

1979 Tractorcade to Washington D.C.

Interview with Dolores Jones

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Conducted in the Kinsley Library, Kinsley, Kansas

Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library

Joan: Dolores, can you describe what your farm was like in 1975? How much land did you have or cattle were you running? What crops were you growing?

Dolores: Well, I can't tell you how many acres we had back then. But it was about half of what it is now and we've expanded. It was probably about 500 acres or less, and we've always had cattle.

Joan: Did you grow wheat?

Dolores: Wheat, corn and milo and that kind of stuff. We irrigated pretty early. We were some of the first ones around Offerle that irrigated. We still flood irrigate a lot of it there.

Joan: Still today?

Dolores: Yes. It's hard work. I had to give it up when I got crippled up, but my husband still flood irrigates some in the summertime.

Joan: So you had cattle. Did you have pigs or anything else?

Dolores: Just cattle.

Joan: Was the farm your sole source of income? Or did either of you work outside?

Dolores: At one time, he worked at the feed yard from 1969 to I think '72, he worked over there and I did a lot of the farming. We were small enough I did the farming when he couldn't do it. I stayed home and took care of the kids. I think one parent ought to be there, that's how I believed it.

Joan: How did you hear about the American Agricultural Movement in the beginning? Do you remember?

Dolores: Well, I started hearing about it at Lewis, and people were talking about these people with tractors parading around. So I went and talked to Leander Lightcap; he's gone now. But he was very interested, and we talked it over together. Dee his son, and Cathy, who was his wife at the time, they were interested, so we said, "Why don't we see if we can get a building here in Offerle and pass out some literature?" So I went to Lewis and got some literature and seen what they were doing. The city of Offerle let us use the city building, and we'd have coffee and pass out literature. We didn't have enough people to help: Lenny, he wanted to loaf and my husband want to loaf. I mean, they didn't want to sit there and do it. They'd go to the tractorcades and stuff, but they didn't want to sit there. It was boring, if you were the only one, so one day I said we had to get more people interested in this.

So I went over to Lewis to see what they were doing. I stopped here in Kinsley at Fox Equipment (which isn't even here now), but I stopped there and talked to his son. I can't even remember his name; he's gone now.

Rosetta: Jerome Fox.

Dolores: Jerome. And he said, "I'm interested, but there's nobody who wants to do anything." So I said, "I'm going to go on over to Lewis."

Joan: Was there an office in the Fox Building at that time?

Dolores: No, it had nothing to do with this Fox, down here on the highway.

Joan: I think they did have one there briefly, didn't they? We heard that from Mary Ellen.

Dolores: Maybe later, but not early, not then.

Joan: So then you went on to Lewis?

Dolores: I talked to the people over there, and I saw all these people in there and they were really interested. I met these farmers, but I only knew their names. I didn't know them all personally. I seen all the old guys and the young guys were interested. So I said, "We're going to have to do something. We can't get these people in Offerle to get that interested." And they said, "Well, we've got to get some Tractorcades going." So we did. Some of those I have those pictures, they started in Offerle. But they still wouldn't come in. No one wanted to come in and sit in there and talk to people. The city people from Offerle would come in and talk to me, but the farmers weren't coming in. So one day I went over there and said, "You know what, I'm going to bring my literature, and if I can't help over here, we'll all join together because you guys have a good thing going. Maybe we can get more interest. And that's how I got over there. I went over and helped them maybe a couple times a week and stayed in the office. I never did go on any of the trips to Topeka or Washington, but we had ones around here, Tractorcades that my husband was in. I did drive a tractor, but not in a parade.

Joan: So the farmers weren't coming into the office. How about their support? Were they supportive of it?

Dolores: It was kind of iffy. I mean, about half of them really thought we were doing a good thing. They'd pat you on the back and say, "We'll help you if we can." But that was as far as it went. The other half said, "You're nuts! They ain't going to listen to us." That's the way it went, and there were a lot of those. They were just very skeptical about it, that we would even get any attention. So I just thought, "If they have that attitude, I can't do it all." So that's when I joined them. But the city cooperated; they gave us the building to use for nothing! But like I said, the farmers weren't joining. The Co-op, they volunteered to shut down for one whole day! I think there is a picture in there.

Joan: As a protest?

Dolores: Yes, they let us park our tractors out there, and they shut down as a support.

Joan: This would probably be in 1977?

Dolores: It was '77, I think. It was just about to the day here; it was the middle of December.

Joan: So this had nothing to do with the Topeka Tractorcade?

Dolores: No. This was before that.

Joan: Were you gathering to go on a local tractorcade?

