one of the little white caps. Some of the girls took a shirt, but I wasn’t brave enough to take a shirt. I took a cap. Stealing from the government! I remember that... but then things just went wild, because they had signed the peace treaty. Everybody was, the whole campus was just jubilant. But then I came home and I met Ralph here that summer.

Interviewer: Before you go on, you were on a college campus when the peace was signed. Were people out drinking or what?

Irene: Oh, they was just out hollering and horns were honking and everybody running around yelling and hollering, "Yippee". No, we weren't drinking, we didn't have anything to drink. Well, maybe some of them were. But they were just running around yelling, "Peace treaty, they signed the peace treaty. The war is over, the war is over." I remember that. And then, when I came back, my brother and his wife had a school when they came back where they taught school at Offerle. I went to St. John for a little bit and worked for a while. There was a girl there, Ellen Pope, and she wanted to come to Kinsley and work after she graduated, but her parents didn't want her to come by herself. So Wilber said, why don't you come out and get a job and room with Ellen. So that's what I did. We roomed together at Roy Warren's over on Colony. We had a bedroom and we both worked at Duckwalls. And he came in Duckwalls one night and left and then he came back, and he kept coming back. But I didn't really like him. I liked another guy that he run around with. Anyway, he was persistent and he won out finally and then we were married in October of '47.

Interviewer: What can you tell us about his service and what he did?

Irene: Yes, that's what he did. He was kind of like a nurse's aide. He gave shots and carried bedpans. The reason was, he'd had rheumatic fever. He couldn't handle the cold and the wet and the damp and all that, they couldn't send him anywhere, so they put him to work in this hospital.

Interviewer: Did he volunteer, or was he drafted?

Irene: He was drafted.

Interviewer: So he was a medic?

Irene: Yes, 'cause I know he said he carried bedpans. After we were married, one time, I had to have shots for allergies and he could give me the shots because that's what he did. They taught him to do that, and to bandage after surgeries and clean bandages and things like that, like a nurse's aide.

Interviewer: And he was from Kinsley?

Irene: Well, he lived in Lewis at the time. They'd moved from Centerview to Lewis. They lived in Centerview until they closed the school down. He went to high school in Lewis.

Interviewer: And he graduated what year?

Irene: He didn't graduate, he was drafted. He didn't get to do his senior year because he was drafted.

Interviewer: Did the school system go back and give him his diploma?

Irene: No, he went into carpenter work with his dad. This is what he did. He was very good at what he did. Now, Ada Cross was a school teacher at the time he was in school. Him and his dad did some work for her and Jim when they were getting ready to have their second daughter. She just insisted that he get his, well, it was like a GED. She said to go back to school and get your diploma. But he said he didn't have time, that he had to make a living. So no, he never got a diploma, he never graduated. So he was drafted.

Interviewer: After the war he came back here?

Irene: Yes,

Interviewer: Then he met you, and married you, and then what did he do?

