

## **1979 Tractorcade to Washington D.C.**

### **Interview with Jefferis Mead**

**November 5, 2012**

**Conducted in the Mead home, Lewis, Kansas**

**Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library**

**Also present: Zelma Mead, spouse**

Joan: Can you describe your farm as it existed in 1979? What kind of an operation did you have going here?

Jeff: Milo has always been too good to Zelma and I, because with milo you had a little income coming in towards the end of the year. We were probably farming three quarters. We were farming Donna Brown's ground also, so there was another three quarters. We were farming about six quarters. I always had some milo and wheat. Ahead of that, I had run calves one winter and when I took and sold them, I almost got the money back that I had paid for the calves. That was back in the '60's or maybe '70's, I decided that for Zelma and I, that I would do a little custom cutting with the combine. I bought a fairly new combine, and that's what took the place of the cattle.

Joan: Okay, so you're basically a crop farm. The custom cutting would be a little bit of extra income. Did Zelma or you do anything outside of the farm to try to make ends meet?

Jeff: I don't believe so, we worked here.

Joan: So how did you hear about or become involved with the AAM? Can you remember?

Jeff: I do not recall that. I would like to read you something here, the first entry in my daily diary about AAM. I have studied back, and I don't see anything earlier. This is January 3, 1978, when I say "Lynn," that's our son, and our neighbor on the corner at that time was Glenn Hetrick. "Lynn took Glenn Hetrick's 1070 Case tractor headed for Kinsley at 7:50 a.m. Met two Schinstock tractors three miles west of here. I put signs on my pickup and went to Kinsley where John Deere was working on my 5020. Tractorcade left for Offerle at 10:00 a.m. Back to Kinsley and ate dinner at Dime Quick, parade in Kinsley, then to Lewis and paraded. Then drank coffee. I had pickup greased, then back to Kinsley and checked on 5020. Glenn Hetrick went with Lynn."

Joan: Now this Tractorcade was just in the local community, Kinsley and Lewis.

Jeff: Yes, it was a small deal, Offerle and Kinsley and Lewis.

Joan: And that's as far as your diaries go, and you can remember it's when you started. So you must have been going to some meetings before that.

Jeff: Okay, I'm going to read you from January 6, three days later. "Glenn Hetrick came for his 1070 tractor. After dinner, Lynn and I drove to Lewis and met with a group of people. Looked at office space, held a meeting and decided we had enough interest to set up a strike office."

Joan: Now, you called it a "strike office". Why was it called that?

Jeff: The American Agriculture Movement. They were all strike offices, weren't they Zelma?

Joan: Well, your idea was that you would strike and not produce?

Jeff: It is terminology, I believe, more than anything at this particular time.

Joan: It is just what they were called. Okay.

Jeff: Okay, I'm going to skip now to the 10<sup>th</sup>, January 10<sup>th</sup>. "Lynn and I left early, went to Darrel Miller's picked him up and Greg Beizer (a young man the same age as Lynn, they went to school together) up and drove to Great Bend to Harlan Manor for the State Meeting of the Agriculture Movement. All day meeting. Jim Cramer (I think he was from Hugoton. He was from western Kansas, and he was a big worker in the American Agricultural Movement.) and Lyle Davison (*Johnson, Kansas*) ran meeting and we got home about 7:00."

We're now down to the 12<sup>th</sup>. "Lynn, Donna Brown, then to Grain Club (we went with them) in Larned. Then back to Lewis for American Agriculture Movement meeting in community hall. Speakers from Hugoton, Kansas. Jerry Litton film very good." I don't remember that film. It must have been there, or I wouldn't have had it written in there. (*Jerry Litton was a Democratic congressman and cattleman from Missouri who made a film about the plight of the American farmer late in 1974. He died in a plane crash in 1976, but his film gained wide popularity with the AAM movement.*)

This is the 13<sup>th</sup>, "Lynn got up early, went to high school, showed the Jerry Litton film to government class. Then to strike office."

Do you know where our strike office was?

Joan: Yes.

Jeff: The west room, and we had a telephone. Some of those people that's been named, that went on to Washington, D.C., whenever they knew anything, they would call the office and talk to Zelma and I or whoever was running the office.

Okay, I'm going to skip now to the 15<sup>th</sup>. "Lynn and I worked on our 5020 and Lester Derley's 4320 (that's another John Deere tractor) getting them ready to go to Wichita for Tractorcade.

January 20<sup>th</sup>: Zelma runs strike office and I stayed around. Keith Newsom came by. Our guys are leaving for Washington D.C. tonight and tomorrow."

Joan: So this would be maybe the first time the local Kansas men had contact with Washington?

Jeff: As far as I know. I'm going to skip to the 27<sup>th</sup>. "We worked around here 'till after dinner. Then we went to Lewis and then to strike office. People were in from coming back from Washington, D.C. Told us some of their experiences."

Then on the 28<sup>th</sup>, we were running the strike office again. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, "After dinner I worked on putting signs on 5020."

Okay, I'm going to the 30<sup>th</sup>. "I finished the 5020 ready. Lester Derley came by with his 4320. We met Darrel Miller at King's Corner (that's right up there where we turn to go to Lewis) with his 4320 and headed for Lewis to strike office. We left Lewis with nine tractors and three support vehicles. Picked up tractors on the way to Macksville. Paraded in Macksville and ate dinner, then to St. John rally. Zelma and Mrs. Schinstock were in our pickup. We paraded with 35 tractors and eight support vehicles. Then had rally, then home. Lester Derley and I got home about dark. Darrel Miller, Robert McKinney and I went to Pratt to the regional meeting of the American Agriculture with Alvin Wheaton.

Joan: This rally took place in St. John?

Jeff: No, we went to, where'd I say, Pratt?

Joan: Pratt for the meeting.

Jeff: Went to Pratt to the regional meeting.

