

Interview with Dorothy Silvester Airgood

September 30, 2011

Conducted at Airgood's Gift and Hardware (former Western Auto Store)

211 E. 6th Street, Kinsley, Kansas

Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library.

Joan: Dorothy, can you tell us your full name?

Dorothy: Dorothy Irene Airgood.

Joan: Where do you currently reside?

Dorothy: 211 East 6th Street, Kinsley, Kansas, U.S.A.

Joan: When and where were you born?

Dorothy: Croyden, England, December 20, 1920.

Joan: What were the names of your parents?

Dorothy: My mother was Ethel Silvester, her maiden name was Graves. My father was William Fitzroy Silvester.

Joan: How about your grandparents? Do you know their names?

Dorothy: I never knew my grandparents, well I knew my Grandfather David, which was my mother's father, but I never knew my grandparents otherwise on my father's side. They were old and gone before I was born.

Joan: David...

Dorothy: It would be David Graves.

Joan: You don't know your grandmother's name?

Dorothy: No.

Joan: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Dorothy: Yes, I had one brother, which I think was William Silvester. Then there was another brother, but I think he died when he was real young. I never did meet my brothers at all.

Joan: Neither one?

Dorothy: No, but I had one sister that was older than me.

Joan: What was her name?

Dorothy: Ethel.

Joan: You grew up in England, what was your household like? Did you live in the country? In town?

Dorothy: No, I lived in a town. It was a good sized town, 300,000. It was just a typical town.

Joan: What did your dad do?

Dorothy: He was a carpenter.

Joan: He built houses or did furniture?

Dorothy: Furniture, yes.

Joan: And your mother probably didn't work?

Dorothy: No, just a housewife.

Joan: What was your school like?

Dorothy: Just like the high school here.

Joan: What was Christmas like?

Dorothy: We didn't get lots of toys like the kids do here, you know.

Joan: Did you have a tree?

Dorothy: No, and we never decorated.

Joan: How about a fancy dinner?

Dorothy: Well, it wouldn't be fancy compared to the ones here. But we always had a real good meal, and then my mother would make a home-made Christmas pudding. She made home-made Christmas pies, you know, mince-meat pies. That was our Christmas. We never entertained a lot because we weren't a big family.

Joan: Were there other holidays? What sticks out from your childhood growing up there? What are some other things that you remember?

Dorothy: Do you mean here?

Joan: No, over there. When you were growing up, what was life like for you?

Dorothy: Nothing very different.

Joan: Did you have a bicycle?

Dorothy: Oh yes. Which I was always falling off of and scraping my knees. In so many of my pictures I have my knees banged.

Joan: We hope you find your scrap book so we can maybe see those.

Rosetta: Did you go to church?

Dorothy: Oh yes, the Church of England. St. James Church, Croyden.

Rosetta: Did they have youth group or anything like that?

Dorothy: Not really.

Joan: Were you in girl scouts or anything other than school?

Dorothy: I didn't belong to anything like that.

Joan: How about sports? Were girls allowed to play sports?

Dorothy: Oh yes.

Joan: What things did you do?

Dorothy: I played tennis. We used to go swimming.

Joan: Where did you swim?

Dorothy: We had a public bath houses. The school once a week would bring a vehicle over and take all of us kids to the pool for one hour. So we had one hour of swimming lesson a week. It was compulsory; we had to go. I think that's good. Kids should learn to swim.

Joan: Was it a mixed class? Were there boys and girls? Or was it just girls?

Dorothy: No, over there, we go to infant school. That would be our first year in school, and it would be mixed. But after that, all the other classes we kept separate: girls and boys.

Joan: Did you have uniforms? Or did you just...

Dorothy: It wasn't compulsory, but most kids wore a tunic, a navy tunic and white blouses.

Joan: What do you mean by a tunic? A jumper?

Dorothy: No, it was a navy serge. Well, I suppose it was a dress, and it had big pleats in front, a square neckline, and we had white blouses underneath.

Joan: Okay, we call it a jumper. Did you have pets?

Dorothy: Oh yes, we had pets. We always had pets. As long as I can remember.

Rosetta: Did your parents own a car?

Dorothy: No.

Rosetta: So, did you ride your bicycle?

Dorothy: Oh yes.

Rosetta: Everybody rode?

Dorothy: Yes, England's a bicycle riding country.

Joan: So you had your grocery store and everything right there. And we're talking now about when you were a girl. You had electricity?

Dorothy: Yes.

Joan: You always remember electricity. So did you always have a refrigerator that you remember, or did you start out with an icebox.

Dorothy: No, we didn't have a refrigerator. We didn't have electricity till later.

Joan: Oh, that's what I mean. When you were growing up, did you have electricity in the house when you were a little girl? But you didn't have a refrigerator, and so you had the icebox and the ice man. How did you heat your house there?

Dorothy: Wood and coal fires. We had a little fireplace in every room, even the bedrooms. That's just what we heated with.

Joan: So you heated the room that you were using.

Dorothy: Yes, it got pretty cold in the winter.

Joan: Well, how about tea. I've always heard about English tea. Is that something you had?

Dorothy: Oh yes, we always had tea.

