

**Interview with Dennis Kindsvater**  
**March 3, 2011**  
**Conducted in the Kinsley Library, Kinsley, Kansas**  
**Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library**

Joan: What is your full name?

Dennis: Dennis Stinson Kindsvater.

Joan: Where do you currently reside?

Dennis: In Kinsley, Kansas.

Joan: When and where were you born?

Dennis: In Kinsley, Kansas, in 1939, November 25.

Joan: And what were the names of your parents?

Dennis: Andrew Kindsvater, he had no middle name, and Darlene Kindsvater. Velda was her first name, she didn't like people to know that. *Darlene was her middle name.*

Joan: And what was her maiden name?

Dennis: Stinson.

Joan: And your grandparents. What were their names?

Dennis: Oscar Stinson and Bertie Stinson. They lived in Kinsley. And Henry Kindsvater and Sophie Kindsvater, they too lived in Kinsley, but Henry passed away in 1942 when I was three years old, depending on when my birthday was, because I don't remember the day he passed away. But I have one memory of him. That memory is of butchering a hog. In Kinsley where they lived, it was hung up in the doorway of the garage adjacent to the home, and my mother didn't want me to see that. But I convinced my grandfather. It was quite a contest between him and my mother, but he prevailed.

Joan: Did you see the hog killed and butchered?

Dennis: No, that part I was not allowed to see. I remember very much wanting to see the butchering of it because they made not only all the meat parts from the hog, but also soap that came from the cooking of the fat. I learned about that process, I was extremely interested in it. I remember to this day the hanging hog in the doorway to the garage. That's the only memory I have of my Grandfather Kindsvater. They spoke German all the time in the home. According to Mom, I was using a lot of German words because I was there so much. He would come and get me each morning in the car, and I guess almost have whiplash when he'd take off letting his clutch out too fast in his car. But he gathered me up almost every morning, and I was there most of the day until Mom became tired of it. He wanted, as a matter of fact, for me to move in up there. He and I were buddies, I am told.

Joan: I'm thinking of the German name. Did he make sausage and things like that, or was it just general?

Dennis: Oh my goodness, my grandmother was...her famous dish was dumplings and I would absolutely die for the recipe for the dumplings made by Grandmother. Living with them were three of their children, dad's brother Daniel and sisters, Louise and Esther. Louise and Esther worked in the hospital, Louise in the kitchen and Esther, I'm not sure, as a nurse and/or cook aid. I think a nurse's aid was what she did. But I was there so much while growing up that...and they had a hundred acre farm out north of town, which I currently own, that they initially settled at when they moved here from Pawnee Rock, where they came first.

Rosetta: Do you know about what year that was that they came in?

Dennis: I know they went through the, what's the name of the island in New York?

Rosetta: Ellis?

Dennis: Ellis Island, in 1900. They were the last that were able to get out of Russia, because they came from Russia. Their parents had immigrated to Russia from Germany because Catherine the Great was interested in the Germans taking over the farming in the Volga Region of Russia. Then there became such a distrust later of the Germans by the Russians that they were sent, most of them, to Siberia. The escape from Russia to Germany was such that they were among the last to make it back to Germany, and then to America, in either 1900. They came to Pawnee Rock with some of Grandpa's brothers. One of them, Jake, wound up down in Coldwater. I'm not sure of the names of the other brothers, but I think there were three brothers that came over and they settled out near Rozel or Ransom or someplace around in there, in Dighton. (*Clarified later: George settled in Dighton and Adam and Dave wound up near Jetmore.*)

Joan: What brought him here to Kinsley?

Dennis: Water. That's the question I asked of Daniel. Daniel was a bit of a historian, and he was the last to die of the 13 children that Grandpa and Grandma Kindsvater had. Dad was the youngest. Dad and his sister Louise were the youngest. My grandfather settled first in Pawnee Rock. Then because of what he regarded as a highly valuable resource, water, being so close to the surface here, they moved from there to Kinsley, and wound up buying the 100 acres north of town. They did live southwest of Kinsley, over more south of Offerle, on what was called the Leitner Ranch. Probably it was, I would say, eight to ten miles southwest of Kinsley. I've been to the place, and it was a rented facility, a monstrous home. There's pictures of that I can get for you, from my cousin in Fresno, California, who was Manual's son. Anyway, water was the resource that Grandpa highly desired and so they came to Kinsley and settled here. We were able to drill a water well by hand, to easily do so. Everybody did it, that's how we watered our lawn, we just drilled by hand.

Joan: It was only down a few feet then.

Dennis: Yes, only down six, seven, eight feet. If you went down ten or 12 feet, you couldn't pump it dry. So we cleaned our trailers and truck with well water. Earl Stinson, my uncle, had that. Everybody in town that had any needs beyond just a little in the way of water had their own well because it was simple. You could do it all in a day by yourself. That was what appealed to my grandfather and brought him to Kinsley, or so he told my dad.

Rosetta: Were there other German traditions that they brought with them? Do you remember any others at Christmas or....

Dennis: Well I know one thing, because of WWII, they were disinterested in speaking German outside the home because of the shame brought upon them by Hitler and his destruction to the world.

Joan: Did they ever talk about the people having any backlash during the war towards them because they were Germans?

Dennis: Well, they did not exactly roam around freely. They were in pretty tightly knit groups because they were ashamed of what Hitler and Germany had done in both wars, but particularly the Second. So one of the reasons I didn't learn German well was once Grandfather died when I was 2 ½ years old, I wasn't at their home as much. If anybody else was there only English was spoken because it was not something they were proud of. And that's unfortunate for me, having been denied that privilege of learning the language so easily. But I do have that warm feeling of things that remind you of things and times you love when I'm around German speaking people. The cooking of the Germans and the loving nature of the Germans and how much I was attracted to that made me feel good. I respond positively to that.

Joan: What brought your mother's people here to this area?

Dennis: Grandpa Stinson came here from Iowa where he was engaged in farming. He used teams of horses to haul coal. That's what he did here too, but why here rather than in Iowa, I'm not sure.

Joan: By hauling coal, do you mean delivering it to homes or to...

Dennis: Yes. Then it began to be longer distances, but from and to, I don't know.

Joan: He did it from the railroad first.

Dennis: Probably.

Joan: And Stinson, is that Scandinavian or English?

Dennis: English as far as I know. Then he started hauling cars with the first trucks that there were from auto factories. I don't know where they were from, but I have a picture of one of his haulers that I'll bring you.

Joan: What year would that be when he started?

Dennis: Hauling cars? I would guess in the '20's. Mother was born in 1919, Dad was born in 1918. Oscar Stinson started the trucking business. They called him O.C. His name was Oscar Commodore, but he didn't like the name Commodore, so he was known as O.C. But that's how the trucking business began. When my father got out of the army in WWII, and I'll need to tell you about his survival there, I'm jumping ahead a little bit. Do you want to ask questions or...

Joan: Oh, we're doing fine, but we need to talk about your dad if he was in WWII.