Joan: So that's where the tractors went, was to Pratt?

Jeff: No, we got out of the tractors and got into a vehicle, a car or a pickup, and went to the regional meeting.

Joan: So you were parading in Macksville and St. John?

Jeff: Yes, we picked up tractors on the way to Macksville, paraded in Macksville and then ate dinner. Then the St. John rally.

Joan: Okay, so there were two rallies, one in Macksville and the other...

Jeff: Well, we just paraded in Macksville.

Joan: And Mrs. Schinstock would be Mary Ellen Schinstock?

Zelma: More than likely it was.

Jeff: I would say it was Mary Ellen.

Zelma: Because she worked in the office.

Jeff: See, we were with Alvin Wheaton. Okay, we're going to February 1, 1978. "We went to Lewis to strike office. Cold all day. This evening we went to St. John with Darrel Miller to the strike meeting. Marj Scheufler talked and did a very good job. Two men from Johnson talked, also nice meeting."

Joan: And that was on what date?

Jeff: That's on the first day of February, 1978. Then on the second of February, we went to Lewis by 10 am. Zelma went to a meeting and I went to the strike office. Zelma runs the strike office in the afternoon." That's all that.

Okay, let's skip down to the 7<sup>th</sup> of February. "Zelma and I drove to Lewis, Zelma went to coffee and I went to strike office. Then we went to bank, then to Kinsley, then to some other bank, then back to Lewis bank and strike office. Then home."

Zelma: We ran the strike office.

Jeff: Okay, I'm going to skip now to the 9<sup>th</sup> of February. We'd had a blizzard. "This evening Zelma and I went to Larned for strike meeting. Lewis people talked." So I would say that was Marj Scheufler and Darrel Miller. Both of them were very good, I thought.

Okay. We're still in February. 21<sup>st</sup>. "Alvin Wheaton came down; then Zelma, Alvin and I took our pickup and headed to Wichita. Solid sheet of ice and one or two inches deep snow. We stopped by Pratt strike office. Drank coffee and ate a donut. We bought a three pound bag of ground wheat flour

from the strike office. Robert McKinney, Jim Wolfe, Rocky Snyder, Beverly (*Snyder*), Amy (*Snyder*) and Alan Simpson caught up with us there and together we went to the 4-H building at Tyler Road and 14<sup>th</sup> Street (now this is in Wichita) for American Agriculture Movement News Conference. Then to Wichita Hilton. Okay, you'll like this. "Clear across town, Secretary of Agriculture Bergland was to be there for press conference. We went in and found out where it was to be, then stood in the hall for a while. Then we were let into a room and in about 15 minutes the Secretary of Agriculture came in for 30 minutes. First 20 minutes the news media asked the questions. Then American Ag got to ask questions. Darrel Miller and us enjoyed the opportunity to actually be in a news conference."

Joan: Okay, you said you bought some ground wheat flour. Was that a fund raiser for the strike office?

Jeff: Yes, for the strike office where we bought it.

Zelma: Probably some farmer brought it in who had done. It was to advertise, you know, what wheat could be used for.

Joan: So you bought this little bag of flour. All right, what happened next?

Jeff: Well, the only thing I can add is on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, "Tonight, Alvin Wheaton took us to Pratt to Strike Regional Meeting." That's the only thing I can add there.

Zelma: There were a lot of people over at Pratt that were active.. We had lots of farmers that would gather for those meetings. They had a dynamic speaker. It was kind of like being at a revival meeting! It really was.

Jeff: Let's go to the 28<sup>th</sup>, "Zelma and I went to Lewis strike office after dinner, then the bank, then to the community hall where ASC people explained the sorry farm program (my opinion) – four-year built in loss. Then at 5:30, we went with Alvin Wheaton and Rocky Snyder and Dean Newsom to the 4-H building north of Great Bend for the American Ag soup supper. Junior Titus and Darrel Miller talked, very good. We had about 20 people from Edwards County.

Joan: Was Junior Titus "Jim"?

Jeff: Yes. He grew up about a mile north...

Joan: We have to keep these nicknames straight.

Zelma: He was Jean's husband.

Jeff: When they made him, they threw the pattern away. Let's go to the first of March in '78. "Zelma and I read American Ag material all morning, then the strike office for the rest of the afternoon. On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, it turned colder. Zelma and I drove to the Lewis Strike Office. Busy, and lots of people in and out" I don't know what this means, "Bad news from McAllen, Texas." I didn't go ahead and explain what it was and other than that I cannot remember. Anyway, "Steve Bundy and Darrel Miller to regional meeting for American Ag in Kingman." (*It was a protest when farmers blocked traffic at the international bridge at McAllen, Texas, to stop trucks bearing farm produce from Mexico. Police arrested about two hundred fifty of the farmers. News pictures showed policemen forcibly detaining farmers in overalls.*)

Okay, on March 7, '78. "Zelma and I drove to the strike office. We picked up Karen Miller. Light snow falling. We drove to Municipal Auditorium in Great Bend for State Agriculture Movement Meeting. We had a good bunch from Lewis. We ate at McDonald's. We got out at about 5:00. Jim Cramer, Lyle Davison (Johnson, KS) and Gene Shore (Ulysses, KS), and Marty Floyd (USDA), Walter McClure (USDA) and others from State Office and regional spokesman all talked. Darrel Miller gave a nice talk afterwards."

Joan: Were all those people in the last bunch of names from the state?

Jeff: Yes, they were on. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, we went to the strike office and ate dinner at the Golden Manor with Alvin and Judy Wheaton, also Lawrence and Fern Wheaton. I think this is pertaining to American Agriculture. Darrel Miller flew to Joplin, Missouri and made a TV tape, 30 minutes, with Jim Cramer and Walter McClure. That's American Ag. people.

Joan: Do you know if that tape was for just Joplin, or did they bring it back to be on Kansas TV? Do you remember that tape at all.

