Sprague, Carroll, 1924-, and Sprague, Norma, 1931-2013, part 1 of interview with Pamela Cress, January 7, 2009

Carroll Sprague

Norma Sprague

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/seks_farm_oral

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/seks_farm_oral/18

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Southeast Kansas Farm History Project at Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Southeast Kansas Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact lfthompson@pittstate.edu.
January 7, 2009

Interviewee

Carroll Sprague
21000 Wallace Rd.
Parsons, KS 67357
620-421-1138

Norma Sprague
21000 Wallace Rd.
Parsons, KS 67357
620-421-1138

Interviewer

Pamela Cress
19093 Harper Rd.
Mound Valley, KS 67354
620-423-0830
pcress@ku.edu

Carroll: How far back in this do you want to go?

Cress: As far back as you can remember.

Carroll: As I can remember?

Cress: Uh huh.

Carroll: OK.

Cress: Now, if you can remember something from your dad, or...

Carroll: I got old papers back there to 1868 or something like that, but it’s all, they’re in pretty bad shape, the papers are. They just been threwed in the suitcase, you know. When my father passed away, he give them to me.

Cress: Well, that might be something worth going through sometime, take a look.

Carroll: OK. Well, ask a question.

Cress: OK. We’re going to start out—this is partly to benefit the person who’s going to be transcribing, who’s going to be typing up what we say. So, I would ask you to tell us your name.

Carroll: Carroll Sprague.

Cress: And could you spell it, please.

Carroll: (spelling name out loud) C-a-r-r-o-l-l S-p-r-a-g-u-e.

Cress: OK. And how about you.
Norma: Norma Sprague (spelling name out loud) N-o-r-m-a S-p-r-a-g-u-e.

Cress: OK. Very good. Now, Carroll, where and when were you born?

Carroll: 1924, about a mile down the road. Back in the field.

Cress: OK, so we’re at 21000 Wallace Road.

Carroll: Yeah. And I was born, it’s two quarters down, a house on it. So it’s from this right here, it’s a mile…

Cress: OK. A mile to the south…

Carroll: It’s a quarter mile west then.

Cress: And a quarter mile west.

Carroll: Take those directions.

Norma: I’ll give you that address.

Cress: OK. So you have the address where Carroll was born?

Norma: Uh huh. 2270 20000 Road, Oswego, KS 67356.

Cress: So it switched from Parsons to Oswego just right at…

Norma: Actually, down where Joe and Debbie live, that’s the end of the Parsons address. But then the next house is the Oswego address.

Carroll: I was actually born in the Oswego address, but I been in the Parsons address so long, that I keep… I don’t think of it as Parsons. But it was actually Oswego.

Norma: That’s where the breaking line is.

Carroll: It was Oswego when I was born.

Cress: Uh huh. And where were you born?

Norma: Just down the road another mile, two miles.

Cress: OK. Now, who were your parents, Carroll?

Carroll: Emmett Sprague.

Norma: And Edith.
Carroll: And Edith. They lived around here until he was 99 years old.

*Cress: Oh, my. And did they live in this area all their lives?*

Carroll: Yeah, they lived in that house where I was born. It’s still there, but they’ve just put another kind of house around it, remodeled it, so it don’t look like it did then.

*Cress: And your parents, Norma?*

Norma: My parents were Eli and Nellie Czapansky. And I always lived… Actually, we moved over there when I was… I wasn’t quite four years old. And they lived, had a McCune address, actually just a little ways east of Sherman City. And I’ve lived there all my life except the time that Carroll was in the military, and we were away four years. So I’ve lived there or here. I’ve lived within this radius from where my other house was. Then when we first came back out of the Air Force, we lived right east of Montana there, where our sister lives…Carroll’s sister and her husband. So I’ve been in this area except the few years that he was in the Air Force. We traveled a lot.

*Cress: OK. So how many people were in your family when you were growing up, Carroll?*

Carroll: I had four brothers and a sister. Or was I counting four? Actually, I was one of the four, wasn’t I. Tom…Russell, Tom, Charles, me. Four boys, and one girl.

*Cress: How many were in your family?*

Norma: I had a brother and a sister. My brother is deceased, and I have a sister still living in Afton, Oklahoma.

*Cress: OK. So then the two of you had a family. How many people were in that family?*

Carroll: Two boys.

*Cress: Two boys.*

Carroll: Two sons. When we come back, one was born in Fairbanks, Alaska, and one was born here.

Norma: In the old Mercy Hospital. That would be the Good Samaritan.

*Cress: Mercy Hospital there in Parsons?*

Norma: Uh huh. Larry was born in Fairbanks. He was born in the military hospital there.

*Cress: Now, were you two born in hospitals?
Norma: No.

Carroll: I was not.

Norma: Neither one of us were.

_Cress:_ You were born at home?

Norma: Uh huh. My brother and sister was too.

_Cress:_ So how did your family come to live in this area, Carroll? Do you remember?

Carroll: Well, my grandfather come here when he was a boy, and like that Cook farm says 1889, something like that. Well in that time, he came. And they ended up… He ended up building that house. I could look it up, but I believe it was 1907, something like that—for the house that I was born in. And they had…he was…everybody’s knowed him for talking about the Neosho River and telling stories. He always…he always started his story out with, it happened on a certain day, and told you the date and everything. I can’t remember any of that sort of thing. He was a historian, storyteller, you know.

_Cress:_ So where did he come from?

Carroll: Where was it?

Norma: Grandpa Tom.

Carroll: Indiana.

Norma: Indiana, I believe it was.

_Cress:_ So he came here and started farming?

Carroll: Yeah, mostly. He was… I don’t know exactly what he done, what my grandfather did. He was a…lived in Montana, when it was a big city.

_Cress:_ Yeah. Montana, Kansas.

Carroll: Yeah. And he was storekeeper, when he was in his older age. But he farmed with my dad. My dad kinda started farming his place, or the whole thing. And he was the only one out of that bunch of boys that wanted to farm. So he ended up buying it from his dad, and I ended up buying it from him. And we’ve owned it ever since. Now, part of it is river bottom And the river bottom fields used to be… they’d go down there and they’d sell you three or four or five acres for a wood cutting deal. So whenever you bought a farm down there back when I first (inaudible), they was all lot so and so. They had a
name things long you couldn’t hardly get it wrote down. I never could figure out what I owned hardly.

Norma: Till you bought all of it.

Carroll: But he bought that… But they actually bought that place where the house is from somebody. My grandfather always said that the Indians told him that was the highest place on this whole deal here. And so when the Neosho River come out in ’51, it didn’t get up to the house. And it put a lot of them under, you know, around here.