Dolores: Yes, and quite a few tractors from Offerle did come in that never took part in too much. They said they all wanted to shut the Co-op down, so quite a few came in. I don't have any good pictures of them, or if I do, I can't find them. I should have kept them all in one place.

Joan: When you said, "They wanted to shut the Co-op down." What do you mean by that?

Dolores: In protest. The Co-op was supporting it. The manager volunteered that he would do it, in support. He's still there, by the way, the same manager, Dwayne Boyd.

Joan: That's interesting, we'd never heard that story before.

Dolores: Well, because I am the only one from Offerle. I talked to him and stuff. He said, "I'll gladly close down, and pay the employees." And he paid the employees, they got paid. They just closed down and got a paid vacation day. So that was nice that they didn't get docked.

Joan: Yes, that was very nice. So, about how many tractors would have participated from Offerle in the little local tractorcade? If you remember who they were, mention names.

Dolores: Less than ten. Ours and the Lightcaps. One was Venon VanNehman; his wife was very active. You know Mildred? He was very active. That one picture there of the tractor on the truck, he didn't want to drive his tractor, so he wasn't going to go! I had to think about that for a little while.

Joan: Did he take it off the truck, or did he leave it on?

Dolores: I can't remember. I think he didn't want to drive it out in the cold. It was kind of cold and it was an open cab, I think.

Joan: So they did that, because it was so cold, they'd haul them to where they were going to go.

Dolores: They trucked them. I just have a picture of it on that truck. At first, I thought, that's a truck just like what we had. But Doyle said, "No, it had a white top." He'd remembered, but it was Vernon's. And he said he couldn't remember if he unloaded it. Since it was cold, I'm thinking he went in the parade with the tractor on the truck. I don't know!

Joan: Can you think of anybody else?

Dolores: Well, I think Albert Birzer furnished a tractor. I think he brought his tractor, but he didn't drive it. Either a hired man or... And in one of those pictures Farold Fox is driving a Birzer tractor, it says. I'm trying to remember. Like I said, we didn't have that much support there when it come right down to it. Yes, "You're doing a good thing." But when it came time, they didn't do it.

Joan: So the Tractorcade started in Offerle and left Offerle and came to Kinsley and went downtown?

Dolores: We went through town here and I think that if you look at the dates we went on to Larned. We have the pictures here, it might be the same day but we went on down to Larned.

Joan: And you drove to Larned on the tractors?

Dolores: Right. And I tried to take as many pictures, and I have some more somewhere. If I find them, I'll bring them in. But remember, I was following this along and trying to get pictures. I wasn't actually in the parade...well, I was too. I followed the tractors or would go ahead of them. But you know, I wasn't actually there. But I don't remember. There was a lot of tractors that were in Kinsley when we got here.

Joan: So you picked up those tractors and then continued on.

Dolores: Then we went on and people from Lewis... I don't remember whether Lewis came in here or we went to Lewis and went that way to Larned. I don't know our route. I can't remember.

Joan: You may have gone there. I don't know though because I think the Lewis tractors were in here, weren't they?

Rosetta: I think so.

Joan: So they may have come here.

Dolores: That's what I'm thinking. We met here, then all went to Larned because there were so many parades that I don't have pictures of. You know, I can't really...that was a long time ago! I don't remember all that.

Joan: That's why we're doing this! We can't wait any longer!

Dolores: Then I won't remember!

Joan: So you said you were working in the office a couple days a week?

Dolores: Answering the phone. Then when all of them went to Washington, I stayed over at the office a lot and was there most of the day or two or three. Because there was a lot of them went to Washington, and they were call back and we would tell everyone else what they were doing and what was happening up there. Because you couldn't always believe all the news people. It was a different story. Did they tell you, the first year we went, no cops knew how to run tractors. The second year, they taught them how to run those tractors so when the farmers got off and let them sit, the cops didn't know how to start them! They did the second year! They knew how to run tractors the second year.

Joan: Are you talking about Washington D.C.?

Dolores: Yes, they knew how to run tractors the second year because they had a tractor school sometime there! Because that was funny, I guess. I'd have loved to have been there, because they'd just get off and just park them, and they didn't know nothing about starting them or nothing. Of course, back then the tractors weren't like ours, you know, back then you couldn't just start them up. Not everybody could, the farmers could, but the city cops couldn't. So we all thought that was really funny that they had to go to school to learn how to run the tractors. And that was one of the topics. We're not fooling them no more; they know how to do it!