Dennis: I remember my father when he went to the war, because there were two children when he was finally drafted in the army, drafted. So he wasn't among the first, being born in 1918. By 1943, he would have been perfect for being drafted, 25 years old. I recall the night he left, we lived...do you remember where Jory's Restaurant was along the highway? In the house that was torn down about three

years ago, just immediately east? That's where we lived, in an old junk pile then. I remember it in want of or in need of repair. The folks were totally broke. It was a rented home, but I remember my mother crying the night he left. He got down on his knees when he left and handed me a dollar bill and told me to take care of Mom and the kids. That would have been when I was like four, about the time Grandpa died. Then they moved after he left over to a place, do you remember the Moletors? Where they lived over, well, from that Quonset on the highway, my father built that. That was the second trucking business place, from that Quonset on the west side, north of there about a house or two was where we were moved to after Dad left for the war. It was nearer my Grandfather Stinson. My mother wanted to be near them when Dad was gone because the walk was like easily two blocks to my Grandpa and Grandma Stinson.

Joan: You mother had three children at this time you said?

Dennis: Tom, my youngest brother, me and my sister Pat, she was second. Tom was born in 1944 or '45, about the time the war ended.

Joan: So when your father left she was probably pregnant then?

Dennis: Either that, or became pregnant very soon after when we went down on a bus to some base where they were being trained at the time to go to war. But there was only one interlude during the whole time where we lived someplace other than Kinsley, and that was for about six months in Bremerton, Washington, where one of the Stinsons, Mom's sister, Fern, lived. Mom tried to go there. I don't know why we came back, but we did.

Joan: Where did your dad serve then?

Dennis: In Germany. He was in the Battle of the Bulge, and he served until the war ended. He would tell a few stories about the war, but he was very reluctant to talk about it. It was hard to jar loose any of his memories of it. The way I was able to succeed in doing that before he died, was to get some CD's of Hitler's speeches. And all the hoopla that preceded his speeches where he would get the whole crowd psyched up and almost crazy so when he said his first word they were fainting and falling. All the signs and paraphernalia, the bands, and the badges everybody wore. Hitler was a wonderful speaker in the sense that he knew how to get the crowd on his side. He accomplished most of that before he got to talking. He was late for all his speeches, the crowd was sweating and worked up. You know, he was bringing Germany out of the Depression through the investment that they'd made in all the war materials. So it was good for Germany economically to have this marauding of Europe going on. It was at their expense; Germany benefited. Anyhow, that's straying away a little bit.

Joan: You remember him leaving, do you remember him coming back?

Dennis: I remember him leaving and I very vividly recall him coming back. He came in on a train with a bunch of other soldiers. We lived in that home north of the Quonset building. I remember there were so many people in the home. I remember here comes this man very red faced and very big. He was 6'2", and I thought a giant of a man then, but of course everybody was very happy to see him, a lot of crying. But he then started working in the trucking business for my grandfather as a driver. Then he wanted to do his own trucking business, and my grandfather helped him get his own permit. In those days, it was very difficult. You had to go to Topeka and get an attorney to represent you and demonstrate with the customers you took with you their need for transportation that was unfulfilled. It was quite an ordeal. If you had the rights for trucking, and they were county by county origins and

county by county state-wide destinations. Very, very strict and very valuable. Now that we have deregulation, and have had for 20 years or so, that's all history. But it was quite an ordeal. I bet I was in Topeka 20 times when my grandfather and my father were asking for extensions of areas operations. In fact, my Grandpa Stinson couldn't read or write, and he was very successful and would take me a couple times with him to read the maps that they would present him in Topeka. They'd say, "Oscar, what counties do you have?" "Well I didn't bring my glasses," and he'd fumble around. He was ashamed to say he couldn't read or write. They all knew it, but he wouldn't admit to it. He signed his name with an "X" but he was very good. He had a fabulous memory. He was very bright. He could figure very close to what a load of wheat or corn was worth. He would buy and sell a load of wheat or corn off the hip. He'd never use a pencil because it didn't do no good. (Dad's first permits were for hauling petroleum products. Then later, grain, cattle, and machinery.) The first permit was all petroleum products from McPherson and El Dorado, *(to coops in Ford County, KS)*.

Joan: For gas stations?

Dennis: No, it was to the tanks. At that time the overhead tanks that were used to haul fuel from to farmers. He did that, and the tanks would hold I think three or four thousand gallons. The trucks had little six cylinder engines with five-speed transmissions. The hills between here and Dodge City that no one would know about now, I know very well because of riding with Dad in the truck, as I did it thousands of times, he would have to downshift to make that hill because immediately west of Spearville, there's a rise in the road. No driver would ever know that today because trucks just consume more fuel and go the same speed. But you sure did in those days because those little engines were barely able to make it. But I learned to drive early because like all kids with a Dad with a truck line, I couldn't wait to drive it. I was hauling gasoline and grain and cattle, when I was in junior high with no license.

Joan: No license?

Dennis: I was stopped all the time and it was, "Who are you?" with no log book, no license. "My father owns this." "Oh, Oh." That was my pass. It's hard to believe you could do that, but I went through so many scales hauling grain.

Joan: So this would have been about...

Dennis: 1952, or '53, thereabouts. At 14 years old I was driving trucks to Kansas City and all around.

Joan: Loaded with fuel?

Dennis: Well, for me, cattle and grain... Dad made me wait until I was around 15 to haul fuel. But at that time, I could go and unload the trucks. He had three tankers at the height of his fuel hauling days, and the men would be tired. Cliff Riddle was one driver, and Ralph Franklin was another, we only had two. They'd bring, and Dad, would bring the loads from McPherson and El Dorado to Kinsley. Our biggest haul was to Dodge City. We hauled to Dodge City, Bucklin, Ford, Kingsdown, Jetmore... Then Grandpa Stinson hauled to Ransom and places north. But anyhow, I was good at unloading the fuel because my dad had taught me how *(and I was very proud and happy to be helpful)*. I was so good at backing up a semi that to prospect drivers Dad would say, "I bet that kid can out-back you." I never ever failed him. He knew exactly what kind of test to give me. The truck line then grew from hauling only gas and then to grain and cattle. We also hauled Mayrath augers made in Dodge City, Kansas, you know the grain augers that were invented by Mayrath, in open-top cattle trailers, to Canada. That was a

big deal for Dad, a great haul. He would never let me go (*on the truck with him*), because I was head slave around the truck line. I got to grease all the trucks and change the tires and all that. He wouldn't let me be go to Canada..

Joan: Now did he pay you?

Dennis: No. Never, I didn't even expect it because I was privileged to be able to engage in athletics. Because when I got out of high school class, in order to be allowed to play football, basketball and track, which I did. After practice, I had to look at the blackboard at the truck lot, which was just one block from the high school, and see what jobs there were for me to do that night. Those were to change the oil in, say, #23, and fix flat tires on a truck or trailer, etc. But everybody worked. It wasn't just me. All my classmates were mostly farmers. They were running tractors at night. It was just what you did; it was nothing. You didn't feel special, but I had to do that work.

