

Interview with Virginia Gleason

April 18, 2011

Conducted in the Gleason home, Kinsley, Kansas

Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library

Joan: Virginia, what is your full name?

Virginia: Virginia Ann Copp, and then Gillett, and then Gleason.

Joan: Where do you currently reside?

Virginia: 909 East 5th, Kinsley.

Joan: When and where were you born?

Virginia: July 8, 1930 in Dodge City, Kansas.

Joan: What were the names of your parents?

Virginia: William Clifford Copp and Edna Ree Smiley.

Joan: And your grandparents, what were their names on both sides?

Virginia: Henry George Copp and Oma Belle Alexander, her maiden name was Alexander. And then on Mother's side, William Howard Smiley and Laura Francis Smith.

Joan: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Virginia: I have one sister, Marguerite, three years younger, my little sister.

Joan: What brought your grandparents to this part of Kansas?

Virginia: Farming! When I was trying to find, I think my Grandfather Copp, well his father, came out. The Smileys were in the Pittsburg area at one time, and then they came to western Kansas, Hugoton. I think all of Mother's family was in Missouri. All of her sisters and brothers were born in Missouri, and she's the baby of the family. She's the only born in Frontenac, Kansas which is in a mining area down by Pittsburg.

Joan: Okay, when was she born? What year?

Virginia: 1905, and then they moved west in the 1920's sometime. It was before the Dustbowl.

Joan: I think you said they settled in Hugoton? What about the Cops? Where were they?

Virginia: They've been in Kinsley since '75, I think.

Joan: 1875? So they're original settlers and they came to farm. Where was the farm?

Virginia: Originally, the one was way, probably, I think it's up where Proberts were, but I'm not sure. And then what I call their family farm is three miles north of Kinsley on the old Hwy 183.

I still have that quarter where the original farm house was that I remember going to. My aunt and uncle lived in that after my grandmother moved to town.

Joan: What did your dad do? Did he farm?

Virginia: No, he wanted to be a professional and went to K.U. when he graduated from high school. He had graduated a year later than his class because in 1910, I think it was, they went to California for the winter and took Daddy out of school. They just stayed ahead of the truant officers while they were out there. So he missed a year of school.

Joan: This was your farming grandfather? So they went...

Virginia: They went when Grandfather didn't have to farm for several months.

Joan: Did he work out there?

Virginia: I don't think so. I think they just enjoyed themselves. They had a chance to buy some land where there is oil wells later, but he didn't.

Joan: So your father ended up graduating what year?

Virginia: '23. Well, '19 from high school, and '23 from K.U.

Joan: And his degree was in?

Virginia: Pharmacy.

Joan: And then he came back here?

Virginia: No, he went to Atchison for several years. Then he came to Dodge City. I have that someplace. He worked for Mosher and Cochran Drug Store in Dodge City. I think he came in '25, and then he and mother met in '28 and were married. I was born in '30, and we lived in Dodge until I was eight years old.

Joan: So where was your mother from?

Virginia: Hugoton, she graduated from Hugoton.

Joan: How did she meet him?

Virginia: She had moved to Dodge City as a teacher. All my aunts on that side are teachers.

Joan: So you lived in Dodge City.

Virginia: Yes, and Marguerite lived there too.

Joan: For how many years?

Virginia: Eight, in 1938 we bought the...

Joan: Do you remember anything about growing up there with your little sister? Does anything stick out?

Virginia: Big high snow drifts. I can remember Daddy walking me to school, because we lived farther north up on 'A', and then I went to Central. The snow would be over the walk, I mean it was high, high drifts that we'd never had very often. Of course, in the Dust Bowl days we'd go home to Hugoton sometimes over the weekend and cover everything when we left. When we'd come back, Daddy would go in and uncover everything before Mother and Marguerite and I got out of the car. I can remember the dirt rolling in at Hugoton. I think I remember it, not just being told.

Joan: Probably, and those grandparents were farmers. How did they fare during the Dust Bowl?

Virginia: Not very well,

Joan: But they stayed?

Virginia: Yes. My grandparents on the Smiley side were never very well-to-do. But I feel like, on the Copp side, they were. Because when Grandfather Copp died in '34, they were vacationing in Corpus Christi, Texas for the winter.

Joan: And that still would have been in the drought.

Virginia: Yes, '34. My Grandfather Smiley died in '33, and Grandmother Smiley died in '61.

Joan: So you didn't know your...

Virginia: ...Grandfathers very well. Just pictures of them.

Joan: And then you came to Kinsley. What year did you say?

Virginia: '38.

Joan: And he started the pharmacy?

Virginia: And he bought the Demain Pharmacy, Richard's. That's my grandson's grandparents, the Demains were. That's who had the drugstore and that's Marty Strate's parents. So it has kind of come full circle.

Joan: Stayed in the family.

Virginia: Stayed in the family, but no one went into pharmacy after me. We couldn't talk them into that.

Joan: Where did you live in Kinsley as a girl?

Virginia: When we first moved here, we were on Niles, right north of the filling station on Niles Street. That's (Tony) Moskalew's house now, I think. We were there for about a year. Then we moved to the Demain house because they had left and moved to Kansas City. That is where,

it is the first house on the south side of Sixth Street. It's where Jean Heinz lived and Elmer Heinz. We lived there until after the war, and then Mother and Daddy built a little house on the back of the lot they had bought that was supposed to be a garage, eventually because you couldn't get good materials right after the war. He was wanting to get out of the house because the Demains were wanting to sell it, and he didn't want to buy it. Daddy had already bought the lot across the street, which was 406 Sixth St.

Joan: Can you tell us a little bit about the pharmacy? Did you work in it as a girl?

Virginia: Well, I did. Marguerite didn't. She always stayed home and helped Mother at home. Well, we both had to clean, but she learned to cook. I didn't learn to cook until just before I got married. I finally learned to cut up chicken. But I always went. I think I was going to be a pharmacist in junior high. We worked, well, I was always there after school, I mean at night. We had long, long hours. This article about Daddy says that.

Joan: You started at what time and finished?

Virginia: 7:30 in the morning until 10:30 at night. But during the war years, we were open until 1:00, usually on Saturday nights.

Joan: 1:00 a.m.?

Virginia: Yes, because there would be people downtown in Kinsley. They'd go to the movies, either the first or second show, and then come.

Joan: Did the drugstore have a soda fountain?

Virginia: Yes, we did have a fountain, and a lot of booths, five I think.

Joan: What did you serve?

Virginia: All kinds of ice cream and drinks. Daddy made his own ice cream all through the war. And we made our own simple syrup, so because of that, we had a good sugar base when the war came along and sugar was rationed. We never were low on it, because we had plenty for the drug store, and we could sneak some home.

Joan: Back then, in drugstores, did your father have to make the drugs? Or did they come in as pills?

Virginia: That's in that article too that I was reading. Papers and pill capsules. By the time I went through pharmacy school, I had to learn how to fold papers.

Joan: What are papers?

Virginia: They're a little white piece of paper. You put the drug in the middle and then you have to learn to fold it so it doesn't fall out or blow out.

Joan: Then people would mix that with liquid?

Virginia: Then they would open it up when they got it home. Then they went in a box, maybe about this long and this wide.

Joan: Okay, you're saying an inch high and probably two or three inches long. Then you folded those.

Joan: So these little envelope-like things were in there, and people would take them home. This was before capsules? Is that the idea?

Virginia: I think so, and then when capsules came along, more things were put in capsules. Well, we had to learn how to do it in school. Now they wouldn't even know what we were talking about.

Joan: Well, I didn't know what you were talking about!

Virginia: But the kids you know, just don't have to do anything. I did have to for the Boards.

Joan: That is interesting! So you had the fountain, and you had the prescription drugs, and then...

Virginia: ...lots and lots of patent medicines, you know. Which I still have a lot of them out in the garage. They went to the back, and we didn't throw things away. I keep thinking they might be valuable. Slowly, I'm throwing stuff away, but there's still a lot of stuff in the garage that I haven't disposed of. Daddy sold veterinary supplies, a lot of veterinary supplies. I think probably at that time we probably didn't have a vet. So people came to him for...

Joan: And then today a drug store might have greeting cards and things like that. Did you have dry goods and make up?

