

## **Interview with Robert Kallaus**

**April 4, 2011**

**Conducted in the Kallaus home, Kinsley, Kansas**

**Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library**

**Present: Mary Kallaus, spouse**

Joan: Can you tell us your full name.

Robert: Robert L. Kallaus.

Joan: Where do you currently reside?

Robert: Well, wherever I'm in good standing, I'm here.

Joan: In Kinsley, Kansas?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: When and where were you born?

Robert: Parsons, Kansas.

Joan: When's your birthday?

Robert: October 25, 1935.

Joan: What were the names of your parents?

Robert: Robert and Marie. I'm a junior.

Joan: And Marie's maiden name was?

Robert: Schinstock.

Joan: Do you know the names of your grandparents on both sides?

Robert: John and Barbara Schinstock, her maiden name was Adelhart. And George and Amalie.

Mary: Her name was really Amalie.

Robert: I never knew that; she died before I came along.

Joan: And how did she spell that?

Mary: Amalie.

Joan: Do you know her maiden name?

Mary: Habiger.

Joan: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Robert: Two brothers and three girls. No there were six...

Mary: Well, there were six of you.

Joan: That would be right, two brothers and three sisters. Where were you in that birth order?

Robert: First.

Joan: That's right, because you're a junior. You're the oldest. What were their names?

Robert: Ronny and Jerry, Leona, Alice and Barbara.

Joan: And you were born in Parsons, so we'll talk a little bit about that and then we'll get into why your family came here. What was life like in your household in Parsons? What did your dad do?

Robert: He farmed. Well, he was married in January of '35, and then the ordinance plant for WWII that was built down there in Parsons, we lacked a mile of it setting on Dad's land. So he thought he'd get in on some of the money too. You couldn't find a place to live, there were thousands of them came in there.

Joan: What kind of ordinance?

Robert: Bombs. They made bombs. Everybody was scared to death.

Joan: Of the bomb making material?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: So what did your dad do to get in on the money?

Robert: He black-marketed meat. And every little place that we could keep warm in the wintertime, he rented it out to them for living quarters. He took a boxcar, Dad bought a boxcar down there at Parsons someplace, split it in half and made two apartments. People were just glad to get it. He had a washhouse, he changed that over. He even put one in the backroom of the house, a bachelor.

Joan: There's probably somebody today doing an interview remembering how they lived in a boxcar during WWII. And you said he black-marketed meat. Did he butcher and then sell it? Was meat rationed?

Robert: Oh yes.

Joan: I guess I didn't know that meat was rationed. Have you heard that before?

Robert: Everything was rationed.

Mary: He sold it to the people there on the farm, and milk and cream and eggs and all those.

Robert: Yes, everything was rationed.

Joan: I guess I just never heard meat.

Robert: You're too young.

Joan: No, we've been doing these interviews for a while.

Robert: I shouldn't probably have told that.

Joan: No, that's good to know, like I said, I didn't know it.

Mary: He didn't have to say black-market.

Joan: He supplied! Anyway, what else do you remember about that time?

Robert: Oh, we kids used to go fishing about once a week.

Joan: Where did you fish?

Robert: In some little old creek.

Joan: What could you catch in that creek?

Robert: Sun perch! About that big...

Joan: About four to five inches?

Mary: Probably three.

Joan: Did you go to school in Parsons? Or was there a country school?

Robert: No, there was the Neosho Valley was down on the Neosho River, which was five or six miles east of where we lived.

Joan: How big was that school?

Robert: A little country school, I think it was just one room. And then they changed over, and I went to school at Franklin. It was a mile west, where this was four or five miles. It was out of the district, but I don't know, they wanted me to go with the neighbor kids. I was bashful. I didn't do too good in the first grade. I had more important things to do.

Joan: Now your little one room school, there was just the one teacher. How many kids your age were in the class? Or how many all together in the school?

Robert: It couldn't have been very many. I really don't remember. I don't remember the teacher.

Joan: How did you get to school?

Robert: In the car.

Joan: Your parents drove you?

Robert: See, that's why they wanted to change. These neighbors were all in the other school district and across the road was us. Well, bashful me, I went down there, and I didn't like it at all. That's when they changed me over the next year. Then in January, we moved out here. I went a year and a half. Then we moved out here. And you talk about rigmarole; it was like a bunch of gypsies coming down the road.

Joan: Okay, hold that for just a minute. You're too young to remember the Depression.

Robert: Oh yes.

Joan: What do you remember about WWII? Other than the...

Robert: Well, there wasn't much, outside of there were a lot of people there who made bombs for WWII. Dad had an aunt that worked there. I don't know what she did, but she worked there three or four years. Then she just kind of turned yellow and died.

Joan: So you think there was some kind of chemical poisoning?

Robert: Oh you know there was. Of course, at that time, maybe they didn't know how to test her. I don't know, but they sure were...then every so often, they'd have a black out. Everybody around there had to blow out their lights. We didn't have electricity; we never had electricity until '47.

Joan: So you had to cover the windows?

Robert: Well, they were always at night. All you did was blow out your lights.

Joan: Blackouts were easy.

Robert: Yes.

Rosetta: Did they blow a whistle? How did you know?

Robert: It would come over your battery radio, and then it was in the paper. Really, everybody knew about it.

Joan: They were scheduled.

Robert: And then if the Jap was sitting over there in town someplace he... I thought it was very unorganized. What little I knew.

Joan: There was a story about a parade or something where they brought a tank?

Robert: Oh, it was to promote Uncle Sam to give money, I think.

Joan: War bonds or something.

Robert: They had this submarine. It wasn't, I'd say what, 30 foot long. Back at Parsons, the railroad went up there. There was this underpass, and they got hung up in it. They took us in school; they took all the kids so they could see it. And there sat this Jap in there, and they couldn't go. They had to do something; I forget what they had to do.

Joan: And this wasn't a live person, this was a...

Robert: No, it was just a stuffed something.

Mary: But you weren't sure, were you?

Robert: At that age, you didn't know.

Joan: You were just like first grade or something?

Robert: I was in second. I think that was in the spring of '44, sometime in there. It was about it.

Mary: It was pretty scary to see that guy sitting in there.

Robert: Yes, it was.

Joan: Well, just the submarine itself would have been different.

Robert: I think it was just to show what the boys were doing.

Joan: Did you have chores at this young age on the farm?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: What were your chores?

Robert: About the usual, feed the hogs, the cow, feed chickens...

Joan: Now your dad had livestock and raised crops?

Robert: Yes, he raised corn. Well, you could raise anything back there. Have you ever been back there? Man, that place is Paradise compared to this danged dessert.

Joan: So why did your dad decide to move out here?

Robert: He didn't like row crop work; that was too hard a work.

Mary: His mother said it was because they wanted to have the kids in Catholic schools.

Joan: You said he didn't like row crop work. What does that mean?

