

Interview with Maribel Owen Carlson

March 16, 2011

Conducted in the Carlson home, Kinsley, Kansas

Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library

Joan: What is your full name?

Maribel: My full name is Mary Isabel Owen Carlson. My nickname is the contraction of "Mary Isabel." Maribel.

Joan: When and where were you born?

Maribel: I was born on July 26, 1931, in Kinsley, at the address of 315 East 5th.

Joan: So you were born at home?

Maribel: Yes.

Joan: And what were the names of your parents?

Maribel: Wilhelmina, who was called "Minnie", Huser Owen. Her husband had another nickname, I guess everybody had a nickname, Paul Doak Owen. But everybody called him "Squirt". Many people knew no other name but Squirt because he was the smallest of the three Owen boys. He was not a small man, but of those three... And he wasn't the youngest. He was the middle one of the three, but he was always called Squirt because he was smaller than the other two, who were *very* large men. They were football players.

Joan: What were the names of your grandparents?

Maribel: My grandparents were Barney and Mary Beurskens Huser, (Beurskens is a Dutch name) of Neodesha, Kansas. That's where my mother came from. Then my paternal grandparents, she was Belle (she was Isabelle, but they always called her Belle) Doak Owen, of Kinsley, and Jim Owen of Oklahoma. But he was already deceased by the time I was born.

Joan: What brought your grandparents to Edwards County?

Maribel: On my father's side, her family came here, the Doaks did, from Ireland. I presume it was because of the potato famine.

Joan: About what year?

Maribel: I don't know the year. I never did. I guess the late 1800's. She was born, my grandmother that is, in Delaware. But I think that was because they were passing through. They didn't stay, but she was born in the state of Delaware. That was Isabelle, who was called Belle.

Joan: And then the other side?

Maribel: Let's see, that's my Dad's side. My mother's side, I guess I gave that to you.

Joan: When did they come to Edwards County? Was it your grandparents who came?

Maribel: Well, it was the Doaks that came to Edwards County. None of the rest of my relatives did. Mom's family didn't; this is all my father's side, the Doaks. They settled up north of Kinsley. I had the legal description written down here one time. Evidently, my great grandfather Jim Doak bought 80 acres up there. If you would go four miles straight from Winchester Street you'd be about to Doak's Grove, they used to call it. That's where they settled. Doak's Grove, does that ring a bell?

Rosetta: It rang a little chime.

Maribel: Glad to hear that.

Joan: I should have been taking notes. Doaks were your father's family. So your mother then came because she married your father?

Maribel: Yes. That's the only reason she came to Edwards County was because she married my father.

Joan: Where did they meet?

Maribel: It was out in Reno, Nevada? Well, in Nevada. My mother... well, we're not in education yet, but she took a correspondence course for secretary. She became one of the first secretaries for Ford Motor Company when they were an infant company in Neodesha. She built up quite a career there, I guess you might say, for that day, for women. She got transferred around. That's when she got transferred out into Colorado. That was out in that area where my father went. I think he was working at a dairy. That's where they met out there.

Joan: In Colorado or Nevada?

Maribel: Well, in Colorado, then I think they might have been married in Nevada, I'm not sure where it was. But it was right out there. I think it was Colorado where they were married, and then because of his mother living here. See, my Grandmother Belle Owen is the one who you might say drew them back to Kinsley all the time because she lived here. She lived here because she grew up here as a Doak.

Joan: Did you have brothers or sisters?

Maribel: Yes, I am the second child. The first child was two years older than I, my brother Jimmy. I'm sure you may have heard of him, have you Rosetta? James Paul?

Rosetta: I don't think so.

Maribel: He lived to be six years old and died of Hodgkin's Disease. He'd finished the first grade and was ready to start the second when he died. Then I became an only child, very spoiled only child, for a lot of years. My sister wasn't born for about five and a half years after that, so it was a long time there. I was spoiled because they tried to make it all up to me.

Joan: What is your sister's name?

Maribel: Helen Owen Mahlik. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona. They do. She and her husband.

I also have a younger brother, Bernard Owen, who lives in Arlington, Texas with his wife.

Joan: Where did you live when you were growing up?

Maribel: A mile east of town in the sand hills. My dad bought that farm in '41; I was ten years old when we moved out there. I was a very angry ten year old because I did not want to leave town.

Joan: Where had you been living in town then? Where you were born?

Maribel: That was the last place we lived, yes. We lived three places in town. It wasn't where I was born. Do you know where the Brokers built their house, the two storey house over here on Wichita? Well, across the street from Moletors? Jack Moletor's place? That two storey house was the last house we lived in here in town. You know they remodeled it into a beautiful place now.

Joan: So you were a town kid as a small child?

Maribel: As a small child, yes.

Joan: Where did you go to school?

Maribel: Well, I had to change school then because anybody who was south of the tracks had to go to Southside. So I did change schools because I had been going up to Lincoln. But it wasn't called Lincoln then, it was Northside. When I was in the fourth grade, they changed that name, because I remember they had a contest and "Oh, this is going to be so wonderful! We're going to have a new name! Whoopee!" Everybody put down a name, and Lincoln won it. Anyway, that's been a long time ago that they called it that. I think of it as Northside, and I don't even usually use the word Lincoln. However, my children, it was Lincoln to them when they went at various times.

Joan: What did your dad do when you were living in town?

Maribel: Well, he ran the filling station on Fourth and Niles, here just by the railroad track going north. And believe it or not, the building is still standing there. That brick building, all those years.

Rosetta: Is that Kortess?

Maribel: Home Oil Station. He sold it to Kortess, so there you have it. My dad sold it to Albert Korte.

Rosetta: So Home Oil was built by Taylors?

Maribel: Taylors had it before. My Dad worked for Taylors many years. Then he took it on his own, and it was his for about a year before he bought the farm. Then he sold it to Albert Korte and Violet Korte, do you remember her?

Rosetta: I guess she was related to Mr. Korte?

Maribel: She was another one in my class. My Dad just sold it to him, and I was mad anyway because I didn't want to leave the neighborhood, and I didn't want to leave the school and I didn't want to go to the farm. But that wasn't the worst part of the deal. We moved out there in '41; we didn't get electricity until '48! One mile out, because of the war. That just added to it.

Joan: That would. I would have thought your mother might have had something to say about that.

Maribel: Well, what were you going to do? You'd take it as soon as they were able to put it in, and they weren't able to do it until after World War II.

Joan: Well, by '41, we had one person say that they were going to get it, and the bride married and came to the farm and then the war broke out. Then they didn't get it until way after the war. So she got the surprise.

Maribel: Yes, that would have been bad too. Well, nobody was a mad as I was out there. The little kids were so little, they didn't give a dang. The little ones, but I did. I was mad and also, it's a very stupid way to feel, but I was also angry that I had to change schools.

Joan: So when you came back, you were at Southside, when you moved out.

Maribel: But I'd gone to kindergarten with those kids. My Mother said, "Listen, you so-and-so. I'm tired of hearing about it. You're going to be with the same kids you were with in kindergarten, and you're going to be with the same kids you're going to be with next year in seventh grade. I don't want to hear another word about it." And she didn't, because that would have been trouble for me! Oh, I was mad. But it was such a silly thing to be so angry over because I became such good friends with Beverly, Donna Kay, and others. But I'll tell you, and you know how it was, how that feeling was that they didn't want to go to this other school.

Rosetta: Well, there was rivalry between the schools.

Maribel: Horrible.

Rosetta: I mean it was big-time.

Maribel: See, I felt like a traitor. How could I go to that other school and be a traitor.

Joan: What was the rivalry about? I don't know if we've ever had this on one of our interviews.

Maribel: Well, it was pretty bad.

Joan: I heard Rosetta, it was country kids and city kids?

Maribel: Well, everybody south of the tracks. If country kids were south of the tracks. And see, the farm was south. There was no pushing, you did what they said to do, and they said that would be the school you would go to. And isn't that awful? I do feel bad and probably should shut up. But you know, I felt so badly because I felt I was leaving my... And with your father-in-law (*Gale Graff*) there the year we were in 6th grade.

Joan: And there was just a school rivalry? What was it based on?

Maribel: Well, it was based on the one side thought they were better than the other.

Joan: Which side was better?

Maribel: Now that's progress isn't it? The Southside was better than the Northside. They thought.

Joan: And yet you didn't want to go to Southside.

Maribel: Right. Because I felt like a traitor; at that age I felt like a traitor. It was so ridiculous, but I just felt that way.