Virginia: We had make up and greeting cards. We sold nuts, Double K Nuts, I think. We would measure, weigh them out. Lots of cosmetics. We had a lot of display cases. I think some of our display cases are out at the museum.

Joan: Did you sell jewelry?

Virginia: Not that I remember from the early days. We sold cigarettes and cigarette papers, where you rolled your own. I'm trying to think, but that's pretty much everything. We've talked about the fact that we didn't serve blacks at our counter.

Joan: Let's talk about it on the tape.

Virginia: Well, Skeet (*John Winchester*) would come over when Daddy was making ice-cream. He would come over and get a big dish of ice cream, but he wouldn't sit out in front, he would sit out behind where the magazines were, in back on a stool there.

Joan: Was that his choice or was that your father's, or a combination?

Virginia: You just didn't do it. You just weren't out there.

Joan: Did he come in the front door or the back door? Skeet is a black gentleman.

Virginia: I don't know. From Hamm and Pool, he was over there because he did all their cleaning, I think. He might have come in the back door, but I don't remember. I bet he came in the front because he sat way up to the front.

Joan: Just separate.

Virginia: He just didn't sit at the counter until the seismograph crews came in. Some of those after the war were big black fellows, and you didn't argue with them. If they wanted to sit there that was where they were going to sit. From then on, we served the blacks.

Joan: After the war. And the children also couldn't get a drink or anything?

Virginia: I don't think so. No, and there were...well, I had two in my class. I don't remember them ever coming in when we were in school.

Joan: Hispanics the same? Or were they...

Virginia: I just don't remember being around Hispanics at all. I don't think we had any go to school. Well, we did. Marion Gutierrez, he was pretty dark. But he graduated with us in my class and then was a mechanic in Pratt for many years.

Joan: But they were still with the railroad and things there.

Virginia: And I think maybe that's what Marion's folks did, was the railroad.

Joan: So what did you do in the store? How did you start out?

Virginia: At the fountain, the soda fountain. I worked with all the different girls.

Joan: Now did you have, I remember phosphates. What is a phosphate?

Virginia: It has a...you added a phosphate to lemon or lime or whatever flavor it was, and the phosphate is what... I can't think how you made it!

Joan: I just remember them, but I don't know what they were. You had a lemon phosphate and it was carbonated.

Virginia: But the phosphate made it more acid, I think, but I can't think what salt it was, whether potassium. . . what salt it was.

Joan: I'm trying to think what else we used to like, like lemon cokes. I know you mixed that. Can you think what else you had?

Virginia: We had sundaes, we had chocolate...oh what was it called. It was chocolate ice cream, but it was different from the regular ice cream. I think it was a little icier, maybe. They loved that, people would, you know, when we were making it.

Joan: Like a chocolate sherbet or something?

Virginia: Yes, only it wasn't as icy as sherbet, but it was kind of in-between.

Joan: And you had malts and shakes?

Virginia: Yes, and sodas. Really, really good sodas.

Joan: What made them good?

Virginia: You put syrup in the bottom of the glass, and then you worked up some ice cream with it and then partly some carbonated water. It was just a little thicker, and then you'd fill it up with ice cream. They made good ones in Greensburg. Cathy and I would meet down there, when they were still there, from Jamie Estlack. When we moved then in '64 to the other building, we took the fountain out. My children were very, very unhappy with their dad. They wanted that fountain. They grew up with it.

Joan: When you still had it in the other building, was that a hangout for the young people?

Virginia: Yes, I kind of grew up with a lot of those older kids. You know, teasing them, or them teasing me. Various ones would take us for bicycle rides on the back of their bicycles. Because, you know, we were downtown, in the summertime.

Joan: And there was the picture show going on then.

Virginia: Two. Usually on Sundays, I think there were two showings, an early show and a late show, on Saturdays and Sundays.

Joan: Were you working? Or did you get to go to the show?

Virginia: I went to the show in the afternoon when I was younger. Then there came a time when I was supposed to be at work. I can remember being upset with my mother or dad because they didn't wake me to get me up to go to work. I could have gotten myself up. I could have set an alarm. But I was used to them doing it, and I figured they didn't want me at work if they didn't wake me.

Joan: And they were letting you sleep because they thought you needed the sleep?

Virginia: Yes, they thought I needed to sleep. But like I said, I was always down at the drugstore after I did a few things at home. Marguerite stayed home and cooked.

Joan: Did they give you a salary? An allowance?

Virginia: An allowance kind of thing. I can't remember that I was ever or when I finally went on a regular wage. That's probably some place in there too. But we had a lot of good girls that worked with us, and I enjoyed that part of it. We had several bowling alleys, and at one time one of the Parkers, where the beauty shop was, was a five lane bowling alley. You know, not five balls, but five pins. They were a smaller pin. The Hargadine girls (*Alice and Mary*) and us would go down after we got off work, after things slowed down, and bowl maybe a little bit.

And that would be like at a 12:00.

Joan: No wonder your parents let you sleep the next day! Who were some of the girls that worked for you? Do you remember any of them?

Virginia: I got that list out, where is it? I put it out here. Daddy kept all their W-2's, so I did too. Finding which one is which...Celesta Taylor worked at the drugstore all during the war.

Joan: But it wasn't Taylor at that time.

Virginia: It was Floyd. Alice Hargadine, and Geraldine McCall. There's Celesta's. And Leah Nell Parton, Parton lived out south someplace. She was a Kuykendall from Greensburg, but married to a Parton. I think he was killed in a hunting accident or something. She worked for us for quite a while. Delpha Strate did. And Donna Marie Shahan. And that's Celesta's. Lois (*Lois Floyd Titus*) worked for us for a little while.

Joan: Okay, this year is 1949. You got one, two, three, four...

Virginia: Well, some of them are the same; redone, mother's done them over again.

Joan: Those are '48, I don't know, this is more than one year. That's why there's...

Virginia: Oh yes, there's lots of different...here's Judy's (*Copp*)

Joan: And these are sort of part-time people mainly?

Virginia: In the summertime, yes. After school and then...

Joan: About how many full time workers would you have had?

Virginia: Celesta would have been one, Leah Nell was another.

Joan: I mean at a time? Would you have had two or three at one time?

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: And it was both men and women? Men did the soda fountain too?

Virginia: Some, but mostly on the other side.

Joan: Stocking shelves?

Virginia: June Schrader worked for Daddy at one time.

Joan: The men stocked shelves and things like that?

Virginia: Yes, and checked orders. Pearson (Beck) worked at the drug store after he came back, for a while (*from the coast guard in 1955*).

Joan: What changes did you see after WWII? As far as, did the business change any?

Virginia: I couldn't see that question. I just couldn't see that. We didn't serve food there. We had restaurants during the war, I thought. Now there was a time when we didn't have some restaurants, and then we did serve food. We made some sandwiches and had them. We made them in the back in the one stock room there and served sandwiches. It must have been after the one restaurant...you know, there was a time when we had lots of restaurants downtown.

Rosetta: Yes, Rita's restaurant would have been open during the war, right?

Virginia: But then there was a time where we were...that would have been between '48 and '52, or a little after that. Because when I would come home and help out. No, it would have been after '52. It was after '52, in the late '50's. For some reason there weren't very many restaurants, and we were making sandwiches in the afternoon.

Joan: So, what was high school like? Were you in extra-curricular activities, even though you were working?

Virginia: Yes. Was it "Y" Teens or Girl Reserves when we were in high school? It was "Y" Teens, wasn't it? When I was in high school? I was an officer every year. My senior year, I worked on the paper and did the advertising. We had the KHS *Breezes*. It was a really neat paper, I thought. With Miss Peterie. I was active in school, but I didn't do...I was usually in at least one play a year. But I didn't try out my senior year. Miss Losey was (*upset*). I knew I wouldn't get the part, so I didn't try out. And just because I didn't try out, she wouldn't let me do something else. I don't remember what it was, but it was silly. I enjoyed high school; I think I did. But I was ready to go to college. I don't remember being sad when I graduated like some kids are because I knew I was going on to school.

Joan: Did you have a car when you were in high school?

Virginia: No, well, not to use very much.