Joan: They were pretty smart about some things. So did you work with Zelma Meade and Jeff Meade in the office? Because I know they didn't go to Washington either. They said they worked there in the office.

Dolores: Yes, we all pretty well took our turns. There was a lot of them went; I can't tell how many went. Most from Lewis. Nobody from Offerle went that I know of.

Joan: They sort of went back and forth. Some flew in. Millers were there for like three months.

Dolores: I know. They bought a trailer and pulled it up there, a little trailer. They had a little camping trailer of some kind they bought.

Joan: I don't know about Millers. Did Millers have a trailer?

Dolores: Yes. They just bought it for that. I mean it wasn't for camping.

Joan: That's right, and then they sold it the day they got back!

Dolores: Right, they'd had enough of that.

Joan: I remember that story now. So, about how many parades do you think you participated in, or maybe how many did this group participate in, not you personally participate in. Maybe around here, not them all.

Dolores: Oh, I suppose 20 or something like that.

Joan: Really! That many. What other towns did you go to?

Dolores: Mostly, it was east of here. They didn't go west of Offerle that I know of. There just wasn't the interest. You got to Dodge and that way there wasn't nobody interested in it. So I think Offerle was far west, and they wouldn't have had them there if I hadn't gotten some of them to do it. They was mostly my neighbors and you know, my family. That's one reason. Other than that, there just wasn't the interest. They wanted you to do it, but for somebody else to do it. You know, that's how it is.

Joan: Well, it's work!

Dolores: Yes.

Joan: Did either of you have parents living at that time?

Dolores: Yes.

Joan: How did they think about what you were doing?

Dolores: They thought we was nuts. My mom said, "They are not going to pay any attention to you." She was still alive. And his folks, they lived here in town -- Will Jones, you might have knowed them. They moved in from north of Kinsley. His dad kind of laughed; he kind of thought it was funny. But he said, "They'll never listen to you." And I said, "Well, we can try."

Joan: And you had children who were around 20, or a little less than that?

Dolores: Well, my son took part. He drove tractor, that's what I mean about popping wheelies.

Joan: That was before we started the tape. Now, his name is Jeff?

Dolores: Yes, and I had some nephews Chris Putter in some of those pictures on Putter's tractor. And Lyle, I don't have a picture of Lyle. I think I gave it to my... he's the one that got killed. I think I gave it to my sister, the pictures I had of him driving our tractor. Then he and Jeff got to popping wheelies and stuff right down here on the highway. I was following. We didn't have telephones then, you know, to tell them to stop it. I couldn't wait until I caught up with them! Then Doyle said, "Did you see what your kid did?" And I said, "Yes." but anyway, they took part. They didn't come to the office or nothing, Gene didn't, but they would bring their tractors.

Joan: Did they go to Topeka?

Dolores: No.

Joan: They were more local. There were no mishaps? They managed to keep the tractors on their wheels?

Dolores: Oh yes. They seemed to keep them under control.

Joan: So they were supportive at least because it was fun?

Dolores: Well, they were supportive, but they didn't take an active part. They'd come to the parades and bring their tractors. A lot of them would do that, but helping in the office or anything, they didn't go. But they'd give you support by being there, too. Oh we were cussed, and there were all kinds of things said.

Joan: By the local people?

Dolores: Some.

Joan: Do you have any stories or memories about some of these local people? You told the wheelies story, were there other things that you remember?

Dolores: Well, most people was really nice to us. They'd clap and everything when the tractors... but some of them were downright rude. You know, "You don't look like you're starving!" Or, "If you've got a tractor like that, you're not starving!" One guy down here weighed about 300 pounds, and I can remember him standing there telling us that we didn't look like we were starving or nothing. "Well, we fed you pretty well!" He never said any more. That's about the only time I ever said anything back, but I couldn't take it. There is things where you can do that once in a while, but it just made me mad. You know, "You don't look like you're starving!" We didn't say we were starving; we just wanted what it was worth.

Joan: When you were fighting for parity, how did you define "parity"?

Dolores: Parity is the cost that it takes you to raise... the price that you get for your commodities keeps up with everything else that you pay for other stuff. But they're getting parity when you go someplace else. They're getting what it's worth. That's all we wanted, what it cost us to plant it and grow it and sell it. That's the cost in it, really, basically, that's what it is, plus a profit. That's parity. That was the main thing, trying to convince people what parity was.

Joan: At this time, were you worried about losing your farm?