Rosetta: But if you look at Kinsley, that's where the nice houses are. And also, if you live north of the tracks, you went to school with Hispanics.

Maribel: Right.

Rosetta: And if you lived on the south side, you did not.

Maribel: Well, they couldn't live on the south side. They could not buy a house on the south side. Now talk about fair, Rosetta! They had those shacks to live in, and they'd better live in them. You know, they couldn't get out of them. I think now of the language deal, and they do this for all of them. Heavens, up there when they got old enough to go to school, they learned English! Nobody worried about them before then. Little kids go in, you know, and that was it. Before that they spoke Spanish. There was quite a few of them in that day. There was quite a few because there were like three pretty good sized buildings down there that had all those people living in them. Even their section boss, who was the head of it all lived there. He could not live anywhere else. Yes, I wasn't even going to bring all this up.

Joan: This is good. It is part of Kinsley's history and it is good to have it down.

Maribel: But it was bad. It wasn't fair in any way.

Joan: And we can see how far we've come. Which is why we do this.

Maribel: If you look back on the school, before I forget, my mother told me this. I wouldn't have remembered or anything. See, my brother that died, he went to kindergarten also, clear back then. He was two years ahead of me. Mother always said, "When Jimmy went, we had to pay for it. When you went, we didn't." During that time was that change.

Rosetta: It was public kindergarten.

Maribel: So we have had public kindergarten since...and I don't know how much longer...I know Ted Taylor went, and he was like three years older. We were trying to decide when it all started in Kinsley, out of curiosity.

Joan: We might be able to find that in the papers. Was the private kindergarten that your brother

went to, was that still in the school? Or was it in the church?

Maribel: I think it was in the school, but you know, since I was only four when he died, I don't remember. But I think Mom said it was the same place, same everything. But she said, "Oh, we were so glad because during that time we didn't have to pay for you." And then of course from then on they didn't have to pay. But they paid for Jimmy. Because see, my grandmother, the Doak that was raised here, she was a school teacher. And I suppose she said, "Jimmy's going to go to kindergarten."

Joan: So education was important.

Maribel: Very important to her.

Joan: And to your parents too?

Maribel: Yes, especially my mother, because she had been educated. And you know she did it by correspondence and got a job with Ford Motor Company. It was a little bit unusual for women in those days. And she was very thankful she had money when no one else did. But it was during those short years when no one did.

Joan: Let's see, before we completely leave the city life. That was during the thirties. Do you remember the Dirty Thirties at all?

Maribel: Well, I remember being here in town, of course that was before I was ten. It turned dark, oh boy, that was frightening for a little child. It was the middle of the day and it was dark.

Joan: And your father, I guess we've said, was employed. Do you remember the Depression years?

Maribel: We were very fortunate because my Dad had a job all through the Depression. We were very fortunate because of that. He got this whole \$80 a month. I know my dad said when I was getting \$200 a month, "What does she do with that money?" That's one of the few things I can remember my Dad said, "What does she (*meaning me*) do with all that money?" He said, "I raised a family on it (*\$80 a month*)."

Joan: And then you went to the country, and now you were farmers?

Maribel: Yes, but it's not crop farm. That's all sand hills and pasture, grassland and cattle. That's what my Dad did; he had the cattle and the pasture. Crops wouldn't have grown there at all.

Joan: So you probably did not...

Maribel: It's right down there by the river. You know the house. Tommy owns it now. Tommy owns a lot of things, my son Tom, including that place.

Joan: It's right by the Arkansas?

Maribel: It's right next to the river. The river was right next to the house. And the one thing we were told when we moved out there, "Kids, stay out of that river!" My mother would have been

worse on me than drowning, I think.

Joan: What was the river like then?

Maribel: It was like four or five feet of rushing water, believe it or not, then. Okay, I was never supposed to have done that because I was never in it, but I mean I remember some of the other kids. The crossing was about four feet at that time. We were always afraid of quicksand, because they thought we were going to go that way. My parents were really worried so we stayed out of that river. Of course the other two knew how to swim. I never knew how to swim because of the war. My sister and brother learned how and did real well at it. But I never did. For one, they didn't have the Red Cross swimming lessons. The only way you would have gotten swimming lessons during the war would have been private lessons, which we couldn't afford. So I never had any. When the Red Cross lessons came along, Helen and Bernard, my brother and sister did real well in it.

Joan: So if your father was mainly a rancher, did you have farm chores? Did you have chickens and gardens and all?

Maribel: We had one cow because he still remembered working in a dairy, and he said he'd never have over two! That was tops, we would never have more than two cows.

Joan: Did you milk cows?

Maribel: Well, Mom did. Then I did. And I would go down and get them. That road which is now that sand pit, see that wasn't dug until after my dad died in '52. Daddy had already made arrangements with John Mix, does that ring a bell? to go in and dig this sand pit. John Mix was an old bachelor that didn't like women at all. When Daddy died, he thought, "Oh, oh." He didn't want to deal with my mother, which he had to. But they went ahead and dug it. Mix went ahead and dug it, and then she owned it for many years. Well, Tommy owns it now, and my family enjoys it very much because they go out there. They even boat on it, believe it or not, and fish and hunt the area. So they enjoy it very much and play out there now.

John Mix, well, he decided he could deal with Mother, but he didn't like to deal with women. So they went ahead and finished the plans to dig it, and that's when it was dug, in '52. Of course it served as a sand pit for many, many years. Rex Strate leased it from Mother for many years. They had it out there for many years, so then they had a very prosperous business going. But when Mom died, Rex bought the other one north of there that he has now. That's kind of the history of that sand pit.

Rosetta: I didn't have any idea.

Joan: That's why we're doing this.

Maribel: It jogs things.

Joan: It jogs the memory.

Maribel: Well, when you think about things, you think maybe they ought to know about that. Maybe they don't.

Joan: Well, I know nothing.

Maribel: Well, people think things. They think that sand pit's always been there. But no, it hasn't.

Joan: Nature put it there?

Maribel: If my Mother hadn't kind of talked to John, "Oh, you can deal with a woman. I think you'll get along. I don't think we're going to have any problems." Finally he decided, and they went ahead and did it then. And it was a very profitable thing for my mother because they sold all that sand.

Rosetta: And they were building roads and everything.

Maribel: And they were building things, she and Rex Strate made a good, profitable business out of it.

Joan: And what year was it that your father died?

Maribel: He died in '52. And they dug it soon after that, well, he and John Mix had already made their plans and everything. So John thought he was fine, and then Daddy died very suddenly.

Joan: Heart attack?

Maribel: Yes, when he was 49 years old.

Joan: He was a young man, that's what I was just trying to figure.

Maribel: If he'd lived another month, he'd have been 50. So it was a big surprise because in those days nobody doctored, and they didn't even know he had a problem. But in his family, it was very prevalent. That's how they all went.

Joan: And you had a little sister, right?

Maribel: A little sister and a little brother.

Joan: So they were both still at home when he died.

Maribel: Oh yes. She was 15, and my brother was 12. Pretty young. And I was 20. But I was in Wichita when he died, on my own by that time.

Joan: Okay, so then you came into school here and went to school in Kinsley. What was Kinsley like during the forties and fifties?

Maribel: It was quite different. Population, that's the thing. There were so many more people. Saturday night you looked all over for a parking place downtown, and were so happy if you found one. Which is so ridiculous now.

Joan: You can park a semi downtown now.

Maribel: And no one ever thought that it would be that way. But you know, that's the way it was. Of course you don't remember because you're too young. But standing in long, long lines to get into the movies. But the movies have been here a long, long time.

Joan: Did you regularly go to the movies?

Maribel: Well, when my siblings were young and just babies, I guess you might say. My mother would stay home and take care of them, and my Dad and I would go to the movies. I got to go with my Dad to the movies on Saturday night. And then he'd go to sleep! Because, you know, it was the only place with air conditioning and so you'd go in there and sit down, and of course he was tired. He worked hard, and there he'd be asleep.

Joan: The air conditioning, that was the swamp cooler or the water evaporative like we still use today.

Maribel: Yes, the same thing. And the bad thing was, well, maybe it was a good thing. It's worked that well for that long.

Joan: I think it's a lot cheaper than air conditioning.

Maribel: I'm afraid I don't get to the movies very often, and I don't know why it is. I guess I stay home anymore, I don't even think about going to it. I'm so glad we still have one. It's a miracle we've got it, isn't it?

Rosetta: I think so. The E-team does an excellent job. They work very, very hard.

Maribel: They have to, to keep that going.

Joan: And what else did you do for entertainment?