Irene: Carpenter work, until he went... well let's see, in '50, he went to work (let's see, Dan was six months old, so yes, in 1950) he went to work for Slentzes on the farm. They gave us a house to live in; he did farm work for them. He did farm work and irrigation, tractors and all that kind of stuff. He did that, then he started to work for Cross's (*Cross Manufacturing Company*) when they were in the store downtown. He did the dirty work, he washed the parts and cleaned up the oil messes, because with his rheumatic fever in the damp in the fields and carrying irrigation pipe and getting his feet wet, he was prone to a little bit of asthma and had to quit that. So Charles Cross told him that he'd give him a job if he didn't mind just doing whatever, but he couldn't promise how long. He'd had the job, because they didn't know where they would be going either at the time. I know he went to work down there. Like I say, he did flunky work, but it was a paycheck. I remember the first Christmas, they gave us a toaster, and I was just thrilled to death. They gave us a brand new toaster for Christmas! But then, he continued with them. Then they moved to another building and then to where they are now eventually. He ran a lathe for a lot of years and they promoted him to foreman of the back. He taught guys back there, and then they put him up in the sales office. That's where he was when he finally quit and decided that he was going to run his own business. But he worked there 19 years, for Cross's. Then we started our own little business and wondered if we were going to make it. It was pretty slim pickings for a little bit, but the boys are doing fantastic now, so it worked out. But he worked with his dad, as a matter of fact; they built our house at Lewis, him and his dad. And they built my mother's house at Lewis, where Cathy lives now. The only reason that he kind of gave that up a little bit was his dad liked to fish too well. When they had a job, his dad would want to quit early and go fishing, and well, Ralph, he was wanting to make the money. He had a wife and family, so that's when he went to work for Cross's. He worked there until we started our own business. He started it in 1974. It's been about 35 years the boys have run this place. They wondered, but Dan was determined. He said this was Dad's dream and I'm not going to let it die, I'm going to make it work. There were a couple years when they had to go to work in Great Bend 'cause there wasn't much doing here. They kept plodding away and plodding away, and it grew. Now they say oh gosh, we can't keep up. Which is wonderful.

Interviewer: How many employees do they have?

Irene: I think they have 22.

Interviewer: That's kind of an unusual experience in this part of the country most business after the war had to leave, and your family built a business from scratch after the war and stayed.

Irene: Well, see, Ralph said they had to... you can't copy... if a company has a copyright on something, you can't copy it. But he said "I know enough, U started from the very beginning, to make the first bolt we ran and the first clevis. So he learned everything from the ground up, so when they started, all they had to do was change one little thing, if theirs was round we'd make it square or something, just one little thing that didn't matter so we weren't copying Crosses, see. We got started that way. There was a guy that drove a truck for Graves who picked up at Crosses. When Ralph was working in the back, of course he became acquainted with John Connelly, who was a very nice man. They talked some, so then when Ralph decided to go on his own, he asked John if there was any way, not being franchised, and John said, "If you've got some cylinders, I know where you live. You out put them out on the driveway,

and I'll pick them up." So I can remember, maybe they'd have four cylinders to ship. I know, that sounds ridiculous now, but that was really something. It meant we sold four cylinders to ship. That was really something; John would come by and pick them up. It wasn't on his route. I don't know if Graves ever found out about it. So then when they got to going, they used him over here. We got a little help along the way; it was suppose to be I guess. The only thing was Ralph didn't get to be in it. He got so sick then, he got worse. I know he'd come over here and Dan would say, "Mom, I wish you'd keep Dad at home, he just comes in and he can't breathe, and he lays on the couch. And that's not good, but he wants so bad to be part of it."

Interviewer: So he started the business in '79?

Irene: '74. And then he passed away in '80.

Interviewer: That isn't so long ago.

Irene: Well, they started in '74, now I can't remember what month they started. I know we had a meeting at the house, because Mike Schnoebelen came, and he wanted to know if there was any way he could be part of it. Because he was working at Great Bend, he was in the Newspaper business. In printing. They had been driving to Great Bend and he wasn't happy up there with his job. He'd gone to college, and wasn't getting to do what he went to college for. Besides, they were driving to Great Bend. Also, they were hauling Shelly to the babysitter up there. And they said, oh yeah, if you think you can make it. It's going to be tight going for a while. But then Ralph, well, the last year of his life, he lived on the couch. He could barely make it to the bathroom. That wasn't good.

Interviewer: When did your mother come up with you?

