

**Interview with Boyd Mundhenke**  
**January 26, 2011**  
**Conducted in the Mundhenke home, Kinsley, Kansas**  
**Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library**

Joan: Boyd, what is your full name?

Boyd: Boyd Marlin Mundhenke.

Joan: Where do you currently reside?

Boyd: At 619 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, in Kinsley.

Joan: When and where were you born?

Boyd: I was born April 29, 1940, out at the farmhouse southeast of Lewis.

Joan: And what were the names of your parents?

Boyd: My father was Merle Mundhenke and my mother was Clella. Her maiden name was Fisher.

Joan: And your grandparents?

Boyd: My father's father was Delmar Mundhenke, and he lost his first wife, who was my Dad's mother, and her name was Minnie. My grandfather Delmar remarried to Eva Corner a few years later, in 1908.

Joan: What was Minnie's maiden name?

Boyd: Malin.

Joan: And then your maternal grandparents?

Boyd: My mom's parents were A.B. Fisher and his wife was Lula.

Joan: And what was her maiden name?

Boyd: Her maiden name was Parker.

Joan: Describe what your household was like. Did you have brothers or sisters?

Boyd: I grew up and I had three sisters: an older sister and twin sisters a year and a half younger than me.

Joan: What were their names?

Boyd: Mynie Lou was my older sister. My twin sisters were Lorene and Loretta.

Joan: How did your family come to Kansas?

Boyd: My grandfather, Delmar Mundhenke, was from Morrisonville, Illinois. He got married in 1905 and had a baby boy, my father, Merle, and six months later his wife Minnie died from a ruptured

appendix. So Delmar was really depressed and upset, and so he wanted start over with a new life. That encouraged him to move to Kansas. He had some relatives from his wife's family, the Malins, and they had gotten established at Lewis, Kansas. So that was the reason that he moved to Lewis. Of course, he had a six month old baby that his relatives were able to take care for the first two and a half years of my dad's life. Then he got remarried in 1908. Then he also bought the farmstead, where our farm is southeast of Lewis, in 1908.

Joan: Can you describe a little bit what it was like growing up on the farm?

Boyd: Well, in the '40's and '50's, when I was on the farm, things were quite a bit different than they are today in 2011. But the biggest difference probably was we had lots of different chores and livestock. Wheat was the major crop, this was prior to irrigation. Wheat and milo were the two dryland crops that were primarily raised. But we had milk cows, chickens, hogs, the whole gamut of chores. We had a big garden and a little orchard with fruit trees... So we did a lot of, you might say, providing a lot of our food, and of course, my dad would separate the milk and have cream. We'd take the cream to town, the excess cream, and be able to sell it. We'd take eggs to the grocery store, and you'd trade in your eggs for groceries. So it cut down on your expenses.

Joan: Now, were those eggs and cream, did they stay in Lewis? Or were they put on the train?

Boyd: The cream was put on the train at the depot in Lewis. The eggs, we just traded them in at the grocery store.

Joan: There were enough town people to consume them... Did your chores differ from your sister's chores?

Boyd: Oh yes. I primarily did the outside chores. My sisters, they did things in the house. Of course, we picked fruit. We had cherry trees and crab apples. And we had a big raspberry patch in our yard. They were really tough to pick. Then they would process the fruit, can it and freeze it and so forth.

Joan: Did your dad have to have any other help besides you on the farm?

Boyd: Oh yes. He always had a full time hired man. In the summertime, he would have a high school boy. So that was about the size of his operation.

Joan: How many cows did he have?

Boyd: Oh, he always had from three to five cows. Which, was far as I was concerned as I got into high school, was a major inconvenience. Seven days a week, morning and night, milking, was not my idea of what I wanted to end up doing in life.

Joan: And you rode the bus to school?

Boyd: Yes, we had a school bus that picked us up and brought us back. It seemed like that wasn't a big deal. We did have athletics, but we did those during school time.

Joan: You had basketball team practice during school?

Boyd: As I remember it, that's how it was. So we could still go back home on the bus.

Joan: And do your chores!

Boyd: Oh yes.

Joan: At this time, has there been consolidation? Of Trousdale and Centerview? Were those all in with Lewis at this time?

Boyd: Actually, Trousdale did not come to Lewis. Fellsburg and Centerview were the too-small communities that did feed into Lewis.

Joan: And Trousdale went to Macksville?

Boyd: At first, they went to Belpre. And then later they ended up at Macksville.

Joan: So when you were in school, there was a school at Belpre?

Boyd: Yes.

Joan: So the county schools would have been Kinsley, Lewis, Belpre and Offerle at that time?

Boyd: Yes.

Joan: Did you play any sports?

Boyd: I went out for sports. I wasn't terribly talented as an athlete. I think almost all the boys, we didn't have the girls' sports then, but the boys pretty much went out for every sport unless there was some really major problem. It was kind of a foregone conclusion.

Joan: Were you in the band or any other extra-curriculars?

Boyd: Yes, yes, I was in band. Played the trumpet. I was actually in some singing groups, but I was not that great of a singer, but I did follow the band. I followed that even into college.

Joan: How many kids were in your graduating class?

Boyd: I believe we had 25 in my graduation class in 1958.

Joan: Did you go to church in Lewis too?