Dolores: No. Later, it came in the '80's when people lost their farms. This was in... we saw it coming in the early '80's, but everybody there, I think, was pretty well still making it. Not very good, but they were making it. They did without a lot of other things. We did. Like I said, my husband worked, and we held on and stuff. But it wasn't easy, you know, this getting half price for your commodities is not a good thing. Now, we're still not getting parity. It's not equal to everything else, but it's a lot better. You know, we're getting some pretty good money, but it's still not parity.

Joan: So by the middle of the 80's, were you worried about losing the farm?

Dolores: Oh yes.

Joan: And you said before, that you had put in irrigation, which is expensive and that sort of thing. Were you dealing with the banks?

Dolores: Yes, but we made it through. We come through it. But it was pretty rough years. It was practically nothing. You didn't make a living; you went backwards every year. You can only do that so long. We did it a couple years, but after that he worked out and then I went to work later. We just did everything we could. We had nothing and never bought no furniture or nothing so we could keep the farm. It was rough.

Joan: Did you find the banks cooperative with you? Or did they put up stumbling blocks?

Dolores: Well, they just got so they wouldn't loan you enough money to pay your expenses and then you had to think of some way to sell something or do something that way that wasn't mortgaged to pay for stuff. But we never had as much trouble as other people because my husband's very conservative. We could have went into a lot more debt, but we didn't do it. But a lot of our neighbors and stuff did, and maybe lost some of their land or their farms. In the '80's, I went to work up at the college at Dodge because we needed the money, and I worked with several people up there that had lost everything. There was one guy that was a janitor and his wife was cooking there, and they had lost their farm and everything. They came from Iowa, but there was people from all over the place that when you got to talking to them, why they were there.

Joan: Well, the Schinstock's lost theirs, I know. They were ones here, and we've interviewed several people that came close, like you, you were hanging on. It was stubbornness and...

Dolores: Yes, we were hanging on. You just had to sacrifice; that's what you did. You're married to the farm; that's what it amounts to. If you want to save it, you'd better do everything you can.

Joan: Did you have any direct involvement with any of the elected officials, like Senator Dole? What was their reception?

Dolores: Yes. Most of them empathized, maybe more than they would now. I don't know, we're so citified now. But Dole, he did come to some meetings. We were up at Dodge, I believe, when it was at the 4-H building, I think, in Dodge. He came and he got booed by the farmers, but he did show up and he talked to people. And you know, a lot of people didn't like him, but at least he came. And you know, nowadays, they don't come. It's possible they won't show up, and he did and it was terrible. The farmers really booed him, they were so mad at him.

Joan: Why were they mad at him?

Dolores: I don't know; they just blamed every politician. It was easy. You know, Jimmy Carter! I mean that was insane, and probably none of them meant it, but that's the way it was, whoever was in office at the time. And they had nothing to do with it. People had to change their attitudes towards the farm.

Joan: What do you mean by people?

Dolores: The city people, you know, they are important too. Everybody's important. And you know, they raise the commodities at a low price so we don't have to pay so much at the grocery, which isn't helping them now. They're terrible, but that's because we're in a drought. Now when this drought's over, it'll go right back down. The sad thing about that is, the people don't have it to sell at the higher prices. That's sad. And see, we've got crop insurance, which helps, but all that does is put your crop out. It doesn't give you a living. I look for them to quit it, so what's going to happen if the drought continues? That's what I hate to see. Now, the prosperity of the little towns, we're just coming back from that. You can here in Kinsley what's happened over the years. I counted one day, and there used to be eleven business in the past 30 years that aren't here no more. You know that, from living here.

Joan: Yes, the downtown has really changed.

Dolores: And we can't all go to Wal-Mart! I hate that place. Don't put that down.

Joan: That's a general consensus. I heard today that India is dealing with that same problem. How about Nancy Kassebaum? She was also in office, do you remember any of her involvements or support?

Dolores: Well, I must say she listened. I don't know whether she could do anything or not, but she listened. That's the main part we wanted, just to listen and take the story back to Washington. And she did. She wasn't very much farm oriented, but she listened. And Dole listened; he really did. I know on some of those tapes, if you saw them... We had NBC come out once to a meeting in Offerle, and I don't know whether... they never played that. We don't know what happened to it. I was the MC there, and I've never seen that. I don't know whether... some say they didn't want it on national TV, and they didn't use it. That's what I think happened, but anyway, we had enough coverage after a while that people did listen. But you know, it was small town, and there was a lot of big farmers that they thought didn't deserve it. But they worked just as hard as everybody else, you know.

Joan: You're telling us lots of things that we haven't heard before. This is very good. Okay, you were fighting for parity and there were particular farm bills that you were lobbying for. That was the idea, to get some help. Can you recall anything where you thought you had a success or that this made an impact?