Joan: You went to your athletic practice and then went to work.

Dennis: Yes, that was it. Sometimes I couldn't wait, and I'd run home and grab a sandwich or something and then come back. I'd have to kind of sneak to do that, because Dad would be very anxious about getting the work done. Because he couldn't hire somebody to do that. He being close to broke.

Joan: It wasn't a labor shortage. It was an economic shortage

Dennis: No, I didn't get my second coat for the winter until I was in junior high school because prior to that, I had one coat for the winter. School, and church and work.

Joan: Was he putting money back into the trucking while he was working and building up the business?

Dennis: Yes, you had to. But everybody was poor. You didn't know anybody except Ed Lippoldt that had money. Ed Lippoldt had a Cadillac and hauled oil around in the front seat of his car and hay in the trunk. We hauled cattle for him. He was the only man around that I recall had money. I guess that's not true, Judy Elmore's grandfather who had Mammel's, what was his name? Swedlund, he was, and I guess the banker was. What was his name? He was the one that Dad convinced to help him with his first truck. That was a very momentous day, I remember. Dad came home crying with happiness that he was able to talk them into a loan.

Joan: Do you know what trucks cost back then?

Dennis: No. I don't, but I know what...I remember hearing about what a new Buick cost. It was either \$3,900 or \$4,900. I drove a Model T to school when I was a junior, one that a lady owned in west Kinsley, and I had to crank it to start it. I was quite pleased with that; it beat a bicycle. But one of the nice things you usually wouldn't expect the little narrow tires on a Model T to do well for you in mud, but for some reason, that tiny car, you couldn hardly get one stuck. On the muddiest roads in the area, you could not get one stuck. You know how you think the floatation tires are the only solution? Not true, because the ground five, six, seven inches down is hard. Those narrow tires would go to the hard part of the road. So I never, ever got stuck with that car.

Joan: You were in all the sports in high school in your teens?

Dennis: I was big in basketball. I'm not bragging, but that was my game. In fact, Coach Carpenter was so angry with me when I graduated because I wouldn't go to a junior college. My mother thought I was unusually smart, like all mothers do. You know, little Johnny is the smartest kid in town; they still think so today. And you know it's an emotional thing. My mother thought I was, so I was always the youngest in my class. I guess I was 16 when I went into my senior year.

Joan: Your grandfather couldn't read or write. But somewhere your education was important.

Dennis: Oh my mother preached that to me daily. Clyde Lovellette was a big basketball star in that day, and because I was interested in basketball, I worshipped going to KU. That was an insane obsession because I hurt myself. Couch Carpenter called and said, "You're growing, you're still maturing." For instance, at the beginning of my senior year, I could not dunk a basketball. I was 6'3". But I could jump like two rabbits. It was my game. I was good at it. But at the beginning of the basketball year in September or October, I couldn't dunk a ball. At the end of the year, I could. I was just really going. There were scouts that would come from many colleges. Dad was very angry with me about this. I was offered and refused full ride scholarships to all the Kansas schools except K-State and KU. Dad was very angry with me.

Joan: So when you went to KU you had to pay the bill yourself?

Dennis: No, he did it, but he was very angry about it. Because he could have...and Carpenter, and Dad had enlisted his support because he was the coach, he said, "You are the best basketball player I've ever coached. You're just too damned young. If you'd just give yourself a year or two, I guarantee you'll play at KU." I tried to walk on as a player, did it my way. Wilt Chamberlain was one year ahead of me, the great, great basketball player. I survived the first cut, and I was praying to survive the second, but I didn't. They cut me. But it's understandable, I was a big fish in a little pond. You know how your perspective in Kinsley, Kansas is when you're a kid who doesn't travel anywhere except where you haul cattle to. It's so myopic, you have no idea how the big world works. I wish I had some peers from bigger communities, or at least some travels, so I could have had a bigger world view of things and been able to look at myself better because I really harmed myself in something that I loved.

Joan: Did you get to play a little bit with Wilt?

Dennis: Only for three weeks until they cut me.

Joan: Well, but that's something!

Dennis: Then I became a spectator just like everybody else.

Joan: Did they have intramurals then?

Dennis: I was so distraught by that, I couldn't hardly look at a basketball court for a while. It's called immaturity.

Joan: What year did you graduate?

Dennis: From high school? 1957.

Joan: Did Kinsley do well in basketball that year?

Dennis: Yes, we went...we beat the heck out of Pratt. I remember my fellow players and I stuffed it right down their throat. But for the second or third game of my life, I fouled out in the last game, Haven beat us in the third tournament I think it was. They were simply better than we were. As simple as that. But we did very well.

Joan: That is really interesting. So now you are at KU. We've got you there, and you were going to major in...?

Dennis: I went first for pre-med, but when I saw my first cadaver, I changed my mind. I couldn't take that. I went into engineering, and then business.

Joan: Before we go on, I wanted to talk about the Arkansas River and what it was like.

Dennis: Growing up, it was flowing well. It was abundant with catfish and carp. Carp, I didn't know it until I left for college, but it was something we all ate. You take that black stripe away down the side and it was good eating from a pressure cooker. It was loaded with bone, but that was not an issue once it was pressure cooked. You'd eat the bones too. So we loved and ate carp, and I speared them in the river. We made spears at the shop of the truck line, and I could get them myself because they were so big you could see their backs. They are top feeders that go along the edge, and I got all the carp we ever needed. Hunting too, which I dearly loved to do. I didn't pay any attention to regulations, and neither did anybody else. I never saw a game warden until after college, in my life.

Joan: What were you hunting?

Dennis: Pheasant, quail.

Joan: What about rabbit?

Dennis: Oh yes, they're not that good a eating. The rabbits were being sought after. They were good for...they paid for rabbits. There was a bounty on them. If you hauled them to Dodge City, you could sell them.

Joan: Was that just to get rid of them because there were so many?

Dennis: No, they were for the pelt. There was some kind of a mink farm, I think, in Dodge. Anyway, there was some use for fur but mostly for mink. I never did see that.

Joan: What about the deer population at this time?

Dennis: You rarely saw deer. If you saw a deer, you told people about it. Kind of like we would a lion these days. Yes, that's all new, the deer population.

Joan: Okay, now we'll go back to KU. I wanted to remember to talk about the river. So you went from pre-med, and then you told us the story other day about how you switched, got interested in changing colleges.

Dennis: Going from KU to Indiana? It was at the inauguration at Summerfield Hall, which was the business school built in the fall of '59. That was when it was inaugurated. Instead of watching a boring football game, I chose on TV (my little black and white that was about like this) I went to that



inauguration. There was a fellow there by the name of L. L. Waters, whose book you have, *Steel Trails to Santa Fe* was speaking. He was a visiting professor from Indiana University. I didn't know it then, but he had come from Ransom, or someplace up here north of us. When I went to talk to him after the speech because I was so impressed with him, he was head of the Department of Transportation at Indiana. He was just visiting here for a year or a semester, I forget. I was so impressed with him, and he took to me, and checked out my grades and all that. Then he called me up one day and asked me to come in, he wanted to talk to me. Then he said, "Look, I'd like you to come to Indiana University." I was totally taken aback. That would be like a trip overseas. Then, the money issue was there.