Joan: It was a family car. Were most kids that way?

Virginia: I think yes. And Mother and Daddy took us to a lot of school things.

Joan: So when you went on a date...did you date in high school?

Virginia: Yes, and then my senior year I went steady with Laverne, and my freshman year of college.

Joan: Lavern...?

Virginia: Schmitt.

Joan: So he had a car. Did you go to the movies?

Virginia: Yes, he had a car and would come pick me up for the movies or school things or for dances. Then he came down to Lawrence two years for Fall Prom, for a dance. The second

year, he came down and stayed with Jim (Gillett). I'd already started seeing Jim, and he came over and stayed with him. Then I went home at Thanksgiving time and broke off with him.

Joan: What did Laverne do?

Virginia: Oh, he was a farmer. He farmed.

Rosetta: During WWII, there were people...the soldiers came over from Dodge. So there were dances on Saturday night, or what did the soldiers do when they got here?

Virginia: You'd have to ask some of those older girls. I mean, Delpha went with Arnie (*Arnold Vomberg*). She met her husband that way. Delpha Strate. So I suppose she was working in the drugstore, and maybe that's where she met him.

Joan: Why were the soldiers coming here?

Virginia: To get out of Dodge, I suppose. Just something different, different girls. And then, wasn't there kind of a base at Jetmore? Wasn't there? South of Jetmore, where they landed there? (*Dodge City Air Force Base had auxiliary field # 4 at Jetmore.*)

Rosetta: I don't know. I just don't remember any contact with any of the service people particularly. I was kind of out of it, I think, at times.

Joan: Well, you were pretty busy, too.

Virginia: I was just busy with other things. We did two operettas my senior year with Miss Perry (*Doradeen*). She was really a busy teacher. This is the one that was hurt in a car accident after our senior year and never was right again.

Joan: So she was the music teacher there. Vocal or...?

Virginia: Both, and she had us do these operettas. They were wonderful.

Joan: So you liked to sing?

Virginia: Yes. I didn't play in the band, and I have always regretted that. But mother wanted me to play a flute, and I wanted to play a saxophone. So we didn't do any. And then my sister, since I wasn't in the band, she wasn't either. And I think band is an important part of the school. However, at that time I think they had to go early before school for band practice. But I just think I missed out on something by not being part of the band. And my kids were both in band. And of course, we didn't have girls' sports.

Joan: So for the rest of the story, they had football, basketball, track...

Virginia: For the boys, but nothing for the girls.

Joan: Was there wrestling?

Virginia: No, there wasn't wrestling, just the three big...

Joan: Did you have baseball? Or was that just like a city...

Virginia: I think that was just city, I don't think they had a high school team for softball or baseball. And no golf! I don't think that started...well, at that time, we didn't even have a golf course until later years, did we? The one out north?

Joan: But you had a swimming pool.

Virginia: Yes, and...

Joan: Where was that located?

Virginia: Over where the Easy Stop is now (*on Hwy 56*). The one down at South Park was built after I was married, I think, and back here. Because my grandmother was voting against it, and we were most upset with her because we were all back here.

Joan: We talked to somebody else about the pool and that brought it to mind. With the pharmacy and everything, what about polio? What do you remember about polio? Anything?

Virginia: I don't remember having to stay away from anything which I think people did. But we never had that much of it here, did we? I don't think Kinsley had that much of a problem.

Rosetta: Kinsley didn't, but we found somebody at Lewis.

Joan: Quite a few at Lewis.

Virginia: Well, what about Mary Helen's (*husband*)? Didn't he have polio? And like Wayne Westphal, his wasn't polio, I don't think. His was an accident or something.

Joan: That's why the swimming pool reminded me, you don't remember the swimming pool being closed?

Virginia: No, not when we were there, and I'm trying to think when my kids were in.

Joan: Well, the Salk vaccine was in the fifties. (*1955 Salk vaccine introduced.*)

Virginia: I'm trying to think, but that's probably right. But I just don't think Kinsley ever had any problem when we were in high school.

Joan: So you graduated from high school and your parents paid for your college education?

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: So you didn't have to work?

Virginia: No, I didn't work at all.

Joan: And you knew what you wanted to be; you wanted to be a pharmacist. How did you get back and forth to college?

Virginia: Once in a while with somebody in a car, but usually on the train.

Joan: So you got on the train here, and then?

Virginia: It went straight through to Lawrence. Well no, that one little train, I guess we had to change in Newton. And then the Doodlebug that came on out from Newton, isn't that what they called it because it was a little short, smaller train. A lot of trains ran for us, and there weren't that many problems.

Joan: How often would you come home during the school year?

Virginia: Just Christmas and Thanksgiving. I think we came back for Thanksgiving. And we didn't have spring break like they do now. There might have been a few days at Easter time or something. And Mother and Daddy usually came down maybe once in the fall.

Joan: Where did you live while you were in college?

Virginia: I lived in a dorm for three years, Corbin Hall, which was changed my senior year into a freshman dorm. I could have stayed on, a lot of the seniors did, but I decided to move out and into a private home my senior year.

Joan: So you rented a room?

Virginia: Yes, just a room with an older couple.

Joan: Did you have kitchen privileges?

Virginia: Some, but I didn't...by then Jim and I were finally engaged, our senior year, and we ate all our meals together. I think I ate breakfast at the house, but then he'd come after me. It was my car, but he kept it.

Joan: So how did you meet Jim?

Virginia: Through Charlene Breitenbach from Belpre. She was dating Graydon Bowman. They were roommates, and Charlene was my roommate. They just thought we should, so we went out and had a Coke date. I think we had a physics date that day, the same test, so we discussed that.

Joan: So you were in the class with him?

Virginia: Yes, but it was a big class. Other than that, I wasn't in...

Joan: What was his major?

Virginia: Business. His first year, he was in business school. Then Navy Supply, and then he went back after he got out of the navy in '55. We went back to Lawrence, and we were there three more years with two little kids.

Joan: You probably spent most of your college time with Jim. Did you do anything extra up there?

Virginia: I have all my letters that I wrote home to Mother my senior year. She kept them all. That was so much fun to read. I think all we did was go to movies! I can't believe how many movies we went to a week at night.

Joan: Well, there wasn't television.

Virginia: Well, there was some, but we didn't have access to it, unless we went up to where Marguerite was a freshman, at the freshman dorm. We'd spend a lot of Sunday evenings up there with her. We could watch T.V. or play games.

Joan: We didn't ask that. Did your folks have T.V. back here? Or when did they get it?

Virginia: They did while we were gone in the navy. Sometime then because they already had one when we got back. And we had one on the west coast I think the last year we were there.

Joan: That was in '52 to '55. And you always grew up with electricity and telephone and everything because you were in the city.

Virginia: In town, yes, but Aunt Geneva and Uncle Leo (Copp) out north of town didn't have it until they moved into their new house in '55. My grandparents' house, where they lived, didn't have electricity. It had no inside plumbing until somebody rented the house later and added that. Oh, I know, Sollitts, they lived out there before they moved. He was handy, so he did a lot of things to the old house. So I remember the pull-down oil lamps and stuff, but I never had it.

Joan: So what was K.U. like when you were going to school there? Do you know what the student population was?

Virginia: No, I really have no idea. It wasn't nearly as large as it is now, and I just don't remember being frightened at all. I mean, college was wonderful to me. And now the girls have to be afraid. Well, even when Cathy was there, she had Chris Hearn. He was there and would walk her at night if she had a late class. I'm sure I was out walking at night and didn't think a thing about it.

Joan: It was a different time. Were athletics important as they are today?

Virginia: Yes, we went to the football games and basketball games. We stood in line for the basketball, and you could only go to half because they were in Hoch (*Auditorium*). There were enough students that only half of us could go.

Joan: And then they kicked you out?

Virginia: Well, part of them went to one set of tickets, and part of them went to the other set, unless you were lucky enough to get somebody's tickets.

Joan: So you got to go to the whole game, but only every other game.

Virginia: Yes, every other game or something.

Joan: Isn't that interesting! Now they're so expensive that the students just don't get to go.