Irene: She came out here after daddy died. See, she lived out there on the farm, and she couldn't drive. She'd never driven. Daddy tried to teach her once, and she ran into a post. She never tried it again, she said no way. So she couldn't stay out in the country; she couldn't drive or anything. So Daddy died in '57, and then she stayed with my brothers. They were in Great Bend at the time. She stayed for a little while. Then she came out and stayed with us for a little while, and she said, well, she needed a home. She rented the farm, but she said "I don't think I want to go to Great Bend" because she didn't know how long Wilbur's would be there, and if they moved she would have to move there. So she decided to come to Lewis, and build her house there, right across the street. It was an ugly old pigeon house. Brick, you know, the windows and doors were all gone, and it was full of pigeons. She bought that, so Ralph and his dad cleaned it all up and built her house over there. She probably moved out here... oh, I know when he died, it was April the 1<sup>st</sup>, we had a terrible snowstorm, a blizzard, while she and I were down at Wichita. We weren't sure the mortician from Stafford could make it down to pick up the body, because he died at night. I was staying with her down there, and then we weren't sure we could make it home. Then my uncles came and got us and we got out to the farm and had no electricity. So we had no water, no heat, nothing. My mother, bless her heart, it was a tough time for her. But she survived, she was pretty tough. That was in April of '57, so she must have lived with us and my brothers until maybe the next year or so, when she built her house.

Interviewer: Let's go back to Kinsley; you came here right after the war. Can you describe what it was like here a little bit?

Irene: When I came out here, I came to Kinsley. I graduated in May of '45, then I went to Colorado that summer for a six week course or something, I'm not sure about that. I was so out of my element,

because I was so much younger than everybody else. I was barely 17 when they sent me away to college. Of course, kids now days are so aware, but I lived on the farm and I didn't drive, I didn't go places, and was kind of a hillbilly, so to speak. I mean I was happy; everybody around there was the same the way. I had two second cousins (*one*) who lived a mile north and another one who lived a mile and a half west. We walked. We'd decide to play together and we walked to get there. I had a little old lady who lived 1/4 mile or a half east and she was kind of like a grandma, and I'd walk there. We didn't drive no place.

Interviewer: Did you have electricity?

Irene: We were very fortunate. My dad had put in what they called a light plant. Down in the cellar, with dirt floor and walls, was all these batteries on the shelves. There was a motor, and when we were going to have a birthday party at night, which we did a lot of, everybody would come and bring cake and you know, why Daddy would run the light plant, and run all the lights and the yard light so us kids could play outside. So yes, we had electricity. There was some times that we didn't use it, because I can remember having gas lights with mantels that we hung down from the ceiling. We used some of those and just regular oil lamps too; we used some of them at times. But then we got... REA came and everybody got so excited. I think that was in '41.

Interviewer: During the war?

Irene: Yeah, well, maybe it was in '45. I don't know, I can't remember. I just know that everybody was excited. Most people didn't have a light plant like we did, so they didn't have electric lights. But then, oh the REA's coming, and everybody started setting poles. It took a while, to get it, but it was right around that time. I can't remember exactly what year it was.

Interviewer: So you went to college, then you came back here. What was your impression of Kinsley?

Irene: There was lots of stores. I guess I'm showing my hillbillyness, but I wasn't used to being able to walk downtown. Boy, you could go to the dime store or you could go to the confectionary. There was just all kind of stores on the main street. There were stores up and down Main Street on both sides. And a lot going on at the movie you know, and the picture show. So I was just right in heaven with everything so handy, because you know, I wasn't used to that.

Interviewer: Do you remember how much you were paid and how much your room cost?

Irene: I think we each paid \$4 each per month for our room, so that would be \$8. But it was just a bedroom.

Interviewer: So for meals did you eat out?

Irene: Yes, we ate out, except, well, she'd let us use the kitchen. But, there again, there was no microwaves. You just fixed yourself a sandwich or boiled yourself something on the stove if you wanted to cook something. She would let us use the kitchen, she didn't cook for us. There was a really nice restaurant. I tried to tell somebody that, Rosetta might remember it. Over on the street south of where the bank is now, there was a café there. Colonial sounds right. (*Interviewer: At one time, that was where the bus stopped.*) I don't remember. See, we lived on Colony. Actually, the big white house across from the high school, well the next house, I think Dr. Boehme had it at one time, well; the next house was Warren's, where we lived. So when I walked to Duckwalls down that street, that café was

there, so that's the reason I remember it, because it was handy. But, no there were a lot of cafés, there was a bakery. There was a family that butchered and had a locker plant or something, Weidenheimer's, and of course Fox's, only at that time it wasn't Fox's, it was Ehler's. Then across the street there was a dress shop, Clarice's. That was too rich for my blood, I couldn't afford her clothes. She had nice clothes. But at that time...