Joan: What time of day is tea?

Dorothy: In the middle of the morning, we have a break and a cup of tea. Then in the afternoon we take a break and have a cup of tea, and then of course always at meal times, breakfast and suppertime. Well, teatime, we didn't say suppertime.

Joan: So the last meal of the day was teatime?

Dorothy: Yes, and sometimes we had a cup before we went to bed. That's what I always have to do now!

Joan: You have to have a little caffeine before you go to bed!

Dorothy: It was always black tea. During the war years, they rationed. Sometimes it was green tea, and it was horrible. I never did learn to like green tea.

Joan: That's back in fashion now. Well, talking about the war, what do you remember about when the war started and what life was like?

Dorothy: Well, let's see. It started September 3, 1939. What I remember of it, it was a beautiful day, a Sunday morning. I was sitting down in the garden; we knew the war was going to be declared just any day, and everybody had their windows open. It was such a beautiful day.

Everybody had their wirelesses on, listening to the news. Then it came over the news, Neville Chamberlain, who was the Prime Minister then, declared war with Germany. We were shocked, even though we knew it was coming, and I know it was lunchtime when we heard this. We went into the house to start eating the Sunday meal, when suddenly the sirens went off. Take cover! And we thought, "Oh! We're going to be bombed right now!" And what it was, evidently some German planes had been sighted over the English Channel, heading for England. They turned back and they didn't do anything. So then, the all-clear siren went off. We didn't have any war until the winter of 1940, we would start to be bombed.

Joan: Had you practiced air raids before the war was declared?

Dorothy: No, but there was a lot of organizations set up, you know. We had "Air Raid Wardens" which would patrol the streets at night if there were raids on and things like that.

Joan: Okay, let's go back to what you said. Was it December of 1940 that you said?

Dorothy: I think it was December. It was winter when we started being bombed.

Joan: Was your little town bombed?

Dorothy: Oh yes, I've a book full of bomb pictures. We had it all the way round.

Joan: Would you run then to a bomb shelter?

Dorothy: No, we had our own. The government would provide shelters, but we had to put them up. I know my father had to give up his little greenhouse in order to make space for the shelter. So every night, when the sirens went off, we would go to the shelter. It was made for two people, and there were four in my family. And we had to share it with friends across the street from us, which was two more people. And it was close. We couldn't lie down in the shelter. We sat side by side all night long. I think that's why my legs are so bad now, you know, circulation and everything. We never got to lie down. The sirens would go off at night, and we would immediately go to the shelter and stay there all night long until the all clear sounded. We'd go into the house and get breakfast and get washed up and ready to go to work. We'd come home at night, and the sirens would start again. My mother would have a little meal ready for us, and we'd grab it and go to the shelter and spend another night there. Oh, we'd always take my cat down to the shelter, Blackie. And the friends across the street had a Pekinese dog they called Tookie. Our friend would grab the dog up and bring it to the shelter. Tookie and Blackie got to be the very best friends!

Joan: But your house was never hit?

Dorothy: No. The school was. We lived right close to the school where I went. It was next to us, and the back end of the school was blown up. The bomb that fell, fell partly in the playground, and it must have hit a water spring because the water came out. We lost the back end of my school.

Joan: Was there a reason your town was hit? Did you have a munitions plant or something like that? Or were they just bombing everything?

Dorothy: They were just bombing. We were so close to London, you see.

Joan: Okay, how far were you from London, about?

Dorothy: Ten miles. We were considered greater London.

Joan: A suburb, we would say.

Dorothy: Yes, the Germans were aiming on bombing London now. Many of their bombs fell short of London and would hit Croydon! So we really got our share of bombs.

Joan: And I assume you had blackouts when the sirens were going?

Dorothy: Yes, everybody had to have blackout curtains. You weren't allowed a chink of light. These wardens would go around the streets at night, and if they saw a chink of light, they were right onto you. You had to pull it up. They didn't even like people smoking in the street, because the enemy going over would see that little light.

Joan: A very frightening time. You mentioned rationing, what kind of rationing did you have in England?

Dorothy: Just about everything was rationed. All meats were rationed. I can't remember how much we were allowed a week. It seemed to me that each person was allowed four ounces of meat a week. I'm pretty sure that's what it was. Of course tea was rationed, which was a hardship. And I think maybe we had two ounces of tea per person a week.

Joan: You used that tea over and over again, I bet.

Dorothy: At the end it was so weak! All it was, was water. We had plenty of vegetables because we could grow vegetables. We had flour and eggs.

Joan: Sugar?

Dorothy: No! I can't remember what we had in the way of sugar, but it sure didn't go very far. It didn't last until the next rationing, you know. Jam was rationed, everything that had sugar in it. Eggs were rationed. We were allowed one a week, I think. I'm not too sure, but I think it was one a week. And they weren't fresh eggs, either. You could have a substitute we called Ersatz. It was dried, powdered eggs. My mother would always want that in the ration instead of fresh eggs because they weren't fresh at all. And to only get one per person; you couldn't do much with that! But with this dried, she would put it in cakes and use saccharine for sugar in the cakes. So many things were rationed.