Robert: Corn and beans and you know, well just corn alone. That was a man-killer. You did everything by hand.

Mary: And horses, too.

Joan: You were using horses when you were a kid?

Robert: Yes, for corn. That was another funny thing. I was a little, well, that's why I didn't get along at school, I'd rather go out and ride the horses and do something.

Joan: How do you harvest corn with horses?

Robert: You have a deal on the palm on your hand, you rip it open, snap it like this and throw it in the wagon.

Joan: So you were cutting the corn off the stocks by hand and throwing in the wagon which was being drawn by horses.

Robert: Yes.

Joan: Okay, that would be labor intensive.

Robert: Well, first you had to plant it with horses. Then you had to cultivate it, maybe once or twice. It was entirely different from what it is now. I think the funniest thing I can remember is when I was out helping Dad, he bought a new tractor in '39, '41, before the war. Anyway, it was a tricycle type. You know, narrow front wheels. I was about five or six, and I told Dad I wanted to drive that tractor. "Oh," he said, "You're a little small." And I said "I want to drive that tractor." Well, he broke down. I kept after him long enough. I'd drive it around out there in the yard, and he'd say, "Hey, bring that tractor over so I can put it into the shed." He didn't follow me, but when I went into the shed, I forgot this back wheel was over here. Kersmack! I never did say anything to him, but one day something came up, and he said, "Yes, I know, you about tore my shed down." I didn't think he'd seen it. That's how dumb I was.

Joan: So when he came out here, did he grow wheat? That's not a row crop?

Robert: No. That's what you see out there now. The beans and the corn are being planted right now, I guess.

Joan: So he came here and bought land and...

Robert: Yes.

Joan: And where did you live, when you move here?

Robert: A mile and a half west of Sts. Peter and Paul, the church out there. Then he got talked into coming to town.

Mary: Well, that was a long time later.

Robert: We spent 44 years living there.

Joan: Well, we'll get up to that. So, on the farm here, you raised wheat?

Robert: Wheat and milo.

Joan: Did you have livestock? Cattle?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: And hogs and chickens and...

Robert: You name it, we had it.

Joan: Did you have sheep?

Robert: No, we had a goat once.

Joan: And when you came here, were you tractor farming at that point? Or were you still using horses?

Robert: No, Dad sold the horses. I think it hurt him worse than anything to sell them. He had two horses he broke to pull the wagon, or you know. They were big. They weighed a little over 2,000 apiece. Tame, they were just like a dog. Like shucking corn, these horses would go down here, turn around by themselves, and go back on each row.

Joan: They knew how to do it themselves.

Robert: He had an old neighbor who was going to help him. Dad was just going along there shucking, and this neighbor says, "How do you get them horses to turn around?" He says, "If yours do it, mine will too." Well, they caught them about four miles down the road. They took off and went home.

Joan: You started to tell us about the trip coming out.

Robert: Well, that was kind of like a bunch of gypsies, I'd call it.

Joan: What did it look like?

Robert: Well, when we moved out here, Mom drove the old car. She had a little baby. Leona was six months old, maybe. This old car had a rickety old trailer hooked on the back of it. He had another horse, and I never have figured out what Dad... we had this old truck, why he brought this old horse out. You couldn't do anything with her; she was nuts. We came into Wichita and had a flat tire. It was down there by the school, someplace.

Joan: Who was driving?

Robert: Dad drove one, and Corny (*Cornelius*) Schinstock drove the other.

Mary: He was an uncle.

Robert: Dad couldn't change the tire, because the doggoned kids had just got out of school and they'd never seen a horse or a cow there in Wichita. They climbed all over that truck, and I'm surprised it didn't scare everything to death. I thought, now that's funny, never seen a cow.

Joan: Now did you have relatives or anything in Edwards County?

Robert: That's where Mom was from.

Joan: She was from here, so she was coming home.

Roberts: Well, Dad was too. He was born down at Parsons. He grew up here on a farm, Joe and Stepanie Brake's. Do you know where they live? A mile on south was Dad's place.

Mary: I'll see if we can find a picture.

Joan: When your dad came here, was he getting some family land? Or did he buy the land?

Robert: Part of it he did. Then he bought the rest of it.

Joan: Let's make sure, what year was this, when you moved here?

Robert: January of '44.

Joan: So the war was going on.

Robert: Oh yes, everything, tires, gas, everything was rationed at that time.

Joan: That must have made it a little more difficult to do the move and get set up in another household.

Robert: Yes, we were just one jump ahead of the horses. The horses were going out when I got started.

Joan: And then when you moved to there, where did you go to school?

Robert: Sts. Peters (*and Paul*).

Joan: And this was a parochial school?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: How many kids were in your class then?

Robert: Five.

Mary: The lower grades...

Robert: There were twelve rows. I can remember that. There were about five apiece.

Joan: Did you like this school any better?

Robert: No.

Joan: You wanted to be out on that tractor?

Robert: I wanted to be someplace besides there! And that's about it on the school. I didn't play football. I wrestled a little bit. I was just telling about the school.

Joan: And your chores were about the same? Or did you gain responsibility as you got older.

Robert: I wised up and figured out how to get out of it. I think the best thing we ever had in grade school was, I don't know, we were at a farm sale one time, Henry Herrmann. That's Joe and Georgia's kids. It was up on Hodgeman County. They had a ranch or something. They had this pony out there, about a half pony. I went over and looked at it. When Dad got done at the sale, I said to Dad, "I'd sure like to have that pony." Well, Dad just said we weren't going to have no horses. I don't know how he got into it or what, but we ended up with a horse and a buggy and what else? No saddle, had to get that somewhere else. But anyway, this was a nice, two people buggy. And that little pony...you'd get you a stick. He raised all of the Lobmeyers. And the Herrmanns, Joe and George, he raised them, this pony. I think he was twenty-some years old when we got rid of him, or he died, I guess.

Joan: How far were you from the school, and how did you get there?

Robert: We took the car, a mile and a half.

Joan: They didn't make you walk through the snow storms?

Robert: I had to walk down the driveway, by golly. It was a long driveway, a block or so, or better.

Joan: And then someone picked you up?

Robert: My dad came and got me. This is when we got to the bus. When we went to the grade school, Dad generally always took us. They wouldn't let the Catholics ride.

Mary: The bus wouldn't stop for the Catholic kids, and it went right by the school.

Joan: When you were on the farm, did your Dad use help? Or did he have enough kids?

Robert: Not when he had three kids running around there. Three boys, I mean. I started running the tractor when I was nine.

Mary: Tell them about getting burned, and I'll show them the pictures.

Robert: Dad was accident prone from the word "go." He, in '37 or '38, this hand, he was cutting wood and he cut these fingers off, right here, four of them.

Joan: All four fingers?

Robert: Yes, didn't hit the thumb.

