

1979 Tractorcade to Washington D.C.
Interview with Beverly Snyder Anderson
November 3, 2012
Conducted in the Anderson home, Pratt, Kansas
Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library

Joan: Did you live on a farm at this time?

Beverly: Yes, we lived on a farm about three miles north of Lewis.

Joan: How big was the farm? What kind of operation was it?

Beverly: Well, my husband wanted to do everything. So we leased five quarters of ground and grew corn, milo, soybeans (*wheat and alfalfa also*) and we had about 30 mother cows which kept us busy in the winter. We also had about 30 sows. That kept us plenty busy.

Joan: At this time in the 70's, was this your sole source of income? Or did either of you work outside to support the farm?

Beverly: I was a teacher for a while at the Lewis Public Schools. Otherwise, farming was supposed to be our big deal.

Joan: How did you hear about or become involved with the AAM?

Beverly: Well, mostly through our neighbors. I don't remember what the first contact was, but we had a great bunch of fellow farmers and neighbors in that area. Of course, we moved there in '75, so we were rather new to the area. But we took to it like ducks to water. My husband was so committed to being a farmer. We were not doing well, in fact, every year we got to farm, he considered it a blessing. We didn't care how far we were going to debt, if we were allowed to farm another year, that was good. I stayed awake at night thinking about it, but he never did.

Joan: Why weren't you doing better? What do you think was the reason?

Beverly: Because it cost more to produce the crops than we were getting when we sold them. And we were young farmers; we did not inherit land or machinery or equipment. We had \$20,000 when we started and the banks very generously loaned us another \$230,000 (that's by the time we finished). That's what we were doing. We were connected with FHA and trying to them to back our loans so we had a continuing dialogue with them. It was a struggle; it was a struggle, but that's what we wanted to do, so that's what we did.

Joan: And the banks were willing to loan?

Beverly: Oh, very willing to loan. Sure, we had five quarters of leased ground that we didn't own. We put two circles, irrigation systems, on that and borrowed money to purchase equipment and livestock. Then we bought a 15 acre farm site with building that we did purchase. All of that was done with borrowed money.

Joan: There wouldn't be any collateral for this, would there?

Beverly: It doesn't seem like it. But I do recall that we had about \$20,000 to start with. So we started

out when we moved to Lewis by working with a fellow farmer, Alvin Wheaton. It wasn't too long after that, that Bob Bogerd decided to retire from farming. That's who we got the ground leased from. The Snyders were related to the Bogerds; that's how we got to the Lewis area from Arizona. My husband loved the irrigation and the center pivot systems and just that way of farming. Compared to southern Arizona, that was getting pretty dry. You had to drill deeper and deeper to find a well, if you were lucky. That's kind of why we chose Kansas. It was a big, well-thought decision! We thought as he was serving in the army, before we started on our career in agriculture.

Joan: About how much did a circle irrigation system cost? Do you have any idea?

Beverly: I do not recall that, I don't know. It was a lot of money!

Joan: This was coming in right at this time, and farmers were being encouraged.

Beverly: Sure. It was a great way to conserve water compared to other ways of irrigation. But it was so sandy in Lewis that the circles were well-suited to that type of land.

Joan: You mentioned Alvin Wheaton; he was involved in AAM. You maybe came to this group...

Beverly: Yes. We visited with our fellow farmers every day, on a daily basis, just about, sharing and talking and visiting. My husband was on the township board as well as some of the other people I'm sure you've talked to. We just got right in really fast into the community, and that is what we were trying to do. It was a great place to live.

Joan: Were you in your 30's?

Beverly: Yes.

Joan: Some of the other people we've interviewed were more in their 50's.

Beverly: We were young.

Joan: Did you have any children at this time?

Beverly: We adopted Amy, and she was a year and a half. So that would have been '78. We just had one little one.

Joan: Before the big Tractorcade to Washington D.C., which we're going to get to, what were your initial involvement and activities that you did in AAM?

Beverly: There were a lot of small tractorcades and demonstrations, even in our local town of Lewis, and I can remember Belpre and to Topeka. My husband drove. The first long tractorcade was, I don't remember the year, but prior to the D.C. Tractorcade, but probably a year or so prior to that, he drove that 730 John Deere with no cab or heat or anything up to Topeka. I let him do that! That wasn't going to be too long to be gone. I can recall a lot of meetings we went to, a lot of discussions, just chair-sitting in a large circle and a lot of people talking about what we could do and what we thought was right. Of course, communication in those days was a lot different than now. People like Darrel Miller would bring us the news from, I guess you'd call them our leaders, and tell what they were thinking and get input.

Joan: The word that comes up is “parity”. How would you describe or define “parity”?

Beverly: In my simple way, I would say it’s a fair price. I know at the time that we did go on the Tractorcade, wheat was selling for less than it brought in 1946. So if we’d been getting a fair price, we may have been able to keep farming. It just didn’t seem fair because all the equipment and expenses were much greater. I would just call it a fair price.