Maribel: Roller skating, my first date was roller skating. We won't go into to all that.

Joan: How old were you on your first date?

Maribel: Oh, 15, I think. I went to work at Copp Pharmacy, for Virginia Gleason's parents.

Joan: Were you about 16?

Maribel: Well, no, I was 15.

Joan: And what did you do?

Maribel: Well, I worked behind the soda fountain because they had a complete soda fountain.

Joan: Tell us about an old-fashioned soda fountain! Nobody's done that on a tape, have they?

Maribel: Oh, I tell you, it's wonderful. It really was. That's where they'd congregate and

everybody who worked there liked working there because the kids would all come in. As soon as school was out or anything else, they'd all be there and that was where the action was because in this town it was kind of dull! And there were two drug stores. There was the other one across the street, Hamm and Pool, which was just about where Ryan's Appliance is now, isn't it? That's where the other drug store was.

Rosetta: Yes, it's not quite where Ryan's is. Young's is part of it now. (*109 E. Sixth St.*)

Maribel: That's right, it is part of it. The Copp Drugstore where I worked was the old Kinsley Office Supply was that building. (*118 E. Sixth St.*) So I worked every summer and after school.

Joan: Did certain kids go one place and certain kids go another? How did that divide up?

Maribel: Well, I don't know.

Rosetta: I thought that certain kids went to one and certain kids went to the other. I don't know the dividing line. It was probably a certain class.

Joan: Just a clique.

Maribel: Yes, a clique at one or the other place. Then there was, well, you know where Dottie's shop is? That was a confectionary. They had music in there, and they danced in there. They had a pretty good time in there! I mean, it wasn't a third drugstore, it was a confectionary.

Joan: What did you serve in the soda fountain?

Maribel: Oh, sundaes and all the different root beers, root beer float.

Joan: What's a phosphate?

Maribel: A phosphate is where you put carbonated water in with various flavorings and ice. No, I'll tell you, we'd be busy. We were so busy. We were supposed to close at 11:00, and sometimes we didn't get out of there until after 12:00. People hardly left because they used it for socializing and everything else. The other things we did was dancing. They always had dances in those days.

Joan: And where were the dances held?

Maribel: Well, down in the pink building, sometimes they called it the Brown Building. The pink building would be where the dances would be.

Joan: Was that live music?

Maribel: Yes. Usually it would be local people, like the Riisoes family. They did a lot of playing. Fritz Riisoe, that's in Edna Taylor's family, she was a Riisoe, she could play that piano like crazy. That's just who did the music. They didn't get an outside piano. Now when I was in high school, they started kind of getting what we called "foreigners" coming in here. We had a Larned band come and play for a high school dance, but a lot of those bands were just whoever wanted to play. Pete Riisoe loved to play.

Joan: What instruments was the band made up of?

Maribel: Well, it would be the piano and the banjo, and Pete played the violin. And believe it or not, my Uncle Bill played the violin. I didn't know that until I read some stories about him that were written in, like, the New York papers! He was quite a violinist. I didn't know that. Of course, he loved to dance. He was a real heavy man, but he loved to dance, my Uncle Bill did, not the other one. So he enjoyed Kinsley. Of course, he's the only one who came back and lived here. My Uncle Steve never lived here, but of course he came many times to visit his mother.

Joan: Was there brass in the band or drums?

Maribel: Oh yes, there was a trumpet and trombone and a few more.

Joan: You're the first person who's really mentioned that. Now we had somebody else talk about having parties at the river. Do you remember that?

Maribel: Oh yes, when I was a kid out there, I could sit on my porch and see all the way to the bridge. And here came these "old" high school kids, you know, out there. They'd be on the bridge in their cars, and they'd turn the radio up real high, and then they'd dance on the bridge. And I'd sit there and watch them and think, "Gosh, I wish I could be over there. I wish I was old enough to go over there!" And I was told to stay away from there also, but you know, those were high school kids!

Joan: There must not have been much traffic in that day.

Maribel: Well, they watched it. It wasn't a busy time, so I suppose it was later at night or on Sunday or something. I don't remember all that, but I was still up and I was on that little front porch we had, watching them. That's where they got the music, and I suppose they got away from their parents, was the reason they were out at the river. It was only a mile out, and a lot of people would take the little drive. To cool off in the evening, they'd take the mile drive out to our place. And like Mother said, drop off a cat or two.

Joan: And the river would be a cooler place, with trees and all and you had the coolness of the water.

Maribel: And a lot of people would fish in those days, and they'd be out there fishing. Because that is a shame. That river used to have water, and it sure doesn't anymore. Of course, that's underflow that's mainly in that sand pit. It's too bad. Violet Korte (*Albert Korte's Daughter*) and I walked across that river, when we weren't supposed to have. We were both so curious to see if we could do it. You know kids.

Joan: Do you remember anything about World War II?

Maribel: The thing about WWII was I remember being very, very scared that we might not win it. Because you had all the propaganda at the movie houses and, it was propaganda, but it was true. A lot of it was true, they were there to make sure that you felt that way about it. As a child, I just remember being very, very worried if we didn't win it, what would become of us? What would they do to us?

Joan: We've had other people tell us that. That for a child it was...

Maribel: You had that feeling, and you didn't express it which was bad. You know, after all, people were doing without things. But they were doing without things that were just things. I suppose that to kids it didn't mean that much. The sugar and gas. You couldn't drive over 35 miles an hour; that was against the law, because they had to save that gas. Well, nobody really wanted to anyway, I don't think.

Joan: The tires weren't that good.

Maribel: The tires weren't that good, the rubber and everything was in bad shape anyway. And the rationing. Rationing never bothered, I think, this area so much because they all had their own food anyway. And I don't ever remember being hungry.

Joan: You had a vegetable garden?

Maribel: No. My mother said she was not going to do it. There was no vegetable garden. Well, for one thing, the water system was pretty bad out there. And then all you had was sand. They tried potatoes once, and my Dad wasn't too much for that either. Mother said she'd been in enough gardens growing up, and she didn't have to any more. But she loved chickens! She had chickens everywhere.

Joan: Was that part of your chores to take care of the chickens and clean out the chicken house?

Maribel: And gather eggs. Yes, and clean everything. I didn't like those chickens. I never did like them.

Joan: Did she sell the eggs then?

Maribel: Yes.

Joan: It wasn't just for your family?

Maribel: Oh no, in fact, she would sell them in town. Al Nall, do you remember (*Linda Nall*) Lorenzen's dad? Boy, he was a nice guy. He had a produce house, and she sold her eggs to him. Then when they would get baby chickens, sometimes they would get them in (believe it or not) on the railroad. They would come into the post office having been...you could hear all the little peeping sounds at the post office. Then the baby chickens would have come in, and Mother would have another shot of chickens.

Joan: When they were little, did she...

Maribel: Put them in the brooder house.

Joan: So you had a brooder house?

Maribel: We had a brooder house until the kids tore it down. It wasn't me! It was one of her renters that she had. In fact, it wasn't our family. But the brooder house was gone, but the cement was left there.

Joan: Do you have any idea how many she'd have at a time?

Maribel: Two hundred, and they'd be on the road when they'd get killed.

Joan: Oh, they were free range.

Maribel: Yes, the fence out there was to keep the chickens out of there. They had everything else. The chickens could ranch everywhere else. The fence that we had put up around the house was really just to keep them out of the sidewalks and so forth. They always messed right there.

Joan: Were coyotes a problem with the chickens?

Maribel: Oh yes, of course she had a huge chicken house.

Joan: Did they go in at night?

Maribel: They were in there, yes. That's one thing I guess I remember, because I didn't like them in the first place, and there they were. They were too dumb to go into the building at night, and I had to see that they did. Why? Because they're too dumb to go in, and they're going to die otherwise.

Joan: So did you chase them in? Feed them in the building? How did you do it?

Maribel: She would feed them in there; that's the only way to handle chickens. If you wanted to kill them, she'd go out in the yard and spread the feed around. They'd come in and eat, eat, eat, and she'd just go grab them as soon as they'd come up to eat. That's the way she caught them.

Roberta: Did you ever have to clean the chickens?

Maribel: Oh brother, yes. Sure did. Day and night, it seemed like, but it wasn't really. I cleaned a lot of chickens. Yes, and then she sold the milk. They would have a little separator on that porch, and there were a lot of people who would drive out from Kinsley, because it was only a mile, to get cream and the milk and the chickens.

Joan: And then she sold the eggs?

Maribel: Yes.

Joan: And the butchered chickens, did she sell them? Or was that mainly for you?