Interviewer: How much did you get paid?

Irene: It seems to me like, I know this sounds ridiculous, but it seems to me like I got \$28 a week. That would have been not quite a hundred dollars a month by the time they took everything out. Of course, when you're only paying \$4 for... but of course I had to eat and stuff like that. I don't know, \$28 sticks in my mind for some reason. I don't know what it would have been per hour. I think it was probably like \$3 an hour.

Interviewer: You were a cashier?

Irene: Well, see, actually, they didn't just have one cashier. You worked the whole store. You were responsible for one section. I was responsible for the east side, the whole east side of the store, where the counters were and the shelves behind. I was responsible for keeping those filled and waiting on people there. But if someone came in and was over here, then you would go wait on them. You weren't confined to your own space, but you were responsible. Then he put me in charge of decorating the windows, why I don't know, but he wanted the windows decorated. I'd never done that in my life. His name was Mr. Cooper. But I did it, and he seemed to be pleased. So I guess I did all right. My forte is not decorating, but I did it. I remember they said, "There's one place you don't want to go, don't go into Schnatterly's by yourself. That man in, oh he's scary." When you're just a kid, you take everything to heart. So one time, Ellen and I went in there. Just because we wanted to see. He was kind of strange, but he didn't do anything. But, we didn't frequent that place too much. But no, there was lots of stores and I was just in 7<sup>th</sup> heaven, because I'd never lived this close to so many things, clear out on the farm all my life. So boy, this was like the big city to me.

Interviewer: So you had never been outside of Kansas? Except for college? On the train?

Irene: No. The only time I ever... no we drove, my brother had his car and we rode out with him. A little black car, and they hauled me out there with them. They had an apartment in town, off campus. But the only other time I ever... no, I went to Colorado with Mom and Dad one time, they took me to Colorado. We stayed in this motel, and I thought this was something really great, because I never stayed in these little houses, each one was a little wooden cabin. We had one of those. It was summer, and it had this big window with a big board to put down to close. If you wanted air, you went out there and you propped this board up. So Daddy propped it up, because it was kind of hot in there. No air conditioning you know, but we were taking a trip, we were going to Colorado, see.

Interviewer: What year was this?

Irene: I'm trying to think if this was when we went on to Wyoming. We'd had a pastor there at Peace Church. Their daughter, her and her husband, the Thalkens, lived in Wyoming. Dad and their daughter's husband, they really just hit it off. He said, "You need to come to Wyoming. You come up and go deer hunting and we'll feed you some deer if you've never eaten deer." So one summer we went to Wyoming. I think I was about ten or eleven when we went up there. I can vaguely remember pictures. They had two kids and we played, and usually if you're older than ten or eleven you don't play, and we played.



Interviewer: Wasn't this during the Depression? Your family must have been doing pretty well, to take a trip then.

Irene: Yeah, like I say, we didn't...the only thing I remember Daddy doing for a little extra money...the ears I think. You see, the county was overrun with jackrabbits. They paid so much for a pair of ears. I know Daddy went rabbit hunting, and he had these ears hung on a wire in the shed, then he'd take them to town and get a little money. Mom sold eggs. You could take eggs and they'd either pay you or you could take groceries, same way with cream, which we separated. We had cows, and we sold cream, so it was a little extra money coming in. I remember that. As far as finances, I was happy. I was warm and had food, so that's all I was interested in. As far as I know, the Depression didn't really hurt us that bad.

Interviewer: So you met your husband and were married here? Or back in Hudson?