Jeff: No, just "Darrel Miller flew to Joplin, Missouri, and made a TV tape, 30 minutes with Jim Cramer and Walter McClure."

Joan: So we don't know how or when that was used.

Jeff: No.

Zelma: I would almost say it came back to Kansas, but I don't know that.

Jeff: On Friday the 10<sup>th</sup>, let's go to the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, 1978. "Zelma and I worked at home until noon. To strike office, I run office after dinner. Zelma came by. Donna Brown gave me money for an airline ticket to Washington D.C. I drove Junior Titus' car to Lorraine for strike meeting. Junior Titus, Steve Bundy, Darrel Miller and Alvin Wheaton and we enjoyed ourselves."

Okay, let's go to the 12<sup>th</sup>. "Jeff left for Wichita 4:00 am to fly out at 7:56 am. Jerry Stapleton, Alan Simpson, Steve Bundy, Marj Scheufler and Jeff all went." Okay, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, '78, and I don't remember this man's name, I mean, I don't remember this name. "We went to Larned with Sherry and Darrel to hear Father Andy speak at AAM meeting."

Joan: Father Andy was from Colorado. He was a Catholic Priest and he traveled with the Tractorcade all the way to D.C. We have pictures of him.

Jeff: Yes, that's right. That particular night he spoke there at Larned. Okay, I'm at Washington D.C. This is the 15<sup>th</sup>. "Jeff called tonight and was really excited about Senate Ag Committee passed Flexible Parity Bill, 16 to 1. Farmers had quite a day, exclamation point!"

Joan: So your trip was doing some good?

Jeff: Yes, we sure hoped so.

Joan: Whose bill was this?

Jeff: Bob Dole, Senator Bob Dole.

Zelma: The Flexible Parity Bill was introduced by Senator Bob Dole in the senate. It provides a guaranteed established flexible price in the Farm Bill. It's what they were trying to get through. Bob Dole did a lot of work for the farmer.

Jeff: Yes, he did.

Zelma: Of course, you know the Kansas farmers up here...

Jeff: I'm going to go to the 18<sup>th</sup>. I'm still in Washington D.C. "Alan Simpson, Jerry Stapleton and I walked past White House, visited U.S. Treasury building, walked past Lincoln Memorial, past U.S.D.A. Building, to Smithsonian Air and Space Building. Did a hurried tour. Then we left Alan and Jerry and got a cab and went to hotel, picked up luggage, then to Washington National Airport." That's what we had flown into. We flew out of it also. "Then to Chicago, had two hour layover. We left Washington D.C. at 4:16 pm. Walked out of Wichita Terminal at 9:16 pm. Found my pickup and headed home."

Here on the 20<sup>th</sup>, we're now on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, "Zelma and I went to Lewis Strike Office. Helped get things ready for a telethon tonight. Then to Larned and back to office and home. We went back to office by 6:15 pm. Terie Stapleton, Zelma and I ran office. Telethon was from 7:00 to 10:00 pm."

Joan: What do you mean, "Telethon"?

Jeff: We were trying to raise money.

Joan: Oh, you were calling to raise money.

Jeff: Yes. What I wrote here was, that's a dollar sign, even though it doesn't look it, it looks like, "\$78,057 pledged. The office was full of people."

Joan: Pledged from how big of an area? Was this just this area of Kansas?

Jeff: Well, do you know Zelma?

Joan: That's a lot of money.

Jeff: Yes, it is.

Zelma: How much money was it?

Jeff: \$78,057 pledged, but I don't know how big an area.

Zelma: It was a Kansas thing.

Joan: It was a Kansas state thing.

Zelma: Yes, it was. And that's what it comes to when you Google that.

Joan: That's quite a bit of money to be raising, but from the whole state, it might not be quite so much because you had to divide it up.

Zelma: But back then! But back to the Flexible Parity. The senate passed the bill, but it couldn't get past the house. So that's...

Joan: That was the end of that.

Zelma: Well, I'm not sure that it was. I wish we had kept some things.

Jeff: I'm going to through this in, I'm not sure that you're going to want it or not. 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, "Up at 4 am. Went to Keith King's with Darrel and Karen Miller rode with us. Keith and Marcille in their car. We went to Lewis Strike Office. Picked up Alvin Wheaton and then went to Johnson, Kansas for breakfast, then to State Strike Office. Then to three different irrigated fields where they were tearing up wheat. Back to Ulysses for dinner, then visited strike office, back to Dodge City and visited strike office, back to Lewis Strike Office.

Joan: Okay, the State Strike Office was where? Was it in Johnson, or was it somewhere else?

Jeff: I would say Johnson, because Jim Cramer was from that area and he was the big worker. Okay, I'm going to go to the 27<sup>th</sup> of March. Zelma and I went to the Lewis Strike Office and talked to Mark Scheufler. He just got back from Washington D.C. at 5:00 pm. Marj Scheufler, Darrel and Karen Miller left with us for Woodward, Oklahoma. Dave Lewis talked, that's another man's name, on Trilateral Commission. Very good meeting, got home about 1:30."

Then on the 28<sup>th</sup>, "To the strike office this morning. Big crowd in office. We held a meeting. We got home about 2:00 pm, ate dinner and rested."

Joan: Now we're at the end of March here, you still don't have a lot of farming duties that you need to be taking care of?

Zelma: Well, no. Because he didn't have cattle.

Rosetta: I want to ask you on this Trilateral. That was a very controversial...

Jeff: Oh, was it ever!

Rosetta: When you said it, I was just going, that was really...and I can't remember the details.

Zelma: It had something to do with... Bill Stapleton's dad...

Jeff: Dub Stapleton was big into that.

Zelma: It was going to be the ruination of the country. I mean, you know, it was a very negative...

Joan: What was it about?

Zelma: You know, that's a good question. It was sort a like saying the Catholics were going to take over. That type of thing. Very radical.