Joan: Over here, automobile tires were. Were bicycle tires rationed too? Was there any rubber for that?

Dorothy: Well, we would have, but by then I wasn't riding a bicycle. I was walking to work.

Joan: Yes, you were born in '20?

Dorothy: That was way back there.

Joan: So you would have been about 19 to in your early 20's. Your father just continued to be a

carpenter, because he would have been too old to serve.

Dorothy: Yes. Now, in WWII, of course, in WWI he was in it. But before that, he and his dad were gardeners. In England, you know, we had a lot of gardeners because we have so many of these big fancy houses, ancestral homes. They have acres and acres of grounds and of course have to hire gardeners to take care of those. But after WWI, when they came back home, he turned to carpentry.

Joan: In WWII, did your mother can from your garden?

Dorothy: No, but she made jam. We had two fruit trees, an apple and a plum tree. She made all of her homemade jam. But you couldn't get sugar, so she had to use that substitute.

Joan: Well, if you were growing your vegetables...does England have a longer growing season without as hard a winter?

Dorothy: We don't have winters like here.

Joan: So you can keep carrots and that sort of thing growing?

Dorothy: Yes.

Joan: Well, you met your husband somehow during this time.

Dorothy: Well, I met him during the war when he was shipped to England, and I was drafted when I was 21 years old.

Joan: They were drafting women?

Dorothy: Yes. We had to go through physicals just like the men. If our health was good enough, we were automatically drafted either to the air force, the army or the navy. Of course, I was drafted to the army.

Joan: What was your job when you got in the army?

Dorothy: Clerical work.

Joan: So how did you meet your husband?

Dorothy: We were both...I was stationed in Salisbury and he was billeted about two miles outside of Salisbury. Of course, he came to town with two of his buddies, and I was out on the town with two of my friends. This evening, the three of us girls had gone to the canteen where we could get a cup of tea at night. We were on our way home to our billet, and these three Americans came walking along. Of course the town was filled with foreign servicemen, you know. They followed us all the way up to where we lived. We were ready to go into our place, and they called to us to stop and talk to them. They were really nice, and we fell into conversation. And that's where it all began.

Joan: And you were living in an apartment at this time?

Dorothy: No, the army had requisitioned houses. We were in big houses, and the army took them over. I think while I was in the army, I must have lived in at least five different houses. Of course, they would put us in one, take us out, put us in another.

Joan: They picked you up off the street! Is that what you're trying to tell us?

Dorothy: It sounds bad, but it really wasn't!

Joan: No, No. It doesn't sound bad.

Dorothy: The funny part was, Stewart and I, we made it together. We liked each other. But the other two girls and the other two men, nothing came of that.

Joan: So what did your parents think when you brought home this American.

Dorothy: Well, they liked him, but they never met him but twice. I think they invited him home for a weekend. He managed to get 36 hours off. I think that's the first time he met them. We took quite a risk when we got married because I knew him for such a short while.

Joan: How long a while?

Dorothy: Well, it would be about a year. I didn't know his family and he hadn't known my family. I didn't know what his friends were like back here in the States. It was a big risk when I look back now. I was fortunate that I had a good marriage and a happy one.

Joan: Well, you were brave also.

Dorothy: Well, now I guess I was. But I didn't think about that.

Joan: Now you told us before the tape, what did Stewart do in the army?

Dorothy: In the army? All he did was bake bread (*cookies, cakes, but no meals. That was a cook's job*).

Joan: He was a baker.

Dorothy: Yes. They didn't have to prepare meals or anything. But you see, his hours were different than mine. He was on duty every night from midnight until six or eight doing all that bakery work. And see, I worked in the day! So we had a hard time, you know, spending a few hours together.

Joan: What did you do in those hours? What was the entertainment for young people?

Dorothy: Well, there were two cinemas in this town. Then there was a garrison theater that put on plays. This was a small town, Salisbury. It is a very old historical town. But there was country all around, and you know, we could go for walks along the Avon River.

Joan: Do picnics, or just walk?

Dorothy: Oh no, no picnics. I couldn't prepare anything. We had to eat at the billet all the time.

Rosetta: Did you have to pass a physical to be in the army?

Dorothy: Oh yes, we went before several doctors and had a real good physical. I remember one of them said, "You will hear from us in a couple weeks or thereabouts." I thought, "Oh dear, two weeks!" And sure enough, two weeks and I got a notice from the government to report somewhere or other. Then I knew I had been drafted. So, the next thing, the instructions were I had to go to London. I think it was Victoria Station. There was a train there that was going to pick up all of us women. From there, they sent us to Honiton. Then, after we had our training, I was sent back to Salisbury. That's where I spent 37 months.

Joan: How far is Salisbury from your home town? Are they close?

Dorothy: Well, it would be close here. I think it was pretty close to a hundred miles.

Joan: Oh yes, it was a ways. Were these only unmarried women that were drafted? Or did they draft married women?

Dorothy: I think it was all unmarried because those with children, they wouldn't want them.

Joan: What did Uncle Sam make you guys do in order to have this international marriage? Were there any requirements that the army put on for you to marry Stewart?