Norma: Like, I lived, like, two miles south from here, not quite that far from down there. And my mother used to say to Carroll’s mother, “If you get scared, come down.” But after that big flood, they were the ones that their house didn’t flood. Well, it didn’t really get in my parents’ house. It got on their…in the porch. Carroll and I were in Alaska at that time, so we wasn’t here.

_Cress: How did the two of you get together?_

Norma: Oh, we just were friends forever. Our families were friends. Actually, Carroll’s seven years older than I am. We went to grade school together. We went to school in Montana. There was the two rooms the year you graduated from school. After that, it was always just one room.

_Cress: Oh, yeah. So you just knew each other forever._

Norma: Forever, yeah. And Carroll had…my brother and his brother was the same age. And Donna and I…she was just a year younger than me—his sister. So we… And our families were friends. But Carroll was always the oldest, so we didn’t have that much in common. He left to work on smokestacks with one of my uncles. I don’t know where you went first to work.

Carroll: Lincoln, Nebraska, is where we went.

Norma: So you worked for them for several years before you joined the Air Force.

Carroll: Yeah.

Norma: So he wasn’t always there. But you also worked for Harvey.

Carroll: Yeah. I worked on a farm. I wasn’t drafted there in World War I, or II. I was (inaudible) because I was a farmer. I was already a farmer before the thing come in so they put me in a lower classification. But then finally it got so that they was going to draft me, I think, and I thought they was. So I joined the Air Force. Signed up for three years. And then the Truman Hitch…what they called the Truman Hitch…they extended you for a year and wouldn’t let you out. It was during the Korean time. And it’s kinda like guys in the service over there now. They come home, and they’re not out, they might go back.
That’s the way I was. When I got ready to get out of the Air Force, why they was…they made you serve another year. They called it the Truman Hitch…that’s what we called it.

*Cress: The Truman Hitch?*

Norma: He enlisted for three years, then he was in there for four…not quite four.

*Cress: You know, I might have forgotten this, but I’m not sure I asked you when you were born. Can you give us your birth date?*

Carroll: November 1, 1924.

*Cress: And you, Norma?*

Norma: I was born November 13 in ’31.

*Cress: OK. So, basically, have you always lived on a farm?*

Carroll: Well, I worked on construction. I was an ironworker. And I went from here to California, past several places, working. And then I… after I came out of the service, I was still (inaudible). So I came back here, and I actually went to work on this power plant over here.

*Cress: Oh, Yeah. Service Valley.*

Carroll: For two winters, a little bit. And then I came up (inaudible) didn’t do much. And I never did do it after that. I ironworked, and I was an airplane mechanic—chief, crew chief on an F82 fighter plane, and nobody knows what they are. They were about to get rid of them. They went to jets during that time.

*Cress: This was during your time in the service?*

Norma: That’s what he was… a Air Force…

Carroll: Crew chief.

*Cress: Uh huh. So, you’ve lived on this land, or been in this couple of miles, all your life.*

Carroll: Yeah.

*Cress: Do you remember having…you or your family…having any dealings with the New Deal programs?*

Carroll: Well, when we bought this.. this first farm we bought was…this next one down here…
Norma: Where Joe and Debbie live.

Carroll: Where Joe lives. And there’s a pond on that…a big pond…and I think…I never heard much about this, but I think it was built in the PWA time. And I know you was supposed to… if it was a drought and somebody wanted water, you had to let them have it. Come in the program… some of the…part of the program evidently. And then I remember the CCC boys. They come down on my dad’s place one time and burned brush. I don’t know what kind of a deal that was. But they was… some of them come down there. Maybe they was cutting some of it, too. Out of the pasture. Clear the pasture.

Cress: Well, that would have made a better pasture.

Carroll: Yeah. I can remember them doing that. I can… as far back as I can remember is four years old. I don’t know much past that. My dad bought a new tractor. They delivered it. It was a 1020 International. And I was always tractor crazy.

Norma: You still are.

Cress: So that would have been around ’28 or so?

Carroll: Yeah.

Norma: He probably remembers the year he built it… he bought it. You remember the year?

Carroll: Yeah. I bought it. Then, my dad never did farm much with the horses. A lot of guys… people did. My experience with farming with horses was with, for somebody else. I never done much of that at home. And I worked, planted corn for Curtis (inaudible), some people around here. And I never liked to work horses, but I did.

Cress: You didn’t?

Carroll: No, I never did like horses. We finally had a horse down here for the kids, but we never did… that was the only horse we ever owned, wasn’t it?

Cress: That was just a riding horse?

Norma: Yeah, just a riding horse. But my father had… I remember when he bought his first tractor. He didn’t have one… same as Carroll’s dad. And we had horses—Man, Maun, and Bird. We had three. One of them was mostly as a riding horse. And I remember when he bought his first tractor. And when he bought his first tractor, it had lugs. You probably don’t know what that is.

Carroll: Steel wheels.

Cress: Oh, OK.
Norma: And there were big lugs, like iron things on each side, you know. And I do remember that.

Carroll: Well, this tractor… my dad bought it… it was steel wheeled, too. And he kept it about ten years, then he traded it for… I traded it for a International. My dad kept his tractor for about ten years, but when I come back out of the service, I bought a Super M Farmall down at Edna, Kansas. And that was my first tractor, started farming.

_Cress: You called it a…_

Norma: Super M.

Carroll: That was in 1952.

_Cress: Super N._

Carroll: “M.”

_Cress: Oh, “M.”_

Norma: Uh huh. Super M.

_Cress: The letter “M.” Gottcha._

Norma: They have M and H and, what was the other?

Carroll: Oh, I don’t know.

Norma: It was a little bigger than an H, and a little bigger than just a regular Farmall. Super.

_Cress: A Super. OK. So let’s see. Did you or any of your family have any connection with the New Deal?_

Norma: The only…. I remember my grandma was on… I think it was called WPA. But the only thing I… She worked for people so many days a week or something. And she got, like… I remember her getting flour… commodities, is that what you would call it? I remember her getting flour and sugar and, like, prunes, probably raisins. I just, you know… but I do remember her getting those. My grandma was a widow. She lived at Sherman.

_Cress: Do you recall what kind of work she did. Was it domestic?_

Norma: Yeah, housework. She used to do, when she was younger…. Her first husband died. And, I don’t remember… there was several children. And then she remarried. Her
name was Carson. My mother’s name was Carson. Then she married a Claxton, and she had two more children. They never knew they weren’t... they were half. They was always just family. And he died, so she had those two children to finish raising. So, she used to do... like, she would go cook apple butter. She had a big black pot. She cooked apple butter in the fall when there was apples and stuff. And she always said “If it’s any hotter in hell than that, I don’t want to go there.” That’s what the lasting memory of her to me was. And she passed away when I was 16, so you know I do remember her getting, like, some commodities, they called it at that time.