Dolores: Not really. It really didn't. We didn't think it made much of an impact. They said they listened, but we all knew it was kind of a hopeless cause when you came right down to it. You could tell them, they would listen. Like I said, Nancy Kassebaum listened, Dole listened, but did anybody go back to tell the story? Until the farmers went to Washington D.C., I don't think a lot of people knew what a tractor looked like. They didn't know, and they still don't. We've got city people now that have never gotten out of the city. There's more now than then. There's more of them, but they need to know. When I grew up, everybody was farmers around here. I wouldn't have any idea about city people, you know, how they felt.

Joan: You were in the Lewis office when they were in Washington. Describe what it was like. Did lots of farmers come in to get the news? What was it like?

Dolores: They'd come in, and we'd all sit there and have coffee. Usually one of them, Darrell Miller or somebody, called back and told us what was going on and what they'd saw that day and what they were up to. They'd all come in to listen and we'd have coffee. We'd put it on the speaker and listened to whoever called, and usually it was Darrell, and we'd all listen to it. Jim Titus, did they mention him? I never knew the man except to see him until I got into that. Then I got to be very good friends with these people, I mean him and his wife and everybody. I would have never known them personally otherwise. I mean Jack Wolfe and his wife and son and all of them. I mean, it brought the community together. Because here we are, clear over at Offerle on the west end of the county, and Scheuflers (*Ed and Marj*) were the east end of the county. So you knew them, but you didn't know them real well. That's where I met, well, I knew the Schinstocks (*Leo and Mary Ellen*) before. But like Mary Ellen, she'd just married Leo not too long before, and I got to know her. There's a lot of people that I wouldn't have, but we've kind of lost count now that everybody went their ways now. And a lot of them are gone; they aren't here now. There's a lot of them gone.

Joan: Even Leo, who was a young man. They were the babies that went on this!

Dolores: I know; I was thinking about that yesterday when I was looking at these pictures. I thought, "Oh, he's gone, and Harold (*Schnistock*) gone."

Joan: And Stapletons.

Dolores: Yes. Oh, Dub Stapleton was something else.

Joan: What do you mean by that?

Dolores: He was really ornery, and he wanted the farmers to have some recognition. And he tried, boy, he was a good old guy! But he didn't always go about it the way he should. But he really led people on. I mean, he could really speak up for himself, and he knew exactly what he was talking about. Now like, even now, I can't remember all the stuff, the issues we had, but he was sharp. He had a good memory, and he was tough. They didn't run over him!

Joan: Can you think of any particular story or anything?

Dolores: I can just remember him saying... you know, I think he did go to Washington. I can remember him saying them damn cops wasn't going to run over him or take his tractor! You know, that was the first... That's all I can remember, him coming back and saying that to me. But I knew they wouldn't. Knowing him, nobody was going to run over him! He was fun. And we all got to be really good friends.

Joan: And you were also a member of W.I.F.E. (*Women Involved in Farm Economics*), weren't you?

Dolores: Yes.

Joan: So, did you work with Peggy Arensman?

Dolores: Some. She got to be the president or something, but the local chapter kind of went downhill

after a while. We just lost interest, and then this other and stuff. I belonged to it for a long time, but I didn't take an active part in it after a couple years. Well, I guess I was working was one reason. I went to work after that in the early '80's, and I didn't have time. At this time, when we started this, I wasn't working, and I had time to go to all this. But other than that, I've forgotten a lot of this stuff. Yes, the W.I.F.E. thing was started for a really good reason.

Joan: Maybe I should say on this tape too, W.I.F.E. stands for Women Involved in Farm Economics. It was started then; they grew up about the same time.

Dolores: I think the farm W.I.F.E. started as kind of an off-branch of American Agriculture Movement. Then we were also involved with the American Agriculture, so I just kind of stayed with them, because I stayed home a lot. Then like I said, I went to work and then I didn't have time for a lot of this.

Joan: So looking back, you think the main impact you had was just educating the general public and may the politicians about the plight of the farmers.

Dolores: Yes, our own people here in the county, our own people that never paid no attention to what you were doing. They accepted the farmer, but they didn't pay attention to how hard some people had it to make a living. I suppose city people did too, at the time. Nobody made big wages, but they didn't have a farm to support either. That was the big problem, back then. Now, I hate to think of the expenses now. We could have never done it, with the expense of the farm now and how much it cost to farm.

Joan: And you had a son who was planning to take over the farm?

Dolores: Yes, he's farming with us now.

Joan: But back in the early '70's, that was the family plan?