Irene: We were married in Hudson at Peace Church. Then when we left, I think we had a little reception, nothing like nowadays. Then we had his parents with us, so we didn't get to be together after we were married. We had to haul his parents back to Lewis. We didn't have any money for a honeymoon. We were supposed to have our picture taken at Rumsey's, so we got back here, and he was busy doing something. So we had our wedding pictures taken at 9:00 that night. So before we could get the pictures taken, we said, "Well, what are we going to do?" So we went to the movie, because he was catty-corner across the street from the movie.

Interviewer: Do you remember what the movie was?

Irene: No, I'd just got married! Then we stayed the night up here at the hotel. The Kinsley Hotel, we had a room up there on the northeast corner. I remember, because when Theresa had that, I went and helped her clean some. I seen that room and thought, oh, this is where I came when I got married...

Interviewer: The big hotel? New Grove?

Irene: The big white hotel down here that was right beside the Depot, the New Grove, I didn't remember the name of it. So that was where we spent our wedding night. Then when we went back to Lewis and lived with his folks until we got a house fixed up, so it was different all right. They had this little house, with a little bedroom right beside where the dining room was... But that's all water under the bridge.

Interviewer: How long were you there?

Irene: Well, we got married in October. Ralph had bought a little three roomed house out in the country. So we didn't have no money. I had a hundred dollars when we got married, and he had fifty. That was it. So he had contracted for this little house out north of Lewis. I think he bought it from a Wheaton. It had sat there, and needed some windows fixed and some floors fixed. But he was a carpenter, and he said that for what he could buy it for, we could fix it up. At the time, he was working for Jimmy Carroll, who moved houses. So Jimmy said he could use the truck, so we moved this little three room house into Lewis and fixed it up. So we lived with his parents then. He was working pretty hard, because he wanted to get out of there as bad as I did. So let's see, October, I think we moved in the spring of the next year. But it wasn't finished. The kitchen was livable and so was the bedroom, but one room was still plaster and lathe, it had to be redone. But we decided we could live in two rooms just to get on our own, so we moved out.

Interviewer: So you continued working after you were married? Did you still work at Duckwalls?

Irene: No, when we got married I quit. Like I say, when you ask, "When did you retire?" I never really... the only time I worked, I worked for Cross's (*Cross Manufacturing Company*). Don't ask me what year it was. Linda was in high school, because she kind of watched over Laura while her dad and I were at work. I worked at Cross's in the office, for Gary Van Dolah, I did applications and insurance in that office. I worked for him for a couple years, but then when Ralph decided that he was going to quit then after a while, then I quit. That was it.

Interviewer: Unintelligible... about selling candy in Duckwalls.

Irene: One time I remember, there was a scoop, and you scooped it out and it cost so much a pound. But I had a real bad accident one day. There wasn't much room between the wall and the counter. On my side, I had picture frames for photo's and wall pictures and all this. Well, I had gotten these frames in that were just the glass frame, you know how those are? I had taken them and laid a stack of them on the shelf like this, and they stuck out about this far, a stack of them about this high. I was down at the other end doing something, and this lady came in and asked me something, and I couldn't hear her. So I started down this aisle and run into that stack and just sliced my leg open on the corners. Blood started running. Do you remember Mary Ellen Whitten? Well, probably not, she was older than you, she worked there and was a little...well she wasn't that old, but she hadn't been married or anything. Well, she hollered at Mr. Cooper and Mary McFerren. Do you remember Mary McFerren? The blood was just...well, I hit the corner of that glass, and I had...for a long time. Mr. Cooper, he grabbed some towels and I thought, "Towels right off of the shelf? They're going to get all bloody!" He wrapped them around, and hauled me, rushed me to Dr. Schnoebelen and took me in there. Dr. Schnoebelen sewed me up. That was an experience, but otherwise, nothing too drastic.

Interviewer: Now, we've heard that the downtown busy on Saturdays and Saturday nights? Were you open on Saturday nights?