Joan: Did you go out? I know Mr. Miller went out to other communities and talked. Did you go to those?

Beverly: No.

Joan: So you were just involved locally.

Beverly: Yes.

Joan: Did you work at the Lewis office?

Beverly: No. Because in ‘79, I was no longer teaching by then and was just working on the farm with my husband, which was great, I thought. If we’d been making money it would have been perfect. So I helped. I had a long history of growing up on a farm and driving tractors. Of course, that’s why my husband said he married me because I could drive a tractor. I did that a lot when I was growing up. And I did, I continued to do it for a long time.

Joan: So the winter before, probably the winter of ‘77, they went up to Topeka. Do you remember how your husband felt about driving the tractor up and the meetings they had?

Beverly: He was cold! But he wouldn’t have missed that for anything. He was very adamant about trying to tell the story so that people like us would have a life on the family farm.

Joan: Who did they meet with that first time, were they meeting with the federal senators or...?

Beverly: In Topeka, they were at the capitol of course. I believe they did meet with some of the legislators and stuff. In fact, I believe there was a hearing that they attended. There may have been a hearing scheduled for that time that they were in attendance to.

Joan: It took two or three days to get up there?

Beverly: I don’t recall that; I don’t recall where they would have stopped. They may not have.

Joan: Well, a tractor didn’t go very fast.

Beverly: When we went to D.C., we averaged about 10 miles an hour. But I do not recall that. I do recall he didn’t drive it back. They loaded the tractor up there and trailered it back!

Joan: Well, let’s move up closer to the ‘79 ones in D.C. How did the other people in Lewis feel about AAM and your activities and these tractorcades? Were people supportive?

Beverly: I always felt they were very supportive. Lewis had a population of maybe 300 in that area,

and just about all of us were farmers. They were very supportive. Money was donated for D.C. Tractorcade, so that we that went had no expenses that we had to pay for. It was all from donated money. So I would say it was very well supported.

Joan: How about your extended family? We just met your mother (*She lives in the Anderson home*) a lovely woman. Your mother, what did she think when you were involved with that?

Beverly: They were supportive. Most people were maybe in a little disbelief when we actually got going to Washington D.C., but a lot of my family is from...at the time I had no other family members in Kansas, except for my husband and daughter. So, the other people that just go to the store and buy food, I don't think they thought about it much. That's why we wanted to do it, to tell the story so people would think about it.

Joan: Then, we haven't said this on the tape yet, but you went and your husband did not. Do you want to explain your reasoning?

Beverly: Well, we kind of had a preview that there was going to be a big Tractorcade to D.C. They kept talking about it. Then finally, it was really going to happen. I can remember very distinctly, my husband came in and said, "Well, you could either go." First, he would say, "We're going to be involved in this Tractorcade." And I said, "Okay." Then, "Either you can go and I'll stay and take care of the hogs and the livestock, or I will go and you can take care of the mother cows that are calving and the thirty sows." And some were scheduled to farrow at that time. It did not take me too long to decide that it would be much easier (I thought) to go on the Tractorcade. He agreed, It would have been difficult for me to do all that, although I could do a lot, but it would have been hard.

Joan: Then what about your daughter?

Beverly: My daughter was about three years old then. Our good neighbors took care of her while Rocky was taking care of animals and stuff. So if it hadn't been for our neighbors, we would have been up a creek. Most of the time, she spent with the Wolfe's, with Jack and Dosca.

Joan: What tractor did you drive?

Beverly: A 4020 John Deere, but I don't know what year it was. You know, that tractor is still up on the farm at Lewis. I told my brother-in-law, who now lives there, that he could never sell it. He said he wouldn't, but one time he needed another tractor. One banker, he said, didn't appreciate the fact that he didn't have a trade-in. So he had to go find another banker that understood. So he still has the 4020 up on the farm.

Joan: Scheuflers still have their tractor. It would be nice if they had a place where they could be kept.

Beverly: If I had a lot of money, I would take that 4020 and have it restored, you know, cleaned up and repainted and everything. It might happen someday. I know it's been sitting outside; I don't think it's been shedded.

Joan: Scheufler's is shedded.

Beverly: They have sheds. I don't think our 4020 is.

Joan: So you decided to go. Tell us a little bit about the group that went.

Beverly: There were three tractors from our... from Lewis, that went. Of course, one was ~~the Scheuflers, Ed and Marge,~~ *(corrected to be Stapletons, W.A. and Clara)* and the other was Jim and Jean Titus. Jim Titus, who lived just a mile from us on the way to the Wolfe's, I followed him just about the whole way. He had a sign on the back of his tractor that Marge Scheufler had designed. It said, "Carter gave us a bum steer." And it had a picture of a really skinny steer on it. So I followed that tractor the whole way. Then there were other tractors, approximately 20, that came from the surrounding smaller towns. But those are the three that went from Lewis, and also Lester Derley drove a farm truck with tanks in the back for fuel. So he was our fuel man. Marge and Ed had a travel trailer, and Lester and I stayed with them in that little travel trailer.