Joan: Did they have out-of-state tuition then?

Dennis: Yes, but I think our tuition in the fall of '57 was \$103 or \$107. That's what it was at that time. I remember when Dad built the filling station where Romano's is now located. He was going to get rich. He hauled fuel, so he thought, "Well, I'll sell it too." We sold diesel fuel, and I ran that station for a couple hours a day when school was out sometimes. Gordon Burnett worked for Dad; he died here a while back. He was the bulk fuel hauler. It was 4.9 cents a gallon for diesel fuel. True story, 4.9 cents. I don't recall what regular was.

Joan: I've got to go back. When you went to KU, did you have your car for when you went back and forth to college? Did you carpool?

Dennis: Yes, I made a deal with my father when I was a senior. He wanted me to break the 30 point level at school in a basketball game. It was at a game somewhere west of here, I think it was Cimarron. I wasn't doing well the first part of the game. I was stone cold. He hollered at me from the side, because Dad was not bashful. "Come on over here!" He and Carpenter were good friends, so Dad evidently thought he could get away with it. Anyhow, he said, "You make 25 points on this game and I'll buy you that damn Ford you've been looking at down there." There was an old, used Ford car. I think he was going to get me something to use for school, so this was just his excuse. I made over 25 points. I told my buddies at half-time, "Pass me the ball, I've got a deal with my Dad." And everybody helped me.

And McQueen, I've have to tell you what we did. McQueen out here raised watermelons near the sandpit. He and Dad were buddies, but one of my lessons in life was there. It was a tradition, we all stole watermelons. And we'd eat them out here at the park at the base of the overpass in front of the cops and everything. Well, we hauled a whole load of watermelons up the overpass and down there, and McQueen would shoot up in the air, and you'd hear all these pellets dropping around. It was a game, and he loved it. He'd plant watermelons for us thieves out there. But the thing that we all had to do though, was Dad would make me go out and work for him a couple days. So it became a game. Hell, there were more buddies out there working for him than there were at school sometimes. And I know it had to be a partnership among fathers. You know, you'd get these birds, "If you want any help, call me." So that was my punishment. Dad would come out there and take my keys to the car and whatever else and grab a watermelon on the way out. But we had to work out at McQueen's to work off our bad deeds.

Joan: As long as we've gone back in time a little bit, I assume you were in civilization, so you always had electricity and water and everything in the home?

Dennis: Yes, my Uncle John Kindsvater, north of town had a two- holer out there and a hand-pump for water and a windmill or a wind generator of some kind with a whole bunch of batteries in the building. So it had a light bulb hanging in to the living room, and that's how we got light in out there.

Joan: When did you get TV?

Dennis: When I was, I don't remember this very well because it was a black and white with a signal that came from Hutchinson. It was more snow than anything else. It would have been when we first moved, so it would have been either the sixth or the seventh grade. So it would have been, well go back to the sixth grade, it would have been 1952.

Joan: That's pretty early.

Dennis: I don't know why anybody would have bothered because the *Ed Sullivan Show* was about the only thing you could ever see. It was so snowy that the issue was the strength of the signal. I remember an FM station because I never heard one until I went to college. We didn't have FM stations out here.

Joan: We haven't talked to anybody about radio stations! I wonder how we missed that.

Rosetta: There never was one here in Kinsley was there?

Dennis: No, never as far as I know.

Joan: Where I grew up in Michigan for a while, my little town had a radio station, but not here.

Dennis: Saturday night was a very big deal here when I was in high school. Everybody looked forward to it. When I was in junior high and high school. It was a big night, and you could hardly wait for it. There was also the Old Settlers Picnic in the summer and Saturday night because all the farmers came to town and everybody else did too. They would park on both sides (it was a two-way street then) on both sides on main street. In fact I got my first ticket in my life coming back from college going down the wrong side of Main Street. I didn't know that it was changed. So it was '57, the summer or fall of '57 when the Main Street was being one way, not two way because I got a ticket doing that. I didn't know it! I thought it was as it always was while I was growing up. The cop, Kirkbride, he didn't care. He was mad at me, said I should have known. There was no excuse. I should have known better.

Joan: And so for the teenage entertainment, besides sports, and all of you had jobs, what was there?

Dennis: Fishing. It was a big deal. You'd go down to the railroad bridge near Nettleton, a prime fishing hole. You'd go down there and set bank lines and why you could bring home enough fish for Mom's deep freeze for weeks. And we had an International deepfreeze, a chest deep freeze which I thought was fantastic. That's where all the wild game went.

Rosetta: Did you like the Nettleton Bridge?

Dennis: Oh yes.

Rosetta: Wasn't that cool?

Dennis: It was! I mean that was kind of the epicenter of summer activity, and fall and spring in my opinion.

Joan: Did the boys and girls go?

Dennis: Yes, it was a hot spot when I was in school.

Joan: Probably in more ways than one.

Dennis: Yes, you took your girlfriends out there, everyone did. I mean it was...there were hundreds of people down there lots of weekends. I can't speak for the weekdays because we were working. But you'd work like the dickens so you could go fishing. And that wasn't too hard because Dad liked me to go because I'd run the bank lines at night and set the poles. He'd say go out and set and make them so you can get the limbs cut just right, cut the string and set it. Catch frogs, wait for a rainy day and get frogs for bait. They're the best. Worms if you didn't have that. But it was easy to dig worms. Just go to an old farm and the manure bed, and they're all around there. Big worms, and we used frogs, but I never did like grasshoppers.

Joan: And would they have bonfires?

Dennis: Oh absolutely, and even in the wintertime, we'd camp out there, all the time.

Joan: Tents?

Dennis: We'd go camping. Instead of having one fire, you'd have two. The reason for that was why sit around having your backside freeze? It didn't take too much ingenuity to have two or three fires. Everybody'd sit in the center and be warmed all the way around.

Joan: Well, I never figured that out.

Dennis: Well, you do if you go camping when it's zero. You warm up to ideas like that.

Joan: Was the river frozen then so it was more like ice skating?

Dennis: No, it ran all the time. Oh, there'd be some around some of the holes where there wasn't enough movement, but there was enough water in the river. You could not ice skate in the river. Everybody that tried it fell in.

The floods were the deal. I remember looking south from the Palace Theater, the year I don't recall, but you could see water coming up the road. I'm thinking it was south of Highway 50-56 to probably now where the swimming pool is or somewhere right in there. It came that far up from the river.

Joan: That would be from Coon Creek?

Dennis: No, it was from the river (Arkansas River). Coon Creek and the drainage sewer in the north part of Kinsley always was a problem because my grandfather's land that I now own, you couldn't get to it unless you waded through deep water to get there because that --What is that road one block over, not Winchester, but the north/south road immediately west of the Northside School? One block west.