Joan: You said, "Cut them off." Actually, so he only had a thumb on his left hand.

Robert: He had a knuckle left on his little finger. You talk about something hurt! Boy, he gave us a haircut with the old pulling things, clippers, and I tell you we'd get to squirming around and whack! On the top of the head. He had this one knuckle, and whew! That hurt. You started sitting still.

Joan: So he was accident prone, were you going to tell us something about a fire?

Robert: Well, we had those old D John Deeres. To start them, you had to crank on this big old fly wheel. He had a heck of a time when it was hot because he couldn't grip it. He was pouring fuel into it when it was running, and it caught it on fire. He spent three or four weeks in the hospital. They wanted to take his leg off, and he said, "You're not taking my leg off!" He said, "We're going to see if we can't make it work." Now, they didn't have skin grafting much at that time, that was in '47. By golly, it just drew his leg up real tight. He sat with baby oil and rubbed it right here and kept working. By golly, he got that to where he could walk as fast as I could, or better. And those old doctors wanted to chop it off.

Then, we farmed out at Dighton in Lane County. I don't know what he did, but he fell off the dang tractor and a one-way run over him.

Mary: That was just before Curtis was born (*July 18, 1963*).

Robert: It drug him along in front of the one-way. Then it hopped up and went over him. It didn't really do a whole lot of damage to him.

Mary: It could have cut him into ribbons, really.

Joan: Tell us what a one-way is.

Robert: Well, it's got a disc every eight inches, about that big around, on a frame, 20 to 21 inches, if they're new. Well, it's just like teeth in a comb going over the top of you. Nobody seems to know why he didn't get chopped up. I took him to Dighton, which was 18 or 20 miles, and then we went on and got an ambulance and went to Garden (*City*). It cut this side to there, but you couldn't see it. The doctor did a real good job with it.

Joan: When you were farming in Dighton, did you take the farm equipment with you and haul it back and forth?

Robert: Yes, most of the time. If you left something set out, somebody would let the air out a tire or something. There was one farmer out there who was a screwball.

Mary: He was with his dad when he got burnt, and when he was run over.

Joan: Maybe it wasn't your dad who was accident prone. Maybe you were just bad luck to have around! Actually good luck because you saved him.

Robert: Then he should have looked for someone different.

Joan: Now, we're in the 40's now. Was this all dry-land farming you were doing? No irrigation?

Robert: No water.

Joan: Did you do any fertilizing or use any insecticides at this time?

Robert: No, not at that time. There were people who came over when Dad was burnt. That was '47.

Joan: So high school then, you came into town?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: And went to Kinsley?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: What kind of a change was that? Did you like that school any better?

Robert: I didn't know where the door was when I went to high school. I was never in it.

Mary: Explain that

Robert: I went to school at Sts. Peters (*and Paul*) until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Then when I went in here, I never got to town. Occasionally on Saturday afternoon I'd see movie, if it was cowboys. If Gene Autrey or Roy Rogers were on, we generally got to go.

Joan: So you had just never been in the high school.

Robert: I was never in the high school.

Joan: Maybe you ought to say that, your family out there, where did they do their business?

Robert: Kinsley.

Joan: And where'd they take the wheat?

Robert: Here in town.

Joan: So everything came into town.

Robert: Gano or the co-op was here a long time before that. I know in '51, when I started school, high school, they were just building this elevator, this new cement one.

Joan: So you were in the class of what? What year?

Robert: '55.

Joan: How many classmates did you have?

Robert: What was it, 40 something?

Mary: Yes, just right at 41 or 42.

Joan: And most of these kids, you would not have known then.

Robert: No, they were strangers to me.

Mary: Well, there was your sister and Johnny Herrmann, that came to town.

Joan: Were there Ag classes at that time?

Robert: Vocational Ag. I was the first one to go have class in the new building.

Joan: In the building across the street.

Robert: Yes, I was the president of FFA.

Joan: So there was FFA at that time.

Robert: Future Farmers of America, yes.

Joan: And there was 4-H too, were you in 4-H or not?

Robert: Well, I did for a couple of years.

Joan: What were your projects?

Robert: A calf that wouldn't lead. I didn't like it too good. They were going to put me up as president, and I said, "You better not, because I'll quit." They said, naa, so I quit.

Joan: I should have asked, What do you remember about the end of the war?

Robert: Well, let's see. '45.

Joan: You didn't have any relatives, uncles, who were in the war?

Robert: Yes, Edward Schinstock was in.

Mary: Your dad had a brother.

Joan: Do you remember them coming home?

Robert: Not really.

Joan: You were out there on the farm. So, you graduated in '55, you just told me. I'm trying to think. Were you drafted into the army?

Robert: Well, I got out of the draft...

Joan: How did you get into the army?

Robert: I went down to Greensburg and put my name at the top of the list. It took 20 some days and I was in.

Joan: Now this was during the Korean War?

Robert: Just when it quit.

Joan: Where did you go to for your training?

Robert: Fort Carson.

Joan: And what was your specialty?

Robert: Tank mechanics.

Joan: How did you like army life? Compared to farm life or school?

Robert: It's just about what you made it. If you worked it right, every weekend...what was I in, seven different countries? While I was over there.

Joan: And you were stationed in Germany?

Robert: And then on weekends you'd get a three or four day pass and you'd go all over.

Joan: Did you see any of the aftermath of WWII?

Robert: You'd be surprised. There was very little of it. They pretty well had it all cleaned up. And that was what, 10 years later?

Mary: Did your parents still have some family over there?

Robert: Oh yes, you were aware that they shot at the barracks. The barracks we stayed in over there were just like a motel. They had hard wood floors and the walls were tiled.

Joan: And they had been built by the U.S. Army?

Robert: For the air force.

Rosetta: For the German Air Force?

Robert: I don't know. Something like that.

Joan: You took over a German Air Force barracks.

Robert: Now, it was pretty beat up. That showed as much as anything...there were shells that hit...and the concrete out in front of the shop. A lot of it was all busted up. I guess if they give you enough money, I guess you can do a lot of things.

Joan: So what countries did you go to and what did you do? What did you see?

Robert: Well, I was to the Berlin Wall. Then I went to Switzerland, Paris, France, England, Holland. Where was the Big Push? (*Battle of the Bulge*)

Joan: Switzerland? Austria?

Robert: No, what did they call it? I was in Austria, but I can't think of it.

Joan: Did you travel to Belgium?

Robert: Yes, Belgium. That's where they had the last big push on the Germans.

Joan: Did you travel with army buddies?

Robert: Yes, two of us went to see a lot of it. We took a two week deal, and we just went where we wanted to go. It was cheap.

Rosetta: Did you travel by train?