Joan: And the Millers?

Beverly: Of course, the Millers went. Darrel was so good at kind of being... helping us get organized and did a lot of calling and talking to media and trying to figure out where we were going to park that night. He was usually ahead of us trying to figure out stuff.

Joan: Was that the whole group then?

Beverly: Those are the ones that were there every day. I know that Jack Wolfe started. They purchased a new camper. and they rolled it. No, there was another tractor, Stapleton's, Dub and Clara Stapleton's. They had another young man who was a diesel mechanic drive their tractor.

Joan: Do you remember his name?

Beverly: No, but it's in my diary. I just read it, but I still don't remember it. *(Larry Seele, a diesel mechanic from Paxico, Kansas)*

Joan: And you were talking about Jack?

Beverly: He rolled his camper on the way to Topeka, so they did not go with us. But when we got to D.C., Jack was there.

Joan: He had flown?

Beverly: Yes.

Joan: So your preparations for going? How did you get ready?

Beverly: Well, I know we checked out 4020. I don't recall ever having to do anything much to it. It was our main tractor, so it was in good shape.

Joan: And it had a cab?

Beverly: It did have a cab on.

Joan: Heater?

Beverly: No, not really a heater, just the engine heat. It leaks up through the holes in the cab! That was basically it. I don't recall ever being real cold while I was in the cab, so that wasn't... But we dressed warmly. I don't recall any other specifics other than figuring out what little Amy was going to do while I was gone. There wasn't a lot of preparation, just packing a small bag.

Joan: A small bag. This wasn't a very big trailer, was it?

Beverly: Oh no, it was... I slept on the table! There were four of us that slept, and you all had to be asleep at the same time.

Joan: Did Marge do the cooking?

Beverly: Oh yes, she was a wonderful cook! At some places we stopped, they would feed us, but if they didn't, Marge had a meal fit for kings when we got there. We didn't eat just sandwiches, oh no! We had fried chicken and mashed potatoes and the whole deal. She was really good.

Joan: Someone said that once you got those tractors rolling in the morning, you didn't stop?

Beverly: Well, we did stop and have a break, usually in the morning, maybe 15 minutes or just a little bit, and a little bit at lunch. We had gotten up so early that usually we'd already eaten what we had in the tractor. We didn't have a lunch or anything, we just ate on the go. Usually, there was a small break in the afternoon. I remember that distinctly, because a little bit ahead of us was a RV which was driven by the Chenoweths from Haviland. They had a potty in there! So I became good friends with the Chenoweths, and I often washed the windows on their RV at night. It was a port-a-potty! And boy, I looked! And if it wasn't around I was in trouble! But it always worked out just fine.

Joan: What time did you get going in the morning?

Beverly: It varied, as you'll see when you read that diary. The alarms were often set for 4:30 or 5:00. One morning, maybe 3:30. We didn't get too much sleep. But when we did sleep, I know that it wasn't hard to get to sleep. It was often that we had to get up at 4:30. It took a long time, when you had a large group like that, to get kind of organized. The only communications were with CB's. That was all. It was difficult.

Joan: Who was leading the Tractorcade?

Beverly: Well, we always asked that question! We didn't know who our leader was because nobody ever knew who that front person was. When you watch the DVD, you'll have a picture of who I think was our leader from our branch that went out. But I did not know their name or anything. I often thought that if the person in front of us drove off a cliff, we would just all go.

Joan: And you joined the Tractorcade right there at Highway 50 in Lewis?

Beverly: Yes, we got together (the South Central group) and I believe it was about 20 tractors. We got together and then I drove with Amy, who was three years old at the time, as far as Hutchison. Then my husband took over, and he drove the tractor the rest of the way to Ben Marble's farm in Topeka and I came back. ~~Then the next day, I'm not sure it was the next day, but it was soon after that~~ (*In January*) we drove up and got our tractors and started out the next day. (*Note to clarify: The second tractorcade to Topeka on Dec. 7, 1978. This is when all South Central Kansas tractors met on Hwy 50 at Lewis to*

go to Topeka. The Snyder 4020 was left at the Ben Marble farm with the others until Beverly returned in January, 1979 to start for D.C.)

Joan: About how many tractors were there on that drive? Say when you went to Topeka, how big had the Tractorcade gotten?

Beverly: It wasn't too big. We left Topeka, and when we got to Sedalia with Colorado in our group there were about 163 tractors and 142 support vehicles. When we got to St. Louis, there were about 300 tractors. When we got to Greenville, Illinois, there were 300 to 500. According to newspaper articles, the *Washington Post*, there were about 2,000 tractors and maybe up to 30,000 farmers that were actually there.

Joan: At the Tractorcade or just from the...