Virginia: Don't get to go at all, yes. But we had activity tickets that we'd get, certain sets of tickets. But then you still had to stand in line. We'd be there at 4:00 in the afternoon. Then when we'd get inside, why then we'd play card games. We played a lot of Honeymoon Bridge, Jim and I, while we were waiting for the game to start. But we went to our set of games, always. Then when the kids were little, we went to all the basketball games then, too, and football games. We would sit around to the north where it wasn't as crowded. Evidently the teams weren't as good then, so there were places where it was easier to take two little kids. We had to carry them in, but we took them.

Joan: So how did Jim propose to you?

Virginia: You know, I really don't remember. We just...

Joan: Did you go pick the ring out together?

Virginia: We picked it out of a catalogue. His dad was a Penny's manager. So it was ordered through the Penney's store and shipped down to him. He gave it to me, and I have this written down in one of my memory books. He gave it to me one noon and then we went to Student Union to eat. But then Marguerite and her roommate had an engagement party for us on Valentine's Day. We ate out at a steak house, a barbeque type thing, that we ate a lot of meals in. Then even when we went back and had Cathy and Bill, why, we took them there. It was a real nice couple that ran it.

Joan: So this was somewhere after Christmas then, if you had the party in February, and then when did you get married?

Virginia: In June.

Joan: So just a six month engagement?

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: What was your wedding like?

Virginia: Well, it was a formal wedding. I have wedding pictures.

Joan: We'll get one of those before we leave.

Virginia: It was a hot day. It was in the Methodist Church, but the reception was at Mother and Daddy's house. We got everybody inside the house that was at the wedding, and then it rained. Then our air conditioning went off and it was miserable.

Joan: You had air conditioning!

Virginia: Yes, we had air conditioning.

Joan: This is 1952, would that have been unusual? To me, that would have been early air conditioning.

Virginia: Well, but it quit on us. I don't think the drug store ever did until...

Joan: Was it an evaporative cooler?

Virginia: No, it was an air conditioner. I'm sure it was, and the compressor was outside there, out the kitchen door.

Joan: We'd never even thought to ask people when they got air conditioning, but that's interesting, because I expect that was...

Virginia: Now the drug store didn't have air conditioning. It had a water cooler, and it was adequate, but it really wasn't that good either. But we did have air conditioning.

Joan: So how many attendants did you have?

Virginia: Two, my sister and sister-in-law.

Joan: About how many guests?

Virginia: You know, I don't know. The church was probably pretty full, 100 or 150, I really don't know. Isn't that awful? I just really don't. Then, we had a really different honeymoon.

Joan: Wait, before the honeymoon. You came back to the house, and what did you serve?

Virginia: Just the cake and punch, not a formal dinner like they do now.

Joan: Did you open your gifts at that time?

Virginia: I think I'd been opening them all along and had them on display in a room. I'm just sure I did, so people could see them. We were there until probably 6:00 or 6:30.

Joan: Was your car decorated? Did you drive around town? Did you do any of that business?

Virginia: No we didn't, nobody did that to us. Uncle Brett (*Riley*) kept people from bothering with that. Jim's brother-in-law, the one's in Pratt.

Joan: And your parents were pleased with your choice?

Virginia: Oh yes, very much so. They were real close to Jim.

Joan: Okay, so tell us about your honeymoon.

Virginia: We went to Dr. Unruh's cabin. Do you remember Dr. Unruh?

Rosetta: I remember Dr. Unruh, but I don't know anything about his cabin.

Virginia: And I haven't been able to find it. Fred and I were always going to go find it.

Joan: Where was it? Colorado?

Virginia: Well, now it's probably gone. No, it was down on Rattlesnake. We found it that night when it was fairly dark, but they had...it was all one big room with an outhouse and a pitcher pump to get water inside. They had electricity to the cabin, so they had a refrigerator and a fireplace. Unruh, they worked with the youth group, and they would take them out there. So a lot of kids have been out there.

Joan: Where on the Rattlesnake was this, about?

Virginia: West of Trousdale. We drove into Trousdale to buy groceries on Tuesday and called Mother and Daddy and asked them and Marguerite out for supper. We had a formal dinner: fried ham and vegetables and salad. Then we all came back to town on Tuesday.

Joan: What was Trousdale like at that time?

Virginia: Well, it had a grocery store! And of course the church was there. I suppose there were some other businesses besides the grocery store. Now, Daddy bought the drugs from a drugstore in Centerview or Fellsburg. I'm not sure which one, but when they closed it Daddy went down and bought a lot of their patent medicines out. I can remember doing that. But I was always going to try to find that cabin because it has reverted back to somebody in Wichita who had it for hunting. But I just wonder if it is still there.

Joan: You could probably go to the courthouse, because if he owned the land, you could probably find out what land he owned.

Virginia: Well, Fred kind of explained where it was. And I asked some of the Trousdale people, and they kind of knew where it was. But I just haven't gone down and driven around there like I need to. I'm just curious as to whether it's even there.

Joan: Did the Rattlesnake have enough water to have fish in it?

Virginia: Yes, it did. It did for a long time. Because we have water out in our creek on the farm because it is spring fed. You know, every so often there'll be water in it that's just from the spring.

Joan: You think it's gone down because of irrigation.

Virginia: Yes, it takes a lot of it out.

Joan: And you were there just from Saturday night 'til Tuesday.

Virginia: Sunday night. We were married on Sunday. That's back in the old days when you got married on Sunday.

Joan: I didn't realize you got married on Sunday.

Virginia: I graduated on Monday, came home on Tuesday and was there those few days and got ready for a wedding and learned how to cut up a chicken. They thought I should learn that, Marguerite and mother.

Joan: Did you have a shower? Was that something they did?

Virginia: You know, I don't think I did. I did when Mike and I got married; I had a shower. But I was just here. And I wasn't running around with any girls. I wasn't close to any of my friends at that time.

Joan: Now at this time, does he know he's going into the service?

Virginia: Oh yes.

Joan: Was he drafted or did he enlist?

Virginia: No, he was in the NROTC (*Naval Reserve Officer Training Corp*) all through college.

Joan: Oh, he was in the NROTC, so he had to serve. So he came out of ROTC as an officer.

Virginia: Outstanding Midshipman. We have the watch. He got that his senior year, and his folks were there for that.

Joan: So he went to Supply School right away?

Virginia: Yes. We came back to town on Tuesday night, and we left Thursday morning, I think, and headed for California. So that was kind of a honeymoon, really.

Joan: Loaded up a car with?

Virginia: Lots of things! But it was all in the car. In later years, I pulled a trailer back and forth. Because we went to Oakland and then Mother and Daddy came out and helped me drive home because I was already pregnant with Billy in the fall when he left to go overseas. I came home in September with Mother and Daddy and then went back in December and was there until Bill was born. The ship went back overseas to go into dry-dock in Hawaii. They took dependents on the ship, but I didn't think I should do that because I was pregnant. I didn't fly over, which I should have. There are many regrets.

Joan: So, when you were first married, he was shipped out and you came home to live and stayed in your parents' home?

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: Then you went back, because he came back in December. But then he went to Hawaii?

Virginia: Yes, he was gone for those two months, January and February. The ship didn't come back 'til in April, but he came back early because we thought Bill would come. Then when Bill didn't come until the first of May; the ship came home too. I went to greet them, and there I was, still big as a...

Joan: So what was your life like when he was gone out there?

Virginia: Kind of quiet.

Joan: Because you're pregnant.

Virginia: Yes. We had lived in a nice two storey apartment, I mean, on the upper story, so I was up and down steps. So I was alone probably a month or so, and then Jim's folks came out to stay with me. They didn't stay in the apartment, but they were there every day. Well, they started driving me crazy because Gramps didn't want me driving anyplace. I wanted to drive, because I was used to it, and it didn't bother me. So then Mother came out, and then I had lots of... so the three or four of us went lots of places. And then finally Jim came home and was there with us. Then, see we left in June; the ship went north to Seattle and was a month in Seattle. Mother came out and drove up with me.

Joan: So you followed him.

Virginia: Yes, because Marguerite was in Seattle.

Joan: Why was she in Seattle?