Maribel: I don't remember doing that very much because people driving out there were coming for cream or eggs. Because I imagine most people were butchering their own if they had any around. In those days you could have them. I guess you can still have them in Kinsley, can't you?

Joan: Some people can.

Maribel: Some people can; that's probably putting it the right way. And others not. Well, I won't be one of them having chickens. Well, my sister, she had to had enough chickens around

here. But yes, my Mother knew how to work it. She knew how to do so many things, my mother did.

Joan: Did she sew your clothes?

Maribel: Yes. Every stitch, coats included. Helen said to me one time, "Do you think we'll ever be able to get a boughten dress." She asked me in later years, "How pleased were you when you finally got to buy something out of the store?" And I said, "I was very pleased, but I was in Wichita, Kansas before that happened." Because Mother made every stitch. You know Ehler's Department Store sold the goods, and she was a good seamstress. And she and Earl were good friends, and he said, "You made that out of that material? Can I put it in the window?" Pretty soon, there was her little creation in the window! So she was very proud of that; I remember that too. Of course that was the big business there too, that department store. It had everything. "Well," he said, "I'm very proud of that; let's put those clothes in the window."

Joan: It helped sell material.

Maribel: Yes, it helped sell material and everything else, the thread, everything you'd be buying in there. It's so sad now, the way that building has gone to pot. You know I worked there once; I was a volunteer for Twice is Nice, it's in such bad shape. The heating system!

Joan: Were you too old to have the flour sacks and wheat sacks?

Maribel: No. And some of them looked pretty good, I'll say that. Oh yes. I gave you a picture there; I think I might even be in a flour sack dress. I'm about 13 there, about that age. And I thought then that maybe that was fine, because I will say this, they didn't look that way. I guess in the factory they made the sacks and made them really pretty. They really were pretty.

Joan: Well, that helped sell them.

Maribel: Yes, and then my sister wore it too because Mother didn't believe in buying anything she didn't have to.

Joan: And you graduated in 1949. How big was your class?

Maribel: 37. I think there were about 17 of them still around.

Joan: About how many of your class stayed in Edwards County?

Maribel: Well, that's what I was thinking, there were about 17 of them that stayed here. There's quite a few, yes.

Joan: So it'd be about half?

Maribel: Yes.

Joan: But you went off to Wichita. Tell us about going to Wichita, the big city, and going to college. How did you get there?

Maribel: Well, when I first saw an escalator, I thought, gee whiz, nobody told me about that. I

think it was in Macy's Department Store, you know.

Joan: Did you ride the train to go to Wichita to go to college? Or did someone drive you?

Maribel: Well, I took the Greyhound bus, back and forth, when I didn't have a ride. Often I did have a ride. There'd be somebody from around here going there or back and forth. But otherwise, I'd take the bus. And you know, Wichita couldn't get you to Kinsley very easily. So lots of times you were in Greensburg, and they would pick you up in Greensburg because the bus didn't go that way.

Joan: So it followed Highway 54. What was the name of the college?

Maribel: It was the American Business College, but they're out of business.

Joan: Where was it located?

Maribel: Remember the...Douglas and St. Francis were the streets. There was a real fancy old hotel that they just remodeled and had all those marble floors.

Joan: Was that the one that used to be across from the Hyatt? Or am I not far enough off.

Maribel: No, this was down in the Old Town. (*It was the Eaton Hotel.*) It was a huge place, and fancy. It had a mezzanine so big with marble floors that our whole college was on the mezzanine.

Joan: Where did you live?

Maribel: I lived in Esther Hall, it was a girls' dormitory run by the Methodist Church.

Joan: Was that right there by it?

Maribel: About ten blocks south on Broadway. And I walked everywhere in those days, a lot of us did. So I walked it, and a lot of the girls who lived there went to school, to beauty school or to business college.

Joan: What was dormitory life like for a girl then? Did you have hours? Or curfews?

Maribel: Yes, well, you couldn't eat there. Well, you could. In the basement was a kitchen if you wanted to have stuff. People had snacks, and some of us, I guess, there were about 32 there, and there were three floors, plus the basement. Some of the floors there were like two or three in. The room that I was in, there were three of us. It seems like many years, but it was only one year! Because then three friends and I got together and we rented a house in Wichita. We thought this was quite a deal. Each one of us took a room. I took a bedroom, so I bought a bedroom set. Each of us bought for whatever it was. Two of them were sisters, and we were all friends. That worked out real well. Because, well, there wasn't a housing shortage, but they weren't available. If we hadn't had this one friend that had been working for this lawyer and there was an estate with this house, we probably wouldn't have gotten it. That was out in the eastern part of Wichita. In fact, it was the better part. That was accidental, but it was the good part. Because my roommate used to say, "Tell them what your address is!" And I thought, "I

don't have to impress them.”

Joan: How did you get back and forth then?

Maribel: The city bus. The city busses were good. Because, well, they had the business so they really picked the people up and took you wherever you needed to go.

Joan: How did you pay for college?

Maribel: Well, college, my folks paid for that. It was \$25 a month.

Joan: Was it \$25 a month for nine months? Was the school year nine months or did you stay year-round?

Maribel: Well, I stayed there a year.

Joan: Are we talking \$300 for the year?

Maribel: Well, it was \$25, yes, for a year, you can figure whatever that was. The dormitory was really cheap. It was \$3 a week if you weren't working. But if you were working and you were making money, it would be \$4 a week.

Joan: And then in that year you ate at restaurants or whatever.

Maribel: Yes, we did. We just went various places.

Joan: What was the class work like? What kind of courses did you take?

Maribel: Well, I had to start from scratch in shorthand, I think it was because for some reason I hadn't had it. Of course, the war interfered there too, getting a certain teacher to teach that. So I took typing, shorthand, bookkeeping; those would be the main things. And there were so many men; it was practically all men because they were back from the service. They were in there getting their education and getting their start. They were older, and a lot of them were married and had their families and so forth. They were there for business, nothing else. So that was the way it should be

Joan: And you were there three years?

Maribel: Well, I was there three years. I went to college for a year. My first job, see, the college placed you. They placed me with Equitable of Iowa Insurance Company. Since it was my first job, I stayed awhile. I stayed six months. I didn't like it at all, and during that time there was one of the salesmen who was working at Equitable of Iowa that was a Jaycee. He said, "We're going to have this opening in the office. This girl is leaving." And so forth and so forth, "Why don't you see... But don't you tell the big boss." And I said, "Don't you worry, I won't." So I applied and got that. I worked at the Wichita Junior Chamber of Commerce until I got married. I probably would have stayed on longer, because they... in fact, they said, there was 400 of them working, and they said, "Can't you commute?" And I said, "Are you crazy? From Kinsley to Wichita?" They said, "Well, why can't you commute?" Of course, they were kidding, and they said they were all coming to the wedding, and all 400 would stand up and say

“I object,” and embarrass you. And I said, “Yes, it will. Stay away!” But they were good to work for.

Rosetta: Sounds like a fun place.

Maribel: It was a fun place, much more fun than the insurance, because they had projects. With these projects, they wanted to make money. So they got these Hadacol Shows. Do you remember Hadacol Shows? They put on these shows, and there were these big companies put on shows. They’d get these celebrities to go to Wichita and then they’d go to the rodeo or whatever they had to make money. So I really lucked out there; I got to meet a lot of those celebrities.

Joan: Who are some of the celebrities?

Maribel: Well, Smiley Burnett, Dick Haines, well, there was another guy.

Joan: You’re going to have to clue me in, I don’t remember Dick Haines.

Maribel: He was a singer. And Jack Dempsey, I met him at a luncheon.

Joan: Was he a motivational speaker?

Maribel: No, he was just there to help sell their show so the public would come to see Jack Dempsey. And they always had these luncheons where they did their business, and then they’d have a board meeting maybe once a month and I’d go to that. That would be at night-time, but all the rest of it I’d be up there. What I liked about it was they let me run the office. I was in with the senior chamber, but we were separated. There were about 13 girls working in there, but I was the only one working for Jaycees. Because they were the poor relation, but you know, it was so much fun. Because who wouldn’t want to work for 400 men who were young, good-looking and from the ages of 21 to 35? After 35 they had to get out of there and go into the exhausted roosters! I mean, it was a dream job! Sometimes I wonder about it, but I had a lot of fun. And their dances were great too because you could dance all evening with a bunch of them, and they were really fun. But that’s what the rules were, you know, they had to get out of there when they were 35.

Joan: And they joined the regular chamber of commerce at that time.