Beverly: That would be the total, of course, by the time we got there. With Colorado, I'm not sure how many were just Kansas tractors, but Colorado and Kansas were about 160 with about an equal number of support vehicles.

Joan: Then you had other tractorcades joining you as you went.

Beverly: Along the way, yes.

Joan: It kept swelling the numbers.

Beverly: Yes. It was always a great anticipation to see how many would be in the next group. The talk was always just talk, so you never knew how many there were going to be. It was always exciting when another group would join.

Joan: Did they come in at the end or wherever they could get in?

Beverly: That was always the plan, but you know. Farmers don't take orders too good. They're not used to doing that, so mostly they did what they wanted to. We did try hard to keep our regions together, so then our support vehicles would be together, and they would know where our bed was that night. And it was difficult; there was a lot of whiplash, a lot of slowing down and speeding up. Because, anytime someone would stop three miles ahead of us or five miles, you know, it would just start a whiplash deal. It was hard. They thought at one point it would be a good idea to have all the support vehicles follow the tractors. If I recall, that seemed to help somewhat. Then toward the end of the day, they would pass and get to wherever we were staying that night ahead of us. Then we would be trying to find them, which was always fun. I know Ed Scheufler was always great because usually the driveway where we were entering this huge lot, whether it was a mall or a fairgrounds or something, he would be there with his "cup of tea" and he would be waving and pointing the general direction of which we should go. It always worked out.

Joan: And you say you were going between 10 and 20 miles an hour?

Beverly: Not 20, we averaged maybe 15. Probably at the most was an average of about 10 miles an hour.

Joan: So support vehicles were going that slowly also. That must have driven those drivers crazy!

Beverly: Yes, it drove a lot of people crazy!

Joan: You haven't said anything about the weather.

Beverly: The weather started out wet and rainy and continued to get worse the whole way. It was cold, and I know in Greenville we stayed a couple days because of a lot of snow. A lot of the tractors that had blades on did a lot of community service by pushing snow at the hospital parking lots and things like that while we were stuck there. There was a lot. Have you seen the pictures?

Joan: I've seen a few, but not that many, there was a lot of snow.

Beverly: The worst was in Cumberland, Maryland. It was really...

Joan: In the mountains.

Beverly: Yes, before we got to D.C. It was awful. We couldn't stop where we were supposed to stop in Friendly (*West Virginia*), I think we were going to stop. They said we would be snowed in there, and we didn't want to be snowed in at that point. So we had to keep going downhill. Some of them had stopped and some of them were pulling support vehicles up the hills with chains. It was so bad at one point that Jim Titus started to go down an exit. We couldn't see the road very good at all; we were the only ones on the road. He started to go on the exit and didn't know it. Instead of going straight, he was watching the white line. We had to holler at him to stop, so he turned around and came back and off we went. At that point, you'll read in the diary, but we didn't know if our support vehicles were in front of us or behind us. You just couldn't see anything. But we kind of figured that they were ahead of us, so that's why we decided to keep going. It was a good decision because pretty soon you could hear the CB, and it was hard for me to hear it, but you could hear them. They were coming looking for us because they were on the other divided highway across...

Joan: Coming back?

Beverly: Yes, coming back looking for us. That was a nice sight that night because it was dark by then. So they of course had to keep going until they could get turned around and come our direction. We stopped. It was Lester and Ed, and they wanted to know if I was okay and if I wanted them to drive my tractor. I said, "No, I think I can make it."

Joan: Maybe we should put in here that we think you are the only woman that went unaccompanied by a husband?

Beverly: Probably, I'm not sure. I know there were other women drivers, a couple, that I saw. But I think they drove part of the time, but I don't believe that anybody drove every inch of the way.

Joan: Did anybody spell you?

Beverly: No. Never. Nobody ever drove my 4020. Sometimes they moved it in the parking lot. I think Darrel moved it in the parking lot because he had to rewire it. One morning I got in and started up and the cab filled with smoke. There was a little wire that shorted out. I think he moved it and rewired that to get around that little short.

Joan: Was that the only difficulty your tractor gave you? No flat tires or anything?

Beverly: No. The only other difficulty was with the windshield wipers. I guess a little clip had come off, so we fixed it temporarily and the only way to fix it good would be to take the top of the cab off, and we couldn't really do that. So we fixed it again, but usually the heat from the inside of the tractor cab kept it so it didn't get iced over. It was difficult to see just because there was so much snow and poor visibility everywhere. But all in all, the tractor was great, except for those two little things.

Joan: What about the other tractors in the Lewis contingent?

Beverly: Most of them if they had a leak or a hydraulic hose leak or something, they put some duct tape on it! There were of course some accidents along the way where the tractor or the camper could not travel any further. In general, I do not recall a lot of mechanical difficulty, maybe just small things.

Joan: Then Mr. Derley would come by and give you the fuel?