Virginia: He husband was in the coast guard, and he was overseas at that time. Marcea and Carl Winfield, he was in the coast guard, so Marcia and Marguerite lived together while their husbands were gone for several months there. We spent a month in Seattle while the ship loaded stores to go to the Pribilof Islands, which is where the seals are. They took stores up to the people on the island and brought the seal skins and seal oil back on the ships. That was interesting.

Joan: I guess I should have asked before. Jim was in ROTC to help pay for his college?

Virginia: Yes, he was accepted into it because that really does help. And then when he went back the second time, he was on the GI Bill. It was a lot better than it is now with the kids going so far in debt when they go to school.

Joan: Do you remember anything about the sealing? Did you ever get a seal skin?

Virginia: No, no he didn't bring anything. Now, I have an alligator purse that he brought from between his sophomore and junior year. Each summer, they went on a summer cruise. And the one year they went through the Panama Canal and were off down in there. It's one of those that I've seen on the *Antique Road Show*. They're valuable.

Rosetta: Does it still have the head?

Virginia: Yes, it's the whole animal.

Joan: That's interesting too because I've never know anybody that's been in ROTC that was navy oriented, rather than army. So his summer boot camps were on board.

Virginia: Yes, between our junior and senior year, he was on the *Missouri*, and they were in Paris and Oslo, Norway.

Joan: That's a whole education by itself, at that time.

Virginia: It really was.

Joan: Okay, then we left you in Seattle with your sister and then...

Virginia: And then when the ship left, Mother and I came home. Drove home again! And were here until...

Joan: And you stayed with your parents?

Virginia: Yes, each time I came home, I just stayed there in the front bedroom that was mine because I had Bill then. We were home just until September that time. Then we went back out to California, and we were in San Diego first, through Christmas, from September through Christmas. I was sick as a dog because I was pregnant again. But when we moved back to Long Beach and I was...just the move got my mind off it, and then I was fine from then on. So we were there in Long Beach; he brought me home in April, I think, or late March. We came home in a dust storm, which would have been '54. He called me the night before while I was in the hospital. When Cathy was born June 15, and then the ship left the 15th. But he called Mother, or Mother called him, and they got it all done. He knew that she was already there before the ship left. She was six months old before he saw her.

Joan: He spent a lot of time on a ship and you did a lot of moving!

Virginia: The first three years, we were just...and he thought about making a career of it. But he was gone so much, and we already had the two little kids. So I don't know; he decided to go back and take pharmacy and come back to Kinsley. That's a good thing we did because he didn't make it too long.

Joan: Now, you were already a pharmacist, but you were too busy with two little kids to be working much.

Virginia: I never did work, except to just fill in with Daddy until I lost Jim. Then I went to work full time.

Joan: So, when he came back, he worked that year at your parent's pharmacy.

Virginia: Originally, he thought he might be a Penny's manager, but then he decided to take pharmacy, and he loved it too.

Joan: Can you talk about what happened to him?

Virginia: Well, there's two...he had aneurysms, but Gramps thought it might have been encephalitis. He always thought it was triggered by encephalitis because it was after the flood in '65.

Joan: That's a water-borne disease?

Virginia: Yes, but when they did the autopsy there were several lesions in the back of his brain. We went skiing with Bairds and Wiedenheimers and Strates, snow skiing, the February before, and we were at Breckenridge. He got deathly ill that night and had a terrible headache that night.

Now the next day, he was fine. But I feel that that was one of the times when he bled out. But Dr. Atwood said that where the lesion was, it couldn't have been corrected in those days. There wasn't any way to do anything about it.

Joan: And he was only 35 years old.

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: And your children were?

Virginia: Sixth and seventh grade. Bill had just gone into junior high and had just started wrestling. Of course, wrestling was his sport, the one he loved the most. He had just started that when Jim...

Joan: It had it been a shock because it was a sudden death.

Virginia: Yes, very sudden. Well, he lasted from Tuesday to Thursday, I think, when they finally pulled the plug. His brother got here.

Joan: That's pretty young to be a widow.

Virginia: Yes, and then when it happened again, I... because one my things, it says in here, all I wanted to be was a wife and mother. It didn't last.

Joan: Then after he passed away, you were still just home with the kids?

Virginia: No, I went right to work because Daddy really needed the help. I think that helped me get over it because I was kept busy. The kids were in school. And in the summertime, well, I think Helen Atwood probably helped raise Bill because Bill was just with the Atwood boys always. Cathy was real good about staying here by herself and taking care of herself. I really didn't ever worry about her. Bill, I did, because kids can get into a lot of trouble.

Joan: And you were staying here?

Virginia: We were here. We moved into this house. We built this house in 1962. He worked on a lot of the fence out there.

Joan: Before that, you had rented?

Virginia: We lived in the little house back of Mother's. When we came back, that was ours.

Joan: Might be a little crowded, with two little kids.

Virginia: It wasn't. That's really an unbelievable little house because I had bridge club parties there. We'd have parties there. Cathy and Bill's room was the smaller one, and it had bunk beds in it, and then we had a bigger bedroom. It had a nice size kitchen. It really is a neat little... Now, I don't know what they've done with it. But it was always supposed to be a garage, but it had lot's of built-ins. It had good storage stuff. Now, the couple that have Mother and Daddy's house, I think they're finally doing quite a few things to it. The superintendent never did

anything, I don't think. And they wouldn't ever let us see it; Marguerite had to see it. But we built this house.

Joan: And you built this house...

Virginia: In 1962.

Joan: And then he died in '65.

Virginia: Yes, we've been in it for a long while. He did all the, we did all the painting and all the woodwork and everything.

Joan: So, as a widow, did you have house-payments? Or did you have that nice insurance that covered...

Virginia: I had a brother-in-law, Uncle Brett, that had talked us into getting mortgage insurance. So the only thing that wasn't paid for was our air-conditioning. We borrowed some money and added air-conditioning in '64, so I had to pay for that.

Joan: That was fortunate.

Virginia: Very fortunate. That's why I told my kids they need to have mortgage insurance if something happened to them. You don't plan on it, but it really was a blessing.

Rosetta: I would think.

Joan: So let's see here, I'm trying to get my dates... When did you meet Mike?

Virginia: That's another story. They moved in across the way in '67. Jim had met him, but I wasn't aware of him.

Joan: You say, "They."

Virginia: Mike and his mother. But I started noticing him at different things and Cathy and Amy would go by. The year before, probably '69, I bowled some. But the summer before we started dating, I bowled that whole summer just to try to catch his eye because he kept score. He bowled all the time. He was an avid bowler, and then he kept score for the women on the women's night. He'd just go down for something to do.

Joan: And to look at the women, probably. You mentioned Amy, who's Amy?

Virginia: Wiedenheimer, Cathy's friend. They all walked to school. They didn't have that stupid bus come by and pick them up over there! Amy lived over where Wiedenheimer's do, and she'd come by and pick up Cathy. Then they'd go by and maybe pick up Susie (*Susie Hamm Hearn*).

Joan: And they could walk all those many blocks!

Virginia: They were in high school, and it didn't hurt them one little iota. But anyway, I bowled

that summer, and then the horse show, the last one... Jim and Dr. (*Albert*) Wesley organized the horse show when we had this formal horse show. They ran it all the time. Then I kept the records for it. I think the last year we had it was this one summer after Jim was gone. I was keeping records, and Mike came over and sat and visited with me for a long time while I was working on the records. But he just sat and visited.

Joan: And he was a bachelor?

Virginia: Yes, he'd never been married. So then, I went to Joan and Ray's (*Gaskill*) in the middle of the night because Ray had done the announcing. So we sat out in the back and talked. He said, "Why didn't you ask him to come to the house?" Well, I should have, but I didn't. And he never did ask me. He started coming into the drugstore more to buy veterinary supplies, but he didn't ever say anything either. Well, Joyce Vancoevern do you remember Joyce? She and I were running around together because she was widowed then too, and we did a lot of things. We took our kids on vacations and stuff. So Joyce had started going with William Eikmeier. Gene Eslinger was trying to get Mike to date Joyce, but they weren't interested. Then she met Ike, so for Halloween she asked Mike to come for supper, and to pick me up. So Cathy and Bill had a Halloween party, and all the kids were here when Mike came and picked me up. Standing and looking out the window! But it didn't scare him off. That was Halloween, and we were married in January. We were engaged in December, at Christmastime, we got a ring.