Jeff: A group of men that each had a lot of money, they were going to take over everything. I think that's what it was about.

Joan: They were going to take over farms?

Jeff: They were going to take over the finances of the United States Government.

Zelma: Back then, they weren't going to need the farms because they were going to come in with the big corporations and take over the farms. So that's the kind of stuff that the farmers were just all up in the air because they thought, you know, here we work the soil...

Rosetta: I remember the Trilateral Commission and it was just very controversial. I couldn't remember, but when you said Trilateral Commission.

Zelma: If you really wanted to find out what it was about....

Jeff: If you really wanted to get everybody's attention, you mention Trilateral Commission and boy, they were listening to you. Okay, I'm going to go to the 29<sup>th</sup>. "This evening, Lester Derley came by and took us and Darrel Millers to Albert Kansas, for meeting with Representative Keith Sibelius."

I'm gonna change dates again. 30<sup>th</sup>, and the end of what I wrote, "We went to Garden City and ate supper, then to Lakin for strike meeting. Not many people there."

Okay, let's go to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, '78. "Zelma and I went to strike office. I went to Kinsley.... This evening we went to Lewis Community Hall for American Agriculture Movement Appreciation Night. Bill and Betty Wilkerson from Johnson talked. Junior Titus run meeting. Nice job. Cake and ice cream and tea and coffee." Okay, that's all of March.

Okay, we're ready now for April 1. April Fool's Day. "Lester Derley came up at 8:15. Zelma and I and Lester drove to strike office then to Hutchinson for State Agriculture Movement in sports arena. Very good meeting. We had 21 people from the Lewis Office attending."

Okay, we're on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April. "Zelma and I went to Lewis Strike Office meeting then did some work in office. Then home for dinner. At the Lewis Co-op Annual meeting, Jerry Litton film was showing." I don't remember anything about that film. I'd like to see it again. I'm sure it was about the American Agriculture Movement. I don't know what this means. It's on the 4<sup>th</sup>, "Lot's of things happened in Washington D.C. Darrel and Karen Miller are there. Beautiful day."

Joan: Okay, that's another group that's in Washington.

Jeff: Well, that's Darrel and Karen Miller.

Joan: I mean, it's another contingency. You're trading them out all the time.

Jeff: Yes. Okay, let's go to the 6<sup>th</sup>. "After dinner we went to ASC office, then to Lewis Strike Office. Darrel Miller called from Washington D.C. Need big push of people Monday morning. Tonight was the bi-weekly strike meeting update. Lots of people there."

I think I found something I probably ought to say. Eleventh of April, "Lester Derley called last night from Washington D.C. Gave us a lot of things we had to get done before the House of Representatives votes on our farm bill for Flexible Parity. At 3:00 pm today, we had a big meeting at the strike office this morning. Office sent about 125 telegrams and made phone calls to Washington D.C. This evening we took Darrel and Karen Miller to Hays for American Agriculture Meeting at armory. We saw Tommy Kersey." That doesn't ring a bell right off-hand. "From Unadallia, Georgia. And Father Andy (Andrew) Gottschalk. Very good meeting."

Okay, let's go to the 12<sup>th</sup>. "About 6:10, (I suppose it's p.m.) We heard the bad news that Flexible Parity Bill was killed in the House of Representatives. 268 to 150. We'll have to regroup.

Okay, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Zelma runs strike office this morning. Sad time for American Agriculture. Zelma running the strike office. Zelma talked to Lester Derley. He was in Washington D.C when the

bad news hit the fan. He was still broke up, same as me.”

Joan: So this is the first real set-back you’ve had. You got it passed in the senate, but then a couple months later it fails in the house. It was a frustrating time.

Zelma: You can see what he said. It was a bad day. And that’s exactly the tone of the farmers that came to the... Oh, just, “We’re done. We’re giving up. We’re done.” That’s what progressed from April and all this talking and meetings that they had. It had gone as far as, “I’m going to take a bunch of tractors and go.” That’s how that... but it took a whole year there to just wear on their nerves. Well, they had to stop and farm in the summer.

Joan: But then when they got back together the next winter it was bad.

Zelma: Then it was time to do something. Well, nothing had gotten done. And they couldn’t get the farm bill passed, and I think the farmers felt like they just went up against a wall. Every time they turned around, the government wasn’t going to do anything. And yet, they were stopping everything. So, if they’re going to give you money to not plant 50% of your crop because that’s what we had back then. You kept out acres so you wouldn’t be raising so much because they said we had this big surplus. They said, “That’s why you’re not getting anything for your grains because you’re raising too many bushels.” So, they said, “Let’s cut back.” Well, farmers all agreed, “We’ll just do that.”

Jeff: Okay, let’s go to the 15<sup>th</sup>. “I took Lester Derley, Harold and Leo Schinstock to Hutchinson for an American Agriculture State Meeting. Keith King took Alan Simpson and Grandpa Kazmaier (*William*).” That was her dad.

Okay, let’s go to the 17<sup>th</sup>. “I went to Lewis Strike Office. Tonight I rode to Pratt with Darrel Miller for Regional Meeting for American Agriculture. Here on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Zelma came over about 3:00 pm. She worked in strike office this morning getting bus lined up for Oklahoma City, Monday.”

Okay, let’s go to the 24<sup>th</sup>. “We got up at 2:15 am, got ready, drove to Keith King’s. Darrel and Karen Miller picked us up, to Lewis, on chartered bus. 30 of us from Lewis Strike Office picked up Scheufler from St. John Junction. Picked up some at Pratt Office, to Kingman Office. Picked up some, then to Oklahoma City for National Meeting by 10:00 am. Started home by 8:00 pm., got home by 1:00 am. Very good trip, learned a lot.”

This doesn’t have anything to do with the American Ag. But, Lynn (*Jeff and Zelma’s son*) and Julie engaged.” Just the important things, you know.