Boyd: Yes. We went to the Methodist Church in Lewis. You know, that was a pretty big part of our lives. It was a pretty active church then, with quite a few more attending than even today, I would guess.

Joan: I was just thinking, I couldn't hazard a guess what our church attendance was when I was a teenager. But you think it was quite a bit larger than now?

Boyd: Yes, I'd say so. It seems like there were a lot of other church activities that were kind scattered throughout the year and kind of important.

Joan: And what other churches were in Lewis at that time?

Boyd: Christian Church, Baptist Church, I believe maybe a Church of Christ. I think that was it.

Joan: Four churches. What was the business community like then?

Boyd: Oh, the business community was...we had two grocery stores...

Joan: Now did your family go to both grocery stores, or did you have one that you frequented.

Boyd: Oh I think we went to each one sometimes. We had a doctor, Dr. Meckfessel. And we had a dentist, Dr. Crawford. We had a jewelry store, and of course, we had a drug store where you could fill prescriptions and it had a soda fountain. We had two barber shops for the men. I can remember just one beauty shop. For sure there was always one café, and sometimes they had two cafes. They had a pool hall, which was a pretty popular source of entertainment. And we had a skating rink on the north end of Main Street where the Lewis Co-op shop is today. We had a hardware store that was pretty complete. Then we had a shoe repair shop, and of course, the telephone office.

Joan: Can you remember when you got a telephone? Or are you old enough to have always had one?

Boyd: We got a telephone, I believe, it was about the same time that we got REA electricity. That was in 1947. I would have been about seven years old. We might have gotten the telephone within a year or two, either way, of that. Maybe mid-forties.

Joan: And before you got REA, did you use ice?

Boyd: No, my dad had what was called a Kohler Plant. It operated on natural gas and it would generate electricity. It was pretty up-town for the times.

Joan: Would you say you were a better-off farmer or average or...as far as your standard of living?

Boyd: Well, we were not a really big farming operation, but I guess we were what I would say was kind of average. Maybe a little bigger than average in terms of size. But you know, my dad ran cattle in the winter time. He would buy calves and graze them on wheat, and then dryland wheat and dryland milo. It was not jam-packed with all kinds of things to do every single week of the year, like today's farming, irrigating, cattle businesses are. We kind of fill up every single week now with no down time.

Joan: Harvesting into the middle of the night even. One other thing about Lewis. How about gas stations?

Boyd: We had quite a few gas stations. I'd say, probably, at least three. And another thing I'd forgotten about, we had a Ford Garage. You could buy cars and trucks there and that was a pretty successful business for several years.

Joan: Now before the war, we learned how important going to town on Saturday was. Was that still that way when you were growing up?

Boyd: Yes, it was. That was a big thing, Saturdays. You know, I was raised, went to school in Lewis, but I had a lot of ties and experiences in Kinsley, also because my mom's parents moved into Kinsley in

1935 when they retired from their farm in Fellsburg, Kansas. So we would come to Kinsley every Saturday afternoon and evening, it seemed like. Later on, one of the, well two activities that I remember quite a bit, was going to the skating rink here in Kinsley almost every Saturday night, and then also the movie theater.

Joan: Now Lewis didn't have a movie theater?

Boyd: No, there was not a movie theater in Lewis.

Joan: Now, you mentioned your grandparents' farm. Who took over that farm when they retired?

Boyd: My grandparents in Fellsburg?

Joan: Yes, that came to Kinsley.

Boyd: My uncle C. O. Fisher.

Joan: So that stayed in the family?

Boyd: Yes.

Rosetta: The skating rink, was it in the South Park? Was that where you went skating?

Boyd: No, the skating rink that was out here west of town. It was just beside the VFW.

Joan: Okay. You said that you didn't irrigate. Was there a lot of use of chemical fertilizers or insecticides at that time? Did you see changes in farming?

Boyd: No, actually, farming up until I would say the mid-to late 1950's, most people did not even use fertilizer. It was only in that period of time that they were starting to realize that the soil was getting a little bit depleted, and they needed to start putting on some fertilizer.

Joan: Did they use manure? Did they put that on the fields?

Boyd: No.

Joan: Nothing?

Boyd: Well, nothing for a long time. And then they got some commercial fertilizer, I'd say it was in the '50's when that started. And you didn't put fertilizer on every year, but maybe every other year.

Joan: And what were the yields back then?

Boyd: The yields were probably... ten to 20 bushel wheat (*per acre*) would probably catch most of it.

Joan: Okay, we have this question which I felt was interesting. Did anyone have to work off-farm at that time for income to help support the farm? Like we do today? When did that start?

Boyd: Okay. No, during my growing up period in the '40's and '50's, most people that were able to

make a go of farming, pretty much did that full time. But one thing that really did happen in the '50's, when a generation of farmers got old enough to retire, I'd say maybe when they hit 60 or so, that there were two things that really helped farmers in retirement during that period of time in the '50's. One was the soil bank program that Eisenhower came out with during his period of the presidency. It was sort of like the CRP of today. You could plant your fields to grass, and then you could get a payment back from the government every year, so you didn't need to farm it. Okay, that combined with the state hospital in Larned, I don't know when it was established, but I know in the decade of the '50's there were quite a few of our neighbors who were hitting retirement age, maybe I'd say in the early 60's, they'd put their farm into the soil bank program and drive to Larned to work at the state hospital. So that was a kind of convenient thing that worked out for a fair number of farmers. (*The Larned State Hospital expanded services in 1966.*)

Joan: Did that give them more for retiring with Social Security or state retirement? Or was it just for income at that time?