Carroll: I knew some boys around, a few that worked for... on WPA. And they always thought it was a pretty good deal, to have a little money, you know. And I never...I don’t know that much about it. But what I knew about it, they always thought it was all right, having to do something. And that place down there... that pond’s got a rock laid up for... it was a fairly big pond for them times, you know. And they fixed that up. And that was for the man I bought the farm from later.

Norma: Mr. Price.

Cress: *So they built a rocked dam, or spillway?*

Carroll: No, just dirt mostly. Dirt. It had a rock waterway around it when it run over. It’s in this little creek here. And when it rains all the time, it will spill over. He cleaned it out once, and I cleaned it out after I got it, made it deeper again.

Norma: Mr. Price kept it up really good. As kids we used to go there, you know, of a night when it was winter time, and the ice would freeze over for several weeks, and have ice skating parties.

Cress: *Oh, good.*

Norma: Yeah. We had wiener roasts, marshmallows and stuff, you know. The teachers would usually come. Why, teachers didn’t have cars or anything. They stayed with somebody there in Montana, right across from the school. So we did have one teacher that lived there in Montana. Most of them would stay.

Carroll: I just was looking in that junk that we got in there. They said that in 1903, I believe it was, somewhere in there, they was paying $45 a month for teachers. And the whole school budget was $700 or $800 or $900. That’s what a 2-room school cost back in them time. I’ve got a little book where my grandpa wrote that all down. He was on the school board. I don’t know when he got off the school board nor when my dad got on, but my dad was on as long as I can remember. He was on when, through all this consolidation, you know.

Norma: Up here at Service Valley.

Carroll: Then he was on the one at Altamont high school, too, for a while.
Norma: Yes he was. When they built the new high school.

Carroll: So… but he was always in the school board business.

Cress: Well, that was quite a service to the community.

Carroll: Yeah.

Cress: So, let’s talk about your farm land. It sounds like maybe you added on to it. How much land did you start out with?

Carroll: Nothing.

Cress: Nothing.

Norma: We rented first.

Cress: You rented?

Carroll: Yeah, we rented. But we was able to… her dad and my dad… when I come back from the service… they thought I was going to come back, so they kept a few cows for me. And then when I got here, I added some cows. And when… and then…

Norma: We bought the cows, and they kept them.

Carroll: Yeah, for us, for a year. And then they… we rented the farm down there. You know it’s kind of hard to remember exactly how we done that…

Norma: We rented it. Marvin and Geraldine rented it, and they moved over on the new place, so…

Carroll: Her brother moved to another place, and we moved there for the first few years. And then later…

Norma: We just rented it for a long time.

Carroll: Later we bought that farm ground, that farm, and sold the house to my sister and her husband.

Cress: How much acreage was on that first place?

Carroll: Well, it was 90… 100… the river cut off a corner of it, so it wasn’t quite 160. It lacked about 20 acres…

Norma: I think it was about 142 acres, if I remember right.
Carroll: Something like that.

Norma: That’s about the nearest I can remember, too.

_Cress:_ And then did you get some more land later on?

Carroll: Yeah. The way we got land was, them people come and told us they wanted to farm us. We ended up… I ended up with my boys farming 3000 acres right here.

Norma: We didn’t own all that.

Carroll: We never went and asked anybody to farm their ground. They all come and offered it to us, and the boys… especially the boys got to farming, well, they took it all. So we farmed… we started farming 3000, about 3000 acres, back quite a while, before I retired. Then, as far as buying a farm, most of the farms we bought, we’d farm them for 20 years, maybe, and then somebody died or something, and they wanted to sell. And we bought… that one there we bought at a sale…

Norma: This one.

Carroll: Yeah. No, the one down on, where the Montana there, where Donna lives.

Norma: Where Donna lives?

Carroll: Yeah. That’s where we bought first.

Norma: At a sale? We didn’t buy it at a sale. We bought it from Mrs. O’Brien.

Carroll: At… well, it was. That was the one… We bought…

Norma: You might have bought part of it, and then the other part… I don’t remember about that.

Carroll: No, it was… They went and… put a price on it. And then we went and paid the price. That’s what… The boy wanted it and he wanted it quick.

Norma: Yeah. He had inherited it from the people that owned it. An aunt or something.

Carroll: Yeah. He was a cousin or something… a nephew.

Norma: The guy that owned it lived at Dewey, Oklahoma, or some place like that, didn’t he? Mr. Jennings?

Carroll: We lived there several years, and never did see him.
Norma: Well, him and his wife had a wreck… him and his wife. And she lived and he didn’t. And she came up here and lived with this sister in Parsons.

Carroll: Yeah, that’s the way that was.

Norma: And then this nephew inherited it, Dad, after Mrs. O’Brien died.

Carroll: In the end, we bought…

Norma: We had 800 acres.

Carroll: Yeah. 820.

Cress: And then you rented other peoples’ land to get up to 3000.

Norma: Yeah.

Cress: So is that about the same size as other farmers’ in this area? Was that bigger, or smaller?

Carroll: Well, I expect it was bigger than the average, I think.

Norma: I’d say it was, too.

Carroll: I don’t know, compared with what I knew… well, most… We rented like 500 acres from Raymond Cook up here.

Cress: Raymond Cook? Yeah.

Carroll: And farmed that… Well, they’re actually still farming some of it.

Norma: Pardon me?

Carroll: Raymond Cook’s.

Norma: Oh, yeah. They’re still farming that. The boys took it over.

Carroll: Now when I first retired, then I didn’t… I retired when I got 65, and then I went back for… until 1980. Didn’t I?

Norma: You mean ’90?

Carroll: Yeah, ’90. Because I was… that’s when I retired… when I quit working, when I got this Parkinson’s. Up to then I went back and worked for the boys, and helped them all the time. And I know when I got too sick to go, why Joe told me he didn’t know I was
doing so much pasture, fixing fence… While they was farming, if a cow got out, they’d call me over to go get the cow.

_Cress: Right._

Carroll: That’s what I…

Norma: Well, Larry told me this fall… he was putting tire (?) around the bottom of the granery. He said to tell Dad, “I missed him.” Because Carroll usually did, you know, the odds and ends. So he’d run their tractor, too, though, until about two years ago, about any time.

_Cress: I’m sure they appreciated the help._

Norma: Yeah, they did.

_Cress: So what kind of crops did you grow?_

Carroll: Corn and beans and wheat, sorghum.

Norma: You grew other crops… sorghum, lespedeza

Carroll: Yeah, it’s a kind of a double crop.

Norma: Oats.

Carroll: I went from just a regular tiller ground plowing. I used to plow it all. And then we decided that wasn’t no good a long time ago. The river bottom… you’d plow that up, and then when the river would get over before you got a crop put on. That’s the way it seemed to do. And then you’d go out on it, and it’d be dry, and then you’d fall through, the tractor’d fall through… And then you was stuck. And so we just quit farming it, went to chiseling…

Norma: Quit plowing and went to chiseling.