Dorothy: They didn't want us to marry foreigners. Or rather, the Americans didn't want us to marry foreigners. I know before we got married, we had to have what they called a "Three months cooling off period." They wanted us to be disillusioned. I was called before one of Stewart's officers, and he told me that all I could expect and how things were. After I met with him, by then, it was almost time for invasion in England -- D-Day. I knew that was coming up, and we thought, "Well, if we have to wait three months, we'll never get married." There wasn't enough time. But anyway, D-Day didn't come until after we were married. But the funny part was, Stewart was in Weymouth then. He wasn't stationed in Salisbury. They'd shipped him to this area where they were ready to go overseas. That was where they were going to leave to go overseas. So, anyway, he had to make arrangements for us to get married. He contacted the church and everything, and they said to him, "You have to have three weeks placing bans." That meant in the church, every Sunday, it would be put to the congregation whether it was okay for us to get married. Stewart didn't know about that, and it was almost time. We wanted to get married right then. Well, anyway, they wouldn't marry us. So the clergyman said, "She's going to have to go back to Salisbury to get a special license." Well, Salisbury was quite a ways from Weymouth. And I thought, "Oh dear, how will I ever make it?" And he said, "I can't marry you after 4 o'clock in the day." That was their rule. Anyway, I went right back to Salisbury, and I stayed at my billet that night, and the next morning I went down to this place to get the special license. Then I hot-footed it to get a bus to go out to Weymouth, which took forever. See, with the war on, there were so many of the...you'd run into army vehicles and convoys. Anyway, it took a long, long while for me to get to Weymouth. But I just got back in time. I got changed into my dress and got to the church.

Joan: What was your dress like?

Dorothy: Blue. And I made it, every stitch, I made. And I made it out of one yard of 54"

material. And you know, that's not much material. I had to do it in my billet at night, so I'd lay the material out on the bed. And you know, I had to put my pattern this way and that way. It was short, it wasn't very long.

Joan: So you got married. Did he participate in D-Day and go over?

Dorothy: He went over right after.

Joan: When it was safer.

Dorothy: Yes.

Joan: When did you see him again?

Dorothy: Let's see. Shortly after we married, I think he was able to get to Salisbury twice. No, once. And he called me on the phone, and I missed him because he was telling me he thought they were leaving. He wasn't sure, but he thought they were leaving. I never saw him again until I came over.

Joan: He came home? He was here and you joined him?

Dorothy: Yes. Well, see the government sent us over here. We didn't pay for our travel expenses. They notified him when I was due to leave and when they thought I would arrive. I came over here; it was a little Greek vessel. I can't remember the name of it. It would be in my scrapbook.

Joan: You've got to find this scrapbook.

Dorothy: I know.

Joan: How long did it take to make the crossing?

Dorothy: Ten days. See, it wasn't a very big vessel. Where he worked, the man said, "You can take a week off and go and meet her." Which was what we wanted. Of course, he had to come to New York. I think it was Ellis Island, where we landed. I know on the vessel before we landed in New York, they announced all the girls that were going to be met by husbands. Of course, I was lucky. He was there waiting.

Joan: And this was basically a whole ship full of women coming to join their husbands.

Dorothy: Yes, and children. Some of them had a baby by then, you know.

Joan: So you met in New York. And he was discharged out of the service by this time?

Dorothy: Yes. He had a job to get a hotel. He was there ahead of me a couple of days. Hotels were very scarce then, and he managed to get a hotel. He met me, and we were able to see New York from all sides.

Joan: So you had a honeymoon finally.

Dorothy: Well, I guess that was it. Then we headed back to Iowa.

Joan: How did you get here? Train or car?

Dorothy: We came back by train to Iowa.

Joan: What did you think of Mequoketa?

Dorothy: It was a nice little town.

Joan: And you met his parents. Is that where his parents lived?

Dorothy: Yes. There was a little town about seven miles south of Mequoketa. His parents had a vehicle, or at least it was Stewart's vehicle. They were there and met us and drove us back to Mequoketa.

Joan: Then it wasn't long before you came here. How did that happen?

Dorothy: Well, let's see. Stewart's parents weren't too well. They were both sick. His mother had a heart attack, and she passed away a year after I came to this country. Stewart's dad was still alive. I know he got real sick that winter, and the doctor said, "You've got to get out of Mequoketa." We had the Mequoketa River right alongside, and we were 15 miles from the Mississippi, so it was a very damp area. So the doctor said to Stewart, "You've just got to get your father into a drier climate for the winter." So we went to Texas for the winter and then came back. Stewart always wanted to own a Western Auto Store. We had a big one in the town of Mequoketa. Anyway, he decided. An uncle of his had just left him a little bit of money, and it was enough that we were able to open a small store. So Stewart said, "Well, my dad will be able to help assemble bikes and things like that." Stewart's dad suddenly said, "You know, I'm going to get married, I believe." This was a year or so after Mother passed away. He married an old, old school friend. So we lost Dad; he wasn't able to come to Kinsley with us. Then of course, we opened up here in 1949.

Joan: What was the store before you came? Was it empty?

Dorothy: It was empty. I think there had been a meat market here or a food store or something. It had been vacated for quite a long while.