Robert: Yes. We got in Paris, and never thought nothing about it. We grabbed all our suitcases and we said, "The first thing we're going to do is find us a motel." So, dumb us, we walked down the street and there was a motel. That afternoon or evening it was time to go back to the motel, and we couldn't find our motel! We didn't know what the name of the motel was. We walked and we walked and we walked and I looked at this kid, and I said, "Listen, I think we went by here two or three times!" Oh gosh, we had a bad time. Taxi drivers acted so stupid.

Joan: I'm assuming, we didn't talk about this earlier, but Kallaus is a German name?

Robert: Yes, or Bohunk or something like that. Bohemian.

Joan: But you didn't know any German?

Robert: No, Mom didn't either. They cut her off, I think in 1918, World War One? Well, kids didn't speak no more German in school. So that was the end of it. Mom didn't get very much; she'd just started at school (*when they stopped German*).

Mary: But they did start reading and writing it. Or anyway, reading it. Then when the war broke out with the U.S., the people out there were being checked; (*they had to prove their loyalty*).

Joan: People out where?

Mary: Sts. Peter and Paul. There was a German community.

Joan: World War One, there were suspicions?

Mary: Oh yes, because a lot of them, the families had come directly over.

Joan: So the language had been...did you have relatives in Germany that you were able to look up?

Robert: Yes, I guess. My brother, he's been doing that.

Joan: But you didn't do it when you were in the service?

Robert: I didn't care who they were. Still don't.

Mary: I think you need to back up and explain why you pushed your name up on the draft list. Why did you want to go in right then?

Robert: Well, I got out of high school and it was dryer than dry, and everything was dying. I told Dad, "Man, I can find something better to do than this." "Oh," he said, "You don't want to go in the army. You don't want to do that." I said, "I'm willing to because my name's on that list." I said, "I just as well kind of get a chance." So, I ran or came up with everybody in western Kansas, they were going to change to one division or the other. They moved about 5,000 people over to Germany. They went over and came back with the other people who were getting out. Anyway, I went down and signed up. I just took my chances.

Joan: So it was a drought, there just wasn't...

Robert: Oh, it was bad. '51, and '52, and '53 and '54.

Joan: Now, we haven't heard about that. Did it compare with the Dirty Thirties?

Robert: Pretty close.

Mary: Tell about the rabbit hunts.

Joan: Oh yes, the rabbit hunts. We've had other people...

Robert: Well, ours was mild, compared with what you've seen of the thirties. You could go out, well, there were a bunch of us were always hunting rabbits. That Korte filling station down there had a drive in bay. We had that over half full of rabbits. Then Korte loaded them up and sent them to New York or someplace to feed mink.

Rosetta: How much were they worth?

Robert: A dime.

Joan: A dime a rabbit.

Robert: Yes.

Joan: Why were there so many? Did the drought cause that?

Robert: They were eating anything green.

Joan: Had the coyotes been eliminated, so they didn't have a predator?

Robert: They couldn't eat them fast enough. A rabbit will take care of itself. Here, I think, two or three years ago, oh it had to be longer than that, anyway, down where I grain cattle. It just looked like the ground was moving, there were so many rabbits down there in the mornings eating. I could take you out there now, and I don't think there'd be a rabbit out there.

Joan: Jackrabbits?

Robert: Yes, but I just don't believe there's a rabbit out there.

Joan: Did you eat rabbit too?

Robert: No! We were scared of them. They had this rabbit fever or something.

Mary: Fed them to the dogs.

Robert: We didn't want to mess with it. It was sure fun though. We did a lot of night hunting.

Joan: You shot them with a rifle?

Robert: Yes, ride in the back of a pickup, and...

Joan: Now, your dad was trying to grow crops at this time? And they were just failing?

Robert: Yes. The government give out a bunch of potatoes. They brought them in down here someplace where the train came in. They parked this railroad car, and they get out to shovel them on. Can you imagine feeding cows the potatoes?

Joan: So that was cattle feed!

Robert: Yes.

Joan: Did you father get outside work or anything at this time in order to keep the farm going?

Robert: No, I think if you hung on long enough, the government helped you. That's when these wheat programs and all of this "you can plant so much" and they guarantee you. I think that's what it was, was the government, kept it going. Well, like potatoes to keep the cows.

Joan: I guess we didn't talk about it, but I assume your mother always had a garden and did canning and that sort of thing?

Robert: Yes, but I don't remember it. I think the garden cost more to keep...up there, that just isn't garden country. You've got to have it sandy.

Joan: During this drought period were there the wind storms and blowing and going?

Robert: It would blow for days like this. No, that's funny, they were so close together. You know, the thirties and the fifties. And it's been clear sailing most of the time. I mean, we had our little droughts. But she's gonna hit one of these days, and I'm afraid. These young people aren't scared of nothing. They honestly aren't. It don't bother them any.

Rosetta: When you came into school from Sts. Peters and Paul, was there prejudice because you were Catholic?

Robert: Yes. Oh, you mean in school? Oh no, I never had no trouble with nobody. I mean absolutely nobody.

Mary: ( Just my dad.)

Robert: No, most of the kids I ran around with were Catholic, anyway.

Joan: But was there prejudice within the community? Because, you started to falter...

Robert: Oh, I don't think so. What do you mean, "in what community?"

Mary: In our community. The division between Catholics and non-Catholics.

Robert: Well, maybe the real old ones or something, but I never paid any attention to them.

Joan: Okay, you came back from Germany in '57. And then what did you commence to do?

Robert: Farmed.

Joan: For your dad or on your own?

Robert: I had the cattle and Dad had the wheat.

Joan: And somewhere in here we meet Mary. Was this back in school?

Robert: Yes, I was minding my own business and ...

Joan: And what happened?

Robert: I slowed down to go around a corner and she caught me.

Joan: Was this while you were in high school or after?

Robert: Oh no, all scattered out. She went on to college, and I went to the army.

Joan: Did you correspond during that time?

Robert: Yes, I wrote her a letter once in a while.

Joan: So you were dating then because there's quite a bit of time up to 1962 when you got

married. What was going on during this time?

Robert: I told her that if she was going to go on to college, I couldn't afford to send her to college. It was either let your mom pay for it or you're not going to finish college, and that's about it. I had more time than money.

Joan: And she was younger than you

Robert: Three and one-half years.

Joan: So we're having to catch up that... she wasn't going to be done with college when you were getting out of the army. So there was that lag time there. So Mary, when did you graduate from college?

Robert: 1961.

Joan: '61, and got married in '62. Where was she off at college?

Robert: Emporia, I guess.

Joan: And would come home occasionally for a date?

Robert: Yes, if she could catch a ride.

Joan: When did you become engaged?

Mary: In October of my first year of teaching. It was October of '60. Then we got married in January '62. So, tell them what we did for fun.

Robert: What did we do for fun...

Joan: That you can tell us!

Mary: Well, we had our wedding dance, and we went to Garden (*City*) to go to the line dances.

Joan: So you were a dancing couple.