Boyd: I think it was a steady, reliable income, was what it was.

Joan: Now in your family, we'll probably get to it in a little bit, but you inherited and took over the farm and is that...did you start farming before? Did your parents retire? Did you join your father to farm later? I guess I'm getting ahead.

Boyd: Okay, I can kind of summarize this a little bit. When I was growing up, even when I first started high school and maybe even before, my mom was always asking me, "When are you going to come back and take over this farm?" And she asked me so many times that I was almost rebelling to think, "That's not in the plan." I was really not that interested in farming. And honestly, things were not terribly profitable and not a lot of things were really changing or happening during the decade of the '60's. We were raising lots and lots of wheat, and we were putting up these big grain elevators in every single little town along the railroad, and we were filling them up with wheat, and it was way more wheat than could be used or sold or exported. So, the government had a program where they sort of paid you a little bit to carry that wheat over. So we were building a huge surplus, and I could see that things were just not happening much in agriculture. It was kind of like watching paint dry, in my opinion. So then, jumping ahead here, when I had an opportunity to go into the Peace Corps in 1961, I jumped at the chance. I was wanting to see the world and see other places and experience new things. When I came back, then I got into teaching. I really, really enjoyed teaching, and I probably would have liked to have stayed with that, but I was the only boy, with three sisters. So, I was realizing that I had a good opportunity economically to come back and take over my family farm. So ultimately, that's what I did. 1970 is when I actually did.

Joan: What did your sisters do?

Boyd: My oldest sister, Mynie Lou, she went to K-State and graduated in home-ec and education. She taught for several years and got married to a banker.

Joan: Where did she end up? She didn't come back here?

Boyd: No, no, she ultimately ended up in Oakley, Kansas, for most of their time, and then later she moved to Hutchinson. One of my twin sisters, Loretta, she graduated with a degree in physical therapy. She worked at that for several years. She married a guy who ultimately went to medical school, and he's a family practice doctor. They moved to Wellington, Kansas. My other twin sister, Lorene,

majored in home-ec and education. She taught school for quite a few years, and she married a guy in Wisconsin. She settled in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

Joan: I'm interested, was this unusual that all four of your children would go to college at this time, or was this the trend? Was education important to your parents?

Boyd: Yes, it was a foregone conclusion in my family that we were going to college.

Joan: Did your parents go to college?

Boyd: Yes, they both did. So the other thing that was different, I think significantly different, back in those times, the '50's and '60's, was going to college and getting an education was a matter of what field you chose and what you wanted to do. Because you knew when you got out that you would have some different options and pretty good opportunities to have employment or a career. Unfortunately, that has changed a whole lot in the last 20 years to where a college education is not your passport to a very productive career necessarily. And that's a sad fact we have to deal with.

Joan: Well okay. You graduated in '58, and you went up to K-State and started a degree in education. When you went up there, was that what you thought you were going to do?

Boyd: Actually, I started out in agriculture, the first three years...or maybe two. Well, the first year and a half or two years. I became a little disenchanted with that, and I decided that if I was going to come back and be in the farming business, I was not learning what I needed to come back and do in those classes. They were kind of hard science classes that I wasn't that interested in, so I changed and decided I would like to be a teacher and maybe combine that with agriculture, so that's what I did.

Joan: What brought about your change to going to the Peace Corps in the middle of the college education?

Boyd: Okay, in 1960 or before, President Kennedy was running for office in the fall of 1960. I became very interested in his campaign, and I actually worked with it and went door to door with brochures and what-not in Manhattan when I was there my third year in college. Then a very significant thing happened. That spring, in 1961, I was going to a Methodist youth group there at college, and they were having an inside-government seminar in Washington D.C. and in New York over spring break, I believe the last part of March. So, we studied up on a lot of foreign relation topics. We then went on this trip and one of the things that was significant to me was a book called The Ugly American. It was actually written in 1958. It had to do with...it was a fictionalized story of a country in southeast Asia, I believe it was actually representing Vietnam, and these Americans would go there and they would not associate with the local people. They became very interested in having a high life style. It really was a bad rap on what we were doing overseas with foreign development and combating the Communist Threat, which was getting to be a big thing at that time in the Cold War. So, this really piqued my interest with how we were doing such a poor job of helping these Third World countries develop. Then the next part of the story, when Kennedy was running the presidency in March of that year, he set up the Peace Corps. So I was right there, you might say, with a front row seat to what was happening because of this trip to Washington D.C. So I came back to K-State and there was a Peace Corps recruiter that came on campus in the beginning of April, I believe, in that year. And he encouraged me to sign up for the Peace Corps if I wanted to.

Joan: So at this time, I'm a little younger than you, but people could go into the Peace Corps to avoid

the draft. Was there the draft going on for Vietnam at this time? Or any of that?

