

Interview with Norma Winchester Kennedy
September 3, 2011
Interview at the Kinsley Library
Interviewers are Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff
Present: Kenneth Gaines, son

Joan: What is your full name?

Norma: Norma Faye Kennedy

Joan: When and where were you born?

Norma: I was born in Kinsley, Kansas, on April 28, 1930.

Joan: Where do you now live?

Norma: I now live in Beaverton, Oregon.

Joan: What were the names of your parents?

Norma: My father was John Walter Winchester and my mother was Lenora Walker Winchester.

Joan: And your grandparents?

Norma: My paternal grandparents were Albert Winchester and Jennie Durant.

Joan: And your maternal grandparents?

Norma: The maternal grandparents were...

Joan: That's hard. They're just grandma and grandpa!

Norma: Yes, my grandmother on my mother's side was Susan Clay Walker and James Walker was my grandfather.

Joan: What brought your grandparents to Edwards County?

Norma: I don't really know what brought them to Edwards County. You didn't know enough to ask questions, and they never really told us.

Joan: I think you said that when they first came out though, did they go to Jetmore?

Norma: I know my paternal grandparents were married in Jetmore. I think on Christmas Day in 1884, in Hodgeman County.

Joan: And they were farmers?

Norma: Yes.

Joan: So they had a claim out in that area? Or you don't know?

Norma: I don't know. I know the oldest child was born in another little town close to Jetmore, I'm not sure what it would be.

Joan: In Hodgeman County, would it be Nicholas?

Norma: They came from Nicolas, Kentucky.

Joan: That's your maternal grandparents. Okay, so your maternal grandparents, the Walkers, came from Kentucky. And again, they were farmers?

Norma: No. My mother once told me he had a store, like a little grocery store in Kentucky.

Joan: And when they came out here?

Norma: When they came out here, I don't know what he did.

Joan: Okay, your household. Did you have brothers and sisters?

Norma: Eight brothers and sisters. Mellow Dee, Laverna Winchester, Leon Walter, Melvern Walker, Earl Henry, Dorothy Jean, Elva June, Lewis Lauren, and I'm the baby.

Joan: How many of your siblings are still alive?

Norma: Four.

Joan: Longevity runs in your family! Let's see, you were born in 1930. Describe your house.

Norma: Dad bought this house, I remember, from the Converses. It was in the country. He told me he paid \$400 for it. We had no plumbing or no electricity, and Dad had it moved in there in 1943 or '44. There was a flood in Kinsley; *(it came in the middle of the night)*. When we went to bed it was dry with no sign of rain or anything. About 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, my mother was awakened by this cat falling off the screen. It was climbing on the screen, trying to stay out of the water! She listened for a while and couldn't figure out what was going on, and finally got up and looked. Water was everywhere, and it was just before it started coming up through the floor. She awakened everybody, and we all got up and started putting stuff up trying to get stuff up on things so it wouldn't get wet. It wasn't too long before they were coming with a boat and hollering for everybody to get out. I remember my grandmother was staying with us then. They came down with the boat and got her out. I remember wading out with Dad. The water was up to my waist, I guess. The water was all the way from Winchester Avenue to Capital. We waded out and went to the Martins just across Capital. I remember staying there that night. I remember that my Uncle Henry had moved, I think, to Junction City. So his house was empty, and I remember Dad contacting him to see if we could stay there in his house. He said we could, and I remember moving in there. Then I remember going back out to the house to get different things. We left the silverware out there that we used to have in the bowl, then the little vase that used to sit on the table. I went out there for that silverware, and I heard something hiss. There were some curtains on the floor, and there was a snake in them! And I left out of there and didn't go back anymore!

(Then in '45 Dad had the house moved from West 3rd to West 4th where it now stands.)

Joan: We've been asking people if they have any memories of World War II?

Norma: Only the rationing of different items, sugar especially. Then we had to have stamps to get stuff. I remember the paper drive that we went out collecting paper. We must have had a wagon, I guess, there were three or four girls that went and picked up papers.

I remember when the neighbors' brother was killed. I just remember that they were away. I remember when my youngest brother went to the service because my dad was on the roof taking the chimney down because we were going to move the house to where it is right now. He had to come down and take him to the train station.

Joan: What branch did he serve in?