Joan: That's Massachusetts.

Dennis: Massachusetts, yes. That's the eastern border of my land, so that Massachusetts Road, you know the Cemetery Road that runs east and west, the oil road? Well, from that point north, from like 50 yards north, is flooded every time we get big water around here. In fact, more than the river now because of the work that was done on it. But we didn't think much of it; it was the way it worked when it rained too much.

Joan: You just brought up a question, why do they call it an “oil road” when it’s paved?

Dennis: Because it’s made out of petroleum products.

Joan: I always thought that meant they used to treat dirt roads with, well I guess it was a petroleum product, they just sprayed to keep the dust down.

Dennis: They just sprayed heavy oil.

Joan: That’s what I always thought an “oil road” was, but here it’s an actual paved road.

Dennis: Well, they make it right out just west of town, still today. They put down sand first, then they spray it with oil, heavy oil, and just a road grader to turn it over. Then it becomes a product that will congeal and compress with their nice big rollers and make that nice road that you drive on. That’s what we always called it, an oil road.

Joan: I just wondered, because of my limited background.

Dennis: Let’s finish one thing, Saturday night was a hot night. Everybody loved Saturday night because it was the nicest time in western Kansas. Because you knew everybody and everybody knew you and the idea of anonymity being a virtue never occurred to anybody. And who could be in an environment like that? I recall going to New Jersey and living there, and I couldn’t stand everybody not knowing you. I hated the interaction that we missed by living there. I love this town. You have 3,000 friends instead of 30. That’s why little towns are so good.

Joan: And you went to the theater, I assume, to see to the movies.

Dennis: Oh indeed. Saturday matinee, where we watched Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers do their thing and Gene Autry.

Joan: As a teenager, were there drive-ins or anything?

Dennis: Well, the only one was in Dodge. But you didn’t do that because that was too much money go there and back.

Joan: There was skating, roller skating?

Dennis: That was an issue, gas too was probably a quarter. Now what?

Joan: Roller skating?

Dennis: The Feldman’s built a roller rink out here, which was what that dumpy building is just past the overpass. Marvin and Wilmer and Chet built that. I remember helping nail wood, until they didn’t like my nailing. I couldn’t hit the nails well enough.

Rosetta: About what year was that, that they built it?

Dennis: I guess 1953. But the reason I know it is because my cousin. Wilmer Feldman was my uncle, he married Mother’s sister, Mabel Stinson. So Gene Feldman and Colleen Feldman were my cousins, and they built that skating rink. Of course, I was invited to come drive nails.

Joan: At that time, was the trucking business out there too?

Dennis: Yes. The first place for our trucking business, do you know, if you go to the high school, the east/west road on the south side of the high school, and take it to the railroad tracks west. Do you know that little, bitty filling station there? That has nothing in it? It had two big, old, round pumps with the glass. Dad parked his first truck and then his second truck there. He rented it from, whoever, I don't know who owned it, and then he built that Quonset across the way and Rex Strait built that. That was a big deal, I was so impressed with that.

Rosetta: Was there ever a lot of competition between the Kindsvaters and the Stinson trucking line?

Dennis: Only as regards Earl Stinson, my mother's brother. He was a little bit, there was some family problems over that. But it wasn't a very big issue because he lucky to be able to cherry-pick from my Grandfather Stinson's hauling. My Grandfather Stinson hauled cattle, grain, gasoline and then fertilizer. And fertilizer paid the best; there was much, much more money in hauling fertilizer. So when Earl started trucking, he convinced Grandma and Grandpa, and that would have been my grandmother who spoke...to give that to Earl. Earl then began the trucking business. He only had, I think, one grain trailer and two or three fertilizer trailers, and that's what Earl did.

Joan: Were there other people in the trucking business at this time?

Dennis: Martin Haskell hauled milk. I changed his oil when we had that filling station out here that's now Romano's. Because he had a pit there that you could go down in and change the oil. When I had to work there, on Saturday mornings dad would send me out there to change the oil in Martin Haskell's truck and two and three other people that would wait for the weekend to do that because I was good at that.

Joan: Did the other little towns have trucking places? Or were you sort of "it"?

Dennis: No, well, I can't speak too well about other places, but I'm certain, beyond a reasonable doubt, that almost all little communities had their truck or two because there were farmers needing cattle hauled, and grain, so there was some of that. A lot of farmers had their own trailer, but it was difficult for all except the well-heeled farmers to own a semi.

Joan: You talked at one point about owning three trucks?

Dennis: And then when we got into cattle, he also started buying and selling grain. That caused Dad to buy more grain trailers, and then he got his first cattle hauling permit, hauling feeder cattle from the farmers mostly to the Dodge City sale barn. Then he started hauling fat cattle for Amour and Company to Kansas City. I got to haul a lot of those old cows for butchering. Cancer-eyed old cows, too old to be productive anymore.

Joan: Is he adding trucks? How many?

Dennis: Yes, and then Dodge City became the epicenter of Dad's business so much that he was in a car driving back and forth and gone most of the time. So much so that my junior and senior year, especially my senior year, there was the threat of moving Dodge City. The issue about taking me, I think, moved Dad back about a year because they were not going to take me from my friends and my school. I was going to live with Grandma and Grandpa, and I meant it. That was the only time I had an enormous

fight with my dad and that was the only time I prevailed. I rarely did that.

Joan: So after you graduated, he moved the business?

Dennis: In '59. My sister, I guess, had her bout with him. She was two years behind me. So it would have been the year that she graduated that he moved. Then Tom moved with them, and he disliked Dodge City so much that the folks sent him to Wentworth Military Academy in Missouri for a year or so, and then back to Dodge. So he had kind of a broken-up high school because of the folks moving to Dodge.

Joan: And they moved to Dodge because there was just more business there.

Dennis: That's where the sale barns, both north McKinley/Winters and the South Sale and Mayrath.

Joan: Were you hauling mainly cattle at that time?

Dennis: Yes. He had like 40 or 50 cattle trailers at the peak of his activity. That big growth came from hauling fat cattle for Iowa Beef Packers to Emporia, Dakota City, Nebraska; Dennison, Iowa; and some other places. Then to other odd places, Kansas City to Cudahy and Excel in Wichita. Feeder cattle were the big business. We hauled cattle from the southeast part of the United States. We even hauled a load of mules to New Orleans for Willis Grumbein in Dodge City. They went for export to be used down in South America for toting whatever up and down the mountains down there. I remember that because it was my first exposure to fresh oysters. Also, and this is, I think, interesting, when we stopped, I'd never seen segregation or rarely heard of it in my life, until that trip. It was when I was a senior in high school. Another guy and I went because it was two drivers, and sent down to haul this load of mules down to New Orleans for Willis Grumbein. At the restaurants where we would stop, I caught a glimpse of the Negro folks eating in the kitchen! That was my first introduction to segregation. You know, you'd think we lived in a hole out here or something because you never heard of it. At least put it this way, it had nothing to do with our lives in any way.

Joan: Did you have any black kids in your class?