Maribel: Yes, and it was fun because, like I said, they were there to have fun in lots of ways. I put out a little newspaper for them, and I enjoyed that because I liked newspapers. That would have been a good thing to have gone into. And so I got to write that, and then different ones of them would write for it. So that was interesting. They were very interesting people, really. I was kind of disappointed they didn’t come to my wedding!

Joan: Okay, about the wedding. You were marrying a guy from back home even though you had 400 eligible young men. He was eight years older than you. So how did this romance blossom?

Maribel: Well, I knew him before when I was working in Copp’s.

Joan: But he would have been a lot older.

Maribel: Right, but see, he'd come back from the war and came into Copp's.

Joan: So you knew him when you went off to college?

Maribel: Yes, I'd gone with him when I was in high school and then a long interim, well, it seemed like a long time then. It wouldn't have been so long now, but you know, and he came back through Wichita one time for Ed Farlow, driving his truck for him, and stopped by. And that was that. He didn't want to go back home. Yes, I always had a soft spot in my heart for Wichita though. And I know it isn't the same as it was when I lived there.

Joan: Well, you mentioned that he was in the service. He was in the army, can you tell us a little about what he did while you knew him? Did you correspond with him while he was in the service?

Maribel: No, I didn't. I was corresponding with a marine. It wasn't him! Oh those war years were good years, weren't they? No, the marine was really nice, but during the war I got to know a lot of Wichita people. No, I didn't correspond with him when he was in the service.

Joan: But you said he was a teacher? Or an instructor?

Maribel: The ornery little things we did. You'll see how young we were for that war, but everybody was trying to save the country and work for the war and do this war effort and everything. Here we were just little kids, like 12 or 13, 14. Bev and I pulled a prank. It's the only time I think she ever was deceptive.

Joan: Beverly Craft, I think we'd better get that on tape.

Maribel: Maybe we'd better not. It was probably the only deceitful thing she ever did in her life, but we acted like we were writing to the servicemen. Our friends should have known better. What servicemen would have written to us little so-and-so's?

Joan: You weren't actually writing; you just said you were? Well, see, Bea Coats was!

Maribel: Well, Bea was a little bit ahead of me.

Joan: But she lied about her age to the serviceman.

Maribel: No, we didn't actually, but we told somebody that we were and she believed. She's still around. I think I should shut up. But that's the only bad thing I know of that Bev ever did in her life. She acts like she doesn't remember it, but she did. Her dad was working down at the Pratt plant, and so we would have him mail it away from Kinsley. Oh brother. So we convinced some people we were, but we never actually wrote to the servicemen. Not when we were that young.

Joan: What was your husband doing down in Texas?

Maribel: Well, he was actually training these people, I guess. And he felt so badly later because he said practically every one of them was killed. But there were so many that were killed, it wasn't like he... But he said that the death rate was so high that he didn't think a single one he

trained with was still around.

Joan: And he was army? Do you know what he was training? What his expertise was?

Maribel: Well, I presume it was with rifles and so forth, training on what they would do when they got over there. But there were so many of them slaughtered that... well, I don't know. Probably said too much already.

Joan: So he came back and found you?

Maribel: Lucky guy, right?

Joan: I think so. And you came back here to get married. What was your wedding like?

Maribel: Oh, it was great. They said it was one of the hottest days there ever was, August 16 of '52, but I never remembered any of it. And no air-conditioning anywhere.

Joan: The candles didn't melt?

Maribel: Well, the candles probably did, I don't remember. But they had that cottage next door, remember? That's where the reception was.

Joan: Next door to the Methodist Church?

Maribel: Where the old Methodist Church was. It is now a building; maybe you know whose home it is. It's up on the (*900 block of Colony Ave.*); it's been moved up there now.

Rosetta: I should know that, I can't remember.

Maribel: That's same building is used for a dwelling now.

Joan: She'll find it by the time we do the transcription.

Maribel: Yes, that ties into the Edwards County.

Joan: Was it an evening wedding or afternoon?

Maribel: It was noon, and then we left right away to go to Kansas City. We were gone nine days, and that was one of the first real trips I'd ever been on.

Joan: Was it by car?

Maribel: Yes, we drove. We drove to somewhere in Wisconsin where my Uncle Steve had his football team in training.

Joan: Oh yes, we haven't talked about that yet.

Maribel: We were there at the training camp. We got to go in there, and they said to stay for meals, so we ate there and everything while he trained his team.

Joan: We'd better clear up who your uncle is, and what you're talking about.

Maribel: Steven Owen was my Dad's brother, and he became the head coach of the New York Giants in 1931 on a handshake. That was the contract. So those days were really different from nowadays. They said they bought Steve for \$500! And my dad said he thought he was worth a little bit more then. But \$500.

Joan: And he had graduated from Kinsley and played for...

Maribel: No, he had never... Steve and Bill, neither one. See, my dad hadn't, either one. My dad came back here later when my grandmother came back here. (*The three Owen Brothers were born and raised in Oklahoma.*)

Joan: But they played professional football?

Maribel: My dad never did.

Joan: But Steve did?

Maribel: And Bill did. Bill played for Steve a couple years.

Joan: And Steve played for whom?

Maribel: Steve played for the Kansas City Cowboys, when he started before '31. That's it, he was bought from the Kansas City Cowboys for \$500, I think it was, by the New York Giants. Then he played for them several years; I think he was a tackle. I don't know much about football, really. I know nothing, hardly, but my brother could tell you things about it that I can't.

Joan: And then he became a coach.

Maribel: He became a coach in '31, and then he was there for 23 years.

Joan: And he had his little brother playing for him?

Maribel: Yes, Bill played for him. Steve lived in Oneida, New York in his later years, and that's where he died.

Joan: We have a file on him at the library.

Maribel: That's what Bev said.

Joan: A couple of years ago we had someone interested in it. He gave us a lot of information.

Maribel: Well, see, Bill lived here with his mother. Lots of the time they did that if they were single men. Bill was older when he got married. He married Frances' mother, Marie. Frances Eslinger. Bill didn't have any children of his own, but he thought the world of Frances. Frances was just like his daughter to him, but she was his step-daughter. So that's how that family goes on and gets connected. It got connected that way because his wife had a daughter, and she was an only child. She was from Brooklyn, New York.

Joan: Well, that is an unusual honeymoon, I think, to go to a training camp.

Maribel: It was! Here I was at that training camp. They took a few pictures and then went on. I was so glad that happened because I didn't get to see my uncle very often. And, "Oh come on in and eat with us!" I remember eating with them. Of course nowadays they probably wouldn't let you on the planet near them, I suppose, and then we watched them play. But you know, we got gas at a place when we were looking for the training camp. Dean (*Carlson*) stopped at this one place, and this one guy got so excited. He was waiting on him with the gas, and he said, "Oh! Do you play for the New York Giants?" Because Dean was so big, he looked like he might have. He was so tall. But Dean said, "No, I'm afraid not. Just looking for them."

Joan: Just my wife's relatives.

Maribel: Of course, we're all real proud of Steve, who would have ever thought. And Bill too. Bill did coaching. He coached the Jersey City Giants later.

Joan: I think the person in the library had football cards, so we have pictures from the trading cards.

Maribel: My nephew got those trading cards from the Internet. When sports comes to that, I don't know one end from the other, I really don't.

Joan: I guess I should have asked you. Dean was doing what when you married him?

Maribel: He was farming because that was what he wanted to do. That's why he came back to Edwards County because he wanted to farm. He got to do what he wanted to do, so I was always happy about that. He got to do what he wanted to do.

Joan: What was the definition of farming for him?

Maribel: Well, up north it was cropland. Wheat.

Joan: So it wasn't cattle.

Maribel: No, it was a wheat farm in the Carlson family.

Joan: Dry land at that time?

Maribel: Yes. Well, all of it because there's no water up there. Believe me, there's no water up there. Try to live up there!

Rosetta: It's a good thing you lived out in the sand hills for a while, so you were used to that.

Maribel: I got used to not having water.

Joan: But she didn't have electricity!

Maribel: The big thing was, all these geniuses from Greensburg kept saying, "Oh yes, we'll have a well for you. We'll have it for you next week!" They'd come in and sit down; they always ate with us. It was like we got additional family, you know. It seemed like it was years,

and of course it wasn't; it was months. Well, they were surprised. They couldn't drill water; they couldn't get any water. "Lady, I'm going to get you that water." But the lady never did see that water. We drilled two or three wells. But we went 200 feet, and there was water. It was there for awhile, but now Tom's barely got enough. He's got enough to water his cattle, but as far as putting a house there... He had a trailer house there, but it is completely wrecked. It is a complete mess. He lived in it for quite a few years, but you knew he'd bought a house here in town?