Norma: He was in the army.

Joan: Did he go overseas?

Norma: I don't remember him going overseas.

Joan: Did any of your other brothers serve?

Norma: Earl went overseas. And Walker went overseas.

Joan: Were they in Europe or the Pacific?

Norma: Earl was in Europe, and Walker was in the Pacific.

Joan: Were they both in the Army.

Norma: They were both Army.

Joan: Did you correspond with them when they were away?

Norma: No, I don't remember corresponding. I guess that's why I hate to write letters now.

Joan: Do you remember when they came home? Did they come back here when they came?

Norma: I don't really remember. I know Leon wasn't in there very long. He was sick, had ulcers, and so he was medically discharged. They had bond drives, and I remember Ed Lippoldt buying rides in the jeep that they had on Main Street. With a big donation, you could ride in the jeep.

Joan: Was this like an Army jeep?

Norma: Yes.

Joan: So it was a fund raiser.

Norma: I remember they had a base at Dodge City, and they had a bus that came through to pick up girls to take them to the USO to entertain the men. My sister used to go and my sister-in-law

used to go.

Joan: You weren't quite old enough for that!

Norma: No.

Joan: And your father was okay with your sister doing that?

Norma: I guess, because she did it. And then I remember her when she graduated, going to school for riveting. She went to Bremerton, Washington and worked in the shipyards in Bremerton and later moved to Seattle.

Joan: Where did she go to school for that? Was that in Wichita?

Norma: It was somewhere like east, I can't remember exactly where it was. I think it was Topeka. She's here, but I don't remember.

Joan: That's interesting; we haven't had a story like that before.

Norma: You know, the word came, and they went. She went to Bremerton to work in the shipyards.. She met her husband and lived in Seattle.

Joan: So your family was pretty well scattered during the war, actually.

Norma: Yes, and Mellow Dee was still playing in the band.

Joan: And the name of her band was?

Norma: I think by that time it was Doug White's *Black Barons of Swing*. They were playing in Arizona and that's where they broke up. She worked at the army base Fort Huachuca. Then she remarried and came back through Kinsley. They stopped here, but he was from New York. So that's how she went to New York. His parents were there, and he was going overseas to France. She went to stay with his parents, but they didn't like her. Anyway, she went there, so she was kind of on her own. She met people who helped her out.

Joan: And he was in the service. This was after the war? Or still during the war?

Norma: This was in 1944...

Joan: So right at the end of the war.

Norma: Yes, right at the end.

Joan: So your family was really involved with the service during that time.

Norma: Yes, so that's how she got to New York. She worked there in clothing, making dresses. She was a seamstress, so she made most of their clothes. Then she went to work for a company that moved to St. Louis. She didn't want to leave, so she quit that job and got a job with United Jewish Appeal, a charity organization for Jewish people in New York. She lived in Manhattan,

and then...

Joan: Your family ended up coast to coast.

Norma: My niece, her daughter, was in Seattle, and she was going to get married and she didn't want her to. (*She went to Seattle and took her back to New York.*)

Joan: What was her name?

Norma: Dolores Reeves.

Joan: What was it like growing up as a child in Kinsley, going to school...

Norma: Well, I just remember the Duprees were our neighbors, so they were the only people we really played with and knew. We were always together, every day, and we were at their house or they were at our house. I can remember a lot of little things that happened. We didn't really have toys. We always got a pair of socks or a pair of underwear or something like that for Christmas. Kenny Dupree was saying that at school when you would tell what you got for Christmas, well, we didn't get a toy. We didn't get anything, so we didn't say anything. But you know, those are the only persons I remember. I remember when we went to grade school, we didn't play together other than at school. I remember one girl who was going to come to my house and stopped by. She asked her mother, and yes she could come to my house. My grandmother was staying with us by that time, and she saw my grandmother and she went right back home. (*No one else ever asked to come.*) So I never had anybody else to come.

Joan: When you were growing up, your age, there were no other black children?