Dennis: Yes, the Winchesters were here and we were essentially color-blind. I mean nothing that I ever recall ever was caused by virtue of one's color. I had Frank Molina, a Mexican, as a classmate. He was a very good friend. You have to be taught to be prejudiced, which I know is the case. Because to me it is unthinkable that anyone would be. We don't choose our parents, and how anybody could take it that somehow some higher being made them better than others has got to be the epicenter of, and the height of ignorance. That's just nonsensical.

Joan: When you were playing sports, did you play with....?

Dennis: Well sure. I mean, there was only one family in town that was Negro.

Joan: Well, I mean other teams.

Dennis: Oh yes, you didn't...it's impossible for people to think like that. But, can you imagine seeing a rabbit on the road and remembering it like something strange appeared? That's the way you felt about seeing a colored person. So what? It had nothing to do with anything. You have to be taught to be prejudiced and have parents who are in order to be thinking like that. And if you start thinking, how in

the hell can you be? Excuse my language. Who picks their parents?

Rosetta: Did you ever sit in the balcony of the Palace Theater? That was where the Hispanics and the Negroes sat.

Dennis: Not Frank Molina! I attended the theater with him all the time on Saturday afternoons.

Rosetta: And he sat down below?

Dennis: Absolutely.

Rosetta: I know Galen graduated in '59, but Pat, he went upstairs to sit with the Rincon boys.

Dennis: It absolutely did not happen with me because Frank was my friend. Frank Molina, my classmate, my class. Absolutely did not happen.

Rosetta: Did it happen to others?

Dennis: Not to my knowledge, and I wasn't asleep either.

Joan: Well at one time it was segregated that way, and in you are in the period now where it is changing, but it actually was.

Dennis: At that time?

Joan: I don't know.

Dennis: Well, I know it was in Mississippi when I was there.

Joan: After WWII, people changed a lot of their thinking, and here, I think, we have found that people did accept the Winchesters, Gaines and the others.

Dennis: Well, my father had one or two Negro truck drivers. Where they came from, I don't recall. I think they were strangers, but in my home and my grandfather's home and among my peers I never ever encountered that. I swear. It's just as hard to believe probably, as it is that I have never been exposed, offered, or accepted (well, I couldn't accept what wasn't offered) to marijuana. I've never, ever had it because I never wanted it. But nobody ever offered it. I never had a friend at school or college that used it. So did I live in a hole? I guess I did, in some ways. But no, it had nothing to do with me. But the thing about the Negroes eating in the kitchen, going back to that story, was shocking to me. That's when I was a senior. I thought it was horrible. I was ashamed to be eating there. I'm not saying I'm virtuous. I'm just saying you can't think that way unless you're a God damned idiot. Excuse my language.

Joan: We agree. Well, I don't think that...I think that Kinsley was much better than other places. I just heard the story last night, Rosetta knows it too, that Kenny Gains, who was a few years after you...

Dennis: He was in my brother's class I think.

Joan: He was playing basketball in St. John, I believe it was, and they went into eat at a restaurant, and

they wouldn't serve him. The whole team walked out. And that's the attitude that was in Kinsley.

Dennis: No it just wasn't a part of my life, and I'm glad of it.

Joan: Now going back, we only got you to Indiana, right? At this time, were you married?

Dennis: I got married after my Sophomore year in college.

Joan: And how did you meet your first wife?

Dennis: Connie was a classmate in high school.

Joan: And so you were...

Dennis: I didn't ever date her in high school, but I came back in the summer and she just happened to be around one night. You know, we were at the pool hall playing pool, as a matter of fact. She and some other girl were driving out back, as they always did, and "Hey, what are you doing there?" Which was the girls' way of saying, "Let's get together." Girls never say that, but you know, but they don't stop by just for cookies and milk. They were looking for the guys too.

Joan: So you met her that summer and married her that summer?

Dennis: No, she was a classmate of mine all through school.

Joan: I mean you met up that summer.

Dennis: I started dating her after my freshman year in college.

Joan: And got married that next year.

Dennis: Yes, a year later.

Joan: And so then you were a married student going to school.

Dennis: I can tell you that there were definitely religious problems that we had. I don't know if I ought to share this or not, but being a non-catholic marrying a catholic was a big deal. I had to go visit with the priest one time. After that, I refused. I wouldn't allow anyone to tell me or my children what they would do in terms of religion. I told him it wasn't anybody's business but mine and my wife's.

Joan: And she was okay with that?

Dennis: Yes, because we married outside the church. And because of that we were absolutely *persona non grata* in her home for a couple years. It wasn't until we started to have children that I guess they felt guilty enough about never being able to tell their friends that they had grandkids they didn't know. And that was the sole reason.

Joan: How did your family feel about you marrying a catholic?

Dennis: I would guess that they weren't exactly elated, knowing that...



Joan: Did they go to church?

Dennis: We did, the First Christian Church. I got attendance pins because my grandmother was big on going. Later, the church burned down, and she was a big contributor when it was rebuilt. She was very, very religious. She talked my grandfather into getting baptized. I remember that. He would never go to church. He was standing outside smoking a cigar until everybody got done.

Rosetta: I remember your grandmother. She was always in church, she was in the choir, with her hat and her gloves on.

Dennis: She used a concoction of, she had the greatest hand-lotion on earth. She had the softest skin, the softest hands. She had half vinegar and half water in one of those little deals, and every time she finished with the dishes she'd splash it on a little while and then wash it off.

Joan: Vinegar and water?

Dennis: Half vinegar and half water. Anyhow, we always added vinegar to spinach and beans and ham. When you go to most places, people say, "Whoa, are you nuts?"

Joan: That's probably a German thing. I grew up in a German community, and we did that too. Okay, so you're at KU and you...

Dennis: I saw the game, or disliked the game.

Joan: So you went to Indiana. You were in your senior year then?

Dennis: No, I had to do one summer catch-up. I had to go to summer school to catch up with a few of the things that they required which KU didn't. I wanted to major within the school of business, and economics and transportation.

Joan: Now when you major in transportation, what are you looking forward to as a job.

Dennis: I thought my father and grandfather had been in trucking business, and my liking it so well, that that would be interesting and nice. I didn't want to abandon all my interest in economics, which I loved, so I had a dual major.

Joan: Would you then work for a state in a highway department?

Dennis: Well, no. You could look on the board at the business school for companies that were advertising.

Joan: Private companies.

Dennis: Yes, like Esso International and Mobil Oil and Ford International and so on. The big companies that were known in school for paying the highest starting salaries. I was interested in that. I didn't want to come back after my...I tried one year with my dad after I graduated from high school, and he and I neither one were ready to work with each other. So I went back and got my master's. I worked as a janitor in school and got a graduate assistantship to work for one of the professors in his research for private businesses, like the canalization of the Tennessee Tombigbee River, for one. And

airline mergers. I was the guy behind the scenes that did all the research. This is why I moved from Kansas to Indiana because I was promised that extra job. Then I also was a janitor, and I got a lot of other jobs, which allowed me to go there.