Irene: Oh yeah, that's when all the boys came over and rode up and down the streets, and we always hoped they'd stay until we closed so when we walked home, they'd come by. And they did! And pick us up, Mary Ellen and I. We'd ride around...oh, boy, those were the days. I was kind of angry at Ralph. When he came by and brought my engagement ring, he brought his dad with him. His dad had needed to come over for business, so here he comes and brings me this diamond ring and his dad was with him! I thought, boy, this is romantic. But he meant well. There's lots of memories. But yeah, the town was buzzing. Cars, you know...

Interviewer: And what happened in the winter? Were these just warm weather activities? I remember it in the summer, but I'm sure they still went downtown.

Irene: I think in the restaurants, if I remember, weren't there a couple little eateries along the north side of the street? Up along that couple blocks there... several small ones...

Interviewer: There was one up where Young's is, and there was one in there every once in a while, they would come and go, and another to the north...

Irene: Well, I've gone blank, because we had to walk, we had no car. We walked back and forth to work, but you know, I can't remember walking in the winter. I guess we were young enough that it didn't bother us; we just did it. Well, when I was going to school, grade school, our school was out in

the center of the section, and why they put it out in the middle of the section is beyond me, but it was half a mile north and a half a mile into the section. Of course, I had cousins that lived a mile south and a half a mile west and there were a couple of girls that lived a mile south. Well, the cousins, they'd start walkin' and they'd pick up the Curtis girls and then they'd come by and my brother and I would cut across, we wouldn't use the road unless there was crops. It would depend on what was planted there. But I can remember walking when there was snow on the ground. Of course, if it was too bad, Daddy or someone would take us. But I don't know, we walked because it was just what you did. We didn't think anything about it. It's been a long time ago.

Interviewer: When you came to Kinsley, do you remember how the races were interacting? The Hispanics, the blacks and whites?

Irene: The only thing I remember, there was one black family. I don't remember any Hispanics. There was one black family. But everyone revered Winchester? Their son was quite an athlete, Kenny Gaines, or whatever, (Interviewer says something...) Well, I don't remember when that was, but that's the only colored people I remember in Kinsley.

Interviewer: Did they come into Duckwalls?

Irene: Well, I'm sure they did. I don't recall that they did, but I'm sure they did. I just remember I was used to colored people, because in our country school, Maggie Harris, she was an old widow lady; she was colored. She lived a mile east of us and drove a horse and buggy. She didn't have a car. Her nephew came to live with her at one point and went to school with us. He was colored and Maggie was colored, but everybody liked Maggie Harris, she was a little eccentric. Then a mile south and a half mile east of us was where another colored family lived, the Walker family. There was a mother and three grown sons. They just mingled with everybody. I mean nobody even thought about them being colored, so I was used to colored. I remember this Winchester, I remember this older man, I think he must have come in; he was kind o a little short, scrawny, little man. He wasn't a big man. He was very nice, very pleasant, polite. Then I remember this athlete that everybody talked about because he was such a terrific athlete. I thought, well, that's pretty great. But Hispanics? I don't remember any.

Interviewer: Well, that's two people who don't remember any. But Duckwalls, everybody would come in there. You could buy clothes there...so where did the Hispanics buy their things if they didn't go there?

Irene: I don't remember any of them to be honest.

Interviewer: Well, I worked there in the late 50's, and I don't remember them coming in, and that makes you wonder, where these people shopped. They couldn't go swimming in the swimming pool.

Interviewer: Yes, because you had Mexican Town across the tracks...

Irene: See, I wasn't even aware of that. We had a lot of Hispanics, well, I say Mexicans, at Lewis, but they were so like us that...

Interviewer: But they had been there a long time, they were part of the community...

Irene: Ralph was real good friends with several Mexicans, the Negretes and the Castenedas. There was no difference, and the same way with my kids. As a matter of fact, Linda dated one of the Casteneda

boys a little bit, nothing serious. But they were just like us.