Beverly: Yes. We would fuel up every night, that's why it was good for us from South Central Kansas to park kind of close together, so he could go around and fuel everyone up. Then in the daytime, he would find a place and buy fuel to fill up his tanks again.

Joan: Then that would last the whole day?

Beverly: Yes, it did.

Joan: With the hurricane situation right now, I wonder why they don't have a fuel truck going down right now filling up all those cars?

Beverly: I've wondered that too! Why don't they have big generators provided by our tax payer money at these service stations that don't have electricity?

Joan: That's the other one, too.

Beverly: It doesn't seem so hard!

Joan: Do you have any other special memories about going out on the trip? You said sometimes the towns you were staying in might feed you? Would that be the local farm group?

Beverly: Yes, usually. Then we'd have some pep talk-kind of meetings. We'd meet to find ways to make it go more smoothly. I can remember the first big meeting we had, we decided that only the tractor drivers would vote. So Lester and Ed and I had a meeting at my tractor, and we declared that we were all tractor drivers so we could all vote. We had a toast or something, I believe. So only the tractor drivers were supposed to make policy. But there was no way to count! If the speaker said something, everyone just said, "Yes!" or "No!" And that's the way we decided things. I remember one thing is that we would stop before nightfall. I can't remember the other things, but you know, the next day we just broke all those rules because it was just impossible.

Joan: With the weather and all?

Beverly: Yes, it was just so unpredictable.

Joan: So about what time did you usually stop?

Beverly: Well, I think it just varied a lot depending on how many miles we went and how many times we were stopped. One of the things I do recall: going through Missouri, we weren't allowed to go on I70. The governor decided that we should go on Highway 50, which would be a two lane highway. So we really clogged up a lot of traffic for the local people, who were not very appreciative, because if someone needed to go across Highway 50, they had to wait perhaps an hour and a half for us all to cross that one intersection. Sometimes people would try to dart between tractors and they would make it. I can remember one time when I thought I was going to hit somebody, but I didn't. Tractors don't have good brakes, they really don't. So we didn't like all of that, so we stopped in the middle of I50 a time or two and waited until the police could control the intersections and not stopping us to let traffic go by. Because they wanted to stop us at a main intersection to let traffic go by, but that was very difficult, so we would all stop in the middle of Highway 50 so we would stop traffic going both ways, the people trying to weave in and out of us and the people trying to come the opposite way. Then our leaders, whoever they were, had a discussion with the local police and explained that we were a parade, and we weren't supposed to stop. I know we had to do that a couple of times, and finally they got the idea that we were a parade and were not be stopped. We did not stop at stop signs or red lights, ever, on the whole deal, going through any city. When we got to Columbus, Ohio, they split us. Some people went around Columbus and some of us went straight through it. They thought that was a good idea. The group I was in went straight through downtown Columbus, and we didn't stop at any stoplights.

Joan: How were the police as you went through the country?

Beverly: I think in general they were good. They just didn't quite understand how difficult it was and that it just did not work to stop us. It was better to let us keep going and just get us out of their way so they could go about their business, is basically what worked best.

Another thing I remember that really struck me, was that people would stand and watch, a lot. They would maybe be across the right of way, standing by a barbed wire fence. Maybe that was their farm or something, so they just drove to it and stopped there. They would have their overcoats and their boots on, with their hands in their pockets, just looking. Some of them would be standing on overpasses and just be waving, like they were trying to say, "Give them hell!" Some of them you would see, like the guy just standing there with his hands in his pockets, just looking. I always thought that he was sad that he wasn't going with us! And I think that may have happened when they saw how big it was. I would dare to say that there were some that wished they had joined in too. To me, that was good.

Joan: What made the difference? Why did you go and other people not go? What went into that decision?

Beverly: Well, I don't know, but maybe the people who were struggling more financially felt the need to tell the story about the family farm and how there were becoming less and less family farmers and more and more corporate farms.

Joan: And this was unusual behavior for a farmer?

Beverly: Yes! Because most farmers, all they want to do is scratch in the dirt, so to speak, and grow food. Most small farmers that I knew felt they had the most important job in the world, to feed the people. It was serious stuff, but also something they loved to do. You'd have to love it to do it. You had to go into debt, and if you had a bad year, it didn't mean a thing because it would be better next year. I also think there were people that did better, maybe had a better start, than people like us did. I know they were there too, ones whose families had been farming for a long time, maybe it wasn't quite so hard for them. But I think it was hard for everybody back then, and it was scary to think what might

be happening to the family farm.

Joan: Darrel didn't put this on the tape, so he asked me to ask other people about church services and things like that. Do you remember that on the trip?

Beverly: I remember there were a couple of times we went to a church service. It was kind of a make-shift affair.

Joan: Was it in a local church, or was it in your Tractorcade?

Beverly: I don't think it was in a local church. I know there was Father Andy who traveled with us. I'm not sure where he was from.

Joan: Colorado.