Robert: After a couple snorts, we danced pretty good.

Joan: Jitterbug then, right?

Mary: No, rock and roll, (*two-step and polka*).

Joan: Okay, past the jitterbugging and into rock and roll.

Rosetta: Did you roller skate?

Mary: Not at that time, we did back in grade school and high school. But not after.

Joan: So where were you living when you got married?

Robert: On the old home place. Mom and Dad moved to town.

Joan: Okay, they moved into town and you moved into the farm place. We'll talk to Mary later about that. Then were you doing the whole operation? Crops and cattle?

Robert: No, I stayed with the cattle, and then I fed baby calves. I bought baby calves, shipped them in from Wisconsin.

Joan: What kind of cattle were they?

Robert: Holstein.

Joan: Was that an easier living than the crops?

Robert: No.

Joan: Harder?

Robert: Harder, and expensive sometimes. About the time with a calf when you think you've got it whipped, the calf dies!

Joan: Then you bred the cattle too?

Robert: Well, they were beef cattle. I had these shipped in from Wisconsin.

Joan: So you weren't calving yourself?

Robert: Oh yes.

Joan: Was this on pasture? Did you raise some feed too?

Robert: Yes. At that time we had some alfalfa and milo.

Joan: Did you make ensilage?

Robert: No, back at that time we used a binder to make shocks.

Mary: You'd make little bundles and go out and pick them up and stack them.

Joan: Like corn shocks? And then those were fed to the cattle during the winter?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: So tell us about this cattle operation. Again, I'm not a farmer. Do you try to sell them in the fall so you don't have as many through the winter? How does a cattle operation work?

Robert: When you get them about 800 pounds, you want to get rid of them. I goofed up and had some few steers that got lost. Anyway, it was this year. I had these few left over from some that

I sold in January and February. It was before last fall. I thought, "Boy, that's a pretty good price!" And I hear that Wednesday, at the sale, it was a record high. They've never had cattle...

Joan: This past Wednesday?

Robert: Yes. They've never had cattle bring a buck thirty or forty a hundred!

Joan: What were you getting back in the '50's?

Robert: I sold some Holstein steers for 10 cents a pound. And that didn't buy much.

Joan: You didn't make use of feedlots?

Robert: No.

Joan: You would go to a sale barn? How would you sell them?

Robert: We went to Dodge or Pratt or LaCrosse.

Joan: What makes the decision?

Robert: When you started to try to sell them, you wanted some place to go.

Rosetta: You never sold out of the Kinsley sale barn?

Robert: Yes, that's where I got that 10 cents!

Rosetta: So you tried other places to get a better price?

Robert: Yes, you'd go to the next place if you didn't like them. We had to make a trip to see the doctor about our wonderful cattle business. We had this pasture down there by Nettleton, and had a sick steer. So, we messed around with it. He just got goofier than goofy. All of a sudden, he was chasing us around. I told Mary, god dang, we had the kids running around down there. I said, "There's something wrong here. I don't know why he's so goofy." So, we got the pickup and put the cattle-racks in to go down there and catch him. And he was still just constantly trying to catch us. So we took him over to Oliphant's (*Veterinarian*), and Oliphant stood back and said, "You take him home and lock him up; he's got rabies." So, I had to put him in the back corral back there, so he couldn't get away. We had chickens, and he'd chase the chickens around and foam at the mouth. I think it took him three or four days, or five, longer than that, to die.

Joan: Why didn't they just put him down?

Robert: They had to have the head. We sent the head in to Manhattan. You can't have it all, well, if you shoot it in the head, it will screw up however they test it.

Mary: The virus goes to the brain.

Robert: You have to let them die on their own. It was just terrible. It moaned and groaned.

Joan: It is a mammal, so it's logical, but I'd never heard of cows getting rabies.

Robert: I hadn't either. All it is that you've got to have a skunk bite them or something.

Mary: It just bawled, and it would fall down and froth at the mouth. It just bellered. I'd shut up the house, and we could still hear him.

Joan: That would be awful.

Mary: It really was. When he died, Dr. Oliphant came out and took a chainsaw and cut his head off and put it on ice. A couple days later, no it wasn't a couple days, it was the next day, when he called back.

Joan: And then what did he do with the rest of the carcass? I mean, did you have to worry about the disease at this point?

Robert: As soon as it hit's the air, it's gone. If it doesn't get in your bloodstream, rabies won't hurt you. But a bite or scratch, anything...

Joan: When was this?

Robert: '64 or '65.

Mary: Curtis was in the third grade, so it was probably later than that.

Robert: He was about 9 or 10, something like that. He wasn't very old

Mary: We had Leann. It was after the tornado, wasn't it?

Robert: I don't know. It doesn't make that much difference.

Mary: Well, we had to take shots.

Robert: 16 of them.

Rosetta: In your stomach?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: The whole family?

Mary: Just Curtis.

Robert: Curtis and her and me.

Joan: Well, you mentioned the tornado. When did that happen?

Robert: 1970.

Joan: Go ahead and tell us about the tornado.

Robert: You'd think a tornado doesn't have... Is that picture of a one-way in there?

Mary: There is a picture of a one-way, somewhere. They're pulling a one-way.

Robert: You can only work one way with it. That's why it's called that.

Joan: So what happened with the tornado?

Robert: It blowed everything away. Well, I wanted to show you that one picture there. But you didn't get it though.

Mary: I got it, it's stuck in the...

Robert: It shows that one-way I'm talking about. You can see that pretty well. It's about ten foot long. Believe it or not, it was sitting out there in the field, and that tornado picked it up. Now, what would it get a hold of? But it turned upside down.

Mary: It turned upside down, and the handle stuck straight up that they used to adjust it. It was down on the ground.

Joan: Did it damage the house?

Robert: Kind of. It put krinks in it.

Mary: I think it moved the house, but Robert's dad still owned it at the time, and he told me.

Robert: He might have got insurance and never told us.

Joan: Did it damage any out buildings?

Robert: No.

Joan: Well, here's a shed with the roof off of it.

Mary: The garage was here. It took the garage. This is the pieces of garage...we're looking east.

Joan: Now where were you during the tornado?

Robert: Who, me? Holding the east door of the house shut.

Mary: He was safe in the house.

Joan: So you were upstairs, not down in the storm cellar?

Robert: No.

Mary: The kids and I were.

Robert: I think the prettiest tornado I ever seen was...we've been through, what? Three? It was Sunday afternoon. I was lying in there for snooze time. Pretty soon, she told me, "Get out here! I want you to look at this." I said, "Nah." But she said, "There's something going on!"

Joan: Something's turning?

Robert: Believe it or not, it just kept growing and going to the northeast. We were standing there at the house, about two blocks down here it was grass and pasture. We stood there within two blocks of that and watched it go by. There wasn't a breath of air. There was nothing.

Joan: It was still where you were?