Joan: That’s written in the margin.

Jeff: That way you can find it easier. If you put it in here, then you gotta read the whole thing. Okay, on the 25<sup>th</sup>, “Zelma and I went to the strike office. Then I went to the ASCS office and did some other business. Back to Lewis. Zelma and I went to the bank and borrowed a couple thousand at 9.25%.” That’s all that.

Okay, on the 26<sup>th</sup>. “This evening, Zelma and I went to Kinsley 4-H Fair building. Father Andrew Gottschalk, Reverend Dennis Kuder and Darrel Miller put on a good strike meeting.

Okay, we’re going to December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1978. “Tractors to Topeka from Lewis. Zelma and I drove pickup to Lewis about 8:30, flew the American, Kansas and American Agriculture Flags on headache rack. Alvin Wheaton, Rocky Snyder, Jack Wolf and Darrel Miller, Junior Titus, Jim Pratt, Bob McKinney, Leo Schinstock, Lester Derley’s big Ford Truck with 550 gallon fuel tank in it, our Ford pickup with 100 gallon of fuel. Bob McKinney, Jack Wolfe towed their pickups. Bob had 100 gallon of fuel. I drove our pickup to Dub Stapleton’s. Zelma took the pickup from there. I drove Bill Stapleton’s

7040 Allis Chalmers tractor.” I think that was the first tractor I ever drove with kind of a slip-and-go transmission. Marj Scheufler fell in next. Jerry Meyer fell in at Belpre, so our office had 11 tractors on the road. Stopped at Macksville for dinner, I had bad oil leak. After dinner, I went ahead to Stafford to Allis Chalmers shop. They fixed it in about five minutes. I fell back in the group when they came through. We got to Hutchinson about 4:30. Twenty-four tractors picked us up at Lewis. We started at Tri-point Equipment, Allis Chalmers dealer, in Hutch. They had supper for us, held a rally, then Lewis people stayed at Scotsman Motel. Dub and Clara Stapleton had his big pickup and a trailer house, stayed in, camper 5<sup>th</sup> wheel.

Then on the 14<sup>th</sup>, we got up at 5:45. Back to Tri-point for coffee, rolls. We started rolling at 7:40 am. We picked up 11 tractors at Hutchinson, three at Burton. We got to Emporia about 2:30, and waited on another group of tractors from Wichita. We paraded at 4:30 till dark. Also, tractors from Emporia. Then ate supper at big building on fairgrounds. Tractors were parked there also. We stayed in Holiday Inn. We paraded with 91 tractors.”

Okay, now we’re going to the 15<sup>th</sup>, December, ’78. “Up early, went to a café and ate breakfast. Then to tractors. We started rolling for Topeka at 7:30. We came into Topeka from the south on Highway 75 and parked in Shawnee County fairgrounds about 12:00 noon. Tractors came in all afternoon. We worked on Junior Titus’ 4320, fixed the windshield wipers and flashers. We stayed in Jayhawk Hotel.”

On the 16<sup>th</sup> now, big day, up early and ate breakfast, to tractors. They started lining us up at 7:15. We started moving into the street at 8:00. North and around Capitol Building. Parked in parking lots, walked about two blocks and watching rest of parade. Lasted until almost noon, then Zelma and I and Lester Derley ate dinner. Then to Municipal Auditorium for rally. Afterward, we had excitement. Then left tractors at fairground. Zelma and I left for Manhattan and came home that day. (We came home from Topeka on the 16<sup>th</sup>) picked Jan’s bicycle up and headed home. We got here about 1:00 am. Icy.”

December 28, 1978. “Back to Lewis for AAM meeting. Getting things ready for tractors to go on to Washington, D.C.”

This is the second day of January, 1979. Zelma went to strike office, Marj Scheufler and Darrel Miller helped her get out a letter for Tractorcade to Washington D.C.”

Joan: I think I may have that letter. (*Scan of Letter archived at Kinsley Library in Marjory Scheufler Documents “Call for Support and Donations – January 2, 1979.”*)

Jeff: Here’s a blip, here. This is the third of January, 1979. “Then to strike office. Zelma had worked all morning getting letters out for donations to Tractorcade to Washington D.C. I worked in office rest of day.”

The 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1979. “Zelma and I went to strike office. Zelma typed up list and I helped gather up checks.”

Joan: Those were checks for donations for people to go to Washington?

Jeff: Yes, to go to Washington D.C. This is the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, ‘79. “Then to Lester Derley’s. Helped him load a 560 gallon tank, 150 gallon tank, and welder, generator, air compressor in his big truck, getting ready to go to Washington D.C. with tractors.”

Zelma: That was all prep work.

Jeff: Yes, getting things ready. Then on the 10<sup>th</sup>, “Ed Scheufler and I attended regional meeting of AAM at Kingman.

Then on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Zelma and I ran the strike office. Tractors getting ready to go to Washington D.C. Lester Derley brought his truck by after getting mobile phone installed.”

Zelma: That was a big thing.

Jeff: Okay, this is interesting, I think you’ll like it. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, “We went to strike office. Lots of people in, and we went over \$7,000 for tractors to go to Washington D.C.”

We’re up to the 14<sup>th</sup> now. “This evening, we took Lester Derley and rode to AAM meeting in Lewis with Darrel Millers. Tractors are getting ready to leave for Washington D.C.”

This is the 15<sup>th</sup>. Zelma and I go to strike office until 2:00 pm, then Darrel and Karen Miller came over. Darrel and I started putting rear brakes on, his pickup is going, or the car.”

Okay, we’re still on the 15<sup>th</sup>. “First tractors left Texas and Colorado for Washington D.C. this morning.”

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, January, “Zelma and I ran strike office all day. Darrel Miller and I worked on his car. Couldn’t find a brake cylinder...

Joan: What day?