Norma: The Gaines were the only ones, and then yes, the Martins. Bus Martins (they belonged to the Church of God in Christ which had churches in Dodge, Great Bend, Pratt and different places) would keep kids from time to time. They'd come and help him, and he used to raise pigs. He'd pick up the stuff from the stores and from gardens and stuff to feed the pigs. They used to keep kids. I remember that, and Charlie and Freddy Goodman came, and they were our age. They had a sister, Virginia, the age of my sister Dorothy. And then there were the Gutierrez; she was black, and he was Mexican. They were here; in 1948 was when they left here. Marion was in my class, and his sister was Theadora. They were the only ones, and the Gaines.

Joan: Did you go to the white children's houses?

Norma: No, only the Duprees.

Joan: So you were pretty isolated.

Norma: Yes, I never went to any place but Duprees; they were two doors down. They had kids (*the same ages we were*).

Norma: I should have brought that picture of our kindergarten. It wasn't kindergarten, I understand; in later year it was like a summer school or something. But I know that kids that were older were in that picture. But I always called it the "kindergarten picture." I remember Miss Payne was our teacher. Margaret and I and my niece, her name was Dolores, but we called

her Buddy for some reason. We were all together in that picture. We played at school, but we didn't go over to anybody's house.

Joan: We talked about the church. Did you have any questions about that Rosetta?

Rosetta: I know where Skeet use to live. Was the church one block further north and to the west? It was a nice house there. Is that where it was?

Norma: No, it was on an alley then; they call it Waverly?

Rosetta: I don't know the street, I'm sorry.

Norma: I think it was Waverly.

Rosetta: Okay, I can check that. But where that big house is, is where the Church of God in Christ was.

Joan: Who's house are we talking?

Norma: Riisoes owned it. The church was there about where that house is, and where the garage part is, is where the minister of that church, Orion Freeman was his name, lived. Our church, the Baptist Church, was on Fourth Street, and across that alley, right there on the corner where that dugout is. Somebody's living in there because I saw a light in there. Right where that dugout is, is where our church sat. Grandma Winchester lived right next door to it, and my Grandma Walker lived right next door to her, east.

Rosetta: So where Skeet lived is right here, and you just go across the street kind of, and that's where it was.

Joan: She's on Fourth Street.

Norma: You mean where he lives now? Where the house is now?

Rosetta: Yes.

Norma: It was west of there (*in the next block*), just catty-cornered from there. It's a street, but then it was just a little alley. And the church sat on the east side of the alley on Fourth Street. The new house is on Third Street. The church sat right there where the dugout is now. Then Grandma Winchester lived right next to it, and Grandma Walker lived right next to that. And then my Uncle Henry lived on the corner of Fourth and Capital.

Joan: And that was a Baptist Church.

Norma: Yes, it was a Baptist.

Joan: And it was a segregated church?

Norma: Yes, I remember a man who was white came for vacation Bible school.

Joan: A visiting preacher?

Norma: Yes, for vacation Bible school. I don't know what they called it then, but that's what it was.

Joan: Now you wrote a story in the email, which was about not being allowed to go to movies.

Norma: We went to movies, but we had to sit upstairs.

Joan: In the balcony, can you retell the story about going as a class?

Norma: I remember going with my class, it seems like it was the third for fourth grade. *Pinocchio*, I think it was. I remember being kind of anxious and knowing it was going to be over in a little bit and I didn't know how I was going to get home. I know I left alone. I can remember walking across the tracks. I guess I got home alright.

Joan: So this was at night when you went. It wasn't a matinee performance.

Norma: Right, it was at night, and I remember talking about it at school that we would go as a class. I went, but I was upstairs and the class was downstairs. So I wasn't really with them.

Joan: Do you know why that policy was? There wasn't a lot of segregation in Kinsley except for the Palace Theater.

Norma: There was segregation in all the restaurants and that confectionary; I can't remember the name of it, and the drugstore. Dad worked for Rexall, but we knew, I guess, and just never did go in there.

Joan: It was a matter of not going in? Or a different seating place?

Norma: Well, I know in the Smith's Confectionary and like Copp's Drugstore, you couldn't sit at the counter. You had to sit in a booth. In the restaurant, you had to eat in the kitchen.

Joan: What were the restaurants at that time? Do you remember?

Norma: Rita's Lunch was right on the corner, and there was something down in the middle of the block kind of down that way. I don't remember the name of that one.

Joan: At that time, was it Ehler's or Fox's (200 E. 6th St.)?

Norma: Ehler's.

Joan: Did you patronize that store?