Robert: Yes, and on the other side, Elred Burkhart, it blew over his water shed, or where he kept his electric and propane and stuff. But we just stood there and it was just going along like...you've seen little whirlwinds. This was a giant one. But on the side where we stood...now it was close to us, it was really closer than I thought it was. I had three feed bunks sitting out there right north of the barn, and it took the middle one!

Joan: Tornadoes are strange.

Robert: They are.

Joan: What did the tornado, the one you were talking about first, did any of the neighbors lose their...

Robert: Oh yes. Bob Schmitt. Let's see, who else...

Joan: Did he lose his house? Or barns?

Robert: It took everything of Bob Schmidt's but the house. Then we were next, and then Elred Burkhart.

Joan: What did it do at Burkhart's?

Robert: It tore down a big barn. It killed some of his cattle too.

Joan: The cattle were inside and they were killed?

Robert: I don't know they were inside. I think it threw the barn on them.

Joan: Oh, they were in the corral beside the barn.

Robert: Yes. And then Fricks, Matt Dockendorf, Laura Werner...

Joan: What happened to Laura Warner's house? Was everything gone?

Robert: There was nothing but the foundation left.

Joan: This was a pretty big tornado then.

Robert: It was a giant.

Joan: And did we say what year this was?

Robert: It was '70.

Mary: Bobby always thought that it either turned around and came back, or there was another one because he finally came to the basement. It got quiet out and everything, so he said, "Well, I'm going to go shine the flashlight around." He was standing out in front, and the wind built up, and he heard a roar. Then more of the shed just went "Boom!" in front of him.

Joan: So this was at night.

Robert: 10:00 or 11:00.

Mary: I don't think it was quite that late.

Joan: So then what did you do the rest of the night?

Robert: We waited for someone to come. Soon Richard Dockendorf came and said there was a lot of damage. We went over to my Aunt Mary Dockendorf's across the road. Now, it didn't hardly do any damage to there. I went with him when he went over to Matt Dockendorf's. It was his dad. We went over there, and believe it or not, Elmer and Jack Frick was there, before we got there, checking out to see whether...

Mary: It took the top of their house off, Matt's and Mary's.

Robert: The top story and the barn. It took everything but...

Joan: And there was no loss of life?

Robert: No. That's about the end of my story.

Joan: I'm going to back up a little bit, because you told us you didn't have electricity until '47.

Robert: Right.

Joan: That's one question we've asked people. Telephone, did you always have that?

Robert: 1951, I think, when we started high school.

Joan: And television.

Robert: Well, we had got a television in '55.

Joan: On the antennae? How many stations did you get?

Robert: Three, which was a plenty. No kidding. You take right now. This dad gummed TV. You don't like the program, so you go "click, click, click" and if you don't like it, "click, click, click" Well, if you've only got three, it only takes two clicks and you're out of business. You either like it or don't. Now that's what I feel, T.V. is terrible. It's always a running, but it's terrible.

Joan: Are your children still farming the farm now? Are they in cattle? What's happened to your kids?

Robert: Well, we've got the boy kind of half-way started. He farms and has some cattle.

Mary: Leann likes cattle. She always has, and she bought herself a few cows and calved for the first time. She'd like to get bigger, I don't know if times are---. But she is a hard worker. If hard work is all it needs, then they'll get it done.

Joan: So are your children all still in the area?

Robert: Well, Lisa's at Garden City. She is an x-ray technician. Then we got the Cracker Jack (Carson) runner around here.

Mary: Where, at Garden or here?

Robert: Carson. Oh man, he was proud of himself. One of the cows just went stark raving nuts, it ran through the fences on Saturday. So Leann got the Mexican cowboys to come over and rope it. When they got done, I guess he didn't have much trouble. He must have had a pretty fair horse. The horse was just about too small for what it did. It really had to paw and snort to keep that cow from dragging the horse away. (*Carson loved the excitement.*)

Joan: We had a cow like that one time, and Rosetta's brother had to come rope it. It was bound and determined that it was not going to get to the sale. It was just awful, and when they got to the sale barn with the thing, the guy who was checking it in wrote "nervous" on the sale slip. When they let it out, it put the guy in the pen up the fence and everything. It was a bad one. Let's see. Tell us a little bit about your church out there. We haven't talked about Sts. Peter and Paul Church. What was it like?

Robert: Well, I don't know. It was a church.

Joan: How big was it? What was the congregation like? Has it changed over there?

Robert: Well yes, it kept...I'd say it was in the '50's at it's top.

Joan: All the families up in there, and we're talking Catholic Church, so did they have large families basically? So that's why in the '50's it was...

Robert: Well, everybody probably had five or six kids.

Mary: Now, our generation is when that stopped.

Joan: And you had a priest?

Robert: Yes.

Mary: We had a resident priest. He was there when Leann was baptized. So it would have probably have been around '70? When they moved the house off?

Robert: I don't know. Sometime in there.

Joan: And who taught the school?

Robert: Sisters.

Joan: So there were one or two? How many sisters were there?

Robert: They generally had two and a cook.

Joan: So there was a home for the sisters and a home for the priest.

Robert: Yes. I never did figure out what the sisters needed a cook for.

Joan: Did the cook cook for the priest also?

Robert: No. I don't know who paid that bill. I always wondered about them.

Mary: I always figured that the cook either couldn't make it in nursing or teaching. Because that's what they all did.

Joan: So she was sort of a sister too? Or not?

Mary: She was a sister.

Joan: So there were three sisters.

Mary: Yes.

Robert: Well, now Father's wasn't.

Rosetta: How many times did you go to mass while you were in school out there?

Robert: Every morning.

Joan: So every morning you had mass. And did the church sponsor any other social life in the community? Bingo? Dances?

Robert: Well, they had the picnic or whatever you called it in the summertime. It was a big blow.

Mary: That was to earn money.

Robert: Well, everything was to earn money. Then when they got the beer drinkers up there,

they had parties and stuff.

Mary: They had lots of gatherings, you know. Pot luck dinners and all.

Robert: That's what I say

Joan: Am I remembering from another interview a dance floor or something?

Robert: It's still there. That was put down in '46, I think.

Mary: It was cement.

Joan: A cement slab.

Robert: It's breaking up.

Rosetta: So the little store that was there, it sold the beer?

Robert: Yes. It was quite a place.

Joan: Was the German heritage evident out there? I grew up in a German community too.

Robert: Do you like beer?

Joan: No. We would sing "Silent Night" in German in the church at Christmastime for the older generation. And then some of the food, we had the big German pretzels that were so good. Was there...did people make their own sausage? I'm trying to think of...

Robert: Oh yes. Most of them did, did their own butchering

Joan: Other remnants of the German culture out there.

Rosetta: Was church ever in German? Did you have German Mass?

Robert: I'd say the last time they had it was in '18. World War I, they cut all that off. They'd throw you in jail if you spoke it.