Jeff: On the 17<sup>th</sup>. He pulled the trailer that they lived in with his car. “We worked on his car until 11 am. Then he took our pickup to Pratt and to give a talk to the Optimist club about AAM.

Joan: I think I have Marj’s talk. *(The Kinsley Library does not have a scan of the speech, but does have several others that Marjory Scheufler gave. See Marjory Scheufler Documents)*

Jeff: I had some diesel fuel in my L-tank in my pickup from when we went to Topeka, this is still the 17<sup>th</sup>. “I pumped the rest of the diesel fuel left from Topeka Tractorcade into Lester Derley’s tank that is going to Washington D.C.”

Okay, on the 18<sup>th</sup>. “They loaded tractors in Lewis at 6:30 am. Headed for Topeka. They will drive them from there to Washington D.C. Jack Wolf’s pickup and camper trailer, Lester Derley support truck. Zelma and I went to strike office about 10:00 am.

Zelma: They loaded tractors on trucks and drove them down to Topeka to meet...

Jeff: Hauled them.

Joan: And some were left in Topeka.

Jeff: Yes, the one I drove stayed there, the 7040 Allis. Okay, we’re still on the 18<sup>th</sup> here. “Back to Junior Titus’ and hooked his new super-cab pickup to trailer. He and Jean will leave for Washington D.C. in the morning. Jack and Dosca Wolfe got east of Newton on ice. Turned both the pickup and camper-trailer over. They were able to repair it enough to drive it back home. Luckily, nobody hurt. Darrel pulled their new trailer home late. They will leave for Washington D.C. Saturday morning.

Joan: And this is on Thursday.

Jeff: Yes. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, “Zelma and I went to strike office. Junior and Jean Titus left to catch tractors in Kansas City. Lester Derley called from Tractorcade at 2:00 pm.”

Zelma: He had a play toy; he had this phone. Nobody had phones in their vehicles. I don’t know how he got that.

Joan: CB?

Zelma: No, they had a mobile phone. You just didn't have many of those at that time.

Jeff: Still on the 19<sup>th</sup> here. "Zelma helping Karen Miller get Miller's trailer ready to go to Washington D.C." Okay, on the 20<sup>th</sup>, "To strike office. Lester Derley called this morning from Tractorcade. Stayed last night at Lee's Summit, Missouri. Darrel Miller left for Washington, D.C. today. He had a meeting tonight in Minneapolis, Kansas. Tractors stayed tonight and tomorrow in Sedalia, Missouri."

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, "Lester Derley called tonight from Sedalia, Missouri, gave us information on how they are getting along. Darrel and Karen Miller caught up with them this evening. Lots of tractors moving. A lot more will start moving tomorrow."

Here's a blip I think you'll like, on 25<sup>th</sup>, January, we were in the strike office. "Our tractors sat again all day in Greenville, Illinois."

26<sup>th</sup>, Then to strike office. Made a tape of Washington trip for Glenn Hetrick. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, in to strike office. Checked if they had heard from tractors. They were moving, headed for Indianapolis, Indiana. We understand they will move in there in a snowstorm.

28<sup>th</sup> tonight, Karen Miller called us from Indianapolis, Indiana. Lots of snowy, slick roads and cold weather. Indianapolis people not friendly, Indiana. We ran the strike office again.

29<sup>th</sup>, Lester Derley had called from Tractorcade between Indianapolis and Richmond, Indiana. Eight inches of snow last night, but going fine. Indiana not friendly." That's all that.

Joan: And that was on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Jeff: On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, "Tractors in Columbus, Ohio, tonight."

31<sup>st</sup>, "Tonight, Lester Derley called from St. Clairsville, Ohio, Interstate 70. People not friendly. 300 miles from Washington. D.C. with tractors."

Now we're in February. On the second of February, '79, "Tractors in Frederick, Maryland, tonight. "

On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, "Karen Miller called from College Park, Maryland, about 10 miles from Washington, D.C. They had a rough trip with cold, snowy, weather. Our tractors are in Frederick, Maryland. They will move them in closer today. Millers, Ed Scheuflers, Junior Tituses are parked in trailer park."

On the 4<sup>th</sup>, February. "Darrel Miller called from Washington, D.C. Our tractors will start rolling at 4:00 am tomorrow morning, going into D.C."

Then, let's go to the 5<sup>th</sup>, February. "Big day. Tractors and RV's blocked traffic in Washington, D.C. We saw Lester Derley's truck on TV this evening. Zelma ran strike office. Marj Scheufler called from D.C. in am and again pm. Also Darrel Miller called in pm. Lots happened today in Washington D.C."

We're up to the 7<sup>th</sup>. "Karen Miller called from Washington D.C. and gave us the latest news.

8<sup>th</sup> Zelma drove to Lewis strike office. Dolores Jones and us worked the rest of the day rearranging and cleaning and putting up 'Welcome Home' signs for first people coming home from Washington, D.C. Beverly Snyder, Karen Miller, Mildred VanNahmen, called from D.C. today. Elmer Huckstep helped here also.

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, February. "I stopped and visited with Lester Derley, who got back from Washington D.C. last night. He told me of a lot of happenings."

On the 12<sup>th</sup>. "I taped cardboard on sides of my 5020 motor, went to Keith King's and then Zelma drove it. Keith drove his 1070 and I drove his 1370. We parked south of the old Ford Garage. Eighteen tractors there in honor of the three tractors from our office that went to Washington, D.C."

Joan: That's the first we've heard about any celebration when they came back.

Jeff: You know what the old Ford Garage is? It's the building right across from the café, what used to be... That was dirt there, and that's where I parked the tractors.

Joan: This is in Lewis.