Dolores: Well, he was going to be a pilot at one time. Then he changed his mind and just stayed in farming. He started farming with my husband when he got out of high school. We begged him to go to school, we said, "You know, it's not so great on the farm. You know, maybe you ought to get an education." "No, I'm going to farm." But he went through the tough years with us. He did. He knows how bad it was, but he'd just started, too. We weren't that old either, then, to have all these problems.

Joan: Yes, and people have told us, it's one thing to have a farm supporting you, but when the child comes up and starts taking over, the farm's got to support two families.

Dolores: There wasn't enough to pay him because we were small when he first started in farming. So we paid him a crop sharing payment instead of wages. We gave him so much of the crop, which we still do. But he farms on his own, too. He's got some land he owns and stuff now.

Joan: We've already said, I guess, that there wasn't any legislation that came out of this.

Dolores: Not much. I don't know of any.

Joan: Is it something that you still think was worthwhile and you would do again if you were young? Or not?

Dolores: I probably wouldn't have as much guts as I had then.

Joan: But you still think it was a worthwhile thing?

Dolores: Yes. I think it brought... if it didn't do anything else, we didn't get much out of the legislature or anything, but it brought the local people and the city people to get to know what people did on the farm, and what we really done. Some of them it soaked in, and maybe half it didn't. But they really understood after that. You know, that people wasn't just out here having fun. I guess a lot of them thought we were, I don't know. There's a lot of people today that don't understand. They don't understand these rural communities at all. They got to go to the city. You know, you see that here.

Joan: So about how many years were you active in the American Ag Movement?

Dolores: Probably five.

Joan: Were there any other farm organizations that you were active in at that time?

Dolores: Not really. We belonged to the Farm Bureau and the Farmer's Union and they supported us, but they really... Farmer's Union probably did the most (speak up the most) and Farm Bureau did quite a bit, but I think the Farmer's Union was the best one for the farmers at the time.

Joan: Are you still actively involved in farming issues? I mean, do you write your congressman? Do you still follow that sort of thing? That's in the political interests.

Dolores: Yes.

Joan: Okay, is there anything else that you want to get on this tape about the whole experience, or any stories. You have told us different things than other people have.

Dolores: Like I said, I got to know people in our whole county, and other counties too, east of here, and the ones at Larned too, that otherwise I wouldn't have known, and known they was in the same shape we was. You know, farmers don't discuss how bad off they are. When we all got together, we learned that we were all in the same shoes. It kind of gave you a confidence in your own strength together, you know, that maybe we could do it.

Joan: That is something that some other people have touched on. This is a very stressful thing, especially when you get into the '80's and the crunch is coming, and the effect that had on marriages. Was that as stressful on your marriage, or the friends you saw?

Dolores: No. We pretty well was in it together and stuck together. But it did, there was no money for nothing. No extra, and that once in a while can be... But we've always been conservative ourselves, so it didn't bother me as much. But a lot of women, they left their husbands and stuff, because he couldn't buy them stuff for the house. I can remember doing without a washer until I got enough money saved up. I used to raise calves when Doyle worked at the feed yard, so I could stay with the kids and get them to school. I raised bucket calves by myself and I'd sell them every year to buy appliances and furniture when I needed something for the house. I'd just borrow enough to pay for them when I bought them, and then I'd sell them. I did that by myself, and the kids would help me after school. I'd do 25 at a time, and if you don't think you wouldn't have fun! I had a little stanchion I pushed them in... I couldn't even think about doing that now. But anyway, that's what I did for a little extra money.

Otherwise, there was no money left from the farm. It all went to the bank or whoever we owed.

Joan: It was very difficult on the men. I've heard that, too, because they wanted to buy things for their wives. They wanted their farm making money.

Dolores: And they'd like to have decent machinery and maybe a newer tractor or a newer pickup. We drove old pickups, I can tell you that, for a long time. They limped along, but we got along. And cars too, we didn't get any new cars or nothing.

Joan: It sounds like you and your husband had a real partnership, because you weren't just a farm wife, you were a farmer!

Dolores: Yes. My dad died when I was 16, and there were three girls. So I already knew how to farm because we helped him. My mom stayed there, and we all got married, but then we took the farm over from her. The others didn't want to farm. We knew how to milk cows and we knew how to stack feed. We knew all of that stuff, so I was a good farm hand. Not no more!

Joan: And you owned the land because you inherited it?

Dolores: Well, we bought it from my mom, and I inherited some too. Well, we own some ground we bought south of Kinsley too, but anyway, there at Offerle, we owned it because I bought it from my mom. She wanted to move to town, and it was rough buying that quarter of ground from her, the first one. But you know, you have to have so much more now to make a living.