Beverly: I think that's right. I do recall him. But there weren't a lot of church meetings, but I do remember one or two.

Joan: But you were only out a couple of Sundays.

Beverly: Yes, it took us two weeks to get there, and then I was there at D.C. for five days before I flew home.

Joan: I guess we never asked that too, what day of the week did you leave on?

Beverly: I don't know! I guess you can Google that. (*It was a Thursday.*)

Joan: Any other memories in particular? Was it in Indianapolis where you had the bad snowstorm?

Beverly: It was in Greenville, and I believe in Indianapolis also we had to stay an perhaps an extra day. *garbled*

Joan: Then you don't want to put it on here!

Beverly: Being snowed in wasn't all bad, I do remember the one in Greenville. I believe it was where... you know, a lot of people didn't use their campers if they had one, or had borrowed it. Of course, everything was freezing up, but I remember that between three campers, we did have a functional bathroom. One of them had water and another one had a stove that worked. So you just had to be in the right little camper for whatever you needed to do, at one point, because it was kind of sad.

Joan: On the way there, did you use a laundry mat? Or did you have enough clothes to get you through?

Beverly: Laundry mat, but only when we were snowed in. I don't recall ever going to a laundry mat after we camped just at a regular stop. I don't recall. Of course, I'm sure we may not have smelled too good, but we didn't really care.

Joan: How did you keep in touch with back home?

Beverly: I called a time or two, not very much. I guess we used a pay phone.

Joan: Unheard of in this day when you can call your family six times a day!

Beverly: And my husband wasn't home sitting by the telephone. You know, he had things to be doing too, so there wasn't a lot of communication, actually, but there was some.

Rosetta: Did you go to the legislators in D.C.?

Beverly: Yes.

Joan: Oh, wait, let's get them into D.C. first. So you all met up where outside of D.C.?

Beverly: Our group was the Kansas South Central Group and we ended up at a campsite called Cherry Hill Camp City. It was north of the Capitol on the beltway.

Joan: What state was this in?

Beverly: I believe it was in Maryland. Of course, when we got so messed up in the mountains, some stayed, some went on and some split apart. I don't know who decided to do all that, of course, I just followed Jim and his bum steer. We ended up with about 20 tractors there and we went in...

Joan: That was all that were in your crew, the others were in other campgrounds?

Beverly: Yes, and some weren't in campgrounds. Some were just in fields. Of course, we stopped at Frederick and parked in somebody's field and went into D.C. and kind of got the communication that February 5 was the day everyone was going to converge on the Capitol. Then I recall that we went back, and I think it was about 40 miles.

Joan: But you were just doing that with the support vehicles.

Beverly: Yes, and the driver of one of the vehicles (I think it was Lester, though I can't remember what vehicle it was) took the drivers back up to Frederick, and we got into our tractors and we went to the campground and then the next day our group started for the Capitol. The other groups were of course larger because we just had our 20 by then, but we got there.

Joan: But then as you are starting to head into the Capitol all the groups start merging. They were coming from the south and the north and the west. Poor people from Washington D.C.!

Beverly: It was kind of interesting on the whole trip, because at one point not too far from the Capitol, the police did stop us at an intersection so the local traffic could cross through. The policeman did stop right at my tractor and was standing there. I don't know who took the picture of me leaning out of the cab with the policeman standing with his back against the tractor. There was another policeman waving the traffic on to hurry up and go across because these farmers weren't going to sit there too long. But the people in the cars were going slow; they wanted to kind of see and look what was going on! And the cops were just... at one point they waved at the policeman that was in front of my tractor to come over there. So he started to walk away, then he turned around and he went like, "Stay there!" And I went, "Okay, I'm not moving until you tell me!"

Joan: Was he surprised to see a woman in the tractor?

Beverly: I don't even know if he much cared, he was pretty serious. We did not chit-chat. So that was kind of the whole time, the people wanted to get where they were going, but they wanted to slow down and see what it was. So it was kind of funny, and then when we did continue to within just a few blocks from the Capitol, I know that one in our group (it was one of the tractors from Haviland) bumped a police car that had cut right in and kind of slammed his brakes. I think the consensus was that it was kind of a planned stop. So we all stopped, in our group, while he was getting his ticket. But basically it just kind of went on and on, so some of our leaders said, "How much longer?" And they said, "Ten minutes." But in ten minutes, he still wasn't out, so we said, okay, and at that time there was one lane free. It was a two lane, so cars were traveling in the left lane, so we got the order on the CB to block all lanes until we could continue. So I just pointed 4020 at a little angle and put it in low-low and just crept forward, just inching forward. But the cars would keep trying to go through until finally I said, "They'll stop pretty soon, or someone's going to get bumped." They stopped, and the police would come to my door and say, "You need to back up." So I would say, "Okay," and I would back up in the right lane, but another tractor down a ways would go out and block the left lane, so when he go down and tell him to back up, then someone else would back up. Finally, and I believe it was a lady police office that was trying to give Daryl Chenoweth a ticket, and we were cleared to go after that. I recall a lot of anxiety about what was going on ahead of us, because some were already hearing about tear gas and that cranes were moving tractors (which was not true!) So there was a lot of anticipation about what was actually happening or going to happen there. Most of it wasn't too serious, except there were some occasions when a tractor with a blade did mow over some police motorcycles or push some cars. Of course, they got hauled off rapidly. I believe they did throw some mace or teargas into a tractor cab, so there were some minor injuries, but I don't think a lot.