Jeff: Yes, in honor of the ones that went to Washington, D.C. On the 14<sup>th</sup>. "At 4:00 pm Lester Derley, Keith King and I brought out tractors home. Elmer Huckstep brought our car and Keith and Marcille King rode back to Lewis so Keith could bring his other tractor. Marcille brought the pickup.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>. "Ed and Marj Scheufler and Junior and Jean Titus got home from Washington D.C. today. My brother Dean Newsom asked me to go with him looking for a tractor. We headed for Marion, Kansas, stopped in Hutchinson and ate dinner, then to International in Wichita. When we were going through Stafford, we met Greensburg Equipment truck with Dub Stapleton's (I say Dub Stapelton's but it was Bill Stapleton's actually) 7040 Allis Chalmers, Junior Titus' 4320 John Deere and Rocky Snyder's 4020 John Deere coming back from Washington D.C. Zelma ran strike office after dinner, and we unloaded all three tractors there."

Joan: Okay, Jeff. It's really interesting that you kept a diary. It gives us some exact dates and people...

Jeff: Yes. Otherwise there is no way I would be able say on a certain date that such and such happened. I can read it, but memory ain't exactly...

Joan: Why did you not go to Washington D.C.?

Jeff: Well, in the first place. I didn't have a tractor... that 5020 was not a tractor to have out on the road for one thing. I think I felt that Zelma and I could do more good in the strike office, keep it open. We read there where they kept calling the strike office and letting us know what was going on and where they were and all this bit.

Joan: Okay, we've had Zelma sitting here too, and I'm just going to stop for a second and ask her. Zelma, what were the activities, maybe not during the Tractorcade, but leading up to that. You were spending hours and days there. What was your role, what did you do in the strike office?

Zelma: Answered the telephone, and I was the secretary. But people! We had constant...

Jeff: There was people in and out at all times.

Zelma: There were just lots of farmers come it with, "What do you hear?" This would have been when they went. Up until that point, I think you can see where I was maybe there only in the afternoon and whatever. But it was just the curiosity of the farmers I think, just knowing what was going on. You know, that \$7,000 they got was a lot of money for guys in that situation. A lot of the money came from retired farmers that were trying to help the younger farmers. They had dollars invested besides the time that they had spent.

Jeff: And they knew the people on the Tractorcade personally.

Joan: Who else worked in that office?

Zelma: The main ones was Jeff and I and... Dolores Jones and Mary Ellen Schinstock. That this was during the time the tractors was up there. Between all of us, we pretty well kept it open. Before that,

Darrel Miller or some of those before they went because they were on the phone all the time drumming up meetings so they could get the farmers together and then what to do and who to get a hold of tell them that they were going to have something.

Joan: Did they keep regular hours, like from 9:00 to 5:00?

Zelma: Pretty well. Yes, there was usually somebody there in the morning. VanNahmens were another family that ran it.

Joan: Yes, I know Mildred.

Zelma: Then she went to Washington just to lobby, but he was there a lot. What was his name?  
(*Vernon VanNahmen*)

Joan: Did you have a coffee pot and a table...

Zelma: Yes, we had a coffee pot and a table and lots of bullshit. That's exactly what it was. You know, farmers just needed to talk. I think it was a lot of it.

Joan: Okay, you've mentioned in your diary, Lynn, quite a bit. How did Lynn and your family feel about your being involved in this?

Jeff: I don't think there was any problem...

Joan: Did they support you?

Zelma: Oh my, those kids...

Jeff: See, they weren't married yet. They got engaged during this.

Zelma: He was in college, and every weekend when he came home, he was up at the strike office. He was very much involved, thinking, "Is there going to be a farm here?" I think it really scared people because of the talk like it was, that, "Hey, you know, there's not going to be any farms left."

Jeff: No family farms.

Zelma: Then he was already thinking about coming back to farm, so yes. And then our daughter was at K-State in Manhattan. They had regular disagreements! She was in Ford Hall, because she would say something about the Tractorcade. "Well, why would the dumb farmers do that?" And she would call home just really upset, "They don't understand, Mother." And I said, "Well, and they're not going to." Because it didn't involve them or their paycheck. And so both of our kids were involved in a way.

Joan: I know you had a lot of support, were there people in the area who didn't think you should be doing this or shouldn't be going?

Zelma: We really didn't hear about it.

Jeff: You know, they didn't come in the office if they felt that way. No really. Because anybody came in that office, we all talked the same thing.

Zelma: I don't think there was much dissension, because...

Jeff: I don't think so either.

Zelma: You know, as farming communities; they knew the farmers needed to have... They were hurting, and they were hurting then.

Joan: Jeff, when you took your tractor to Topeka, what do you think you accomplished with that show of force or whatever?

Jeff: Well, this is my personal observation. As you all know, tractors don't move down the highway nearly as fast as a semi, and semi's didn't run like they do today. We, were kind of ornery-like, purposely slowed the tractors down as much as we could. You know that's going to happen. To get on, we came in from the south to Topeka. The highway patrol was there and let us in, and got us where we could park. All that different kind of noise, it kind a got people's attention.

Zelma: We had cars, when we was going down the highway, cars on the side would stop and watch all the tractors go by. They had read about us, and heard about it in the news, and they wanted to see what this was.

Jeff: It was a different sight than you was used to seeing. Here's all these tractors going down the highway.

Zelma: And they would honk and they would wave. And that was definitely a support.

Joan: So the Kansas people in general were supportive. I suppose you had a few that didn't like being behind you.

Zelma: Yes.

Jeff: But as far as I know, no tractors got tangled up with a car or semi or anything.

Joan: And then elected officials. You've mentioned Bob Dole, how did you view him during this whole time? You know, there was the bill and the Tractorcade. Was he supportive?

Jeff: Yes, very much supportive.

Joan: Who were the other elected officials at the time? You've mentioned Sibelius, Keith Sibelius.

Jeff: And Bob Bergland was the...

Joan: Well, he was in Washington. I'm trying to think of the Kansas people, what kind of help you got from them.