Joan: Well, once he got the idea, it went quickly!

Virginia: Well, yes. My kids were a little upset about it at first and Elsie Beal, do you remember Elsie? She married Charles Beal. He had an old jewelry store here at one time. They lived here for quite a while, but Elsie worked at the drugstore at that time. She talked to Cathy and Bill and said, "You're going to be gone before very long, and your mother is going to be all alone. You should be happy for her." They finally agreed. And they were. Cathy was very close to Mike. Bill never did get as close because of when he got married.

Joan: Now, did Mike pop the question?

Virginia: Yes, he did.

Joan: And he had picked out the ring already?

Virginia: No, we went to Gifford's and picked it out.

Joan: What kind of a wedding was that?

Virginia: It was a big wedding at the Catholic Church. It was a big, big wedding.

Joan: Most of the town there?

Virginia: Well, not really because he had so many relatives. So I asked a lot of my friends just to the reception because I thought they would fill the church up. Well, a lot of the big families didn't come, so we would have had room for more of them. But it was kind of a hurry-up thing. Marguerite and Mother and I drove into Wichita on an icy, stormy day and found my dress.

Joan: And what kind of dress did you have for your second wedding?

Virginia: Short, coat dress. I still have it in there. I still have both of them, and I can't get anybody to wear them.

Joan: Who were the attendants at that one?

Virginia: Cathy and Bill. And who else stood up with me? I can't even think. Gene with Mike, and Marguerite! And Delores Dark made their dresses. She was working for me at that time.

Joan: And the reception for that wedding was...

Virginia: At the gym, and then we had a dance that night out at the VFW. But we didn't have a dinner. We'd had a dinner here at my house for family, but we didn't have a... So I always thought we'd have a 25th anniversary celebration of some kind. But we didn't make it.

Joan: So your honeymoon?

Virginia: Went to Wichita. The reason we picked the date that we had it, was that was the only open weekend we had. Bill was wrestling all of the other weekends. So that was an open one. We had our wedding and the next weekend I went to Goodland, I think. And then the last weekend was at Oakley, and Mike was with me in that one. We came home in a snowstorm.

Joan: And Mike farmed. But you lived here in this house?

Virginia: Yes, I thought I wanted to live out at the farm. In '72, we had three floods over all of that farm ground out there. So, I decided this was a pretty good place to be.

Joan: You didn't want a house flooded out there. He was living in town anyway with his mother. Was that the reason that he wasn't out there?

Virginia: No, most of his farm ground was in Hodgeman County at that time. And his brother, when they came back, Grandma Ruth and Mike moved to town and Gene and Lois lived on the farm. But they bought this section down here, and then when he and Gene split up the farm ground, why Mike took the section here with the alfalfa. That's a whole different area. I had never been around farming, at all. Well, Uncle Leo had, but I just had never been around it that much. So it was an eye-opener.

Joan: In farming, did he have both animals and crops?

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: He ran cattle, but there were probably no other animals, were there?

Virginia: Horses. When he passed away, we had a string of eight which the girls got. We'd got a good quarter horse, and we'd been breeding her.

Joan: And that was just for pleasure?

Virginia: Yes. He loved to ride, and I always thought I would learn to ride. But, when we had the drugstore and I was the only pharmacist, I thought I couldn't let anything happen to me. So I

was always afraid to get on a horse. I always thought, "Someday." And I still haven't. And Cathy doesn't ride. Her whole family rides, but she doesn't very often. She fell off a horse several times in Manhattan. She doesn't have very good memories of it. But Mike loved horses. Joan: I'm trying to think what year we're up to now. We're in the '70's. What changes did you see from when you worked in pharmacy in high school and then when you came back and was doing it in the late '60's?

Virginia: Well see, we moved into the other store in '64 (*209 E. Sixth St.*). So we didn't have a fountain. We still had all of the same products that we sold and those would change. We put in sewing things when we didn't have the Duckwall's Store, but then we got the Duckwall's Store and that... And I can remember when Mary Fox closed. You know, she was right across the street from us. I was in Great Bend in the hospital when he came down and said Mary put a sign on her door, closing out. It is sad, as each one of these...

Joan: What year was that, do you remember?

Virginia: '88, when I had the hysterectomy. It was after, I think, her boy Bodie died.

Joan: So from after the war until...was it a steady decline of businesses?

Virginia: I think so.

Joan: How long were there two drugstores?

Virginia: Until '93. We had just bought, in '93, their drugs and their records and had agreed to buy all of that when Mike passed away. So then, Mike's sister came over from Larned, and she helped. They'd bring stuff over, and she'd help put it away and helped me get things settled in. So they were here until then. I think they officially closed in June, I think.

Joan: Well, let's go back in time a little bit. You're kids were in school during the consolidation. Do you remember anything about that?

Virginia: Yes. Jim was on the board when they took in Offerle. His kids were some of the first ones that went over there. Pearson and Jim were both on the school board when that was decided. And they tried to get a consolidated school between here and Lewis.

Joan: At that time they did?

Virginia: Yes. Mr. Crouch was really working on it.

Joan: So it would have been more of a county school.

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: And what was the opposition? Do you remember?

Virginia: Lewis didn't want to give up. Because Lewis does go down when you lose your school.

Joan: And why did Offerle?

Virginia: They just couldn't keep the school going, I think.

Rosetta: And they got to keep their grade school.

Virginia: And they got to keep their grade school which Lewis probably would have too.

Joan: How did the transition between Offerle and Kinsley go through?

Virginia: I can't really remember any problems. I mean, I really thought...and I didn't think anything about driving over there to school things.

Joan: Well, you certainly would have heard, with Jim being on the school board, if it was...

Virginia: And I just don't think that it was the thing to do.

Joan: There wasn't a choice for Offerle?

Virginia: No. And they had already lost a lot of their businesses. Because see, there was a drug store over there; there was one in Lewis. Two grocery stores, I think, that Offerle had at one time. We had three.

Rosetta: Safeway, Mammel's and Northside.

Virginia: Oh yes. Then we had four.

Rosetta: Gaskill's had a little store for a while, and that was run by Hunter's before.

Virginia: Well, why did we have so many grocery stores?

Joan: So people could walk to get their groceries rather than drive? Did that enter in at one time maybe?

Virginia: Because we didn't have that many more people.

Rosetta: They served a larger area before, with the farmers. It started going down when Gibson's came in. People would go over there because things were cheaper. I mean, that's my interpretation.

Virginia: I don't know how we'll ever change it back.

Rosetta: At one time, early on, there were many, many grocery stores. A lot more than three or four grocery stores.

Virginia: Yes, because where Airgood's are, that was a little meat market. And across the way where the cleaners were, Littrell's, that was some kind of a... and then on the north side, that's right! There really were a lot of... But they were probably barely making a living, all of them. So how do you draw? I don't know what things we'll ever do to make it grow. I know people

are upset with economic development at times because there isn't enough going on, but you just can't make people do anything.

Joan: What changes did you see in the school from when you'd been in school and when your children were in school? Did they have girls' sports at that time?

Virginia: They both went to Southside, where I did. Some of the teachers at the high school were the same!

Rosetta: Miss Losey and Miss Peterie, did your children have them?

Virginia: No, they were gone by then. So was Miss Trotter. I can't even think who their teachers were. I've already given that part away. I've sent it home with them.

Joan: Did they have girls' sports by this time?

Virginia: Still not, no. Cathy was a cheerleader. But I don't think she ever got in school sports.

Joan: Now, were your kids in music?

Virginia: Yes, they both played saxophone and trombone. Cathy played saxophone. I don't think they were in dramatics as much as I was.

Rosetta: Were your children in the Marching 100?

Virginia: No, that was before, Rick Gaskill. Let's see, Rick was three years older than Bill, he might have been a freshman. But he never...when they went on their trip, he wasn't part of it. But they had Mr. Kingry. But I don't think it was 100 then, and why? I wonder why not?
(It was the marching 100 during the 1960's under Charles Kingry.)

Rosetta: But he still had a good band.

Virginia: Oh yes, he had a wonderful band, but I don't think it was as big.

Rosetta: But it was still a good program.

Virginia: Oh yes, really.