Joan: Did you drive your tractor all the way down to the Mall?

Beverly: Definitely! Right to the steps of the Capitol. Of course! Then the three of us from Lewis were sightseeing on our tractors. We drove by the White House and did a loop around the Mall and everything. The weather was nice that first day. Then we had a big rally, so we parked. Our three tractors were kind of on a side street, but many of the tractors were parked on the Mall. Then we had a meeting on the steps of the Capitol, and of course there were police in riot gear everywhere, a lot, a lot, which was pretty interesting to most of us farmers. We had a meeting.

Joan: Did you feel threatened by the police? Or intimidated?

Beverly: Not really, because I knew it was kind of normal when there were large demonstrations. They had to be there, but it was interesting to look further up on the Capitol at different levels and see them standing with rifles and stuff. So it was kind of interesting for us. But you know, we had a good meeting and kind of a pep rally. By then it was, "Well, what are we going to do tomorrow?"

"Well, later we're going to go home and then we'll come back into town tomorrow." So of course, then they decided that they would barricade the tractors on the Mall.

Joan: Was that the first day that they barricaded them?

Beverly: Yes. We were only allowed to mess up the traffic in Washington D.C. for one day, one time. Then at some point, while we were not paying attention, they started driving (you will see the pictures on the DVD) city buses, trucks, dump trucks and trash trucks and lining them up bumper to bumper and surrounding the tractors that were on the Mall. Actually, the three of us from Lewis kind of didn't know

what was going on because we were going on a little sightseeing trip. We were kind of done for that day.

Joan: By sightseeing you mean on foot or in the tractors?

Beverly: We were in the tractors, so at some point in the afternoon we decided that it was time for us to head back to the campgrounds. So the three of us just went back, not realizing that the ones on the Mall were actually not able to leave! So we went back and I got in the camper. I can't remember, but I guess it wasn't locked, and no one was there. I just said, "Well, I guess they'll be here pretty soon." It got night, and it was dark. Of course, we didn't have a telephone or anything, so I think I went to bed. I was tired! I went to sleep, and then Marge came in and said, "We didn't know where you were! We looked all over for you down there! And we didn't know where you were. We're so glad you're here safe and sound and everything." So that's when we learned that all the other Tractorcade tractors were on the Mall, barricaded to where they could not leave.

Joan: How did you feel about that? Did you want to be in the Mall?

Beverly: Well, yes. The next morning when we went back in there, some of them knew that our tractors were safe and sound. Of course, they were not unhappy that they were there, they were there to tell a story and that was just part of it. They got a lot of news coverage, but they did say, "You should bring the tractor and break in! They would let you come in. and you could join us!"

Well, I'm thinking about all the difficulties of doing that, and I knew that if my tractor was impounded in there, that my husband would have to be coming back. If I went back to Lewis, he would have to be coming back. We really did not want to do that. So, none of the three of us were actually in the Mall in the little trap. But the police were pretty smart, that was a pretty good thing. We kind of got a little bit out-thought on that deal, but it worked out okay, although they did some damage on the Mall. They ran over some trees, and they burned a tractor in the reflecting pool, or drove it and maybe the other one was burned. They burned a tractor up and took parts off an old tractor and threw it over the fence at the front of the White House. Things like that.

Joan: You said you stayed for another week?

Beverly: We stayed for five days there.

Joan: What did you do in those five days?

Beverly: I actually had a meeting scheduled with a gentleman in the FHA about our particular financial concerns and the fact that we were denied continuing support from our local FHA in Dodge City. He gave us some ideas on the appeal and assured that if there was any way they could, it should be allowed so we could continue farming. And we did continue farming a little bit longer.

Joan: So you found that meeting helpful?

Beverly: A little bit. We did a lot of paperwork with appeals and a lot of stuff that we just shouldn't have had to do if we'd had a fair price for our crops, we wouldn't have had to do that. The mystery to me, especially since my husband died a couple years after that and I left the farm, the big question in my mind is, "What would have happened?" Would we still be there? You know what we would have done if we were forced to sell, because we talked about it, "If we don't make it and we go bankrupt, what are we going to do?" The very easy answer for my husband was, "We'll start over again." So we had the

plan, but never knew exactly how that would have turned out.

Joan: Did you go to any other hearings?