Rosetta: Who came out and checked to see if you were loyal citizens? Was it the sheriff? Was it a vigilante group?

Robert: I'd say it was somebody mad at you turned you in.

Mary: I think Mr. Moffat. He was the lawyer, and I don't know if he was the county attorney or what, but he came out.

Rosetta: What did he look for? Did he look for German...?

Robert: Anything German, I think.

Joan: Picture on the wall!

Robert: Well, you know they drove the Japs out of California. They just had them all over.

Mary: In concentration camps. But the older Germans, when I went out there, you know, the grandmas and grandpas, they had a very strong accent.

Rosetta: So there was prejudice in World War I, but by the time of World War II, you didn't have to worry if you were a German.

Robert: No.

Joan: I think we found that down south too, in the Lutheran community there. WWI was a problem, and maybe down to Greensburg a bit in WWII, there was some hangover, but not up around Offerle.

Robert: Yes. That's what makes me so mad now, these Mexicans. They speak this and they won't change. Well, I don't like it.

Joan: Well, give it a generation or two. And that's what it took in my community that I grew up in. The grandparents could speak and write German, and the parents of my classmates could understand and speak a little, and my classmates nothing.

Robert: They didn't want anything to do with it!

Joan: And they didn't offer it in school. They offered Spanish!

Robert: When Dad was burnt there in '47, Dockendorfs just lived across the road. It was Kate and Mary and Nick and Ted.

Mary: Old maids and old bachelors.

Robert: They were 4 old bachelors. They were the best people in the world, I mean they were. I stayed over there for about a month while Dad was in the hospital. I'd walk across the road there and feed the cat and the dog. There was only one thing I didn't like about them. When they didn't want me to know, they talked in German. Well, I had no idea what they were talking about. Mary was a character. She wore out the telephone rubbering. You can erase that too. She might read it. She's upstairs, looking down here.

Joan: What has happened to the church?

Robert: It is falling down.

Joan: You lost your priest. Was there a time period when you had someone come in? Not a resident priest?

Robert: Yes. We were hooked up with Offerle and Burdett.

Mary: Now, that was when church was still going when we had the priest. It was Offerle,

Spearville, Burdett and Hanston, I think. There were 4 priests. They were all young. They rotated the priest through the parish, and then we'd get together every summer. One parish would entertain the rest of the parishes and we had a big dance and had a lot of fun there. And then after they were gone, the rectory had been gone for quite a long time, then after they were gone, then we got hooked to St. Nicholas.

Joan: So when did you stop having services out there?

Robert: '93. That's when we closed.

Joan: And then you came into Kinsley to St. Nicholas. So the population out there had gone down. Children moved away and didn't come back, smaller families...

Robert: There's nothing out there, as far as. . . . It's divorce alley out there.

Mary: And there was no future for the kids.

Joan: Well, that's a unique problem for a Catholic church, to have the divorce rate affect the congregation. It is interesting, because you said your generation, sort of the post WWII generation, stopped having so many children. I'm trying to remember, I don't remember when the pill came around, is that the reason? Then in more recent years, the divorce rate went up, and that affected it. That's interesting.

Mary: It has never been sanctioned by the church, but the younger people, I guess you'd say, weren't as obedient. They became more free thinkers.

Joan: So that's what affected the church.

Mary: There'll probably be people mad at me for saying that.

Joan: That's all right. They probably won't read your interview. How was the feeling about coming into St. Nicholas? Was that a congenial move? Or was there resentment?

Robert: You know, my attitude was, I don't give a darn. That's about the size of it.

Mary: There were some people who went up to St. Mary's for awhile, but then that was closed. Then Offerle and some went to Kinsley. There was a lot of resentment. Some went to Kinsley. Some people said they wouldn't go to Kinsley, but they have.

Robert: They knew they would after a while after they would get their smoke calmed down.

Rosetta: It was a bad time for the church, I mean closing all the little churches.

Mary: And ours was the first one in the diocese. And they made a lot of mistakes, the hierarchy did, in the way they dealt with us. There were lots and lots of ill feelings about that.

Joan: So resentment to the hierarchy.

Mary: Well, yes. There's been so many more since then, and they've gone about it differently.

It was really hard on the older people out there that been out there for 80 years. It had been their life. And it killed the community. They didn't have dances anymore. (*The community just died.*)

Robert: A lot of the older folks that had been there when the new church was built, I heard it was built in '07, I believe.

Joan: Rosetta, I think we're getting close. Do you have specific questions?

Rosetta: Well, we usually have a medical. You doctored here in Kinsley, your children.

Mary: Yes, with Dr. Schnoebelen.

Rosetta: And you had your children at the hospital here?

Mary: Yes, all three of them.

Joan: Were you and your siblings born in a hospital or at home?

Robert: I don't know, I think I was born at home.

Mary: The first four Kallauses were born at home in Parsons, out on the farm. Leona was born in Parsons. Alice was born in the hospital in Spearville.

Joan: We've had that, people born in Spearville.

Mary: When Alice was born, Grandpa was laid up with his leg; he didn't move very good. It was terrible weather. They called Dr. Schnoebelen, and he said, "Are you sure a car will make it? Do you want me to come out and get you?" Now can you believe that? No, No, they'd get there? And they finally made it. I think they got as far as Albert's.

Robert: Albert's, then the gas line froze up on his car.

Mary: Yes, and they were right by Grandma's brother, Albert Schinstock's place. So he took them on to Spearville. And someone was getting ready to come out looking for them because it was taking too long.

Robert: Dr. Schnoebelen was a funny guy.

Mary: A character.

Robert: When we had this rabies deal, well that evening I called up, or somebody called up, Schnoebelen and told him. He says, "I want you to come in in the morning." I went, "Oh, it didn't bite us." He said, "I want you to come in in the morning." After we knew it had the rabies, I said, "Nah, I ain't coming." Schnoebelen says, "Well, I just don't give a damn whether you come or not, you just go ahead and die. But the boy is going to town in the morning. I don't care whether you live or die."

Joan: And the community out there was the church and the little store? Was there anything else?

Robert: The priest's house, and the sisters' house.

Joan: And the school and the little store, but that was it? That was the community?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: And then you did all your trade in Kinsley? And you mentioned...what was it like coming into the movies on Saturday?

Robert: Kind of like going into a different world. All we saw was bleak dessert out here.

Joan: What did movies cost?

Robert: 12 cents.

Joan: Did you get popcorn too?

Robert: I doubt it. You could make your own popcorn at home.

Mary: That was a nickel.

Joan: Did your folks go with you? Or did they visit at that time?

Robert: No, they dumped us out and went and did their trading.

Joan: How often were you able to do that, do you think?

Robert: Once a month, I guess.

Mary: I think they left you kids at home a lot.

Robert: Well, yes. We had to...