Boyd: That's a very important thing that happened in my life. Vietnam was not really heating up until about 1963 and '64. I spent three months traveling back to Southeast Asia when I finished my tour of duty in the fall of '63. And I was planning to visit and spend some time in Vietnam, as well as every other country there, but President Ngô Đình Diệm was assassinated, I believe it was in August when I was in Thailand. Things were getting very tense, so I was not able to actually do anything more than just sit down at the airport in Saigon. But, when I got back to the States, my dad had written to me when I was in Japan and said that I was classified 1-A with my draft board, and that I had better get back to the states. So I got back into college, and that actually helped, especially, I think, in these small counties where we didn't have such a big number that were having to be drafted. But the upshot is, when I came back, I really knew what was going on over there. And I knew that we were setting ourselves up for an un-winnable war. So the real buildup came...actually war was declared in 1964 when President Johnson declared the war. In 1965, we had a huge buildup, something like 500 to 600 thousand troops were committed in 1965. Okay, during this time, after I get back from the Peace Corps, I was in college back in K-State, and I was becoming one of those rebel rousers that was really, really passionately against the war in Vietnam. I actually was going to do anything I could to avoid being drafted and going to Vietnam. I was talking about going to Canada or something else. I spent two years of really lots and lots of hardships and work in the Peace Corps, and I really was wanting to serve my country, but this was not in it for me. The Vietnam thing. So, ultimately then as we marched through the 60's, 1968 was kind of a watershed year because Eugene McCarthy had come out to run against President Johnson, and he was the anti-war candidate. He running on the idea that if he were to be president, he was going to withdraw us from the war. So then, ultimately, Johnson backed off and decided he was not running again. In March of 1968. Then we had a terrible bloodbath at the Democratic Convention that August, and lots of really significant things happened then that changed the whole society of our country.

Joan: Okay, let's go back then. You've had a recruiter come to campus, and you decided to sign up for the Peace Corps. Then what was the procedure after that?

Boyd: Okay, so I met a recruiter in April of '61. He encouraged me to go ahead and sign up for the Peace Corps, even though I did not have a college degree. At first, I thought I would not even be eligible, but since I had a farm background, he encouraged me to apply and that actually turned out to be the situation. I was able to work in agriculture, and it wasn't necessary that I have a degree for what I was doing in the Peace Corps. I started out working out with water buffaloes and then later...

Joan: Before we get there, what was your training before they sent you to Pakistan, did you learn language?

Boyd: Oh yes, I went to training in Fort Collins, Colorado at the end of August. We had, I believe it was three months of training there, and it was very intensive. Eight hours a day, five days a week, and we had intensive language training in Urdu. After our training in Fort Collins, and we were the first group that they had trained. We were also the first group that went to West Pakistan.

Joan: You were in the very first class...?

Boyd: Yes, that went to West Pakistan. There were probably maybe six or eight groups that started training that summer of 1961 to a few African countries, a few in Asia, a few in Latin America, that went that first summer. After our training in Fort Collins for three months, we had a home-stay for about a week.



Joan: Stop right there. How did your parents feel about the decision you'd made to go into the Peace Corps?

Boyd: My parents were devastated. They thought it was a really bad idea and it was not in their game-plan for what I should be doing. It wasn't until about six weeks or so into the training in Fort Collins that we had to have, or they did, an FBI check on all of us. It was a very, very extensive check of everybody who had gone into training. So one of our farmer-friends, neighbors of my dad, was interviewed by this FBI agent. This neighbor came over to talk to my dad and told him all the questions they were asking about my family and everything. So my parents sort of thought, maybe this is a little bit restrictive. So by the time I was getting out of training, they were all for it and thought it was a pretty good deal.

But after three months of training in Colorado, then we had one month of training in Puerto Rico. This was kind of an outward-bound type of thing. We did some hiking in the rainforest area. We were split up in groups and did lots of different kinds of activities, a lot of physical stuff. We continued to have our language training every single day. Then we went to West Pakistan and Peshawar was where we landed in the very northern part of the country. We had at least a month of intensive training there before we were distributed around the country with our jobs.

Joan: And where were you sent, and what did your job become?

Boyd: Okay, I was sent to Lyallpur, which was sort of in the middle of the country, in the Punjab. They had an agricultural college there, and I was supposed to be sort of like an Ag extension agent. But honestly, our jobs, since we were the first group there, our jobs were really not established. We had to live there for several weeks and kind of develop a niche of what we could do. I started out trying to work with water buffaloes, and I found that this probably going to be a three to five year window of time to do very much. Ultimately, what I kind of zeroed in on was working with chickens. I sort of copied some things that a missionary friend from the States was doing, building cages and confining chickens for better production.

Joan: How did the people feel about you?

Boyd: The native people were very receptive and very friendly to us. When we would go out to their villages, we were treated like royalty actually. One of the problems we had was the sanitation and the food and water. Particularly the water was not very safe to drink. So, we had many bouts of dysentery and lots of problems getting adjusted to that. That was a pretty major deal really.

Joan: So how many of you were there in the Peace Corps?

Boyd: Okay, there were 28 in our group.

Joan: Was your living more like the people's? Or was it in between what you were used to here in the States and what the native's had? Was there a dorm?

Boyd: We had a small group that I was with. I believe there were six, or maybe we started out with eight. We hired a cook, and he would go to the bazaar every day and buy food and come back and prepare it for us. We collectively lived together. We had little individual rooms. No running water. We had to take dip baths and sort of shave in cold water. So I ultimately grew a beard.