Joan: And you always lived upstairs?

Dorothy: Yes.

Rosetta: How was it to meet Stewart's parents? Were you very nervous?

Dorothy: No, because his mother corresponded with me, wrote nice letters, you know. She was tickled to death to think he was going to marry an English woman. You see, his mother's side of the family were English. So she was really happy. Now Stewart's dad's side of the family were from Germany; his parents were from Germany. But I know his mother was thrilled to bits. They couldn't have treated me better if I'd been their daughter. They were wonderful in-laws to me. So I've been very, very fortunate that I married into a family like that. His folks were just like my parents, never rich, hard workers and believed in the same things. They weren't drinkers

or anything. It was marvelous when you think about it. We just clicked; we were both so much alike.

Joan: What were the big changes you found when you came to America?

Dorothy: Well, I think what amazed me so much was this is such a vast country. Everything seemed so big, you know, wide open spaces. Of course, England is such a small country. I think that was the biggest change I found.

Joan: How about food?

Dorothy: Well, yes. Here you seem to have more fatty foods than we had in England. I guess people say the English fare is bland. It's not flavorful like here. But that's not so. English food's good. I had a job getting used to fried chicken. I mean, we had chicken in England, but my folks had always roasted it. I'd never had fried chicken.

Joan: Lots of fat there. We like our grease.

Dorothy: I think that's why so many Americans are fat.

Joan: What was Main Street like when you got here. What other businesses were there when you first came?

Dorothy: Across the street here, where Twice and Nice is, there was a big clothing store run by Earl Ehlers. He had clothes on one side, and his brother-in-law had shoes on the other side. They were there for a long while. Then, I think, Mary Fox bought that from them.

Joan: Were there other hardware stores?

Dorothy: Well, up in the next block, there was Gambles. And down here there was Firestone. I think that was the all.

Joan: There would have been one or two lumberyards at this time?

Dorothy: Oh yes, there were a couple of lumberyards. But across the street, in that narrow store that's now the insurance store. It seems to me that Giffords had it, I believe. Do you remember Dale Gifford?

Rosetta: I remember Dale Gifford, yes.

Dorothy: He had a jewelry store, I believe, because after they were there, they moved in next to me here. Then from there on, they moved up to the old bank building. Then of course, they both passed away. But there were numerous little stores across the street. They kept changing. There was an appliance store, I think, when we came, run by Harnish (*Vern*). Do you remember that? And there was a bakery store run by Lloyds.

Joan: Where was that?

Dorothy: Across the street. I can't remember the order they came, they'd move out, and then

another one would go in. But that was a good bakery store because I was always over there buying stuff. Then there was the store on the corner was run by Mrs. Baugher. Her husband was a professor at this school. Do you remember that?

Rosetta: I know the name.

Dorothy: That was an old, old store, and she ran that for years after he passed away. She ran that; it was a grocery store. That's where the greenery is now, across the street. People had moved out and Littrells Furniture Store took over. At one time, they were up there where the drug store is; then they moved across the street. Then they moved into where the antique store is now.

Joan: When you first came, where there restaurants downtown?

Dorothy: Yes, there was one little restaurant right across on the alley. And it was a good restaurant.

Joan: Do you remember what it was called?

Rosetta: The Coffee Shop?

Dorothy: Yes, it was a good shop. They'd stay open until midnight, you know. They didn't just close early. It was opened early in the morning. His wife would come and open up and do the cooking. She'd stay on until about 2:00 in the day, and then he would take over and until about midnight. They never let help run the store, either. He or she were there continuously. I think that's why they had a good store. You know, when you watch your help, you have a good store. Because they're not goofing off. There were a lot of eating places, I think, when we came here. There was one down there by the theater, just a little one. There was one right up there on the corner the next block up. Then there was one over there by the bank. There were a lot of eating places.

Joan: How did the business people react to you? Did they welcome you and encourage you and help you with the store?

Dorothy: Well, we kept hearing rumors. "They'll never last. They'll never last." I know Stewart said, "We're going to last if it kills me."

Joan: And that was 1949? This is now 2011. You lasted.

Dorothy: I wish Stewart knew I was still running the store!

Joan: Maybe he does.

Rosetta: So when you came to Kinsley, I know you went to the Methodist Church later. Is that where Stewart... was he a member of the Methodist Church?

Joan: Yes, he was in Mequoketa.

Rosetta: How different was that from the Church of England?

Dorothy: I didn't think it was that much different. Not really. The communion at the Church of England, we'd all drink out of the same cup. But there wasn't much difference.

Joan: Okay, what were your hours at the store here when you first opened?

Dorothy: Stewart would always open up. I think he was here by 8:30. I wouldn't come until just after 9:00, because I had my breakfast dishes to do and pick up, you know. But we stayed...well, we never closed at noon. We would take turns. I think we used to close at maybe 6:00.

Joan: Did you stay open later on Saturday night?

Dorothy: Oh yes. We'd be open until about 10:00, maybe. And there was such a big difference on main street. You know, Saturday nights, the town was full of vehicles when the farmers were coming to town. Of course, that was their one and only day. Saturdays, they'd come meet their friends and visit until midnight, go to the show and then finally pick up groceries at midnight.