Carroll: Back a long time before everybody else quit plowing on that particularly.

_Cress: Is that like the no-till?_

Carroll: Yeah. And then when… they are completely no-till now.

Norma: Yeah. They’re pretty well completely no-till now.

Carroll: I started out with a 2-wheel corn planter, then went up to the 6-row, I think, then 8-row. And then that’s about the time that I quit, you know. I mean I really quit working
for them. But when I sold out, we had a guy come and tell us what the machinery was worth… you know, a dealer or somebody. And I sold it to them for that price.

Norma: They made payments every year on it.

Carroll: Yeah. They made some payments. That’s the way they done it.

Norma: We didn’t have a sale, just sold it to him.

Carroll: When they got the payments paid, it was theirs. That’s the way I got out of it. I never did do no… have no sale or them things.

_Cress_: _Pretty much your two sons, they got it._

Carroll: They were farming, they farmed with me. Joe, the youngest one, always farmed. And Larry, he went to college, and Joe went to technical school for mechanics. And then he come back to the farm. And then about that time the neighbor died over across the road, and he wanted to rent him… his widow wanted to rent me their 300 acres. And so that’s… we just got started building up.

_Cress_: _Just kept on going._

Carroll: Yeah.

_Cress_: _OK. So, you have the crops. Did you raise livestock as well?_

Carroll: Yes. We usually had 40 or 50 cows.

_Cress_: _Beef cattle?_

Carroll: Yes. I never did… I wasn’t ever really a cattleman, you know. If you was a real cattleman, you’d probably drive out and look at them every day, see if they was all right. And I looked at mine going 50 mph.

Norma: Larry’s a good cattleman. Joe’s more… You know, some would rather turn the earth and some would rather do cows. Larry did dairy when he first came home. He did dairy with Judy’s father and a couple of brothers, I think. And then when Raymond come and rented them the land, why Larry moved over here. And he just farmed. He didn’t… But he’d get up early and milk cows, and go back at 3:00 in the evening to do cows.

_Cress_: _Now, was your livestock mainly for the market? Or did you consume some of it yourself?_

Carroll: No, usually just the market. I had Hereford cattle to start with. And then… but I ended up with black cattle. I kept white face. I got to having some pink eye trouble. And black cattle never had it as bad.
Cress: Were those the Angus, you mean?

Carroll: Yeah. Angus.

Norma: You had pink eye with the white face cattle.

Carroll: Yeah, seemed like.

Cress: So where would you take your cows to market?

Carroll: Parsons Livestock. They got a… and I always just kept my own heifers for increasing the… replace the old cows. So I never did really buy many cattle. I never did have too much trouble with any of the cattle diseases because I never did take strange cattle much, you know.

Cress: How about the crops, now. How would you sell those?

Carroll: Well, we sold… we used to sell to Strauss. They had an elevator there, you know. And then we went to Oswego, to the Co-op, first Co-op.

Norma: Strauss had a big elevator when we first farmed.

Carroll: And later on we got to hauling it to the Port of Catoosa, not exactly Catoosa, somewhere, but a port on the river.

Cress: Down by Tulsa.

Carroll: Yeah. That’s where we got to hauling it, according to the price.

Norma: Well, Dad, you joined the Farmers’… National Farmers’ Organization, I don’t know what year you joined that, and did a lot of forward contracting.

Cress: Oh? Now how did that work?

Carroll: Well, it’s just like… kind of like the stock market, you won some and you didn’t. I think a while back, Larry said he had some sold for $7--corn I think it was… And the price was about $4 and something.

Norma: Here.

Carroll: At the Co-op here. But you didn’t always do that. A lot of times we just sold it to some trucker, and he was hauling it to the same place we’re hauling it now. I might say… tell you we sold out. We don’t even own this house. We sold it to the boys. So, if you want to know anything, they’re the ones that know.
*Cress: Well, they know about today, but you remember how things were a ways back.*

Carroll: Well, I got a book here. I used to keep… I started keeping records, but I give up on it. And then, part of it is (inaudible)

Norma: I know it is.

Carroll: Starts January 1975 and goes to ’79, I think, ’83 or ’84. That ’84 is right here.

*Cress: And those are some of your farm records?*

Carroll: Yeah. That’s… I can tell you… Let me see… 180 acres on the Walter Cook place. We got all these places around here, we call them by the name that…. old people.

Norma: That’s what I told Carroll, start calling this… you know, we always call it Grandpa Emmett’s, that’s Carroll’s dad. My last name was Czapansky. No kids could say that. My parents… so they called them Grandma and Grandpa Emmett and Grandma and Grandpa Eli. That was their grandparents.

Carroll: See, April 20, I don’t know what year that is, planted 80 acres of corn on the Cook place across the river. Then I got later on here, May 5, the river was out over us. And I’ve got prices in here of what I sold it for. A lot of stuff in here that I’m the only one that can probably figure it out.

Norma: I imagine I could.

Carroll: Sowed wheat on all of… let’s see, now, that was another place we rented.

*Cress: Now, see, I would think your sons would find that to be fascinating, too.*

Norma: Well, I think they do in the end. They’ve never been interested in the history until Larry got sick last summer. And he got real ill. Well, I guess it gave him a wake-up call.

Carroll: Well, it did Joe, because after I got so I couldn’t help him, why, they farmed a couple of years just the two of them, on that 3000 acres. And that kept them busy. They stayed behind a little all the time. You know, that’s the way that works. And then when Larry couldn’t work, why they found a boy down the road, lives down the road here, and he come work for them. And he’s still with them.

Norma: Hired hand.

Carroll: Hired hand. And they just… Joe just took him to the field, down to the field one time, and told him where to plant it. “You know as much as I do about the planter.” ‘Cause Joe never did plant. He always worked the ground or something, and Larry planted, he hauled grain, he never run his combine. They had their parts of it all the time. And that’s the way that was.
Norma: That’s kind of the way they do—Larry does his thing and Joe does his. They work together all the time, you know, as far as working is concerned. But Larry’s not a mechanic. Joe’s a mechanic.

_Cress: Well, they can work with each other’s strengths._

Carroll: Yeah. And they’ve never had any arguments that I ever knew about.

Norma: Yeah, they have disagreements, but not arguments. They agree to do their thing their way.

_Cress: Yeah, you couldn’t possibly agree with everything all the time._

Norma: Yeah. But they don’t… And I think… Joe said something years ago, and it stuck with me. “After I’ve been with Dad and Larry all day, I don’t want to be with them all night.” I said, “Well, the feeling’s mutual.” And you know we try not to be… let them do their thing and we do our thing. But that was just one point that stuck with me, and I thought that’s the way everybody wants to be, that’s the best way. So they all get along good.