Joan: Did your diet change because of what was available?

Boyd: Oh yes, we would have whatever fruit was in season in the bazaar. You would get almost sick and tired of something and then the season would change a little bit and you would have something else. It was mostly native type food that we ate.

Joan: Now in the Peace Corps, did the government pay you? What was the compensation?

Boyd: We had a per diem allowance. I believe that was like about \$35 a month. That doesn't seem like much at all, but it didn't cost a lot to live there. We didn't have to pay for our room, and then the salary we earned was \$2 a day for the time we spent, and we got this allowance when we terminated our service.

Joan: Both men and women?

Boyd: Yes. And really, four main categories of work: agriculture was one; teaching was one; nursing was one; and there were a few that were like engineers. We had one guy who was a bricklayer.

Joan: What else would we like to know about this?

Rosetta: Their religion, was it all Muslim?

Boyd: Most people there were Muslims. There were a few Christians, but they were pretty much the bottom of the pecking order. Most of them were Muslims. This was long before the terrorism that we've been experiencing here for the last ten or 15 years, but the government was sort of a military rule, but it was very friendly to the States, and it was a good time to be in Pakistan. Things really changed in the late '80's after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and things really changed a whole lot.

Rosetta: Did you get a chance to go on touristy things to go see things or sites?

Boyd: Yes, we did, or I did. And I even went on a pretty extensive little vacation in the middle of my tour of duty. I went over to Beirut and Jerusalem and visited the Holy Lands and Syria at Christmastime actually the first year I was there. In general, we got maybe one day of vacation per month. Most people built it up to the end, so then when I got finished and terminated over there, I got a plane ticket back to the states that I could fill in whenever I wanted to. So I went to every single country along the way and then visited and got contacts with lots of...sometimes Americans who were living in those countries, and sometimes Peace Corps volunteers who were actually working in some of those countries, and so I was able to live on a shoestring and travel public transportation--busses and trains--for little or nothing. It was not a tourist-type experience in a way. It didn't cost that much to do it.

Joan: How many months did you spend coming home?

Boyd: I spent three months coming home. That in itself was an experience that was almost as rewarding and interesting as the two years that I spent in Pakistan.

Joan: And you did not come back to Edwards County during that whole time.

Boyd: No, and the other thing that was kind of significant, never once did I make a telephone call back to the States. The only way of communication was letters. I would write almost every single week, and it would take about seven days for a letter to get from here to there. So that was, you might say, a pretty isolating experience that is not like it is today. Peace Corps volunteers today go with their laptops, and

they have their websites and even cell phones. It's like you're almost not getting into another culture or a different place.

Joan: Well, when you were working with your chickens or whatever, did you have to go back a couple decades as far as having electricity or where they were doing this or was it pretty much the same state as the States would have been to set up the poultry?

Boyd: It was moving back in time probably 50 years where we were. But in terms of electricity, we did have electricity in our Peace Corps hostel where we lived. But the villages were sort of hit and miss. There were some villages that had electricity in a small area, in part of them, but it wasn't universal at all. They didn't have electricity and running water in most of them.

Joan: So you were going back in time as far as setting up this poultry production.

Boyd: Yes, yes.

Rosetta: Did they like Americans? I mean, you know, you talk about the "Ugly American" and all that.

Boyd: They had a lot of good friendships with us, and we were, like I say, in many cases, we'd go into a village and we were kind of treated like royalty, and they thought that it was really quite simply that somebody from America was coming to try to help them and do something for them. Now quite often, if you tried to find out what their basic needs were, they'd say, "Oh, we just need some money. We need more money." And you'd have to dig a lot deeper to find out what there was that you could actually help them do with some changes in their farming practice or their ways of hygiene or whatever they were doing.

Joan: So we were talking a little bit during the break, about your relationship with the Kennedy family and Sargent Shriver, who just recently passed away. Because you were at the very beginning of the Peace Corps, when it was quite a small organization, I assume...

Boyd: Yes, and actually the Peace Corps idea was, I've read, one of the more successful things that President Kennedy is remembered for with what he called "The New Frontier," with the "passing the torch to a new generation" and so forth. But one of the kind of neat experiences that we had was Jackie Kennedy had decided to come to India and Pakistan that first year that we were there in the Peace Corps. So she, Jackie, came to the airport in Lahore, and she requested that she wanted to meet the Peace Corps volunteers there. This was kind of interesting because a lot of the foreigners, the Americans who were working there in the United States Information Service, the State Department, the U.S. Consul and different places, they were looking forward to being able to see the First Lady and so forth. But she requested that the Peace Corps was who she wanted to see, so we got ushered up to the very front of the line. I believe I was the second person who was able to shake her hand and visit with her a little bit. This was kind of a big experience that we had.