Norma: It was the only clothing store in town except for the men's clothing store, (*Workey's*). Across the street was Stutzman's, the ladies' store (203 E. 6th St.). That was it until Al's Clothing came along after the bakery left (122-124 E. 6th St.). Ed Farlow ran the bakery right (*Workey's* was 102 E. 6th St.).

Joan: I just heard that in an interview the other day.

Norma: Yes, Workey's had a store there, right across from Ehler's store. It was a men's store. And the bakery, I think, was right there.

Joan: And those merchants were willing to sell to...?

Norma: Yes. I don't remember any segregation in the stores.

Joan: The grocery stores?

Norma: Yes. It was just where you went to eat; you sat in there.

Joan: And the swimming pool?

Norma: Yes, you couldn't swim in the swimming pool, I remember that. It was on Highway 56.

Joan: We have one picture of it.

Norma: I remember a boy got drowned there.

Joan: And in school, other than the class trip to the Palace? Did you feel you were treated equally?

Norma: No. I mean, as far as the teachers were concerned, I guess I was. I know when my kids went to school, when they took pictures, they always took them in the back of the room. They had a desk in front, and they put them in the back to take the picture. I don't know if that was Kenny...

Joan: It wasn't alphabetical!

Norma: And Stanly, I think, started to school here. Other than that...

Joan: Was this ever discussed in your father's home? Or was this just the way it was?

Norma: It was just the way it was. We didn't protest or anything.

Joan: I guess we should talk about your dad a little bit. He was so highly respected. What did your father do?

Norma: In the community, he worked. He just worked and went to church. He sang when he went to church.

Joan: He had quite a good voice.

Norma: Well, you know, he liked to sing. Who was it, Susie (*Roenbaugh*) was telling me that her mother played piano, and he came and did some things for her. He'd always bring the music. After he got done working, she'd play and he'd sing.

Joan: Susie...

Norma: Susie Roenbaugh; it was Susie Etling, then.

Joan: And he did janitorial work, or fix it work?

Norma: He did janitorial work; he waxed floors. He had this big, heavy polisher. It wasn't an electric one; he wouldn't have an electric one. I remember he wouldn't use anything on windows but Bon Ami.

Joan: How does a floor polisher work that's not electric?

Norma: Well, it was very heavy, square on the bottom.

Kenny: It was lead on the bottom.

Norma: He pushed it back and forth and polished the floors. I remember he'd be going out to the Mundhenke's (*Merle*) over in Lewis. He'd go to Schraders, what was their name? Brodbeck-Schrader. I can't remember her name, (*Alfreda*) but she married a Schrader.

Rosetta: She was Mrs. Schrader. We'll look it up.

Norma: Yes, he worked for her. He liked her a lot; she was really nice. The Mundhenkes, I can remember him going there all the time, and just different places: the bank, Betty and Myron Burr's.

Rosetta: I'm, not sure, but there is a polisher in the museum in the back.

Kenny: Oh, really.

Rosetta: It may be Skeet's, I'm not sure.

Norma: I don't know whatever happened to it.

Joan: It might be worth running out there to see.

Norma: It sure would. I remember that thing. Was that you when they had the anniversary celebration for Mother and Daddy? Myron came to Wichita and picked me up and Lewis, my brother.

Joan: Did your mother work outside? Or was eight kids enough?

Norma: She did house work, and then mostly she washed and ironed.

Joan: And she took that into your home to do that?

Norma: Yes, she took that in.

Joan: What kind of washing machine did she have?

Norma: We had an "Easy" that I remember. I don't remember before that. I remember it had a wringer that you worked by hand. I remember Grandma Walker's washing machine was wood.

Joan: A barrel?

Norma: Yes, it was in a little building beside the house.

Joan: Did you have chores that you had to do? Did you have to help with any of it?

Norma: I don't remember having any special chores or anything. We had to wash dishes. We had to pump the water and heat the water. You had to heat it on the stove to wash the dishes and to take a bath in the tin washtub, or aluminum, whatever it was.

Joan: Was the pump inside the house?

Norma: The pump was inside the house.

Joan: Was there an outhouse?