Carroll: They don’t go to a restaurant together very often, you know. They just go their own way.

Norma: Well, if you want to go out to eat, you don’t want to go with them. You’ve been with them all day. Well, or anything else.

_Cress: Yeah, that sounds like a healthy approach._

Norma: Uh huh. Yeah, you know, and I always thought of that. They… we do our thing and they do theirs. On the holidays, I just usually let the grandkids make up their mind anymore. They were all in athletics, they all did athletics in college, and they got together and made up the day they’d come for Christmas or Thanksgiving or Easter. And that always worked out with us because we didn’t… My mother lived to be old, and Carroll’s parents, but they’d come up here or whatever. So that’s just the way we did it.

_Cress: Well, let’s go back a little bit now. Did you have a garden?_

Carroll: I never did. She did.

_Cress: Norma, did you have a garden?_

Norma: Yes, I always had a garden. I don’t remember… I remember a lot of years they weren’t very good. Last year it was pretty poor.
Carroll: We had a… I always said if we couldn’t get in there with a 30 foot disc, well I didn’t have no, nothing to do with it.

Cress: Well, what kind of things did you grow in your garden?

Norma: Everything. Potatoes…

Carroll: We usually growed potatoes every year.

Norma: Tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers, radish, onions, lettuce. I’m not too much… I wasn’t too much to grow, like, sweet potatoes, stuff like that in the fall, but I have had pumpkins and squash and stuff. Mother planted more of that stuff than I ever did. When we were… when I was home, we just raised everything in the garden. I helped, and we canned. I don’t remember… My parents didn’t even have a refrigerator until I was probably a junior in high school. We didn’t have a refrigerator.

Carroll: Didn’t have electricity.

Cress: Did they have an ice box, or…

Norma: We did an ice box in the summertime. That’s all we had.

Carroll: My parents didn’t have electricity until later than hers.

Norma: Well, you know, where we lived we had KG&E went down our road. They wouldn’t give us electricity until the REA went through. Then when the REA went through, they made us take it, ‘cause they didn’t want us to go on the Rural Electric, see. They wanted to get our business. So if it was on your place, you had… So I had it a year before Carroll’s folks had electricity. And so, we raised everything. We had a locker in town. And we had to keep beef, probably butchered our own beef, I don’t remember, and took it down there. But we used to. Carroll and I butchered our own beef at times, and our own pork. And we’d had a locker downtown. And Saturday was a big day to go to town. You’d… they had a drawing. You had your name in the drawing, maybe you’d win $10 or $25 or something. So you always went Saturday afternoon. And you went to the locker and got your meat and got groceries. When we got groceries, there was no adding machine. I know we used to go to Sherman, and they had an adding machine. You’d go down there, and they’d just… you’d tell them what you wanted, and they’d write a list down and they’d go get your groceries and bring it back, set it there on the counter, put it in your sack and you’d come home. They’d figure it up with a pencil.

Cress: So is that where you usually went grocery shopping?

Norma: Down at Oswego, yes, most of the time. We didn’t go to Parsons that often.

Carroll: After the Plant come in, you always had to go around it. See, we always used to...
Norma: You could cut through, go through until this Plant come in.

Carroll: When I went to high school…

*Cress: The Kansas Army Ammunition Plant?*

Carroll: When I drove to high school, we drove right straight west until we hit 32nd Street, then went into Altamont.

Norma: You just didn’t go to Parsons that often.

Carroll: We didn’t… we drove our own cars. One year, I don’t know… I was the same age as all these girls, but they was four or five girls…

Norma: In Montana.

Carroll: In Montana. And what we’d do, we’d take… My dad would furnish the car one day and somebody else another day.

Norma: And Carroll drove the car.

Carroll: And I drove it.

Norma: They went to high school in Altamont.

Carroll: Probably 14 years old, or something, I don’t know.

*Cress: But they thought you should do the driving instead of the girls.*

Carroll: I don’t know whether the girls hadn’t ever drove or… I don’t know what the case was.

Norma: I don’t remember either, Dad, but I know I got a driver’s license when I was 14, ’cause I drove the tractors for Dad. I would go in the truck with him. He had a, would be a horse planter, and he pulled it behind the tractor, and when you got at the end of the field, you had to take it out of gear so you didn’t lose your corn seed or your bean seed. And I had to have a badge to go over in the Plant.

*Cress: But your dad was farming some of the land over there in the Ammunition Plant?*

Norma: Uh huh. Mostly it was some that he had already farmed before, like he had the Woods place, that we’d call it. And it was over in there.

*Cress: So they were leasing it out to people?*
Norma: Yeah, they leased it out to people, especially if you had already farmed it and they took it over, then they didn’t use that much land, you know. But you had to have a key to get in the gate, or somebody had to come let you in the gate. I did both things, so it’s quite a little change for us people that lived here in our own area. So many of them moved out and stuff, you know, I remember.

*Cress: About when did they put the Plant in?*

Norma: ’42.

*Cress: ’42. How about wild game or fish? Did you ever hunt or fish?*

Carroll: We hunted all the time as kids, but there wasn’t no deer around here, I don’t think. I never did see a deer until... I can’t remember when.

Norma: You know, I remember probably when I was 12 years old, my dad and L.D. and Vern Brooks said they saw a deer down in the bottom. And they all… once in a while they’d see this one deer. And then when we went to Alaska and come back, I remember them saying there was just a few more. But now, Larry and Joe, when they were little, they didn’t want to kill a deer. Now they’d kill every one they could find. ‘Cause they eat the crops and tear down your fence.

Carroll: See, we border the Kansas Ordinance Plant on this back side.

Norma: See, this is a dead end right here. This just goes back to the Plant.

*Cress: Uh huh. I think I may have tried to go down that road one time.*

Carroll: And they have… We didn’t… Well, you couldn’t go in there, but you didn’t see very many deer around. But now we got a brother’s son-in-law, he went… he come in here and he set up a camera before the hunting season in the night. I didn’t know he was taking… but he had a camera over there. And he set it up, and boy, you’d see 20 deer, you know. He let that set there long.

Norma: And they mostly come out of the Plant.

Carroll: Yeah, that’s where they come out. And they come out on our crops. And that’s always been a… It got so it’s a little annoying lately.

Norma: But you never hunted years ago, Dad. Now Tom, your brother, always hunted… What did he… rabbits and something else. You know we don’t have very many rabbits. I haven’t seen any back there this fall. What did he… He, what’d he skin?

Carroll: Twelve, or whatever it was… a skunk.

Norma: He didn’t get a skunk, but rabbits and something else. But you used to get…
Carroll: Possum.