Beverly: I did not go, I don't believe, to any other hearings at the Capitol. I know there were other meetings that we went to a couple of times. A lot of it, we just kind of hung out and talked to people and fellow farmers.

Joan: Other people on the Tractorcade? Or ...

Beverly: Fellow farmers and also the policeman, after the first day, were very friendly and very interested (that's my recollection of it) and there were other people from foreign countries that we talked about it. They were very sympathetic; it was the same thing where they were from.

Joan: How about the public in Washington D.C.?

Beverly: I can't say that we met a lot of them, really. I didn't.

Joan: And you would go back and forth from the campground every day?

Beverly: Yes, every day.

Joan: Did you get to do any real sightseeing while you were there?

Beverly: No, never went into any building or the Smithsonian. My husband had been stationed at Fort Belvoir (*just south of D.C.*) for a year after we were married, and I didn't have to teach at that time. So we did our sightseeing at Washington D.C. before that. But there was no time to sightsee, nor did you feel the energy or the desire to do that. There was a lot of media attention, of course. Helicopters even on the other route into Washington D.C., helicopters would fly down and land near us with the media. People like Darrel would visit and talk to them and stuff.

Joan: How about the media in general and the coverage of the Tractorcade. Did you think it was being covered?

Beverly: Yes. Every place we went, it was covered, because it was big news. The big news was telling the locals which route we were taking so they could avoid us the next day!

Joan: I can understand that!

Beverly: And trying to explain to them how big a problem it was if they had to get somewhere and cross the tractorcade.

Joan: Yes, a harvest crew irritates us today, and that's only a few vehicles!

Beverly: You can imagine, I don't know but maybe when we were the biggest, this was maybe 25 miles long, and it took a long time to pass a single given point. Every kind of tractor and trailer.

Joan: That's a good story problem for kids, if the Tractorcades were 25 miles long, at ten miles an hour, how long would it take to pass?

Beverly: Well, just to leave a parking lot in the morning took a long time for us to leave, or to drive in to a parking lot and actually park.

Joan: You sort of get it was like the wagons that you would circle and keep circling. Do you remember that?

Beverly: No. I just remember that Ed would be there and point us that way. As long as there would be somebody standing on top of a tractor waving over here... We always found each other, but you had to look. I don't recall, I know we never parked in a circle. We were parked in rows, almost always. And there were too many to ever park in a circle. There would not have been a large enough area. (*Beverly corrected this according to what Darrel Miller said.*)

Joan: At the time you were there, did you feel you were having an impact on the legislature?

Beverly: No. I do remember meeting with Nancy Kassebaum, who was our senator then. She was against parity and told why.

Joan: Do you remember any of that conversation? She has agreed to be part of this project as far as...

Beverly: Really, I do recall being upset with her.

Joan: She said she did not vote for it.

Beverly: I believe, if I recall right, that it was part of another bill that wasn't going to pass anyway. So she voted no anyway. That whole deal when bills are attached to other bills, I have no idea why they do that, I'm sure they continue doing that. And then with Mr. Bergland (*Robert*), who was the Secretary of Agriculture. No one was happy at all with any of their comments, I don't believe.

Joan: How about Senator Dole?

Beverly: I don't recall too much about him specifically. But I remember Nancy Kassebaum and Mr. Bergland.

Joan: And then to get home, you flew home?

Beverly: Yes. Greensburg Equipment from Greensburg, of course, went and brought all three tractors back, loaded them up.

Joan: What was your reception when you got back to Lewis?

Beverly: You know I do not recall that there was any big welcome party or anything. We just went to the farm and continued doing what we usually did. I do not recall... People knew we'd done something, sure. I know we talked about it, but it was nothing in an organized fashion or anything. We all knew that we had done something unusual that would most likely never happen again. And we did feel that we told the story, although I'm sure that there's a lot of disagreement on that and how effective we were. I don't think we were immediately effective on changing any legislation or anything. Which didn't surprise too many people, I don't think. That's the way politics is.

Joan: Is this something you would do again?

Beverly: Well, hopefully not! No, I had a long talk with myself after the Tractorcade and a couple of other things that have happened in my life. I vowed to myself that I would never join another movement or cause that did not directly affect myself or my family. So far, I've kept the pact, but of course, I wasn't farming.

Joan: But you felt the Tractorcade did directly affect you.

Beverly: Yes. But you know, it just seems like a lot of things... But I also felt that in the long run, it didn't do a lot of good for people like us. So maybe it was just a waste of time in the long run. In the short term, we felt that it was certainly important to do and that someone needed to tell the story. And who better than we farmers?

Joan: And like you said, you had no way of knowing. You feel that you would have lost the farm?

Beverly: Most likely. I'm guessing that if my husband had lived, we probably would not have been able to keep farming. But no problem, he would have gotten a job working for another farmer, and we would have started again somehow, some way. If you're not a farmer, it is hard to understand the connection to the soil. We both came from a long line of farmers, and to think that we just couldn't do it was hard.