Norma: There was an outhouse. And then when somebody used the outhouse, there was no paper. We used the catalogue! They sent someone to the house to get paper, and for some reason they went to the house and got paper and matches. They came out and set the weeds and grass out there on fire. I tell you, we just ran everywhere getting water. Where it came out, the sink sat next to the wall in the kitchen, on the outside wall. It was piped outside. It was all the water we had there. I remember getting gunny sacks, and we were just beating that fire. We finally got it out. I don't remember exactly who that was. I think it was a cousin.

Joan: They were in trouble!

Norma: Yes, they were in trouble. I remember that. And I remember you had to move the toilet every once in a while to a new spot. We had chickens, mama raised chickens all the time. I remember her cleaning them.

Joan: They had a garden?

Norma: Dad always had a garden.

Joan: Did your mother can then?

Norma: She canned, and we were talking about how in the summertime we used to go out there on Highway 50 and pick plums. We'd all have to have our hats and bushel baskets and go out and pick plums for plum jelly and plum butter.

Joan: Did you have a telephone?

Norma: I remember having a telephone. We didn't have one all the time, but I remember having one.

Joan: How old were you when you got it?

Norma: I had to be pretty small. I remember two different kinds. I remember the kind that sat on a cradle, you know, and then one that hung on the little thing.

Joan: And you always had electricity?

Norma: No, we used lamps early on. We had a coal-oil stove and a wood stove in the kitchen.

Joan: Now, the rest of the town had electricity, wouldn't you say?

Norma: Yes, they had electricity out there. We didn't have gas out there. We didn't have a bathroom until we moved the house in 1945.

Joan: Where was the house originally and where did they move it?

Norma: The house was on Winchester and third. That elm tree that was in front is still there. I think that's an elm, and it's right in the same place. It was right on the ditch, I remember. That's where the house was in 1945. The house next door, Mr. Tansil; he had property out south of here, a homestead out there, I guess.

Joan: He was white?

Norma: He was black. The house caught fire the same year, I think, that my sister came from Texas on the way to New York. Dad bought what was left standing. When he moved the house, he got Mr. Brown to add to the house. He added a bathroom and three bedrooms.

Joan: Where is it now?

Norma: It's on Fourth Street. It's the second house from Katz.

Joan: Mr. Brown would be?

Norma: Mr. Brown, his first name was Frank. He lived in my Uncle Henry's house there on the corner. He did the work. I remember they, after the house was moved, they dug a basement. I remember the boys, Freddie and Charlie Gibson used to come over and help us wheel that dirt out in the wheelbarrow. There was a ledge, or course, around because the house was already there. They dug that basement and it was accessible from the outside.

Joan: Did you get electricity at that time?

Norma: We got plumbing at that time. Electricity we had before we moved.

Joan: We know from some of the other interviews we've done, it was so easy to pick up a house and move it because they had no plumbing, wires or anything attaching to it.

Norma: They took the chimney down, I remember that.

Joan: What year did you graduate?

Norma: 1951.

Joan: Do you remember about how many were in your class?

Norma: 40, I think.

Joan: I know in your email, you lamented the fact that there were no girls' sports.

Norma: Yes, I was looking forward to gym, you know, and when I was in sixth grade, the seventh graders had gym. Then when I was a seventh grader, it was just the eighth grade had gym. Then when I was eighth grade, was back to the seventh. I never ever got to have it. In grade school, we'd play baseball in recess. I remember I was always right behind the pitcher. When a fly ball came, you caught it, then you would get to go up to bat. That's where I always stood.

Rosetta: And you went to Northside?

Norma: Yes.

Joan: Why wasn't there gym? The war was going on then, but I can't...

Norma: I don't know why they didn't have it.

Rosetta: Probably someone on the school board didn't want their daughter out for gym.

Norma: I don't know why they did that, but I know I was looking forward to it, and then that year it wasn't offered to my grade. I remember they had a call for anybody who wanted to go out for a play and everything. I know my brother was in a play, and my sister was in a play. I thought I'd like to be in a play. I went, but they never called me to read or do anything, so I was never in a play or anything. I remember being in the operetta in the third grade. Northside had an operetta. There were some other girls that stayed with the Martins; they were going to school here there. Drusilla, was their mother; Meta Jo, Charlotte, and Maxine were her three girls. Seems like the last name was Johnson. They stayed with the Martins. Dolores was in it; June was in it. I guess it was all-school. We were flowers. June was a columbine. Mother made my costume. It was made out of crepe paper. I remember the teacher picked me to try the little hat on. I was a Bluebell; they had blue crepe paper with green on the top.