Virginia: So it was in the sixties when the Marching 100 was?

Rosetta: After that. Seventies probably.

Virginia: No, because it was Rick Gaskill, and that's ahead of Bill. That's in the sixties.

Rosetta: Well, I graduated in '60.

Virginia: It was '66 and '67 or '68.

Rosetta: Late sixties.

Virginia: Yes, late sixties. And there's been changes, I guess, at the school. But to me, in some ways, it was just...

Joan: How many kids were in your class when you graduated?

Virginia: 30.

Joan: How many were in children's classes?

Virginia: 70. They were in the big classes. They weren't the biggest. The class of '75 was 75. And I think that was the biggest one, wasn't it? But they were 71 and 72, they were about that number. They were big classes. But I don't remember that the teachers were ever unhappy with the classes, the size of the classes.

Joan: Well, the class size was still the same. But they had more teachers. In other words, you'd have had three sections of English.

Virginia: No, I don't think so.

Joan: Well, you couldn't have had 75 in an English class.

Virginia: No, but they just had...I bet they had thirty in most of them.

Rosetta: Teachers had 30 children in their classes and that was normal.

Joan: But 75, that's three English teachers. I don't think you would have divided that in two. Okay. You were a Methodist all the time?

Virginia: Yes, and I didn't leave the Methodist church.

Joan: So your children were raised Methodist. What changes did you see in the Methodist church over the years?

Virginia: Well, it's more lenient now.

Joan: I mean, size-wise. And you've always had a full time pastor.

Virginia: Yes, but when we built that church, it was full.

Joan: What year, about, was that? In the seventies? Late seventies?

Virginia: No, sometime in the seventies. (1970)

Joan: So it was a big church through the fifties and sixties?

Virginia: Yes. When Cathy and Bill were in high school, there were 10 or 12 Methodist seniors. Now there aren't even any that go to church. It was just an active, active church.

Joan: And you had one full-time minister all to yourselves.

Virginia: Yes.

Joan: Not like now, where we share.

Virginia: Always, and I don't know what happened there, either.

Joan: Well, population went down and people not going to church at this point, too.

Virginia: Yes, and I think they say the Catholic Church doesn't have as many going either. They just don't go.

Joan: And did your second husband continue to go to Mass?

Virginia: Yes. Well, for the first, while Cathy and Bill were still home, we went to early church, I mean early Mass, and then he'd go to the Methodist Church with Cathy and Bill.

Joan: So your family went to both places?

Virginia: Well, Bill we didn't get to the Catholic Church as much, but then after he was gone, Cathy went with us. So she went quite a bit, and then of course, she ended up marrying a Catholic boy and joining the church. But I never did. I took instructions for a little while and then decided it wasn't the thing for me. And that was fine with Mike. But for the first couple of years, we were going both places! Then when Cathy went to college, I just started going to the Catholic Church with him. I didn't go to the Methodist for all those years.

Joan: And there was an active women's group and youth group and all that sort of thing in the fifties and sixties?

Virginia: Yes. Oh yes. Well, our women's group met in the morning at one time, when I had little kids. Now there's just one women's group period.

Joan: And there used to be...

Virginia: Three circles, I think, and then the Mother's Club. There were three or four circles.

Joan: Health care changes in the county? What have you seen in regard to doctors and hospitals and things? You didn't have your children here.

Virginia: I did one. Cathy was born here, in this hospital, the one here on Fifth Street.

Joan: And it was Doctor...

Virginia: Dr. Unruh delivered her. And then when we came back to stay, Dr. Atwood was here. He came, I think, the same year we did. So he was our family doctor, plus, we ran around with them.

Joan: When did we build the new hospital?

Virginia: The new hospital out there?

Joan: Do you remember anything about that?

Virginia: Yes, because I can remember being at a school meeting and they were really, really upset about the fact that they were building a new one.

Joan: So there was controversy about that.

Virginia: Oh yes, it was wonderful when the first one was built. Daddy was mayor.

Joan: What do you mean the "first one," the one over there?

Virginia: This one, the Fifth St. one. That was wonderful.

Joan: And your father was mayor.

Virginia: Yes. I'm still not sure why. They didn't put a flat roof on the other one, so why?

Joan: I've heard before that the width of the hallways, there were government regulations...

Virginia: Government regulations probably came along and we, in the United States, we don't redo anything. Look at how much stuff we just tear out and start over. They don't in Europe!

Joan: They don't have the land that we do. You had another spot to put the hospital. It is quite often cheaper to just start new than to try to rewire.

Virginia: Yes, it's cheaper. But we got a new hospital, and I think now that everything is big enough that it's meeting all their requirements.

Joan: Yes, and it doesn't do as much as it used to. I mean, you don't deliver babies anymore.

Virginia: No, they don't deliver babies. You see, Cathy's were all born here.

Joan: Now you said your dad was mayor?

Virginia: Yes, he was on city commission. Marguerite and I didn't want him to be on the school board, ever. Well, then Jim did go on and so did Pearson! When we were growing up, we didn't want Daddy to have anything to do with the school. But commission was fine, so he was on that.

Joan: So he was on the city commission and then he was mayor. In just the research, I've noticed that there seemed to be a lot citizen participation in the community. Whether it was school board, hospital board, city commission, county commissioners... People were involved.

Virginia: Are they still, though?

Joan: I don't know. It is the same people now, over and over again. I guess because the hospital went over with the Lutheran Hospital, so that had people from Offerle. Anyway. Is there anything else you want to get on the tape? I know this is later. You were married to your second husband from '72 to '93, just twenty-two years. What did he die of?

Virginia: Heart attack.

Joan: So that was sudden also.

Virginia: Very much so. Very much so. We'd been to Dodge and when he got up, he thought it was indigestion, which he's been doing that off and on. That's what I thought it was, but it wasn't.

Joan: And now your children are where and doing what?

Virginia: Bill is a vet, a doctor, and he has a clinic in north Denver, Westminster. Cathy is on the ranch.

Joan: And Bill is married?

Virginia: No. He's been married twice, and now he's divorced again. He has a new girlfriend. He has one son and they have one son.

Joan: So you're a great-grandma?

Virginia: Yes, three times, because I have two out at the ranch.

Joan: Cathy is?

Virginia: On the ranch south of Bucklin, north of Ashland, in Clark County. She has four girls and three of them are on the ranch and have all come home.

Joan: So they all have separate...

Virginia: They all have jobs. Jenny (*Betschart*) is the oldest. She graduated from K-State and she is the business manager and takes care of the books. Katie graduated from K-State and then the ranching school at TCU (Texas Christian University). She is in charge of the A-ling (*Artificial Insemination*) and in charge of the artificial breeding program of cattle. Then the third girl is in college, and she's the one that isn't coming back right now anyway. She'll finish school next winter. And then the fourth girl finished at West Texas A & M, at Canyon, Texas, and she is back on the ranch.

Joan: Do they all have their own homes? Are they married?

Virginia: Yes. The first, Jenny, has a new home now on the ranch that they brought in about four or five years ago, I think. She's in her own home. It's probably 15 minutes from Cathy's to get there. If you could drive straight across it would be shorter. Right now, Katie (*Shaw*) lives in Ashland, but they're going to build on the ranch. Molly (*Beckford*) is in the little house that Cathy and Roger lived in when they first were married, and it's down below. So right now, I think they're going to stay there. Her boyfriend is in another, they've got houses galore on the ranch that have been...

Joan: For hired hands...

Virginia: Yes, and moving them around and different things. So right now, Molly's right below

them, but I think when she gets married she may... He's down, I don't know, she may stay where she is. Roger's mother is down on farther south on the ranch, and she's in a new home there. Molly's boyfriend is in a different one right close by. I think they decided they'd rather have their folks looking at them than the grandmother.

Joan: How big is this ranch?

Virginia: You know, I should know the acreage, but it's a huge one. They don't own all of the land, some of it is leased, but it's a big concern.

Joan: That is unusual, especially for girls. It might not be so unusual if it were boys.