Rosetta: Well, I remember Mrs. Castenada used to come into Duckwalls when I worked there. She always had somebody with her because she did not speak English.

Irene: Yes, she never learned English.

Interviewer: I think there were one or two that waited.

Irene: Well, this is like when Frank and Angie (*Casteneda*) got married. They got married about the same time Ralph and I did. They'd been friends with us, as far as we were concerned they were like us, no difference. Well, Frank and Angie got married and we had Dan and they had another one and we had Linda and they had another and another and another, then we had Laura, and I think they finally ended up with nine or ten kids. We stopped at three. One of their daughters was real good friends with my daughter. Laura and Cruz were just thicker than thieves. And like I said, they weren't Mexicans. They were just like us, not like now days when they come and don't speak English. No, some of those people had been there longer than we had, as far as that goes, but I sure don't remember them coming into Duckwalls, I sure don't. But I remember this little colored guy, he was very nice. He was kind of quiet, polite, nice older man. But that's all I remember -- hat had no bearing on anything. That's it.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything else you'd like to tell us?

Rosetta: Do you remember another 5 and 10 cent store called Weinelt's. It would have been across the street north

Irene: It doesn't ring a bell, it might have been before my time or after I quit working. No, I remember the clothing stores and the eateries, the jewelry stores and the banks, and Duckwalls and Gambles. Lots, all up and down the street, drug stores, all kinds of businesses, furniture stores, you name it and we had it, we sure did. That's the way it was.

Interviewer: What church did you go to when you were in Kinsley when you were first married? Did you go to church?

Irene: I can't remember going to church when we were in Kinsley, I don't think either Ellen or I either one went. It seems like a time or two my brother and his wife came over and took us. When Ralph and I were married though, at first, before we had a family, we'd go to my folks' on the weekend, and I'd go to church there because I was still a member. We did that pretty near all the time. We'd go down and spend the weekend with Mom and Dad, because they'd always send food home with us, eggs and homemade bread. All the good stuff you know, but then when Dan came along, I don't know how old he was. We went to the Christian church a few times when we didn't go home, because Paul Brockhausen was the pastor there, and he also drove a school bus, and Ralph drove a school bus before we were married. So Paul invited us to come to his church, and we went to the Christian Church for a little while. Then, I know you belong to the Christian church, and no offence, every church is different. But back then, we didn't have a lot of extra. You know what I mean? We were making it, but we were eating a lot of Lipton nickel soup in the pouch. We ate a lot of Jell-O, 5 cents a package. We were making it, but we weren't extravagant. We had gone to the church a few times in Lewis, but we went home a lot. We had gone there three or four times, but some lady came up to me and said they were having something the next Sunday, and they would like for me to bring a double recipe of Jell-O. So, I can't remember what was said, but I told Ralph, and he said, "We can't afford it!" We don't even

belong to that church, and they expect you to bring a big thing of Jell-O. You got to buy the fruit and this and this? We can't afford that!" And we really couldn't, so we didn't go back. But I wanted to go someplace because Dan was getting... I thought, pretty soon I would want my kids to go to Sunday school, so then we started going to the Methodist church. Then after Linda was born, well, Ralph wasn't a church goer for a long time; he didn't see any point in it. But I was determined my kids were going and I had been raised that way, so we were going to go to church. I was a Sunday school teacher for several years when my kids were small, down in the basement of that church over there. It was damp and cold and nasty, but I was teacher for several years after my kids were old enough. Then we got involved in things and finally Ralph decided he was maybe missing out on something. I just kept going and taking the kids, and one day he said, "I think I might go with you today." I said that would be wonderful; we'd love to have him go with us. And do you know, he started going, and before it was all over with he was ushering and what all. But he hadn't been raised in church, as a matter of fact, he hadn't been baptized, and I insisted he be baptized before we got married. So he did, he got baptized. His family was not church. So, been there ever since.