Joan: You wouldn't want to get wet with that on!

Norma: Yes, but it was a lot of fun to be in that.

Joan: What activities were you in in high school? Were you in any clubs?

Norma: Yes Kays. Do you remember Kays? The pep club.

Joan: You were in the chorus?

Norma: I was in the chorus, I remember that, and I remember starting to take lessons on the clarinet because my niece played saxophone. She had a saxophone, and she played in the band. I never did get that far. Mr. Rosel was the teacher when I first started, and Doreen, I don't remember her name. I remember sitting in the hall, practicing.

Joan: Now you went to school with Dorsey?

Norma: No, he was older.

Joan: So when did the romance start there?

Norma: Well, let's see. I don't remember exactly. (*I think it was when he was in the navy. I started corresponding with him.*) We were always with the Gaines. I had a cousin, William Sellers. He had a car, and Leon had a car. Gaines had a Model T Ford, and we used to get together and we called it "Ditch'em". It was played at night, one chasing the other. They'd turn off their lights and turn a corner. Well, you couldn't tell they'd turned the corner, so you might keep on going. That's what we used to do. We'd just ride around.

Joan: Did you do that "Ditch 'em" in Kinsley? On the city streets?

Norma: Yes. There wasn't too much traffic. Yes, we used to do that. I remember we used to go to Larned to get hamburgers. They made the best hamburgers, big hamburgers. The Blue Goose, I think they called that place.

Joan: Now, was that a segregated place?

Norma: I don't know. No, it had to be because we used to go to the kitchen to order. We'd go in there and...you know...just being together. I suppose somewhere in there...

Joan: Somewhere in there, there was a spark.

Norma: Yes.

Joan: You got married in '48? Were you engaged first?

Norma: No.

Joan: What was your wedding like?

Norma: Well, we just went and got married.

Joan: It was in Great Bend, right?

Norma: Yes. I think it was in his house. The Reverend Moon was my Mom and Dad's pastor. He was the pastor in Great Bend. We used to go down to Larned at that church. (That church is gone.) Not every Sunday, but most Sundays. That's who married us, Reverend Moon, in Great Bend.

Joan: In Dorsey's home?

Norma: No, his house.

Joan: The Reverend Moon's house.

Norma: Yes.

Joan: Who stood up with you?

Norma: My Mom and his son was there. Now, I just pulled that thing out last evening, and there was my marriage certificate. I looked at it, and his son signed it.

Joan: Did you just have a suit on?

Norma: No, I was just there. It wasn't really a planned wedding or anything like that.

Joan: Did you go on a honeymoon?

Norma: No.

Joan: Where did you live after you were married.

Norma: We stayed with my parents. Then he went to Kansas City to school, mechanics school, and I graduated.

Joan: Okay, you got married before you graduated. The mechanics school, was that civilian? Or was it a military school.

Norma: No, he was a civilian. He worked in Kansas City for the city and was a mechanic.

Joan: He passed away in Kansas City.

Norma: Yes.

Joan: Were you with him at that time?

Norma: Yes.

Joan: It was probably a hard time.

Norma: It was. You know, I hadn't been away from home, and we didn't really have a doctor and anything. He didn't complain, and I didn't even know he was sick until that day, or the night before he passed.

Joan: I'm trying to think. Did you have children at that time?

Norma: Yes. Kenny, Pam and Sandy. Pam and Sandy were in Kansas City. Kenny was in Kinsley.

Joan: That's right, your son was living with your parents.

Norma: Yes, when I was in Oregon, he didn't like the schools out there. They were a little different than the schools here. The kids were wild and unruly there. He complained about that. Mom and Dad wanted him to stay here, so he came here.

Joan: Do you think that was a good thing for him?

Norma: Well, yes, in a way. I might have been a little harder on him, I think, if he had been with me.

Joan: He is the only child that lived with your parents?

Norma: That lived with them, yes. Paul came out and started school. He went to kindergarten in Kinsley for maybe a year. His birthday's in November, and I wanted him to go to school, and he wanted to go.

Joan: So he got an early start.