Virginia: Yes, but when Cathy kept having girls...but they're just like the boys. And you have the equipment, I mean you can work the cattle. And those girls, it's fascinating to see them work the cattle. They castrate them and give them their shot and clip their ears and put in ear tags. They do it all. And it worries me sometimes that it is too hard on them. But they love it. I couldn't get either one of mine back in my field, and I just always wanted to be like my dad. If Jim had lived, it might have been different.

Joan: Well let's see here. This is one we haven't asked everybody, but as a woman in the business community, did you see women's roles change from before WWII to after and into the fifties and sixties here? Or did women keep about the same roles?

Virginia: Well, there's finally been more women owning businesses. Jane (*Wenstrom*) and Stella (*Knecht*), but Stella when she bought the flower shop, at one time I...well, there were four women in my graduating class in pharmacy school. Now it's practically half. Sometimes it's more than that. Of course, it's that way in the vet school too, and I think that's a mistake because they're not getting into large animals. They're all going to go into small animals which is what Bill is too. I was just trying to think, you go up and down Kinsley, a lot of the business are owned by women now. Paula (*Hattrup*), Dorothy Airgood, Julie Gleason, Mary (*Fox*) was...

Joan: And Jennifer (*Gleason*).

Virginia: And Jennifer is now. It is mostly women.

Rosetta: And Carlene Engler.

Virginia: She was. And now with her own she says their business has just been amazing. The Two Elks Lodge. When I started, it was unusual, what I was in.

Rosetta: Mrs. (*Liz*) Strate owns the restaurant.

Virginia: It's just nice.

Joan: Well, you spent most of your life in Edwards County, so looking back, has this been a good place to live?

Virginia: Yes. I think so. I mean, I know when I lost Jim if I'd been on the coast or someplace, it would have been hard. Then Cathy and Bill and I talked about moving to Colorado at one time, just out where Gramma and Gramps were and me trying to work out there. I decided it

would be better here, so we stayed here. When I met Mike, then that was a plus. I've just always liked Kinsley. When we were going back and forth to the west coast, and the last time we left, we really were glad. And I said I'd never go back, and I didn't for a long time, until we flew back for a funeral. When my aunt's husband passed away, we decided we were the ones to fly out for the funeral. That's the first time I'd been back to California. Now, I've been back since.

Joan: Good place to raise kids?

Virginia: Yes, a good place to raise family. And I think my kids got a good education because they did okay in college. They made it through college, so I have always felt like they got a good education here.

Joan: Well, we've already talked about the decrease in population, and we've also mentioned a little bit the future of Edwards County. Do you think we're at a plateau? Do you think it's going to continue to decline?

Virginia: I don't know what the answer is, because now, like they're trying to bring in the dairy. But they have to have the water for that and are we going to have water?

Joan: We're in better shape than a lot of places with water.

Virginia: But will it always be if they keep letting them irrigate? I don't know. How some people come up with ideas for these new businesses, I don't know. We went, years ago, Mike and I went up north by Lucas to look at a bull. So then we drove into Lucas, and the man we'd bought the bull from was the owner of this alfalfa business that you'd take good alfalfa and the women sorted it. The fine leaves were made into little bales for gerbils and pet stores! And he was...

Joan: Making more money that way?

Virginia: Yes! But how did he come up with the idea. I keep thinking somebody here in Kinsley will come up with some little idea like that. I just don't have ideas like that. I'm not that kind of a person. But there they were making these little bales of hay, and it probably employed two or three people, plus getting the hay into them.

Rosetta: Where was the Beal's Jewelry Store? I've never heard of it.

Virginia: Next door to our drugstore (*207 E. Sixth St.*).

Rosetta: Which one? It had to be west.

Virginia: No, east. That's a jewelry store, where Sally (*Frame*) is. (*209 E. Sixth St.*)

Rosetta: Okay, I was in the wrong...past or the new. It was where Giffords had their jewelry store?

Virginia: Yes. I think Dale (*Gifford*) bought Charley (*Beal*) out. I think.

Rosetta: Okay, thank you.

Virginia: Because it's next door to Brad (*Eustace*), where Sally's at, that's a jewelry store.

Rosetta: And I knew that was where Gifford's was, I just don't remember the Beal's jewelry story.

Virginia: I think that's the only place he ever was, but he could have been.

Rosetta: And there was a Leonard's Jewelry Store.

Virginia: And there was a Leonard's too.

Rosetta: Yes, but I missed the Beal's.

Virginia: I'm just sure that's where it was.

Rosetta: And I'm sure you're right.

Virginia: But after years... You see, that's when we were doing those papers. I get so confused.

Joan: I can relate to that. Is there anything else that you'd like to put on this tape? We didn't talk too much about what happened after the seventies, or how involved you got in the farming aspect with Mike.

Virginia: That was interesting. I know that there was a time when I thought farmers didn't deserve those payments and different things. But after you're part of it, you kind of understand that they're being paid not to farm. If they can't farm fencerow to fencerow, then that's when they started those government payments. Well, I still think probably they should do away with them now because the price is up! But how do you make everything.

Joan: Was he always a dry land farmer or did he irrigate?

Virginia: No, he was always dry land. And I helped work the cattle sometimes. I didn't do a very good job of it sometimes.

Joan: Well, you were a late learner!

Virginia: I miss going out. And I miss when we quit cutting wheat. That was kind of fun. I took meals out in the evening.

Joan: Now you're the first woman that I've ever heard say that it was kind of fun.

Virginia: Well, now Cathy kind of missed it too when they quit feeding them at night. But I didn't have to be out in it all day.

Joan: Did your husband hire help?

Virginia: Yes, they usually had year-round. Before he was helping with the drugstore, he was out there, he and Gene, and they usually had at least one or two helping out there. But then in '75, when we took over the drugstore, he was in town with me more. Well, we had Pedro Ramirez. He had a little trailer to begin with out at the farm. Then he had a bigger one when he came back.

Joan: He had a family?

Virginia: In Mexico. Then Gonza, his older son, came and worked for us. Then he worked for various ones. He's in Dodge now and owns a home up there.

Joan: What years about are we talking, when Pedro worked for you.

Virginia: In the seventies, after we were married, and into the early eighties.

Joan: Was that common for farmers to have Hispanic workers?

Virginia: Yes. And then Rod Habiger started working for Mike in the late eighties, I think. Maybe when he got married he was going to take the other land, so he quit and then Mike Habiger started working. Mike (*Habiger*) had worked for maybe three or four years before Mike passed away. And of course, he still does all my farming.

Joan: Well, that's interesting. You're the first person that we've talked to with an Hispanic farm hand. Did he used to go home regularly to Mexico when he wasn't busy?

Virginia: Yes, he drove home once a year or so. One year, when was it? He got a pickup to take home, but he went by bus I think, and Mike drove the pickup and Grandma Ruth and I came in the car. And we took it to El Paso. We went to El Paso and that night we got there before dark, I think, so we were to go to where you pass into Mexico, customs, and just this side of customs there was a whole group of houses there that some of them live in. It was some relative of Pedro's that we were to take the pickup to. Mike went back in there while we sat in the car and worried. But he made it back.

Joan: So that was in the seventies still, probably?

Virginia: No, I think it was some time in the eighties, but I'm just not sure when it was.

Joan: It was probably still pretty safe down there, then.

Virginia: Yes, not like drug wars now. But we took the pickup and then this relative got it to Pedro, and he took it on home. But you know, Pedro never wanted stuff. He didn't want seconds. He wanted new clothes, and when he bought stuff, he wanted new.

Joan: Do you know if he sent money home to his family?

Virginia: Yes, he had a big family in Zacatecas; he was way down into Mexico. And after Mike was gone, sometime in the nineties, Gonza and the younger boy, he had a little boy come up and spend one winter with him, and he went to school here. We had a translator work with him over in the west part of town. Mike got somebody to work with him before he started school. Then

he went. He was the same age as Carlene's little boy.

Joan: But that's the only part of his family that came up?

Virginia: Those two boys, yes.

Joan: And Gonza was?

Virginia: Gonza was an older son, and this younger son came and went to school, fifth grade I think. The boy came to see me with his mother. I don't think Gonza was with him, but they were in Dodge one time when they came down to see us. So I met his mother.

Joan: So they are in the States now?

Virginia: Well, the mother is back home in Mexico and Pedro has passed away. He had a heart attack.