Then, well, to not ramble on here too long about this, when I got back to the States and got back into college, I had gone through Southeast Asia and had seen the build up and the problem in Vietnam. So I was getting to be very upset about our position with our country wanting to go into Vietnam and fight the communists, which was, in my opinion, kind of an un-winnable war. The French had come to this very same conclusion in the '50's after WWII. Back then Eisenhower had sent quite a bit of money to the French to help them throw back the communists out of North Vietnam. And so, when I got back to college, I was getting to be a very anti-war student. So then, I was trying at all cost to keep from being drafted into this war. I actually had several friends who had gone into the Peace Corps, and then

come back home and ended up being drafted to go to Vietnam. I was just really upset about this. But I finished at K-State in January of '66, and then went to Kansas City and took a teaching job in the Kansas City, Missouri School System. I learned how to deal with a whole new set of problems and social issues with racially integrated school that I was teaching in. We had a lot of blacks that were bussed into the school. So we had a pretty unstable kind of social setting. Then, in 1968, when Martin Luther King was assassinated, in April of that year, my school as well as all the other school in that inner city area were just absolutely turned upside-down. Finally, after trying to hold school for just one day, they turned all the classes out a week early for Easter. We had like eight or ten days off to get things settled down. We came back after that little break, and things were not settled down. It was like teaching on pins and needles for the entire rest of that school year. There was just lots and lots of unrest. So really, coming from Lewis, Kansas, I did not have any experience in dealing with blacks and other racial minorities. Except my Peace Corps experience was very helpful, and very enlightening with some of the experiences I had. I would have to say that teaching in Westport High in Kansas City, Missouri in the late '60's was equally if not more challenging actually than serving in the Peace Corps in West Pakistan. It made quite an impression on me and the person I became.

Joan: We didn't get that on the tape did we? The fact that you came back and became a recruiter?

Rosetta: No.

Joan: So maybe you want to pick up and talk about recruiting and JFK's death.

Boyd: After returning from the Peace Corps in the fall of 1963, after a couple of weeks at home, after my two years of being overseas, things were moving very slowly here. I was getting a little bit bored. The Peace Corps was actually wanting ex-Peace Corps volunteers to help recruit. So I volunteered for that and went to several different places across the country to mostly universities. I was in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in late November recruiting when President Kennedy was killed on Friday afternoon. I was showing a movie with President Kennedy talking about the Peace Corps. So this was an extremely depressing time for me to deal with his death. Most people who are old enough to remember can relate to what they were doing when he was killed. I felt like I had quite a bit of identity with the Kennedys, with being in the Peace Corps and so forth. And then, I was scheduled to go into Washington D.C. that next day to get some different orders for recruiting. So, I was back in Washington D.C. for all of the funeral activities, and one of my old Peace Corps buddies from Pakistan was living in an apartment that was only two blocks away from St. Matthew's Cathedral where President Kennedy's service was held, so we had a ringside seat. We could go out on the sidewalk and see the entire procession go by. I took a zillion slides of every dignitary and every country was represented and so forth. So I really had a special closeness to President Kennedy in several different ways.

Joan: And then you said you became active with Bobby Kennedy, which was in the same period you were just talking about in '68.

Boyd: Yes, later then in 1968, when I was in Kansas City. I'd gone through a lot of extra turmoil there with Martin Luther King's assassination and my teaching. I was very interested in Bobby Kennedy's campaign and was really getting pretty passionate about that. Then he was assassinated, I believe on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June of that year. So, it was a lot of ups and downs. You might say we were living in tumultuous times during the '60's. But 1968 was probably a watershed year. Then it kind of led on to a very confrontational Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August of that year. Lots of radical college students were protesting and the police force in Chicago were beating them to a pulp with their billy clubs. We were experiencing such violence from daily TV reports of the blood bath we were

experiencing in Vietnam, and then we had it back in our own country with the protest movements that really, it was a time to remember.

Joan: This is going to be completely out of sequence, but you just said something about TV. When did you get TV up here?

Boyd: We got our first TV in the mid '50's.

Joan: So you pretty much grew up with T.V.

Boyd: Well, I was like in junior high or almost starting high school, I believe. I'd say that T.V. was one of the big things that changed the social habits and experiences that we were all living with. Prior to having T.V., you know, we would go skating, and go to movies, and sometimes people would go bowling, and we would visit other friends and neighbors. My parents actually belonged to a square dance club. So as kids growing up, we would tag along with them, and the kids would play cards or games. We had lots of social interaction. But with T.V., that sort of changed the whole dynamics of it, and it led on to other things that we've gone to now, where you get your entertainment at home, whether it's the internet or T.V. or renting DVD's or whatever.

Joan: Another question I have is, when does Nancy come into this picture?

Boyd: I met Nancy in Kansas City when I was teaching there.

Joan: What was she doing?

Boyd: She was working at Hallmark Cards. She had graduated from KU, and I believe she was on her second or third year there by the time we got married. At that time, I decided that my dad wanted to work out of his farming operation. The plan was that we would move back to Kinsley, and I would teach for a few years and help my dad on the farm there south of Lewis. Well, I did get a job teaching in Kinsley. I taught one year, and the very first spring my dad's hired man decided to quit, and my dad was very upset and decided he just wanted to get into retirement and not keep fighting things. So Nancy and I had kind of a soul searching experience to decide to make the changes. So I actually went into a little partnership with my dad for about four years starting in 1970. Then he completely retired in 1974 and I took things over.