Norma: Two bits, would be a quarter, you used to get a quarter for a rabbit, you know. And they’d skin it and have its hide, and then they’d take it…

Carroll: That was just a certain time. The rabbits got so thick around here that you’d go down this hedge row and on down in there and the next one over, and they’d cut the hedge and lay the brush over, you know, they hadn’t got rid of it yet. And the rabbits was in that brush. And you’d go out there in the snow, and they was just everywhere. And you could go out with a .22 and get you all the rabbits you could carry. Take them to Oswego to (inaudible) and they’d buy them.

Norma: A lot of people used to eat them. We’d eat them occasionally, but I never cared that much for rabbits and squirrels. We had beef…

Carroll: I was never… I never cared much for game at any time.

Norma: No. Carroll never did hunt much or fish much either. But the boys have, so… And Joe still hunts. He usually gets his license, you know, so he can hunt.

Cress: So you folks, sounds like Carroll in particular, preferred beef?

Norma: Yeah.

Carroll: I guess we did.

Norma: He don’t now, but he did then.

Carroll: I’d say I do now. But they have…

Norma: He does now, but he don’t eat… His teeth has got bad, so he can’t eat steak good.

Cress: Oh, that’s too bad.

Norma: You go with a lot of hamburger and roast.

Cress: Did you ever raise hogs at all? Or your family?

Carroll: Well, just a few. When we bought this farm down here…

Norma: There was hog houses.

Carroll: There was a hog house on it. ’58, is that when we bought it?

Norma: Yeah, uh huh. ‘58’s when we moved there.
Carroll: But there was the hog houses there, so I bought some feeder pigs and fed them for two or three years. Like that was always one of them things, sometimes you’d make money and sometimes you didn’t, you know. And I got into the farming… I always liked the farming part of it better than the livestock part of it, so I always kind of kept the livestock to a minimum.

Norma: The boys have more cows now than they’ve ever had.

Carroll: We bought this farm, so my dad lived on the next corner down. And this man lived here—Price. And we bought that… He come down there one day and said he was going to retire and quit. And he wanted to know if I wanted to rent that, or buy it, or something. And so he made a deal, to loan me… I was supposed to have paid $2,000 down. And I borrowed… I didn’t have to. And then he carried it, and we went on for about ten years. And a lot of people around here thought I give too much for it. I give over $100 an acre, which is, I guess they say nobody else had done that. But this man made me this deal. He wanted his (inaudible) money, or he was going to put it in a land bank with the government. So I wanted to buy a farm, so we didn’t have anything, much, you know, just a little farm. So we just went and bought it from him. We was glad to get it from him. And then we had… We kept it for…

Norma: We just paid him personally, though, Dad. He had a lawyer to draw up the contract. And we just paid him personally each year, so much, you know.

Carroll: And we had good crops the first year. The second year we farmed we had some corn that made 70 bushel to the acre. That was probably more than it was making then, most of us making 40. And then wheat made 50 some. And he told me, said “I farmed all this time and never did have 50 bushel.”

Norma: He likes you, Carroll. Carroll had worked for him on the farm there at different times. And he told him that he was either going to put all that land in soil bank, or if he would buy it from him and he would get him a contract. They were very nice about it. They really was, weren’t they, Dad.

Carroll: The only thing about it… I don’t know, we didn’t set no moving dates one way or another…

Norma: Didn’t what?

Carroll: Didn’t set a moving date. You know, they stayed in the house…

Norma: Oh, yeah.

Carroll: And we finally… They said they… So they wanted us to help move them, so we moved out of the house down there where we was living and moved up there. And we hauled them down there to that house.
Norma: They moved where we moved. ‘Cause they just rented that from us.

Carroll: Of course you know how that would be. You can imagine the woman of the house saying, we’ll just come in there and haul her out. And that’s about the way it was, you know. We had a truck and trailer and stuff. And we’d just back up and take a load of stuff down there.

Norma: Well, they were going to get a place to live, so they just decided they’d move in there. And they lived in there several years.

_Cress_: _So you kind of swapped houses._

Norma: Yeah, swapped houses. I did that two or three times, and I swear I’ll never do it again, and then I end up doing it.

Carroll: We didn’t buy that place… turned out to be easy to pay for on account of the good crops. If it hadn’t been for good crops, it might not have been that easy.

Norma: When we bought this up here, there was a couple lived here, they were from France, both of them. And he had come over here to mine, didn’t he.

Carroll: Coal mines, over around Cherokee.

Norma: The coal mines, and so they lived here and they were older. They never had any children, but they both came from France. I’ll have to tell you, Larry was smaller when he came up here, and Joe, and they liked to kiss. And when they come up here one day, well he told Larry that Christine come over here, and she married him over here, and he said, “Goddah damnah, she was beautiful.” He told that…you know, they were French. And she was always calling me and saying, “Well, send the little fellahs up here.” So, Joe and Larry’d come up. And come back one day, and Joe said, “Mom, I can’t unmertand anyting they tay.” Joe was tongue-tied when he was little. Larry looked at me and he said, “Mom, I think it’s about even-steven.” And the doctor clipped Joe’s tongue, and they said that he would talk plain after he went to school and got his syllables and things. And he always did, but, you know, he didn’t even know he couldn’t talk plain. But you could always guess, and Christine… I could always understand him, but Carroll and the kids couldn’t.

Carroll: I guess this is the farm we bought at auction.

Norma: Yeah. This one.

Carroll: We paid more than $100. So I never did buy any of the really high land. I bought some $400, though.
Norma: There was a house here. You tore it down, but it had… had went through several families lived here off and on.

Carroll: It seemed like everywhere we went we had to tear the house down and build a new one. Then we moved up here and tore the house down and built this.

Cress: This is a nice one.

Carroll: Well, it’s smaller, you know. I expect that was my fault.

Norma: Yeah, that was your fault. I didn’t… he and Larry drew up the plans, and we just all at once decided we was going to build a house and move. I expect some of my family was ill… I don’t remember… Kind of a busy time for me, but it worked out all right. That was another… When Joe and Debbie moved down there, they moved from across the road in a house. And I had to move out so they could move in. And they wanted in by Christmas, so I think we moved the 15th of December, something.

Carroll: When we got this about finished.

Norma: This was finished, mostly. It was finished to move into, but I didn’t have an oven that year, remember. I went down to Debbie’s and cooked my turkey and ham.

Carroll: We’re not talking about the olden times, this is medium times.

Cress: Medium times. Well, it’s all part of your family’s story. Let’s talk a little bit about these New Deal programs. And you may or may not remember about it, but… One of the programs was called the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. And they were willing to pay people to either cut down or stop growing crops.

Carroll: Yeah. I was in on that.

Cress: Tell me about it.