Rosetta: When you were in England, did you have any hobbies? Did you embroidery or crochet?

Dorothy: I loved to embroider and knit; I was always knitting. You never go to the store and buy a cardigan or a jumper or anything like that. You always did your own knitting. I loved to knit, and I haven't knitted since I came here. I probably wouldn't know how to do it now.

Joan: So what changes did you see in the business community over the years.

Dorothy: Well, so many have left now. They closed down. So many people say, "Well, this town's going to the dogs." But you know, it isn't really. We lose a business, and something else moves in. It maybe not where the people moved out; it may be down on the highway or something. So I really don't think we've lost a lot of businesses here.

Joan: What do you think caused businesses to leave? You are the only hardware store now. What caused the businesses to leave?

Dorothy: Well, I'm trying to think. Gambles was the first one to leave. The old man sold to his son, but why he got out, I don't know. Then they sold to another outfit, and I have no idea why they gave up. Now, Firestone, I have no idea why they left either. He was an elderly man, it could have been health reasons, but I don't know.

Joan: But you don't sell as much as you did back in the '50's.

Dorothy: No. When we had the Western Auto, we sold everything. They provided us with whatever you wanted, we could get for you. But it's not like that now. I'm not into automotive stuff very much. What I have is what I had. I can't locate a place that would serve me with the right prices. So I leave it alone, and I just sell. I just want to stay here. I don't want to be upstairs sitting and doing nothing. It's nice visiting with people.

Rosetta: Did you drive in England?

Dorothy: No, because we never had a vehicle. You had to be pretty rich to own a vehicle back

then.

Rosetta: Did you learn to drive here in the United States?

Dorothy: Yes.

Rosetta: Did your husband teach you to drive?

Dorothy: Yes. I think I used to scare him to death! I took corners on two wheels!

Rosetta: But you were brave enough to learn to drive.

Dorothy: Yes.

Rosetta: Some people never do.

Dorothy: Well, I gave up because I've got glaucoma in my eyes. I just didn't feel safe on the highways with my eyes like this. It's just too risky; I'm just going to give up. I know Stewart wanted me to keep on. He said, "Well, just drive around town." But I never did.

Joan: Did you and Stewart ever get any time off? Did you ever take a vacation?

Dorothy: Oh yes.

Joan: Who took care of the store then?

Dorothy: There was a Vivian Huckstep. She lived in Lewis. They were really farmers; they farmed south of town. She would come in and run the store for us. But we'd go over to England about every five years for three weeks.

Joan: That was wonderful!

Dorothy: That was one thing Stewart insisted on. We never bought a fancy house; this apartment upstairs was just an old made over. It was a lodge hall, but it's an apartment. And he said, "Well, do you want a fancy house?" And I said, "No. I'd never been used to a fancy house." And he said, "Well, I never have been either. Let's take the money that would go into a house, and we'll take trips back home to see your parents. He really thought that was what I should do. He was so good about that. They were always so happy to see him. He liked them so well. I've been very fortunate.

Rosetta: Did you fly to England?

Dorothy: That's what we did. Well, one time we went over either on the *Queen Mary* or the *Queen Elizabeth*. Then visa versa, coming back. Why we did that, when Stewart was shipped over to England during the war, he went over on the *Elizabeth*. Of course, that had been one of the English luxury liners. Every fancy trimming was taken out of that vessel, and it was converted for a troop ship. Thousands went over on that ship. Stewart said, "If a submarine had hit us, the Americans would have lost a heck of a lot of fighting force." So he wanted me to see that vessel. He wanted to see the *Queen Mary*. Of course, by then it had been put back to the original trappings and all. That was the only time we went by ship. The other times we flew.

Joan: Did it take about a week to go by ship?

Dorothy: Four or five days, yes. It wasn't really much longer, and it was very enjoyable.

Rosetta: Now this store has the original ceiling, right?

Dorothy: Yes. And upstairs was the same. But when we had the apartment, we had dropped ceilings put in. Because see, this was all ceiling. We wanted to keep some of the heat in! You know, people come in and they say, "Oh, this is a beautiful ceiling." Maybe it is to some people. But a few years ago, there was an antique dealer from Texas came here, and he oohed and awed about this ceiling. He said, "If that were in Texas, I could make a fortune out of that ceiling." You know, antique people, when they're building, they want to have these old-time ceilings.

Rosetta: And you've never really remodeled much. It's kind of the way it was when you got it.

Dorothy: Yes.

Rosetta: That's what I thought. I'm just making sure my memory was right.

Dorothy: Yes, this is where the old storage was.

Joan: Do you know about when it would have been built?

Dorothy: I have no idea.

Rosetta: It was Popp's Meat Market. Popp built it. I have that information at home.

Joan: Was it 1900 or before?

Rosetta: I think it's 1900.

Dorothy: Did you ever know his wife?

Rosetta: No. I never knew the Popp family, just Sally Bidleman. That's part of her family. I never met them.

Dorothy: Now, old man Popp was a very nice man. He'd come in here sometimes. There would be a chair back here, and he'd sit and talk to Stewart.