Joan: We've heard some people say that it was rough, but it maybe strengthen some marriages where there was a partnership, where everything was shared.

Dolores: Well, I think it did ours, but I saw a lot of them that it didn't. Just like I said, I worked with some people up there, and I got to know why they were there and stuff. They told me they'd lost their farm and stuff and both of them was working. They had nothing left. I mean absolutely nothing, except a little furniture and stuff. These people that I met from Iowa, they had a wonderful farm, the way they described, and they lost it all in the '80's.

Joan: This was when you were working at the college and they were retraining themselves.

Dolores: I couldn't get a better job. I was a cook, because they had the idea that if you were a farm wife, you knew how to cook. You couldn't do nothing else, like keep books or... You knew how to cook, so that's where they put you. They had that in their head, that the farmwife could cook.

Joan: Could you?

Dolores: Yes! Not quite as big a batters as I made up there at the college, I used a paddle to stir the soup! Well, I was a baker at the college. But I just got tired of driving, and I came down here and worked at the hospital in Kinsley. I worked about four departments down here. It was a lot better than driving to Dodge. You know, that college was no fun up there. It was big stuff, and I cooked in the mornings on Saturdays and I had two college kids to help me. On Saturday mornings, I was the only cook. Believe me, you wouldn't want to do that with kids. They'd crack eggs for you, and then you had to strain the eggs because they never took the shells out. I still remember that. You'd get to the bottom, and it was all shells! Oh yeah, you need college kids helping you. If you ever want to live, that's what

you want to do, especially in the kitchen! Oh, I had a lot of fun at it, but that's what the idea was, that farm wives kept the books for their husbands, we all did, but when you went to get a job, you didn't know nothing except to maybe cook! You could cook, or maybe a dishwasher or something. I went to the employment office, and that's what the guy told me. He said, "You have no skills." Well, I'd done about everything!

Joan: And you know how to work!

Dolores: Yes, that's why they'd give you those jobs because you knew how to work hard. That was not a good label I wanted - to be a cook! Or a housekeeper. You could get jobs doing that.

Joan: Now, you brought in a bag here, and I want you to tell us about the bag with the buttons on it. There'll be a picture on the website so people can see it. Who made the bag? It's a tote bag.

Dolores: Karen Miller made several, I don't know how many. She give them to us; I don't know whether I paid her for it or if she asked... It seems as if she wanted a little bit of money. I can't remember.

Joan: It's made of denim.

Dolores: Yes, and it was brand new denim.

Joan: What does it say? I can't read it because you have so many buttons on it. "My AG Bag." My American Ag. bag.

Dolores: She made all this; she was a wonderful seamstress. She did it, I mean, she bought the material, and I have no idea... I think I paid her for it. I think she asked like \$5 or something. I'm not sure, because I got to thinking when I got it out, did I pay? Or did she give them to us? She may have given them to us. I don't know how many she must have made for the women. I'm sure most of them had one, because all of us that was active in it got one. So, I don't know. I thought that was neat. When I went to the meetings, instead of wearing all these buttons, I put them on there.

Joan: A bag instead of a hat. Some people had hats, but you couldn't put all of them on a hat.

Dolores: And I forgot to bring it, did anybody bring a hat in?

Joan: Yes. Do you still have your hat?

Dolores: Yes, I have the original greasy one my husband wore and I got two women's. I laid them out, and I forgot them.

Joan: For our open house, you can wear those! I think that would be fun. Did you help make the buttons?

Dolores: No, Bev Snyder made a lot of these; she really did. I don't know, some of these from here she didn't make, and I don't know where I got them or who made them. But she got a machine, and she made a lot of these. I'm sure she made these, but I'm not positive. She's the only one that could tell you.

Joan: Yes, she did, but I don't know which ones she made

Dolores: She got a machine...

Joan: And she made some pocket money.

Dolores: Oh yes, she took them to the meetings. And she was always doing something, her and her husband, Rocky. They were really nice people; it's too bad (*Rocky Snyder died in 1981*), but time goes on. And I never knew those people before that. I didn't know him or her either one. There's people that I probably would have never met in this county, so I got a benefit from it.

Joan: And then you got in some bumper stickers too. Were those given out at the meetings?