The significant thing of starting at this time in farming that I would like to mention is that irrigation was just getting started. My dad had gotten his first center-pivot irrigation in 1969. He put down two new irrigation wells. And so, like I kind of mentioned a long time ago, I thought that the 1950's and especially the 1960's was a time that nothing was happening much in terms of a lot of changes or different things happening in agriculture. And that was the case. We were building up a big surplus of wheat and the prices were not good. So it was not all that productive a time to be in agriculture. But I'd looked back many times and thought that 1970 was a real opportune time to get started in farming. That's when I started. We were just starting to develop irrigation, and so I became pretty active and was on the steering committee to set up the ground water management district in the five-county area here that got started then in the mid 70's. We at that time thought that every single quarter section of ground was going to be irrigated. That it was just a matter of time before we had an irrigation well on every single quarter. We happened to be in probably the garden spot in the state of Kansas for the best aquifer for pumping irrigation. But surprisingly enough, we started learning by the mid-80's that we were starting to mine our aquifer and our water table was going down. So in 1988, we had to declare a moratorium for no more water rights being issued. So this is a little of the history of irrigation.

Joan: And now we're buying the water rights back in some places, right? Or they're getting them back.

Boyd: No, I don't really...

Joan: Or they are retiring wells, is that what I want to say?

Boyd: Yes, that's right.

Joan: Okay. You left to go to college, and you came back in 1969 or 70. Did anything stand out in your mind that were big changes in that time, other than irrigation?

Boyd: Well, I'd have to say that during the decade of the '60's, what I think is kind of a significant thing that happened was that this was, I believe in the mid-60's, is when the little plastic credit cards became available. I think that has had a significant impact on the way people live, the way people think and the way they operate their lives. I certainly can remember when I got my first credit card. I think it was in 1967 or '68. You know, it was kind of a big deal, but we still didn't use it that much. But today, people have multiple credit cards and play both ends against the middle and usually come out way behind.

Joan: About how many kids in your class have stayed in Edwards County? Do you know, about...? You said there were 25 in the class.

Boyd: Yes, we had a 50 year reunion here two years ago. I'd say we probably have about five or six. Maybe four or five that are here now.

Joan: Have they stayed here? Or did they come back?

Boyd: Most had stayed.

Joan: Were there many obvious changes to the business community after you came back after being gone for ten years? Or maybe it hadn't started to change as much at that time.

Boyd: Well, Nancy and I moved back here in 1969, and there were quite a few businesses on Main Street here in Kinsley that were still pretty active and viable. We had like two drug stores and three grocery stores.

Joan: Did Lewis still have its two grocery stores?

Boyd: Lewis kind of got down to one grocery store.

Joan: Did it still have a pharmacy?

Boyd: No. The pharmacy in Lewis, I think, was not here by the late '60's.

Joan: And the hardware store, that was still there?

Boyd: Yes.

Rosetta: The only other person that I know that was in the Peace Corps was Glenn Frame. Glenn was your neighbor for a while. Did you ever talk to him about the Peace Corps? Or...I just wondered since

you were neighbors and had a totally different lifestyle.

Boyd: No, Well, we're kind of different generations too.

Rosetta: I just wondered. I mean, I never talked to him about why he joined the Peace Corps, I just wondered, since you were neighbors, if you ever said, "Hey, you ought to join the Peace Corps."

Boyd: No, I think he was gone from here and had done a few things when he joined the Peace Corps. He wasn't like right out of college. I was pretty young. I was only like 20 years old when I joined the Peace Corps. I was on the very low end of the age.

Joan: Most people would have graduated from college, you said before they would have joined, which would have made them a couple of years older.

Boyd: And then we had several who were in their 30's that were actually in my group too.

Joan: Now that's interesting. I didn't realize that older people were...

Rosetta: Have you read Three Cups of Tea?

Boyd: We have that book and we can't seem to find it. No, we haven't.

Rosetta: The sequel's out now...

Boyd: Yes, we saw that last week when we were down at Watermark in Wichita.

Rosetta: I've read Three Cups of Tea, but I've never been any of the places. But it is still so primitive. I mean, you build a bridge and it changes their whole world.

Boyd: Yes. That's a benchmark book for that part of the world.

Joan: Okay, well the hard questions are at the end. Summarize the highlights of your life for the last 40 years since 1970. What's sort of happened in the last 40 years.

Boyd: Okay, that's about how long I've been farming, since 1970.

Joan: Are you still actively farming?

Boyd: No, I retired in 2008. And incidentally, this was the centennial year of when my grandfather, Delmar, first purchased that home quarter where our farm is. And so, we were recognized as a century farm in 2008. And that happened to be the year that I took total retirement and turned over the operation to my son John. John graduated from K-State in 1997, and he came back and worked with me and developed a cow herd of his own. He got some equity built up to where he could take things over after ten years. So in terms of my 40 years of farming, probably the last 15 to 20 years has been trying to set things up where John could take over this business. As you probably know, this farming business is really, really tough to break into. It requires so much capital. It's a tough business. I feel very fortunate and kind of blessed that we're able to pass our farming business on to a fourth generation. So that's one of the big things that I've been working toward since I've gotten to the early '90's. When John was starting in high school, he indicated that this definitely was the main passion of his life and he wanted to come back and do that. So I'd been kind of working toward that direction. And our daughter, Shelly

became very interested in becoming a doctor, so we've been kind of helping and trying to facilitate her education and things that she can do. She is now an infectious disease specialist in Lincoln, Nebraska. So raising two kids was kind of full time for us. Some people have five or six or more, but we were very, very busy with two.