Mary: You and Barbara babysat.

Joan: You did chores and stuff at home when they came to town?

Robert: Yes.

Joan: I was trying to think. You're family would have been a lot in the car.

Robert: What do you mean, all of us? And it was just a two door car!

Rosetta: We usually ask about race relationships. I guess all the Hispanics at that time were Catholic, right?

Mary: Pretty much.

Rosetta: Was there prejudice against the Hispanics?

Robert: When? Way back?

Rosetta: No, during your lifetime, the '50's and '60's.

Robert: It's getting worse, I think.

Mary: The whites didn't date the Mexicans, and the Mexicans didn't date the whites. If you were black, or Mexican, they made you sit in the balcony at the theater.

Rosetta: And they couldn't go to the swimming pool, right?

Mary: You know, I don't know. I don't remember seeing any of them there.

Robert: Well, where were you born?

Rosetta: I was born in Pawnee County.

Robert: Didn't you live up here on the farm?

Joan: Well, of course you were out there, then. It needs to be more recently. Was it equal status at church and everything? I'm trying to think because we have Catholic cemeteries.

Mary: At the cemetery, the Mexicans were buried at the edge.

Rosetta: So in your cemetery, Sts. Peter and Paul, they were totally white. And here at the Sst. Nicholas, they were buried along the edge.

Robert: The north fence, I think.

Rosetta: But were there altar boys that were Hispanic in St. Nicholas?

Robert: I don't know.

Mary: I've never seen one, I don't think.

Robert: Did they go to Catholic school?

Mary: I don't think so. I think they went to public school.

Joan: There could have been a money issue.

Mary: Yes, I just thought of this, so many of the Hispanics now go to the Hispanic mass. That's their choice.

Joan: At St. Nicholas, there is an Hispanic Mass.

Robert: I wonder who cooked that up?

Joan: And the past...

Mary: There wasn't a big input, running it, you know. Personally, I think they'd be better off if they just meshed in with us. But I think it would ease a lot of people's prejudice.

Robert: There's only one Mexican family I knew in Kinsley. Molina..

Rosetta: There were Rincon's, and Perez's and...

Joan: Well, but he was out in the country.

Rosetta: But he came to the school here. Contrerez and Chicon. You missed all of them?

Robert: Old Louie Chicon.

Mary: He was older, Rosetta probably never knew him. He was a Chicon.

Rosetta: I never knew Louie, but there were several Hispanic families.

Robert: Val Perez. He always had a cool car.

Mary: Oh, he was handsome.

Joan: So most of your friends were friends you had from the community of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Robert: Just one, John Herrmann.

Joan: Just John.

Mary: Well, Harold Schinstock. But he was a cousin.

Robert: Bruce Hawley, David Eslinger.

Joan: Well, here's another question for you. We asked other people as well, did you have a motorcycle?

Mary: Oh gosh.

Joan: So he did!

Robert: Yes.

Joan: That crew out there, I've heard some stories about motorcycles!

Robert: Cool. A good way to get in trouble.

Mary: Oh, it made him so cool and foxy.

Joan: Mary liked you on your motorcycle.

Mary: My dad had absolutely...if he saw me riding it!

Robert: Oh yes, I've owned one, two, three, four.

Joan: What kind of motorcycles did you own?

Robert: Two of them I wish I had back. An Indian and a Harley Davidson. Well, after the kids got big enough, I was always doing something with the kids on Sunday, messing around and getting in trouble. I went down to the Chevy Garage one day. It was when Bill Dark had it, and here come that little motorcycle around. Somebody was pushing it, and I thought, "Well, golly dang." It was only about that big, and I got to thinking about it. Oh couldn't I have fun with that!

Mary: He didn't tell me about it.

Robert: So I bought the little motorcycle and that was the start. That wasn't the one over in Germany.

Mary: He learned to ride in Germany.

Robert: I don't think that's in there.

Mary: I thought there was a picture of Curtis in there on his little motorcycle. That little motorcycle went miles upon miles, and then Lisa took it over. Well, the picture isn't in here. Then Leann took it over, and oh my.

Robert: Well, it raised three kids. It only had one speed and that 30 miles an hour.

Mary: We put one of those long flags on it because they'd go over to Dockendorf's on it, and if they went through the ditch nobody could see them coming along. How they survived, I don't know. No, Bobby did lots of things on his motorcycle. He and John went to Dodge that one time and played hooky on it, didn't you?

Robert: Well, yes, old Roy Rogers was going to be in the parade, and I said, "I'm going to go to Dodge, and I'm going to go to the parade." So, Mom said, "I'll write you an excuse." Well, I didn't want any danged excuse. I said, "He can chew me out when I get back." So, we went to the parade and went to school the next day. Man, old Dawson caught me, and he reamed me out. I knew I was going to get it because why write the excuse? That's two of us. I'm going, regardless.

Mary: You and John were all over on your motorcycles.

Joan: So you got to see Roy Rogers. Was he riding Trigger or in a car?

Robert: No, he didn't have his horse. We'll have to make a trip down to Branson so I can see his horse. Have you ever been to see his horse?

Rosetta: No.

Robert: I haven't either.

Mary: It was kind of neat. The law back then was really kid oriented. He and John would roar around town. They'd flag them down and say, "Okay guys, you've got all the old ladies on this side of town in a stew calling about the noise. Go to the other side of town for a while, and then go home."

Robert: We were chased home every Saturday night.

Mary: No, they just came and told you it was time to go home. "Hey boys, it's time to go home."

Rosetta: It was a totally different time. You could do pranks and not get into terrible trouble, like you do now. If somebody painted main street now with "Class of 2011," they'd probably be arrested.

Robert: They would if they could catch them!

Mary: But back then they knew that you were going to do it. Tell them about backing your motorcycle.

Robert: I don't know, I just got a wild hair and backed my motorcycle into the picture show, and "vroom, VROOM!"

Joan: You went into the Palace Theater with it?

Robert: Well, yes.

Mary: Well, the doors were open. He just backed in there and let her rip and roar, and then he took out of there.

Joan: Now how old were you when you did that? About?

Robert: Oh, 17 or 18.

Rosetta: Were you trying to get Mary's attention or something?

Robert: No, I was just goofing off.

Joan: Then did you head for home before the law got you?

Robert: Well, I thought I was safe, until he called. (*Huston*) Sterret, that had the picture show, caught me later on. "If you ever do that again, I'm going to..."

Mary: How about your last motorcycle? What happened to it?

Robert: Well, I don't know.

Mary: What did you always tell everybody?

Robert: Well, I had to sell the darned thing to buy a ring.

Joan: Buy the diamond.

Mary: I don't believe it's true, but that's what he always said was why he sold it.

Robert: By golly, that's right. I sold my motorcycle.

Rosetta: It must have been a big diamond.

Robert: Nah, motorcycles weren't worth diamonds.