Rosetta: Yes.

Joan: So where did you live then? Did you live up there? Or did you...

Maribel: Yes, we lived up there. There was a house up there then, but they took it down.

Joan: There was a house and somewhat of a well then.

Maribel: Yes, there was a well, and they'd had electricity for several years before we got it. All those miles out, and nothing one mile out. See, that's what didn't make sense to me.

Joan: Well, I think what happened was the war happened and then they couldn't get the copper wire.

Maribel: Yes, or they lucked out or something up there. Because I know we'd had that several years before you guys did.

Joan: Probably a different rural electric company too.

Maribel: We couldn't understand why that happened that way.

Joan: I guess we didn't ask you, did you have a phone when you were one mile out?

Maribel: Yes. A party line.

Joan: You had the phone before you had electricity?

Maribel: Oh yes, we had a party line when we first moved out there.

Joan: So you always had the phone.

Maribel: Yes, and everybody was so... you got on to find out the news. But we had a party line up north too, on the Carlson place. And boy I'll tell you, they listened in up there.

Joan: How about television? When was your first T.V.?

Maribel: You know, I just hardly remember getting one of our own in the late '50's. It seemed like a lot of people had one before we did. But I remember. Do you remember Junior (*Robert*) Burcher? The first time I saw television was out there.

Joan: How old were you then?

Maribel: Well, I was married and come back here!

Rosetta: Now you didn't see it in Wichita?

Maribel: No. And you know, I don't understand why I didn't see it in Wichita.

Joan: No, because Wichita certainly would have had it early.

Maribel: You know, I thought of that.

Rosetta: You didn't pay attention to T.V.

Maribel: With 400 men, I didn't pay attention to that, when we got T.V. Isn't that something? My cousin lived there, I'd go down there once in a while when she'd invite me and we'd have supper. But they didn't have it; nobody had it.

Rosetta: See, my folks didn't get T.V. I graduated in 1960, and they got it after I graduated. I didn't grow up with T.V.

Maribel: Well, you didn't either. I figured you probably did.

Rosetta: No, we never had T.V. until I left, and then my parents got it.

Maribel: Well, this Wichita thing, just like she said, I've thought and thought of that. That's the strangest darn thing. They could have had it, but they didn't have it, not in the places where I was.

Joan: Wichita would have had a station, I would have thought.

Rosetta: Yes, they had a station.

Maribel: When did they first get a station?

Rosetta: I don't know, but it was the only station I think you could get was Wichita. But maybe they didn't have enough money.

Joan: Or they didn't approve of it.

Rosetta: Or they didn't approve of it.

Maribel: Well, I went to the church because I went to the Methodist Church there a long, long time ago. All my friends and all the people... nobody where I ever was had it because I had never seen it before. Maybe they just thought it was a fad and didn't pay attention to it. You know, people did think it was just a fad, kind of a strange thing. It was not going to be universal.

Joan: It was so snowy out here.

Maribel: Well that's it. Out at Burchers, that thing was a couple cowboys riding through a snowstorm. That's all it was. But we would look at that thing; I remember being so excited

about it. And then, I don't know when we got it. It was a long time after Burchers did. I think Tom Fox got the first one, but I was never in his house.

Rosetta: I used to babysit when they'd go out on Saturday night, and I got to watch T.V. I never got to watch the end of the movie because they came home. But you know, there used to be a movie.

Maribel: So you must have...

Rosetta: Well, let's see. I graduated in '60, so I would have been...

Joan: It would have been about the same time.

Rosetta: Well, you know, about '58?

Maribel: I don't remember. I guess I should have written it down.

Rosetta: I never saw it until I was babysitting.

Maribel: I wonder what time that was when I first saw it? I don't know what year that was. Oh, that's amazing, but I just know when we lived out there, we got one station, or two, not over two. One would be out most of the time. For my kids, they'd get off the bus and come in, and they'd watch Major Astro. Do you remember him?

Rosetta: I remember hearing about Major Astro. But we never had T.V. at that time.

Maribel: Well, see, they did. They'd come in and watch that right after school. Of course, you had to let them go through that before you could pry them into doing their chores. But they would watch Major Astro, and then of course I think they got more interested in it because they got to where they didn't want to do their chores. Of course, they didn't have anything to compare it with, so they thought it was great.

Joan: Talking about the kids. You were married in '53?

Maribel: '52.

Joan: James was born in '54, Gary in '57, and Tommy in '59. So tell us a little bit about living on the farm and raising kids on the farm. You mentioned chores just then.

Maribel: They had chores, but they certainly didn't do them like I did.

Joan: Did you have chickens?

Maribel: No

Joan: That was a "no."

Maribel: Well, they said, "Dean's got asthma. He's allergic to chickens." And I thought, "Okay." So we never had a chicken on the place. His mother thought that was horrible! But we

never had chickens.

Joan: Did you have a garden?

Maribel: No.

Joan: Did you work outside the home?

Maribel: Yes, I did. I was at Taylor and Son's most of that time. What age would that have been? Tommy was in the fifth grade when I went back to work.

Joan: Well, when you first got married, you were with Etling and Beezley, lawyers, as a secretary. And then when you had your baby, you stopped?

Maribel: Well, yes. I did work at home though. People would bring their stuff and I would do their work and then they'd pick it up.

Joan: Bookkeeping?

Maribel: Yes. Typing, a lot of typing was done in those days. And then I think whatever year that would be that Tommy was about fourth grade.

Joan: He would have been about 10 years old, so about 1969.

Maribel: I went up there to the register of deeds office for Wayne Westfall, remember him? And Wayne, I'd gone to school with Wayne, he was a year ahead of me, he said, "Come type these records because they want these records for Edwards County, and I'm afraid we're losing them. So that's when I went back to work, that's the first thing I did. So I went back to work and typed all those records for Wayne. Then while I was up there in the registrar of deeds office, there was Don Taylor. That come available, and Don said, "Why don't you come to work for us?" That's when I started, so about the time Tommy was in the fourth grade, I started working for them. I worked for them nearly 15 years, but I hadn't planned on it then.

Joan: Were you finding it necessary to work outside the home?

Maribel: Very necessary.

Joan: It wasn't just because you wanted to get out of the home? But you needed the money.

Maribel: The farm needed the money, and we needed the health insurance and as you know, everything was so expensive.

Joan: By this time, you said he was about ten years old, so your kids were old enough.

Maribel: Yes, that's about what Tommy was when I went back to work. Because I remember him going riding around that courthouse! Well, Tommy was a little hard to handle. Well, see then when I first went to work for Taylor and Son's, Stella Knecht was up there. And she didn't approve of the way I was raising my kids! Stella, she was a good gal. I enjoyed working with her. She was very exacting, but she was very good. She took care of the car insurance, and I took care of everything else, it seemed like, all the property damages. When they got that flood

insurance, which was kind of the beginning, then they handed that to me too.

Joan: And you were basically just a wheat farm?

Maribel: Yes, wheat.

Joan: And the kids went to Northside?

Maribel: Well, they went various places because in those days they were shuttling children around to wherever they needed more students, whichever school needed them. Some of my children went several years to the other one because... Then Gary's class was that extra big class. They hired an extra teacher for it.

Joan: I guess I should have asked...we learned that you were born at home. How about your children?

Maribel: They were all born in Edwards County Hospital.

Joan: Over on Fifth St.?

Maribel: Yes. A very busy hospital! And when Gary's class came along, they were really busy. They didn't have rooms, hardly. You know, when I got in there I was so lucky because I had a room because there were a whole lot of people waiting for babies that were out in the hall. I mean that hospital was over-used, very much over-used. They needed a new one all right when they did get one because they'd worn that one out. Just like that, I mean double use on everything. And the year that...I remember that, and boy, I'll tell you...they were getting them in and out fast on that day because they just didn't have enough beds.

Joan: So do you know how many students were in your kids' classes?

Maribel: Well, Jim always said his was almost as big as Gary's.

Joan: And that was 80 kids? Get the class years here.

Maribel: Oh yes, Gary's was at least 80, I think. (*78 graduated Class of 1975*) And then Jim's always said, "You guys never hired a teacher for us. We were almost as big, but they didn't do it for us. They did it for Gary's." (*77 graduated, Class of 1973*) Well, I know they hired the extra teacher for Gary's, but actually that was almost like an extra class of girls, because it was 2/3's girls. It was almost like it was extra weird that year. They weren't looking for war, I guess, because they say for war they have boys. And that year there was a normal amount of boys, but they had twice as many girls. Therefore they were very crowded, and they hired an extra teacher, I think, all the time he went to school.