Norma: You had to be five before you could start school in Oregon, or something like that. So he started out here.

Joan: So why did you go west?

Norma: Well, my brother went west. He was living in Larned, and he didn't have anything and wasn't getting anywhere. He just decided to go somewhere else. He didn't know where they were going; he just started west. I remember he kind of went south down into Arizona and down that way somewhere. The next time we heard he was in Utah. You could stop and pick cherries and things like that. Then the next time we heard from him, he was in Portland. When he was out there, he met Paul Kennedy. He was the one who got him a place to stay, and told him where he might get a job. They liked it there, so they stayed there. Then we went to visit a few years later. I loved it. My brother, the one next to me, his family went. That was after Dorcey had passed. He passed in May, and we were going to go out there...

Joan: What year was that?

Norma: 1954. We were going to go out; the folks were going to go out, so we had decided we would go and he would look for a job there. But he passed away in May, so I went and my brother Lewis went with his family. They just loved it there; and they stayed. They didn't come back at all. I remember, I had to apply for Dorcey's social security and that kind of thing, so I came back and did that. Then I went back in January. I got back there in January.

Joan: Now was there a black community out there?

Norma: Oh yes, there are a lot of black people out there.

Joan: So was the segregation still evident? Or not so evident?

Norma: No, it was not as evident. I never, ever heard about anything like that, you know, in restaurants and things. In fact, there was a lot of intermarriage out there.

Joan: Really, that's early. Of course, WWII, was down in that area. You told us earlier, when we were writing things down, you were a maid?

Norma: I was a maid at Meier Frank, that was the biggest department store there. My sister-in-

law was working there as a maid. They needed somebody, and I went and applied.

Joan: What does a maid do in a department store?

Norma: They clean the bathrooms, clean the paper up.

Joan: You were in the bathrooms? I remember when I was a child, there was an attendant in the bathrooms? So you were there all the time to assist people?

Norma: Yes.

Joan: That's gone away.

Norma: Yes. It's gone away. And then of course, some of them were stock people. I remember a lady quit, or had to have an operation or something. I thought I wanted to be a stock girl. So I transferred to stock. I was doing something one day, and the manager said, "Norma, get over here and fold this table!" Well, I didn't move for a little bit. I didn't just jump and do it. And then I just went back to the stockroom and said, "This is it for me." Then I went back to being a waiting room attendant, and they made more money anyway.

Joan: Did you get tips as a maid?

Norma: No, it was just salary. We got more than the stock girls and more than the elevator operators. It was pretty nice, and it was nice to meet the people. I remember walking home from work one evening. (*The man asked for a dime.*) Transportation was a dime, and I didn't have a dime. So I walked home. I remember it must have been about five or six miles, I guess. But I worked there until 1957. I went to help my brother. He had an operation and his wife was still working. I went over there, and the girl was still a baby. I went over there to help them out. In 1962, they called me to the post office. I had put in an application there and at Tektronics. I didn't get the job at Tektronics and I wanted to cry. (*I was very disappointed*) because I wanted to go to work. But that was like in May, and then by September the post office called me to work in there.

Joan: What did you do at the post office?

Norma: A clerk sorting mail (*at the main office for 17 years, and a window technician (T-6) at a branch for 11 years*).

Joan: All this time you were a maid, you were also having children?

Norma: Yes.

Joan: Alright, we've had other ladies tell us, at that time when you went to the hospital to have the children, how long would you be off from work?

Norma: I don't know, let me see. (*I didn't return to work after Paul was born.*)

Joan: Brenda was '60, Kay was '59, and Paul was '57, Jackie was '55.

Norma: Wait a minute, I think I was carrying Paul... (*I didn't go to work after Paul was born until '62 at the Post Office.*)

Joan: So when you were having the children, you were home? I guess you mentioned earlier, but we didn't get it on the tape, you were born in Kinsley in the hospital?

Norma: No, not in the hospital.

Joan: At home? And your doctor was?

Norma: Dr. Stoltenberg.

Joan: And do you remember your mother...people have said, you know, that ladies got to lie in bed for five days.

Norma: Yes, ten days you had to stay in bed every time! We talk about that's not fair now. I wanted to get up, but, "No, you can't get up. You can dangle your feet after two days." And now, they're out of the hospital in two days.