Joan: And there were children by this time, so you had family to take care of.

Dennis: Two.

Joan: Earlier you were talking about your brush with a Fulbright Scholarship?

Dennis: Yes, I missed it by...I was one year late because the requirement of teaching for a year before you could be awarded a Fulbright was enacted exactly at the moment when I finished school. Had I applied 12 months previously I would have had it because that particular position at the University of Melbourne had not been awarded for two years. It was all just a nice dream.

Joan: But you didn't come back at that time, you went to New Jersey.

Dennis: I went to work for, I got a job with Esso International. The highest paid job offered because I graduated with honors. I loved school and, you know, if you love something, you do well at it. And I did, I blew them away. I got in all the honors classes when I was working on my Masters. I still had the jobs because I had to have them.

Joan: What year did you go to New Jersey then?

Dennis: 1963. The year Kennedy was assassinated was my first year there. I went to work for Esso International.

Joan: What did you do for them?

Dennis: I worked for their transportation department in economics.

Joan: Was that planning?

Dennis: At the time, our job was optimizing two things: managing the relationship between owned tonnage of oil ships and leased tonnage of oil ships. They had a magic formula that somebody there had said, "We're not going to own, as a corporation, more than 50% of our annual shipping needs." It just came, like all kinds of rules do, from who knows where. I progressed through channels well because I loved the job. Then I was there seven months and got my first group of men to work. We had 15 to 20 economists there working for me. Well, it was difficult because I was so young. Usually you had to be gray at the temples. It was a good job in the sense that you didn't have to be gray at the temples in order to succeed. They recognized hard workers and people that did well. But anyway, I got that changed with a whole series of meetings that also turned out to be my undoing. They had proposed altering the existing C-2 ships by making them longer and deeper, almost worse than buying new. I sent out a memo saying that it would be better to sink the old ones at high seas and buy or lease for a year than to do that. I made a big case of it. I worked on that on weekends on my own time. I had the facts with me because I gathered it up from people there. But I stepped on too many toes. Well, I had my first shot at corporate politics, and man, they moved me clear to the marine sales department. They did me a favor because it was within a month of that that I quit. Another fellow and I borrowed some money from a fellow that wanted to sell his real estate business. We started renting apartments, and then I expanded

out with my partner to selling real estate.

Joan: This is still in New Jersey?

Dennis: In New York. So New Jersey was our bedroom and New York was my office. Then, because he lived in New York and I lived in New Jersey, I got my realtor's license in New Jersey and started selling land. I loved that. I didn't like the anonymity of the East. I didn't like my children being raised there because I thought, in general, the children's behavior towards their parents was unacceptably rude. But nevertheless that was way they did it. Parents tolerated way beyond what I could stand, the differences in how children were raised. When you weren't going to change the way they were raised and all their peers were sassing their parents and using words that I would have been nailed to the wall over. It was very, very different, and I couldn't take it. So we moved back here in 1972.

And with my father, after he had had his heart attack, that also worked out well. He was ready to get out. So that's when I started in with the truck line. My brother, a year later, came also and joined. He came from the FAA, where he was flying jets for them and teaching people to do that. We bought the business and that brings us to this spot.

Joan: And you've have the business ever since.

Dennis: I dearly love Kansas. And I know it has a lot to do with how you were raised, but I used to defend Kansas back east when people would say, "What part of the South are you from?" Because I had a little bit of a drawl. And I would say, "Kansas." And people would say, "Kansas? Why I went through Kansas once. I didn't think I was ever going to get through that state. All I saw was flat land and wheat. What do you folks do there?" And you were immediately on the defensive. And I got so tired of that, I finally would say, "You know, Kansas is really not a good place to live. I'd recommend that you not come there or visit." Because the virtue of Kansas is the absence of people. Because you get so tired of being on the defensive about...I didn't dare go into the issue about how they are the most provincial of all. They travel less. They go to Europe, but they don't go anywhere else. Europe and Florida, back then. For them, a trip around the East to the historic places on the East Coast, oh that takes two or three weeks. Well, for me, I can be there the next day. Go through Connecticut, New York State, Pennsylvania, I traveled all over the East Coast. I loved it, and I would go to New York City museums, which are fabulous, on the weekends when New York City is trying to get out of town. And then I'd be coming back when they were trying to get back in. So I rarely had a traffic issue, I was going against the grain because they were 50 miles from where I was. Which was unheard of then. Who would do that? But I lived on a farm. I rented a place and then I bought a house next to the farm.

Joan: You didn't live in the city then?

Dennis: No, no. In fact, I got a week-end job out there with a guy who had a dairy herd. I loved it.

Joan: How many kids were in your high school graduating class?

Dennis: 43 or 44.

Joan: How many of them either stayed here or came back to live here like you did?

Dennis: To answer the first part of your question, stayed? It would be the farmer kids who didn't go on to school. I don't know, I would guess six to ten. I would have to go through them name by name. I know I could. Jay Schaller was one. He stayed. But most of the boys made a stab at college some

place.

Joan: Did your classmates serve in the Korean War?

Dennis: No, that was...

Joan: You were sort of in-between?

Dennis: Korea was what, '50 and '51? Well, I graduated in '57, so Korea was before that.

Joan: And you were a little bit before Vietnam then?

Dennis: Vietnam was, I'm guessing, when I was around 30.

Joan: So you were sort of in-between, your age group.

Dennis: I didn't have to worry about Vietnam because I had children. So I was not going to be drafted. I actually didn't want to be over there in the jungle. And those folks were the ones who got the biggest shaft of the century. They gave their lives and fought for that mess over there and come back to the idiots who were demonstrating against them and taking out their dislike of being in a war on the individuals who were there to defend us and represent us. I thought that was horrible.

Joan: When you came back, you lived in Kinsley?

Dennis: No, we came back to Dodge City. That's where the truck line was.

Joan: You are a good person to ask, though, because you left and then came back in the early 70's. What changes did you see from when you were growing up here and then coming back?

Dennis: In Kinsley? Well, there were a lot more closed doors uptown on Main Street, for one. Most of the kids that were here because their parents had farming interests were still here, but those of us who didn't have that were largely out of it, because there were no jobs to be had outside of agriculture here. None I can think of at all. Maybe John Wire could work in the bank, I think he was the only exception, you know, that kind of thing. But there were a lot of closed doors. It's understandable, there weren't any job opportunities. That's the first thing that kept you away. If you lived there, you had to drive to your work in Dodge or Larned. And that's still the same today.

Joan: And the farming took less people because of the bigger...

Dennis: Correct. Bigger tractors, less manpower required, irrigation. Opportunities abounded in Dodge in feed yards. Kinsley became a bedroom community except for the farmers. And there's no change today. Kinsley is a bedroom community today, except for farmers and farming related people, and attorneys and teachers and, you know, the infrastructure people.

Joan: The county school and the hospital.