Rosetta: He built this store. There was a food store here.

Dorothy: Now when we came here, there was a great big round cement thing out back there. It took up half the room. It was what he made baloney in. He was at one time called the Baloney King. He made really good baloney.

Rosetta: It was a secret recipe.

Dorothy: Yes, I guess so.

Rosetta: In some of the articles, they said he had a secret recipe.

Dorothy: Yes, and then later, I think after he died, the Weidenheimers became the baloney makers in Kinsley.

Joan: So this was a big cement...by big, how big are you saying?

Dorothy: Oh, very big!

Joan: Six feet?

Dorothy: Yes, at least six feet or so in diameter.

Joan: Inside or outside?

Dorothy: Outside.

Joan: Inside, like a big cement vat.

Dorothy: Yes, and that was what he made his baloney in. It was in our way when we came here. I mean it took up a lot of space from merchandise. Finally, I don't know, the one that was married to Popp's daughter.

Rosetta: Chester?

Dorothy: We said, "Chester, is there anyway you could get rid of that thing because we don't need it?" He said, "I'll take it." It's up there where they used to live in the garden.

Joan: Really? I may have to go take a picture.

Dorothy: Yes.

Joan: Now, did you own the store at that time? Or were you leasing?

Dorothy: No, we rented.

Joan: So when did you buy the store?

Dorothy: I'll have to look it up; I just don't know what year. I was tired of going down to where Pops lived every month to pay the rent. His wife wanted that right on the first of every month.

Joan: There would have been refrigeration here too, right? Or had they taken that out?

Dorothy: Well, there used to be a big refrigerator in the middle of the store. That's where the floor over there is kind of off. I suppose they put their frozen stuff in there, I don't know. It was way before we were there.

Joan: That's interesting. I'm going to have to look up how baloney is made now.

Dorothy: It was good!

Joan: I didn't realize you needed this big...

Dorothy: Well, of course we never had any of his, he wasn't doing anything then. I know Weidenheimer's was exceptional. They had customers coming, I think it was once a week, when they made baloney. They had steady business.

Joan: And you did all of your trade here in town? You were able to get your clothing and your shoes here. You didn't have to go out of town at all.

Dorothy: We had a couple of little clothing store, and of course Ehler's. There used to be one up here on the corner. Duckwalls sold blouses and things there. I'm still wearing the blouse I bought up there on the corner. I think I paid \$2 for it.

Rosetta: Wow!

Dorothy: Yes! And they had jewelry, you know, for \$1 and earrings. Things like that, real cheap.

Joan: And you always doctored here in town?

Dorothy: Yes.

Joan: Do you remember any changes in the doctors or the hospitals?

Dorothy: Well, thankfully, I never had to go to the hospital. But I went to Unruh, I think he was the doctor I doctored with. I think he was down there somewhere.

Rosetta: Yes, next to the Ford Garage (*306 E. Sixth St.*).

Dorothy: Yes, I think that's where was. I think that was the only doctor I went to.

Joan: So you never had any operations or any... I mean, I know you have fallen, in later years. But you never had....

Dorothy: Had my tonsils out, and my adenoids when I was little.

Rosetta: That's wonderful.

Joan: And then you're a member of the Methodist Church. What changes have you seen in the Methodist Church over the years?

Dorothy: Not too much because we didn't go there all that much. Stewart got to the stage that he enjoyed the Wichita First Methodist (*on television*). And it was easy on a Sunday morning to sit for an hour and watch that. I do that.

Joan: When did he pass away?

Dorothy: December 19, 1999. He just didn't quite make it into the new century.

Joan: As a young couple, when you first came here, what did you do for entertainment? Did you dance? Were you dancers?

Dorothy: No. Of course, he always liked his T.V., ballgames and things like that. But I always had something to do. At night, we'd go to the theater. It was lot cheaper in those days.

Joan: Were you card players like some of them?

Dorothy: No, I guess we were old fashioned.

Rosetta: Well, you were a working woman when most of the women were staying home.

Dorothy: I've worked all my life in this store. Always.

Rosetta: So it was nice not to go some place, just to stay home.

Dorothy: Well, I went home to see my parents. Weekends, we'd maybe decide we'd like to go to Great Bend or somewhere to eat.

Joan: So you were closed Sundays?

Dorothy: Yes, but I mean, just apart from going out of town to eat or something like that, we didn't do much of anything.

Joan: Now, we've asked everybody. I don't think your business was involved, but about race relations. You didn't have Mr. Winchester clean the store did you?

Dorothy: Well, they were here when we came, and he would come in to buy. They were a nice family, them and the Gaines.

Rosetta: So it didn't bother you to wait on them?

Dorothy: No. No.

Joan: Did you notice a difference in England and America as far as the racial...

Dorothy: We had a lot of colored people over there, so I was used to colored people. We had a lot of blacks over there, and Jamaicans, you know.

Joan: And they were allowed to eat in restaurants and everything. Because when you came here, in a lot of the country, they were not allowed to.

Dorothy: Down south, yes.

Rosetta: It happened in Kinsley, too.