Dolores: Oh, we had them for sale, but most of the time, we give them to people. Some of us paid for them, but I can't really tell you because we didn't collect much money at these places. I think I probably paid for the ones I took home, and I've got several copies of all of those. Those are the ones I could find. I didn't bring the ones... we had some drawings and stuff and I didn't bring some of them. It shows the guy sitting on the pot, and it said, "The only guy is Washington who knows what he's doing." It was back in '77, but it's still true! I don't think they know what they're doing. He said, "Are you going to take that?" And I said, "I don't know." But somebody made a drawing, and we made copies.

Joan: Bring it in, and we'll add it to the collection because the farmers had a great sense of humor.

Dolores: It's a good thing we did, because once in a while people got rude. You just learned to grin and go on, and keep grinning at them and waving. That's just the way it is, we're sorry. But you know, you couldn't let it bother you. And it is probably a good thing it didn't go to Washington, because I guess those people there had worse experience than we had locally.

Joan: Some of them. But there was a lot of support in Washington, too, as far as the local people. Okay, we talked about money. Did you do any of the fund raising to pay for the trips to Washington? How did you find Offerle? Were they supportive financially?

Dolores: I did some. People in Offerle were not very good. And I think most people paid for their own that went up there. I'm sure most of them did because we didn't collect very much money. And I'm sure some of the guys did give some money towards some of them, which was probably privately done and I don't know about it. But we didn't collect much.

Joan: I think Lewis and in that area might have been quite supportive.

Dolores: Yes, and some of them that didn't go gave money. But we didn't at Offerle. Nobody paid anything. And that's why I was over there because there was no support at Offerle. Well, yes, there was. "You're doing a good job!" and that's what it came to.

Joan: I've never asked this question, I know there is rivalry between the towns in the county, do you think that had anything to do with it?

Dolores: Not really. I just don't think we had the interest. I've lived there all my life, and I know all those people at Offerle, and I just don't think they wanted to. They just don't want to do it when it

comes down to it. A lot of people just can't make themselves do it.

Joan: They weren't any better off than the Lewis folks.

Dolores: A lot of them weren't.

Joan: And I think we've said before that Dodge wasn't that interested. Now, if you get out close to the Colorado border, in Johnson, there was a lot of interest there.

Dolores: Oh yes, I know a lot of people. I got tapes from those people out in Colorado that I probably should have brought in. They're on a cassette, and I don't know where they're at. I'd have to look.

Joan: Well, when you find them here sometime, do bring them in. We'll see if there is a way to digitize some of those.

Dolores: I just haven't been...

Joan: You haven't been well, I know.

Dolores: For a while. I just don't have the strength to do it. It's a good thing we're not Tractorcading today. I couldn't even get on one!

Joan: And that interested me, that it was the farmers mainly in the 50 year old age group that were active.

Dolores: Younger. We were in our 40's.

Joan: But it wasn't the young kids that normally the ones you think of being rebels.

Dolores: No, it was people in their middle age and older, like 40's and 50's and early 60's. Except for Jack.

Joan: Jack Wolfe was a little bit older.

Dolores: And Dub Stapleton, they were the old guys. The rest of them were probably... the oldest was maybe in their early 60's. And we were in our 40's. I mean, it wasn't the kids. Now, my son went along a lot, because he went with us. But it was because we were there. My nephews came to the parade, Chris Putter is was in that picture and Lyle, the one that got killed because they liked to have fun! On the tractors! Well, they took an interest, but you know, they were there because...

Joan: When I think of the 1960's, it was the young people that were rebelling. That's one reason we did this project, because it fascinated me that you weren't the young people.

Dolores: Most of them were a generation 10 years ahead of the '60's flower children. They're growing up now; they're getting on Social Security. We were older. We didn't go through that in the '60's. We were ahead of that in the '50's. And the 50's was a whole lot different than the '60's. That's when that rebelling and the long hair, as my husband says, come in.

Joan: I wondered if you had watched the '60's and that's why the Tractorcade was in the '70's?

Because the young people had the idea?

Dolores: It probably did sink into the back of our minds, that maybe they had something going.

Joan: Are there any other stories or anything else that you want on this tape? Today, looking back on it, how do you feel about being one of the people who did participate in it?

Dolores: I don't know for sure. I think we did the right thing, but that's the only part. I don't think we gained a thing, except we did teach people that there is farmers and where their bread and butter comes from. But other than that, I don't know whether we gained anything. I'm proud of what I did I cry when I think about it.

Joan: You're not the only one.

Dolores: We have good memories and we tried, and I still try. I'm proud to be what I am, and we lived clean. We're living in a clean country in this area, and I'm proud of it. I just love this place; I love where I live and I love the county. I love the people. I don't see them much no more, but I do love the people here. But they're just a good breed of people.