Joan: Or one. So when you were having children, it was ten days.

Norma: I had to lie on the bed ten days.

Joan: And then you couldn't walk!

Norma: Right. And I remember after Stanley was born, I was sick. I thought I was going to have to go back to the hospital; I remember them saying something about malaria.

Joan: In Oregon?

Norma: No, that was in Kinsley. He was born in Dodge; he was the first one born in a hospital.

Joan: But still, malaria here?

Norma: But I remember them talking about that. But I didn't go back to the hospital.

Joan: And the doctors, did you ever feel there was any different treatment for your family with our local doctors?

Norma: Dr. Stoltenburg, I remember he came out that night. Mom called him. He came out and I remember he was there all night. She didn't have to call him so early, but he was here all night.

Joan: And this was Kenny. Was he a big baby?

Norma: He was seven pounds, all of them were seven or eight pounds, I think.

Joan: Normal.

Norma: Mellow Dee, she was a big baby. She was nine pounds.

Joan: So you worked for the post office until...?

Norma: Until 1990, 28 years.

Joan: So you got to retire from there.

Norma: I retired. I heard about the retirement thing, they were giving a lump sum and that they were going to stop that if you didn't retire by November that year. I didn't know anything about it, but I had my Mom there still at that time. My dad was gone by that time. I had my Mom and had to have somebody come in. You couldn't get anybody. My daughter Jackie was coming in, and she would be always late, and it made me late. Anyway, I thought, I'll just retire and take care of everything.

Joan: Well, let's go through your kids. You can tell us what they're doing now. Kenny is:

Norma: He's a professor at the University of South Carolina.

Joan: And Steven?

Norma: Stephen passed away at 10 months.

Joan: So he passed away in 1949. And Stanley?

Norma: Stanley is a painter; he's still working in Portland. And Pamela taught school; she's retired. Jacqueline is almost through raising her family, I guess. She's in Vancouver.

Joan: Paul?

Norma: Paul is working now for FedEx. He's a truck driver.

Joan: Does he live in Oregon too?

Norma: Yes, he's in Portland.

Joan: Kaye Lynn?

Norma: Kay Lynn works for Standard Insurance. Brenda works for Leupold Stevens. They make scopes, rifle scopes, binoculars, and things.

Joan: Now, you never went to college, and Kenny obviously did. Did your other children?

Norma: Pamela went to college. Pamela and Kenny are the only ones who did. I went to real estate school. I didn't really get started in real estate because I was still working in the post office.

Joan: How do you think living in Edwards County affected your life? You have an unique situation.

Norma: Well, I just think that my childhood and the way I came up and everything made me

shy, and I didn't talk to people. I'm still just kind of getting into doing that right now. When I went to Portland, it was, "Oh, you don't talk very much, do you?" And that just made it worse. I remember having this book that I sent for; it was from a coupon in a magazine about a conversation or something because I wanted to be able to converse. Because I didn't read or associate with anybody or anything. We weren't allowed to be there when people came to visit, you know. Mama would always say, "Oh you kids go play. Nobody came to see you." We'd go, and usually didn't go play; I was just standing there around the corner. I wasn't in the room, but I didn't socialize with anybody.

Joan: I think in our email, you said there weren't dances when you were growing up. Now living in Kansas City, with Dorsey, was that...

Norma: I wasn't there that long, so I didn't meet a whole lot of people. We didn't have a car or anything like that. Mostly what I did there was look for a job, which I didn't find, except I worked for another girl at a hotel one time. But that's how living in Edwards County, or Kinsley, affected me. It was not the same way with my sisters. Like Mellow Dee, she was just kind of witty, and she just seems like she knows what to say. Even now, it was easy for her to make friends and converse.

Joan: Your dad liked to sing. Did you have a piano in the house?

Norma: Yes, we always had a piano.

Joan: Who played?

Norma: Mom and Mellow Dee. Mellow Dee kind of played by ear, and I think that's why she played at the theater all through high school. Between movies, I think, in the silent movie days. She played the piano well, I understand. (*After graduating from high school*) she went to Hutchinson (my aunt lived in Hutchinson) and joined the Doug White Band.

Joan: Have you had a good life?

Norma: Yes. I fell very blessed. I know the Lord, so I don't have any money problems or anything like that.