Carroll: Well, they had these programs, and you… if you went into the program, and I always went into them. Some guys didn’t like them and didn’t want to fool with them. But later on, what was aggravating about it, you see you might have a wheat allotment… you might have a 20-acre field here, and you might only have a 17-acre wheat allotment. So you couldn’t… you’d just go up there and sow that 17 acres, leave that 3 acres out. You had to leave it somewhere on the farm. And there was a lot of times later on where that was the only profit there was, if you was in that program. I know later on when we was all together, soon after the boys come into the business, we went into Kansas Farm Management for a bookkeeper… he kept good books, and see the two of you, you could tell where you were compared to everybody else. Always said it was a good deal. But it took… you had to do a lot of keeping track of stuff. It was better than that bookkeeping I think there. But that’s what we done. So I pretty near always went into it with the farm program. And now then it’s better because you can plant the thing all corn, or all wheat,
or whatever you want to do, more, you know. And that other way you was always restricted in what you could do. And here we had, we really had 26 landlords, one time, a lot of the time. And you’d keep them all (inaudible). Well, now, some of those little farms, it just didn’t pay to fool with the government and try to measure and all that stuff, so we didn’t do it. But on any acreage, if they wanted to, we’d do it, you know. And I just… after we had, he put it on a computer, you know, that’s where he keeps it, and so we were… they’re probably still in the same program. I don’t know whether there’s any program to it anymore. But… I always… For me, it was an aggravation, but it was worth it to do it. And you had to cut down on the crops. They was just overproducing, you know, at least on milo. And you really couldn’t hardly afford to leave it idle and not get anything out of it, that was the trouble.

Norma: Well, if you left it idle, it grew up into bush.

Carroll: Well, we didn’t leave it idle that long.

Norma: I know, but I mean some people did.

*Cress: Yeah, I think that was the idea that the Roosevelt administration had was to cut down on that overproduction and help the price to go up. How about the FDIC, the Federal Insurance Deposit Corporation? You were probably a little too young to know when the banks were failing.*

Carroll: Well, I remember my dad had a bank failure.

*Cress: He did?*

Carroll: Yeah. It was his dad and him. They had $300 or $400, it wasn’t a very big amount, saved up for this…

Norma: It was for that time.

Carroll: Yeah, I guess it was. Saved up for this farm payment. And they put it in Marley’s Bank in Oswego…

*Cress: Marley?*

Carroll: Marley, I think it was. And the first thing you know, it was broke. And the guy left… I don’t know what happened to the guy, but they couldn’t ever get no money back out of it. And of course it made them pretty depressed, you know, when you couldn’t find your money. It’s like all these people now in the big con deal, you know. That guy making off with it, about the same thing. There wasn’t no rules in the bank, and pretty hard to catch up with him. So my dad was always cautious of banks. He never liked banks.
Cress: You can see why. Then after the FDIC, do you think he had a little more confidence in the bank?.

Carroll: I don’t know. Was that where if you had $10,000 in there, they’d guarantee it, that kind of program?

Cress: Yes.

Carroll: Well, I was… I never had enough extra money most of the time to fool with that, that I ever worried about it.

Norma: Whatever you were saving, you’d just make payments.

Carroll: Now it’s gone up to several million, hasn’t it?

Cress: Well, they just recently, because of the current crisis, it’s $250,000 for each account.

Carroll: Yeah, that’s what it was… $250,000. Back then it was a lot less than that. I don’t know what it was. But I never did have… I guess if I had money in the bank, it was either CD or in that checking account.

Cress: And those would have all been guaranteed, too, with the FDIC.

Carroll: Well, that was all right. I never had no trouble with it. But I don’t know that much about any of it, you know.

Cress: Well, I think those days before they had that Federal Deposit Insurance, that’s when people would put money in the bank, and they would lose it all.

Carroll: That’s what my dad done.

Norma: And your aunt, Bertha. Aunt Bertha.

Cress: And some people then, you know, were afraid to use the banks at all. That’s when the government came in and said, we’ll insure your deposit for you so you can go back to using the bank. And some people, I think it took them a long time to build up confidence.

Carroll: Well, my dad… I was a school deal, these school deals around here. And that day he was kind of putting any bank, but I… but it made him conservative, more conservative. And I never did try to farm with Dad. When I left home when I was done in high school, and went farming for this guy right over here.

Norma: He didn’t live there then, though.

Carroll: No. But I…
Norma: Well, my parents went through that, too. Dad got so he wouldn’t trust the bank. They had money at home in a tin can.

Carroll: My dad was real conservative. And I knew after I got to farming a little bit, I seen that I was going to borrow more money than he ever borrowed. And he wouldn’t have been wanting to do it if he was in with me.

Norma: You went through the same thing with your boys, didn’t you?

Carroll: What do you mean?

Norma: Larry and Joe. I said you went through the same thing. You knew they borrowed more money.

Carroll: Yeah. They borrowed more money when Joe was…

Norma: It was too big a deal for him. He didn’t want in on it.

Carroll: 22 years old, wasn’t he, something like that?

Norma: Joe was 22. Larry would have been a little older.

Carroll: They borrowed enough money to buy, bought this 400 and some acres at one shot. And they didn’t even own anything. Maybe they owned a tractor.

Norma: Oh, yeah. They owned their own tractors I expect then.

Carroll: But we just stayed out of that. Said if they needed a little few dollars on it in order to make it overdue, work, we’ll see what we can do. But we didn’t get involved in it, and they borrowed enough money in the banks, just like the banks in the ‘80s, it must have been in the’70s, in the ‘80s, it got so… when the guy from California, was the President…

Cress: Ronald Reagan?

Norma: Ronald Reagan, yeah.

Carroll: He had… that’s when they come that one day you could borrow $800 on an acre field or some land. You could borrow $800 or maybe more. But pretty soon, you couldn’t borrow $300.

Norma: That’s a pecan picker, I think.

Carroll: And I had a brother-in-law that went broke during this time. And it wasn’t… good farmers went broke during that time, just like probably the same as now. See they
had… one of them had just put up a hog shed, where a hog can climb it. And he put hogs in there, and the hogs went down to 10 cents or something like that. And he never did recover from it. That was during that time, and he never could find a place to borrow back. And so, I went through them deals, but I just never happened to be… We paid on the farm for 50 years.

Norma: Every year.

Carroll: And finally paid it off. Then we sold it… to the boys.

_Cress: Well, you finally got it all for yourself, then. Let’s see, we talked… you mentioned before that the Public Works Administration had built a pond on one of your places._

Carroll: Yeah. That was before I had anything to do with it. I tell you, there was something about that in some of those papers. I guess I never did get them or something, I don’t know.

Norma: I don’t remember, either, Dad, about that. It was probably was… you mean in that abstract they made for that, or the deed? I could’ve looked, ‘cause I think I’ve got that downstairs where we bought that from (inaudible).