Dennis: The economic activity is largely absent except for the ag kind. That's it. And I remember in high school, the argument while my father was mayor, one term, about a vote taken. I think this is correct, Montgomery Ward wanted to build a warehouse here. Isn't that right? And there was a great

deal of trouble here among adults, I recall, in arguing about the workers used. Very few people here wanted to change. I think there was a general resistance to change that helped to contribute to the economic apathy that dominated here. My Uncle Daniel would have been a poster child for that kind of thought because he, for instance, when we were here, mostly before I came, and when this community was engaged in this decision about whether or not we should have more flood control up through here. He was the one that was vehemently opposed to it. Yet his farm, on this 100 acres here that I now have, has a major waterway through it. To this day, when it rains too much it still floods. You know, it has to do with whether you want to live in the past or the future. That's what it's about. You have to be more willing to answer the challenges of tomorrow than yesterday in order to stand for changes. Change always brings about better things, usually. Not always, but usually.

Joan: Eventually here, I know we didn't ask that, but you were divorced, and remarried.

Dennis: Came back here and got a divorce in 1978. That was six years after I moved back from the East. I married 15 months later, or 16 months later and stayed in Dodge and lived there until we moved to Cimarron and later to Kinsley.

Joan: And you still have the trucking business?

Dennis: Yes.

Joan: Did you other questions? You were thinking, about the trucking or how things were? She's always the one trying to figure out exactly where things were.

Rosetta: I kind of think I know where your trucking lines...where that was. I know where Oscar Stinson lived, and I know where Daniel (*Kindsvater*) lived, you know, had his farm, out there by Bidleman. I kind of know that...

Dennis: Any voids? Any voids that I should fill? Is there any area of it that I've not...

Joan: No, you've done a good job.

Rosetta: You've done very well, and a lot of it I didn't know. After you graduated, I didn't know what all you did.

Joan: And I think it is interesting, like you said, that you did come back and you can see the differences. I think in these concluding thoughts, that we have you pretty well covered one place or another. I think you've told us how Edwards County affected your life in this type of environment. We talked a little bit about the decreased population. One last question we haven't talked about. What do you see for the future of Edwards County? I think maybe the population has leveled off.

Dennis: Well, the answer to that, we'll have to qualify by saying it's based on the following presumptions or assumptions, whichever. Agriculture has done very well, and I think that it has a bright future, relative to any other segment of our economy, like manufacturing. I can't imagine agriculture having seen its worst days.

Joan: Do you see the farms staying family farms? Or do you think it will be corporate?

Dennis: There will have to be changes in tax laws to change much of that. Because who in their right

mind would want to leave farming. For what? There would have to be a rare opportunity in order to do that. Because it is so different now from what it was while I was growing up. They had to worry about making ends meet, with the wheat prices the way they were. I used to talk about not even needing cargo insurance to haul wheat because a load of dirt was more valuable than a load of wheat. You know, that's not the case anymore. I think the economic reality of the situation is that we're in a good place at a good time. I know for sure that we're less affected in general here than most all the other areas. I know it's factual too, because I was listening one day on, I think it was Fox News. It was in the last six months, that they were talking about the county in the United States that has the highest unemployment. I believe it was in Ohio, and it was 18% or 20%, something like that, and kind of as an addendum of the presentation, and said, "By the way, the county in the United States that has the least unemployment, guess where that's at?" I was thinking, well, it can't miss us by too far. And it was Ford County, Kansas! And guess where the next was? It included Finney County, and the next was the county that Liberal is in (Seward). Then when the governor or whoever helped inaugurate the casino, some mention was made in that speech (I wasn't there; I heard about it) that it was nice to be in an area that was progressing economically. We have as much difficulty getting drivers today as we ever had, and mechanics, and people in the office. For us, you'd think we're living in a little Mecca because what you read in the paper sure doesn't have anything to do with us. Our business could not be busier. People eat meat still; it's just the price of the meat. And this leads to the economics of not just farming and crops, but to beef. Meat will always be eaten; it's just the price that you pay for it. We're the epicenter of the production of the fat cattle. And that isn't going to change, and here's why. Because the killing plants are located near where the feed yards are, and they're there because of the weather and the cheap grain. And the weather isn't going to change here relative to anyplace else. And the grain isn't going to quit growing here, unless it does everywhere. So you have those two factors that are going to make sure that that stays the same. Even when killing plants reduce their kill, because of the battles that the buyers and sellers of meat have four or five times a year. When the packers shut down plants in Nebraska and Iowa and Texas and Arkansas and Colorado. We are the last to be affected. Cargill, for instance, with all their plants, when we have reductions in kill, the last hours they cut down are Dodge City because the cattle are cheaper here because they have less freight against them. You haul nine pounds of grain into an animal for every one pound of beef you raise, so you're sure as heck not going to move the cattle feeding to places away that require the hauling of grain. They're here for weather and grain prices. Now, you could ask the question, why is it that they're not in Iowa or Illinois where the corn is. It is weather. Cattle do poorly in cold, wet weather. They don't gain well. They don't lay down in slop. They stand and stress instead of resting. So, to further answer your question, in addition to crops, meat and the activity that surrounds the production of fat beef isn't going to go anyplace. It is going to stay. So I think the economic activity here bodes well for this area.

I think for this community, that we will be fortunate if we gather some young people who start bringing economic activity here. Now what would that be? It would be supporting businesses for, and I've thought, for instance, in my little world, of bringing a Reefer Refrigeration center here. Because you can't hardly find a place to live in Dodge City. The rent is through the ceiling, and it's cheaper to buy gasoline than it is to... we have here, Kinsley, Lewis, Jetmore, Minneola, we have over two thirds of our employees living outside of Dodge City. And driving! Well, they don't need to drive daily, it's not like an office job. They're out three to four times a week, so a lot of the trucking repairs that are taking place there could take place here. You know, that kind of thing for other businesses will only move out of Dodge because Dodge is growing like crazy. And people don't like to have their children queued up with boxing gloves every day, like they have to have over there. I'm not the only one that's moved from Dodge. I think therefore that Kinsley might grow less in population, but I can't imagine us doing worse, or very much worse because the rising tide raises all boats. So those two areas of economic activity are going to help keep us around. I think we've reached close to the economic low in this community. I think if we clean this community up and make it more attractive, get rid of the junk

you see around this place, which are only cancers that affect dying communities. If you get rid of the symptoms, you'll help alleviate the problem. That would be the first thing, if I led this community that I would do. There would be big changes in that area. Get rid of the cancer. Who wants to live in a place, a yard, or a home or a town, that has a bunch of junk around it? I mean who is attracted to that? Our community, I think, would be well advised, to get rid of the signs of decay and economic malaise. I just can't believe that, and I blame myself in part because we've been here long enough to get involved. I think people who feel as I do need to quit thinking about it, and start talking about it and address those issues. I have spent some time talking to (*Rodney*) Craft. He's big on this, and he's doing some things about it. I've talked to him sometimes. But I think more need to be involved, and people like me need to quit talking and do something about it.

Joan: Okay, this might be a good place to stop, unless you have something else you want to add?