Dorothy: I didn't eat that much out in restaurants, to notice. But I'm sure that the colored people were allowed to here. I believe. I wouldn't want to say they weren't, but I don't...

Joan: You mean here in Kinsley?

Dorothy: No, I mean in England.

Rosetta: What about the Hispanics. Did they come into your store?

Dorothy: You mean like the Mexicans? Yes. We had a lot of Mexicans through the years.

Joan: We had another question about changing roles for women. But you were drafted! Would you consider yourself a liberated woman all your life?

Dorothy: I suppose.

Joan: Were you a partnership with Stewart? Did you feel you owned half the store?

Dorothy: No, not really.

Joan: It was his store?

Dorothy: Yes.

Joan: And you worked here?

Dorothy: Yes. But we got along so well, and everything. But we never a couple that said, "This is mine. That's yours." Nothing like that.

Rosetta: Did Stewart bake for you?

Dorothy: Oh yes, he was a good cook. I think that's why I'm not a very good cook. Well, he used to like things that I didn't want to cook. He was a big fish lover, and a big liver lover. I hated to cook either one of those. So he'd automatically do it, you know, do the best meals.

Joan: Now, I always think of the English liking the fish.

Dorothy: Well, I did. Fish and chips.

Rosetta: Now Stewart always had bicycles. He always repaired the kid's bicycles. So that was a big part of your business, bicycle repair.

Dorothy: Yes. Stewart would have people in, even from Larned, Lewis, Offerle, Greensburg, and they'd bring out their bicycles to be worked on. Of course, he could only do it in his spare time. We would be busy waiting on customers. I have so many people still come in; of course, they're grownups now, and they say Stewart fixed their bicycles. Things like that. Or, "My dad bought my first shotgun here." Or, "I bought my first bicycle here." Or, "My red wagon came from here."

Joan: What about BB guns for Christmas?

Dorothy: That's something I won't sell. I don't like these little animals shot. They can go out of town for BB guns. That's a no-no to me.

Joan: When you first opened in the 50's and 60's, did you have some help? Did you have part-time help or full-time help?

Dorothy: Yes. About 4:00, we had a teenager come in help assemble stuff that Stewart couldn't get done. It was just school help we had. Then of course, when we took a trip, it was Vivian Huckstep who came in.

Joan: So really, it was just one part-time person who came in.

Dorothy: Yes.

Joan: You guys worked pretty hard, I think.

Dorothy: Yes, I guess we did, when I look back.

Joan: That's probably why you're still moving now.

Dorothy: It could be. I hope to move for a little longer.

Joan: Okay, this is sort of a big question for you. Looking back, overall, how do you think moving to America and to Edwards County affected your life?

Dorothy: I don't know.

Joan: Well, think about how it would have been different if you had stayed in England. What changes did this country and marrying Stewart bring?

Dorothy: I don't know!

Joan: Was it a good thing? Did you ever regret coming here?

Dorothy: Oh no, no, no, never.

Joan: You've talked a little bit about the future of Edwards County. You're hopeful that Kinsley will keep going, aren't you?

Dorothy: I hope so. I don't know why it shouldn't. It's such a nice little town.

Joan: Yes, we've got almost everything here.

Dorothy: We've got a nice grocery store, a real nice grocery store. Of course, we lost Duckwalls, which people regret.

Joan: Maybe they'll find something else to come in.

Dorothy: Well, they're going to have that store move into Greensburg. What is it, 90 something or other?

Rosetta: I think they're getting Dollar General, or something like that.

Dorothy: Well, maybe it's that. They're going to build it, aren't they?

Joan: You said most of your relatives...you have a niece and a nephew still in England?

Dorothy: I have a cousin; she's in Canada right now. But when her husband's healthy enough, they commute back and forth to England. She's got a home there, and he's got a home in Vancouver. Of course I've got second and third cousins over there. I'm acquainted with them, but I don't know them all that well.

Joan: Because you can't see them.

Dorothy: Right.

Rosetta: I know Stewart was on the library board. He was on the library board when I was hired. So he was involved in that, and he always read. Was he involved in any other organizations? Or were you involved in organizations?

Dorothy: That was one thing I didn't get involved in.

Rosetta: Was Stewart a Rotarian?

Dorothy: Oh yes, for years. He thought that was a wonderful organization. They did a lot of good in the world.

Rosetta: And you used to read all the time, too.

Dorothy: Until my eyes started getting bad. I've still got some books, I think, that Stewart got from down there...what do you call that place where they go in for classes?

Joan: The junior college?

Dorothy: Yes, I ought to turn them into either you over there at the library or turn them back there. They were books he bought. It might do somebody some good.

Rosetta: I know he was always interested in genealogy too.

Dorothy: Yes.

Rosetta: Were you interested in your family too?

Dorothy: Yes, but I don't know enough about it. I regret so that I never asked questions. My cousin in Canada writes, and she'll say, "Why didn't we ask our parents questions?" But we just weren't interested when we were kids. Now, we regret it, but what can you do?

Joan: That's why we're asking you questions today.

Dorothy: I don't know much.

Joan: This has been delightful. Thank you so much for the interview!