Joan: So looking back overall, how do you think living in Edward County affected your life? Maybe it affected your Peace Corps, and you have a little different experience.

Boyd: Okay, I really think it did have a big impact on my life. I think I received a very good education here. I think I learned a lot of important things about family values. I think I learned a lot about developing a good work ethic, with all these chores that you do growing up on a farm, which comes in handy. I think that I learned a lot of kind of common sense, kind of resourceful things that helped me quite a bit in the Peace Corps, because you have to, you might say, reinvent the wheel here and there in lots of different ways. So I think my background here was very good and that was one of the reasons that Nancy and I really wanted to raise our family here and live here. Even though it doesn't have the glitz and glamour that a lot of places do. I guess that during my period of seeing the world and experiencing a lot of different things in different places even in this country, I came to realize that we have a lot of natural advantages for a good lifestyle here. It's good to get away to some of these maybe more exciting places, but we do have a lot of really good things here.

Joan: Maybe I want to further that question. Western Kansas is a pretty conservative area. From what you've described of your college and your Peace Corps and your political persuasion, how was it coming back with those viewpoints into this conservative area? Did you have problems?

Boyd: I don't think that's been a big issue. I think you can find people about any place who share some common political/religious/social kinds of values with you. Yes, I did experience an awful lot of things when I was traveling overseas in the Peace Corps that you don't see and don't deal with here on a daily basis. Like when I was 20 years old and left Lewis, Kansas, I'd never experienced dealing with gays, or like I said before, blacks and minorities. There's an awful lot of things that you realize in this day and age the world is so much smaller, and we all can see how we experience so many different lifestyles and religions and points of view. I think no matter where you live you will find people. And now with the internet and emailing and sending things back and forth to somebody that's in Washington State or New York or wherever, that you are friends with. You don't always just have to be dealing with your neighborhood.

Joan: Have you kept in contact with your Peace Corps friends?

Boyd: Yes. Kind of very unusually, our Peace Corps group has continued to stay in contact, and we have had many reunions, and actually the last time we got together was just two years ago. I think most of them are getting together in Washington D.C. this next September for the 50 year reunion. Depending on my health, hopefully I can go too, but I'm not positive about that right now.

Joan: The population has continued to decrease since 1970. Have you seen other changes from the '70's to now?

Boyd: Oh yes, the way people live and the way businesses have changed. When malls came into the bigger cities, back in the '60's probably, that started changing things. In these small towns and communities, it's impossible for a business to compete with a retail business that's selling the same thing that you can get in a bigger place. But these small, little towns are always going to need service



businesses. That's the main things that you do close to home.

Joan: The repair man and...

Boyd: Yes, the grocer, the cafes, the liquor stores, the beauty salons. The doctors, if at all possible, that's a key part of a small community that's going to survive and continue on. Probably medical facilities and education are the two common denominators that determine whether a small town or community can survive.

Joan: When you said that, I was just thinking, even some of the governmental services are becoming more concentrated. I mean the Ag-related things, the counties are having to go together. It used to be that every town had an Ag agent. Now they're starting to share, so even the government things have become less.

Boyd: Exactly. And a lot of it gets down to budget issues and being able to subsidize or fund county extension programs is much more difficult than it used to be. And quite honestly, we have fewer and fewer people involved in the production of agriculture. Probably we've seen the biggest downsizing. There'll probably be a little bit more as time goes on, but I think that we've seen the biggest, dramatic drops.

Joan: That's because of mechanization basically?

Boyd: Partly mechanization has got a lot to do with it. The other one is the economy of scale. You can't have an economically viable business that operates on two or three quarter sections of land. It's just not like it used to be when they used to have a family living on about every quarter section of land. It didn't cost as much to live. That's a real significant difference. You didn't have to have all these technological play things and things that we use all the time. So, you had a bad year, or you had a bad two or three years, you just tightened you belt a little bit more. One of the things that I can remember, growing up, Mom and my grandparents would make soap every year. Of course, they always made butter, regularly, and then they made cheese. Of course, with all the gardening and the fruit and so forth; and we butchered a hog and a steer every year. So, it didn't take a lot of outside spending to get by. That's totally different now.

Rosetta: Did your mother make sister's clothes?

Boyd: Yes, quite a few.

Joan: The last question is, what do you see for the future of Edwards County? Is it going to stay viable?

Boyd: I think Edwards County will continue to downsize probably a little bit more. But I'm hopeful and optimistic that we can continue to have a good education system here and a good health care system. Both of these are kind of dependent on how funding gets set up. I know the Obama Healthcare Plan that was passed last year is pretty complicated, and I don't think anybody can say totally how it's going to work out, but I have heard that it's going to have some benefits for small hospitals and healthcare facilities in terms of reimbursements from Medicare. Hopefully, that can help us a little bit. When it comes to education funding, to date, we've been able to do pretty well with the extra money that has provided for busing and things that we desperately need with a low population. It will depend on how that shakes out. I think tourism could be a thing that could be developed a little bit more here. We already have some. But I guess I'm optimistic about our irrigation potential going forward. Even

though, we are declining a little bit in our water table, but that really sets us apart from a lot of other counties around us. If you go very much west or north of here, they don't have the opportunities that we have here with our production agriculture. And cattle, that's another thing that we can probably maintain and develop even more.