Rosetta: And there were several years of big classes.

Maribel: Well, Tom's wasn't. Of course, Tom's looked small beside the others. But even Tom's was bigger than what they'd had for so many years. What is the average class right now?

Joan: Maybe 30?

Mirabel: 30 would be a big one?

Rosetta: Well, I graduated with 40, and 40 was the average. Then it went up again when your children were there.

Joan: Now it's around 30 or less, maybe. I think 32 might be a big one.

Maribel: I was thinking the whole school, when I went there, I imagine about 300 for the whole high school, something like that.

Rosetta: That was junior high and high school?

Maribel: Yes. The consolidation, when we consolidated with Offerle, my boys were junior high.

Joan: Do you remember anything about that time and the feelings?

Maribel: You know, I don't think it was bad at all. I don't remember any bad feelings. There might have been, but I don't remember them. It seemed like it went off pretty well. After you get over the first initial shock of the consolidation when you never thought you'd see that.

Joan: Maybe it helped because they kept an elementary school there.

Maribel: Well, their school was practically new. Their school was a nice new building compared to ours. See, they had the newer building, but they didn't have the children. And with all the bussing, of course, the bussing was kind of a bad deal, but I can't really think that that consolidation had that much bad feeling that I can remember. I might not be remembering it.

Rosetta: Well, I don't remember very much about it.

Joan: We're hearing that from a lot of people that they don't remember bad feeling about it. There probably was some, but it was low-key.

Maribel: Low-key, right, because I think they tried very hard, both sides, to accommodate each other, so there wasn't any antagonism.

Joan: And it was a necessity. Everybody sort of realized that.

Maribel: There was no way they could keep going. Like back in the '50's when I was in school, sure Offerle High School. Lots of people went there. But at that time you would never have thought that we would ever consolidate! Well, they had everything.

Joan: What other changes did you see in the '50's and '60's due to the decreasing population, even though we just talked about your children's classes were higher. We've talked about consolidation of schools. Did you see changes in the churches or the business community?

Maribel: I don't remember churches changing so much. It seemed like they're about the same. But I think maybe we've been fortunate to have kept it the same. I mean, not all places have. I mean as far as the church is concerned.

Joan: Your congregation isn't as big though.

Maribel: Oh no. It is much smaller. Sometimes you look around and wonder where did the people go? They're not there. And a lot of them actually are gone.

Joan: I think we talked about how busy it was downtown when you were a child. Then as you got up toward 1970, was that starting to decrease yet? Or did that come in after, when we started losing car dealerships...

Maribel: The 70's might start it pretty good, the decline, you might say. The dealership deal is pretty bad, when you don't have...

Joan: You worked for Taylor's; did you notice changes in their business during that 15 years you worked?

Maribel: Well, yes. See, they were a pioneer company. Don's Great-Grandfather started that at the very beginning. A lot of people, I guess maybe they stayed in business and kind of lived on a reputation for several years or something, in a way. Where a new business might have had more trouble coming here and starting up. But they've been here for so long. And then of course, I felt at home there because my Dad had worked for the Taylor family. The brother who was in there a lot was Ed. That's Ted's dad. Ted's dad was Ed, and that's who my Dad worked for.

Joan: Maybe we should say for the tape, what did Taylor and Sons do, is that what it was called at that time?

Maribel: Insurance. Insurance, abstracting, they did all the abstracting for many years. It was all theirs.

Joan: Did they do real estate at that time too?

Maribel: Well, they didn't do it, but they just ended up in it, kind of. The abstracting part of it dragged it in, probably because people were in there. That's where my Dad found out about the farm there because he worked for them. They said, "Oh, there's a good deal coming up." And it was; it was a very good deal for my Dad. I think I've about hit everything.

Joan: Well, let's check here.

Maribel: Except for Treasurer. I was the Edwards County Treasurer. That was kind of the highlight in my later years, in '84.

Joan: How many years did you do it?

Maribel: I was in for four terms, 16 years. I appreciated it very much, being in there. It had a lot of problems, but then, what doesn't? It was kind of exciting. I would have never thought I would ever run for anything. But I think I would encourage anybody that thinks that they might never run. Analyze it, maybe you would be happier running than you think. Maybe we need people who don't want to run, to run!

Rosetta: Now, did you have computers when you were there, or were they just coming in?

Maribel: They were really coming in; they were really starting.

Joan: How did you adjust to computers?

Maribel: Well, I adjusted to what I had to do for my office, but it was frustrating. I was purchasing agent, of course, being the treasurer. So therefore, there were these people eager to earn money at these computer companies. They would be in and say, "I want to sell you a computer!" Well, yes, okay. Fine. Computers are great, we use this, but why can't it last longer than five minutes? See, that's what always boggled my mind. In five minutes they'll come in and sell you something else. And I thought, "No, you're not." So therefore, I didn't buy some of the programs I could have. I had small distributions, things that didn't at that time amount to much. Maybe they would amount to a little bit more now, but ones that I could go ahead and do by hand because we were such a small county compared to others. And they would come in there and try to sell me a program that would do that for me, for a whole lot of money. Why? I wouldn't do it, because I'm too tight. I'd say, "No, save the county money. It's a small distribution." Now I could see with the taxes, property taxes, you needed it. You needed it badly and that was a god-send. But some of those little distributions, sales tax and some of the little things at that time, they didn't need all that. So I felt a little bit brow-beaten because I stood up and didn't buy anything that I didn't feel Edwards County needed. But of course they wanted to sell it.

Joan: What year did you become treasurer?

Maribel: '84.

Joan: And you were there until...

Maribel: October 1, 2001 because treasurers go out at different times, they go out in October.

Joan: Did you see changes in the county, the revenue or anything, during that time?

Maribel: Oh yes.

Joan: What was happening?

Maribel: When I would invest, it was so good in the early years. Everybody was trying to force you to take five or six percent! If you were really good, you could get six percent. And boy, I'll tell you, I even got a few really good deals. Because I let them bid everything; everything was bid, to me that was a fair way. If you want it, bid on it. Analyze exactly what you're bidding on, and the one that has the highest bid, wins it! That's the way I did the whole thing while I was in there, so I could make the maximum amount of money for the county that could be made. Because you had to deal with these people. You had the ones who were okay, that you had to deal with, the ones that were qualified, all the banks. And at that time, the savings and loan. Of course, those were the ones that were qualified and you let them bid on. Okay, each one of those would bid. That's what it is, and I'm going to take the one that's going to make the most money. But you also had to watch that you never got anything that wasn't FDIC insured, so you didn't lose a penny for the county. That was my theory. You don't lose a penny for the county, and you make the maximum amount. It was kind of an interesting game to me.

Joan: So what happened by 2001?

Maribel: Well, by then they weren't offering anything. Well, I thought, I was about 70 years old. I thought it was about time I got out of there. I'd been in there for 16 years anyway. And that was right after 9-11. You know, 9-11 was in September, and I retired in October because that's when treasurers take office. It isn't very obvious sometimes; they try to put it into January, but it's October. And they do that on purpose because they don't want the clerks and the treasurers to be both new at exactly the same time. That way you're staggered. That's the reason. A lot of people say, "Why don't we get the treasurer out of there on the first of the year and be done with it!" Well, it's got a reason, and that's its reason. Because there's a lot of things going on up there, and it's not good for you to have both of them new at the same time. So that was the reason they had it, and that's why. I guess they still go out in October.

Joan: I think I cut you off earlier. You went to work there after your husband had passed away? Is that what you were going to say?

Maribel: Yes.

Joan: What year did he pass away?

Maribel: '84. And I ran in '84. He died in June and it was too late to get into the primaries. So then I ran in the general. That was a really mixed up political year, I'll tell you. It had a lot of problems. One of them was, you know Gerald Olsen had run in the primary. I guess he was Democrat; I don't know. Anyway, whatever he was, he had won it. Then he came up to the treasurer's office, and Bill Williamson was the treasurer. Did you know Bill Williamson? He showed him the ropes. The commissioners were meeting, and there was a lot going on. Pretty exciting, and he showed it to Gerald and I think that's when Gerald decided he didn't want it. It was too much of a... I don't know. He didn't want it, here after he won it! But Bill showed him what was going on, and he was through. Then they had nobody! So then they said, "Well, Maribel, why don't you try that?" And I thought, "Well, maybe I will!" I need a lot of those things, like money and insurance and a few other things. I needed it very badly. "I think I will." They said, "Go ahead, it's too late for the primaries, we'll put you in the general. The Republican Central Committee will be pleased to have you be our candidate. And there won't be any other candidate." That's what they said. And then Norman (*Elliott*) became the Democratic candidate, so I had opposition after all. But I won and was very happy I got it. Don't always believe everything they tell you because there was opposition. And Bill had decided not to run because I was running. I think he was going to run until he found out that I was going to run, so he didn't. I was surprised! They came in the office. I remember sitting back in the back part of Taylor's listening to it. They came in there, and Buzz Schnoebelen or somebody else started talking. Whoever was in front said, "Gerald just withdrew! What are we going to do now?" I think it was Buzz Schnoebelen.