Zelma: I don't even remember who the governor was. Who was it?

Jeff: I don't either. I'm sorry about that. (*John W. Carlin, Democrat. Governor 1979-1987*)

Zelma: It wouldn't be hard to look up. But it seemed to me like it was, "We need your vote." That's

kind of the way you felt, and yet they were... I mean, Bob Dole really worked. He wanted to hear from the farmer's mouth, because the farmer kept saying, "You all don't know. You don't know what's going on out in the country. If you would come out to the country, then you'd see what we're talking about." It was like they were banging their head up against the wall. He was very receptive, and that's why he went ahead and sponsored that parity bill.

Jeff: When I went to Washington D.C., we went to his office, Bob Dole's office, and visited with him.

Zelma: It was all political then, well see, just like he got the bill passed, the parity bill, in the senate. He had his buddies that was going to take care of him, but then it got to the house and it got axed.

Joan: And Nancy Kassebaum?

Zelma: She probably was the governor.

Joan: Well, no. The senate because she didn't vote for the bill, so she must have been in the house. But you don't have any particular memories of her?

Jeff: No. But I'm glad that we were part of it.

Joan: Why?

Jeff: Well, to bring the attention to the people. That's what we were trying to do. The people of the United States....

Zelma: And we had a son that was going to farm, and it was worrying us what it was like. And now, we have a son and a grandson! Oh my.

Joan: Well, we've talked with most of the people about what was the situation you were in as far as debt and this sort of thing at that time. Were you one of those farmers who were really worried about losing your farm? Like we've talked to some?

Jeff: No, we weren't in a financial bind, but thinking that maybe Lynn would want to farm, and we'd like for the farm to be here if he wants to farm.

Zelma: We were in our 40's then, you know.

Joan: Had you invested in irrigation and that sort of thing?

Jeff: No, this is ahead of the irrigation.

Zelma: For us. We were one of the last to put that in. We were very conservative. Well, you had to be. Borrowing money was nothing like it is now, nothing. You know, we'd go in and borrow \$1,000 or \$2,000. I think you heard him say he went in and borrowed \$2,000. That would last quite a while. It's just so different.

Joan: Again, this was right after the Tractorcade and maybe more when they were borrowing hundred of thousands to do irrigation.

Zelma: You're getting into the '80's and '90's. Well, in the early '70's, there was a lot of them that went under.

Joan: That's what we heard, in the early '80's.

Zelma: We weren't in that situation.

Joan: Do you think the whole AAM activity at that time, was it worthwhile? Did you accomplish something?

Jeff: Well, I would like to think that surely it did some good.

Zelma: I think it brought attention to the problem more.

Jeff: Yes.

Zelma: I know our representatives from the farming states realized because they heard all the time, I'm sure, but the general population, if they weren't affected by it, I think it just brought it to the front that there is a problem and something needs to be done. Parity was a big word then, and people didn't even know what it was.

Joan: How would you define "parity"?

Zelma: I don't know, that is a hard one. It's equal, you know. Trying to equalize the cost of what you get at the market. Let's get something together, you know, we were like this...

Joan: You're indicating that it was costing you way too much...

Zelma: That's right, compared to what you were getting back. And parity, nobody could understand it, and the farmers dang sure didn't because they just thought we needed more for our grain. That's the mentality of the dirt farmer.

Joan: Is this something that you would do again? Did you have a good feeling? Would you have spent all these hours in the office?

Jeff: At that time, yes. I'm thankful that we were able to try to help out.

Zelma: But is it something that you would do again?

Joan: If you were young!

Zelma: It's so different, I guess.

Jeff: Well, in my opinion, the whole United States is so different. I'm a little bit concerned that if you put the tractors out on the road like we did and somebody on the highway didn't like what you did, they wouldn't think too much about shooting you. That's just my opinion.

Zelma: See, we didn't have that back then.

Jeff: No, there wasn't any concern.

Zelma: Maybe it was there, and we didn't realize it. But we didn't have any threats.

Jeff: No, we didn't have any threats that I ever heard of.

Joan: Are you still actively involved in trying to influence agricultural legislation and things like that? Or did it make you more of an activist from '79 to the present time? Do you still write letters to congressmen?

Jeff: Not like I should. No, I guess I think that they'll take care of it.

Zelma: What's the use? What's the use? There again, everything is so much different now. Now we have the internet, and you go in and look it up. But we don't do it.

Jeff: We didn't even have CB radios in the tractors.

Zelma: But I'm just thinking, why would you do it now? Would they care? I don't know. Good question, Joan.

Jeff: I seriously don't think you would dare get out on the highway. I mean, because you hear about all these...

Zelma: You have a lot more four lanes and super highways now than we did then, too. I mean, it wasn't safe. We pulled right over, and you didn't have that many trucks on the road either.

Jeff: Yes, Zelma was telling about you'd pull off and they'd wave at you and maybe wave a flag and flash their lights. It was a different time.

Zelma: If they got the message, then that was a good way to give it. I guess the farmer felt like, well we're doing something. We're trying, and maybe somebody will hear us. I don't know. They did when we got to Washington, D.C. with the tractors. All of sudden we were good buddies because they had that humongous snow storm, which I'm sure you've heard some of them talk about. They went in with those tractors and opened up streets and got people where they needed to go. All of a sudden, those farmers were good boys.

Joan: But it didn't result in any legislation!

Zelma: No. And you know, their hands were probably just as tied then as they are now. Well, you feel like you can't do a thing.

Jeff: But I'm glad we worked at it.

Zelma: You feel like you're beating your head against a wall. And we're quite a bit older now, too. That makes a difference, and I'm not even sure Lynn would fight it now like he did then. He was gung ho, you know, it was like, "We're need to get this done." And you know, one of his friends went to one meeting. And his dad was a banker!

Jeff: I'm glad you ladies are doing this, I really am.