Rosetta: It sounds like Buzz.

Maribel: And I was sitting in the back office and I was hearing all this, and I thought, "Okay, why not?" And I decided to run.

Rosetta: You did well.

Maribel: Thank you!

Rosetta: Or you wouldn't have been elected for 16 years.

Maribel: Thank you, I appreciate that. It was really quite an experience for me. It was kind of a highlight of my life because I didn't think I would come into that. But that's like I tell anybody, you know, if you think you don't want to run, think it over. Maybe you should run!

Rosetta: Well, all your business training that you got, you used that, really, all your life because you said you were doing bookkeeping and stuff for people.

Maribel: Yes, well when we were in town before we moved to the farm. See, we lived in town for a while, and then when his dad died, that's when we moved.

Joan: When did you move back into town?

Maribel: When we built that house in '76. We didn't move back into town until '76. We were out there 13 years. It seems like it was longer than that. We went a long time without water, I know that!

Joan: Being the treasurer was the highlight of your life. I think your three children were too. Where are your three children?

Maribel: Believe it or not, they're all around here.

Joan: Isn't that unusual?

Maribel: Yes, it's unusual, and I'm very happy about it. Of course, Jim's about a block down here. He has his business in Trousdale, "Jim's Repair". Gary has been up in Larned all these years. I don't know what's going to happen there. There are going to be a lot of changes there. I don't know if you folks know about that or not.

Rosetta: I only know what you told me several months ago.

Maribel: Well, Gary's making a lot of changes. Then Tommy lives just a little north here. He never married, or anyway he never told me about it. So yes, I'm very happy. Tommy has a lot of ground and farms for a lot of people. So evidently he's doing all right, or they wouldn't be wanting him.

Joan: Do you have grandchildren?

Maribel: Yes. There they are up there; there's the three. Then there's Loni, I consider her my granddaughter also. She's over here. Elizabeth is in the blue, she's Gary's daughter. Loni is over there in the picture with the black, the small picture, she didn't graduate. That's fine. So I have four. And then six greats. Elizabeth has a little boy; Gary has a two year old grandson. The rest of them are all Jim's. I've got a lot of pictures.

Joan: So looking back over all, how do you thing living in Edwards County has affected your life?

Maribel: Well, I think it's been good if you figure everything in. There's been times I thought about it, and I really do think it's probably been a good place to live. Of course, every once in a while you think about what if you'd done something else, but really not. It's been great. And I got a, oh I'm going to show you guys before you leave.

Joan: We'll wait a second on that. What do you see for the future of Edwards County? Where do you think we're headed?

Maribel: I think sometimes with the way the people are working hard to keep it, that maybe we do have a future. But otherwise you'd think that everybody else had buried Edwards County a long time ago. But I don't think maybe it is going to be that way, do you think?

Rosetta: I think we're going to be okay.

Maribel: That's what I think too. What do you think?

Joan: I think we're going to be okay. I think maybe technology will help us. In another interview, we talked about the fact that we have water. Maybe not up north!

Maribel: Not everywhere.

Joan: We have water, and we have major highways and that sort of thing. With land and water, we will survive. It may be different. It's going to be bigger farms...

Maribel: We were used to a whole different way of doing things. We're used to more people, and it can't be done that way anymore. No, I'm very proud of Edwards County.

Joan: Is there anything else you'd like to add on the tape?

Maribel: Well, there was something I was going to mention. I don't know if you folks remember in 1975, Edwards County gave out ceramic plaques to nine worthy residents or recipients. Do you remember that?

Joan: I wasn't here then.

Rosetta: No, I wasn't raised in Kinsley.

Maribel: Okay, these plaques stated that they were given for distinguished leadership and exceptional service in Edwards County. I listed the people here. My mother was one of them, one of the nine.

Joan: Why don't you go ahead and read the names, and then I'll take your piece of paper with me, if I can.

Maribel: Mr. and Mrs. Abner Offerle, Mr. and Mrs. Buford Brodbeck, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Hahn, Mr. and Mrs. John Newland, Mrs. Minnie Owen, Walter Mathes, Mrs. R.E. Schnoebelen, Mrs. Maxine Draut, and Mr. Joe Akins. Now Mom's plaque is in here.

Joan: Why was your mother chosen?

Maribel: Well, exceptional leadership and distinguished service. She had been in charge of the Cancer Society for many, many years. And Edwards County, many of those years (and I know because she told me and she was very proud of it) was the highest for donations. The reason she worked so tirelessly on that was because of my brother that died. She was very dedicated toward it, and I always presumed that that was the main reason that she was on it. Then a lot of those people, I think, did a lot to get the hospital. You see, that would have been in '75, when they built that second hospital. So I think that's why a lot of those names were there. That's why I wrote them down.

Joan: I think that's interesting, the whole story is interesting, the loss of your brother and everything.

Maribel: That is the reason that she was so dedicated to it. She would work on that day and night, almost. It was her way, and people followed her very well, because they were proud. Just about every year Edwards County was the highest group for donations to the Cancer Society. I presume that's the reason her name is on there. She did a lot of things.

Joan: Does the plaque have a date on it? Let's look that up, and we can find the newspaper article about it and find out more. Okay, is there anything else that you think you want to add?

Maribel: Another thing, I was just going to mention shivarees. You people probably never heard of shivarees.

Joan: I have, but we haven't had anybody on a tape mention them.

Maribel: Well, shivarees were common for newly married couples. A wheelbarrow with a wife in it would be wheeled down the main street by the husband. I was! Then the crowd would go to their home to cause any kind mischief they could think of. Lots of times, taking off the labels of the canned goods, so you wouldn't know what you had!

Joan: Now, when did they do this to you? Because you left from the church for your honeymoon. Did they do this when you came back?

Maribel: When we came back, much later, when they finally caught us. That's what they would do with a lot of them. When they could finally catch them, when they'd come back from their honeymoon or something. Some of them got kind of rough, but ours wasn't. We were lucky there. Somebody was starting to take all the labels off, and they I stopped them. I didn't need any extra work to do.

Let's see. The Edwards County Centennial was in '73, but that was the Kinsley one, wasn't it. Well, it doesn't matter, I guess. And this explains why my mother was so dedicated; and believe me, that was right at the top of her list of things she was going to do.

Joan: Okay, I think we've covered everything.

Maribel: Oh, another thing about the war, WWII. It was kind of ridiculous, but I was so worried that my Dad was going to be taken and I'd never see him again.

And Kinsley had an ice plant at one time. Do you remember the old ice plant?

Rosetta: Yes.

Joan: I don't remember anything!

Maribel: It was across the street from where my Dad's station was. But I was not supposed to cross that street! I was pretty little at the time.

Joan: Your parents had lost one child, so they were probably pretty protective.

Maribel: You're right there, that's probably why. I guess I'd hang around that station with my Dad. I remember climbing those old fashioned gas pumps. Thank you.

Joan: You did a good job.

Maribel: I hope so. Thank you. I got kind of excited about this; I've enjoyed reading them all the time. I think all of these things came out of various times. I guess I told you that all three of my sons went to the auto technical school over there in Dodge. Those teachers said, "Another one! All three of them!" Finally, Tommy said, "I'm the last."

Joan: When was Dodge City Community started? (est. 1935) That's an interesting question. Saint Mary's would have been there too (est. 1913).

Rosetta: Saint Mary's was there for a long, long time. But the Juco?

Joan: I'm guessing that was a lot more recent, I'd guess the '60's, but I have no idea. I'll find that out, it would be an interesting thing to know, when education got a little closer.

Rosetta: There was Pratt, I think, and Dodge City Community College, when I graduated. But we weren't encouraged to go to the junior colleges because you wouldn't get a good education.

Maribel: That kind of gets me. Helen went to K.U., and Bernard went to K State. They fought about that constantly, day and night. They still fight about it.