Carroll: You know they don’t even use an abstract any more.

Norma: Just a little deed. We have a lot of abstracts from all the places.

Carroll: You know it always started with pages that thick, you know, you could find out the history, go clear back to when somebody first got it from the United States.

_Cress: I have an abstract on the little farm that we own. Like you say, it’s about this thick._

Norma: I’ve got a box full of them down there for the boys. They don’t want them, but maybe some day they will.

Carroll: I want you to keep them.

_Cress: Some day they will._

Norma: We’ve looked through them. We’ve had to for quite a few years. We made a trust 10 years ago, 11 now, but we made a trust.

Carroll: Well, I never did have anything much to do with that. But I think it was a good program. I never heard too many guys complaining about it.

_Cress: Well, it did give people jobs._
Norma: You know, there’s a lot of stuff I can see in Oswego that they did at that time. Down there around the water house, they built a rock wall, and they built that.

Carroll: Built them shelter houses up there at the park.

Norma: Yeah. The shelter houses up there in the park. And there’s a lot of rock work, as much as I know, right down there around the Oswego park, and down by the water house and all that. And they’re still there. And they would be until somebody tore them down, I think. I just they were a good thing to make for… It’s kind of like the camp down there going out now. Those boys you see them every place doing work. And, I mean, not only will the people that work there miss it, the people that they do work for will miss it.

*Cress: I know they do contribute to the community.*

Norma: Yes, they did. They helped with the tornadoes, and they helped with the wind, ice storms, and I just… you see them different places doing stuff.

*Cress: They take care of, or they do some of the caretaking down at the park in Parsons.*

Norma: Yeah. They just take them different places, and they can… I mean, if something tragic happens, they’re right there. And somebody’s always telling me what a help they are to the community. And that’s a help to theirself, too.

*Cress: Right. OK, let’s see. The REA was one of those programs that the New Deal brought about. You mentioned a little bit about that before. Let’s talk about… did that have any effect on your farm operation?*

Carroll: Yeah. It was just a good deal. I never had… we never had too much electric stuff until a little later. But by the time… when did that go into effect, do you know?

Norma: Your dad was on that.

Carroll: Yeah.

*Cress: Well, at the federal level, they passed the law in 1937, but from everything I know, it didn’t really get out here to southeast Kansas until probably the late ‘40s.*

Carroll: That’s when my folks got everything. Well, by the time when we bought this farm down here, had this silo on it, we had a silo loader and everything, we had electric motors then. And we depended on… all the grain bins and everything, they had electric motors, fans, and stuff. And I don’t know… that was the only electricity we could get at the time was REA, and we’re still on it.

*Cress: So the main impact on your farm operations had to do with the augers and loading up the silo.*
Carroll: Yeah. Having the power to do it with.

Norma: They had a grain dryer… your grain dryer.

*Cress: How about your life outside the farm? Your home life. What kind of an impact….*

Norma: I’d hate to do without electricity. I’ve been without it a few times. It’s not nice.

*Cress: What things do you remember the most about how things changed when you got electricity in the house?*

Norma: Oh, we could have a washer. We just had… a washer was, like, we used gas and oil like you do in a lawnmower or something, you know. And you started it, and the dryer. Refrigerator’s probably the main thing I liked. Of course, now you can have so many things that they didn’t even have then. Maybe a deep freeze was real important, like to my mother. ‘Cause she got hers when we were gone, you know. After you got electricity, you couldn’t afford a deep freeze and stuff like that for a few years. You had to pay for putting the other stuff in, you know, that was more important, your lights and stuff.

Carroll: I was in the Air Force, and I came from (inaudible), Illinois, and I was going to Alaska. And we wasn’t really caring to get married at the start of that, I don’t think. Never thought much about it, but we decided I was going to be gone for two years. And so we got married before I left.

Norma: Well, I couldn’t have come up there unless we were married. He could’ve been… If you’d have went there, then I couldn’t have come there. That’s the way it was.

Carroll: The Air Force was… they’d been on getting rid of people after the World War II, you know, and then they was starting to come back. And they didn’t care one way or the other, I guess, if you was single, because… I remember this pretty good. Then one night, the thing said… you know we had a bulletin board, and they wanted some volunteers to go over to the main area, this base, to this program. Well, nobody volunteered. But pretty soon, they read a list of people that had just volunteered. And I was on it. That’s the way they done it, but I… So we got on a bus and went over there. And there was Bob Hope and his tour, you know, that he had done for the troops all over the world.

*Cress: The USO.*

Carroll: And he had the Secretary of the Air Force, and he had made the announcement that there was going to be an allotment for the wives. And so I got… I remember very distinctly, we got $95… or was it the other way around.

Norma: We got $96 and paid $95 rent. The first month… we got $96 and we paid $95.
Carroll: So that’s how… But she went up there and worked a little bit in a laundry. They… you could do them kind of things, if you wanted to do that, and could do it, you know. And we didn’t have as much trouble with the cold weather as a lot of people did ‘cause I knew how to fix things up so they didn’t freeze up, you know. ‘Cause see we seen 59 below in Fairbanks on the thermometer right outside the window.

Norma: Yeah. And me being country, I could live, you know. Some of them women come from New York and California, they didn’t know how to live without a bathroom, you know. You had a utility room that, like… Well, you could… They had showers, they had stools, but you had to walk up there, and you had to carry a chamber pot. Well, I’d had a chamber pot of my own forever. It didn’t bother me. Some of them gals, they didn’t last long, either. Most of them go back. But we were used to it. I mean, Carroll and I knew how to live when it was cold, and he knew how to keep the fires going.

Carroll: Pretty near didn’t one night when we went to, I guess, to base, wasn’t it?

Norma: We went for Thanksgiving dinner. We went with some other friends.

Carroll: And when we come back, there was dripping out of the… we left…

Norma: We had a little sink. We had an 18 foot trailer, had a (inaudible) built on the side, which was, what, 10 X 10?

Carroll: 7 X 12, something like that.

Norma: And our oil had got congealed and it wouldn’t heat the house. And they had this, just like a little stagnite there where that dripped and dripped and dripped in that sink. It didn’t drip on the floor, it just dripped and dripped and dripped and froze.

Cress: Oh, it created, like an icicle.

Norma: That’s what it did, a big icicle And that’s the only time I remember that it even got… What you had to do of a night, you had to take this light bulb and put it on the… around the oil where it’d run in. We used diesel fuel, so…

Carroll: I went uptown and asked, and wanted to know… I was going to buy some kind of a warming outfit to put on the pipe. He told me if you got to where you join two together, parts of these, said if you’ll put a light bulb right there, put a little box over it.

Norma: We had that forever, and that’s the only time we ever had any trouble, too. We’d gone… we weren’t gone very long. We went to eat at the… well, at your mess hall. We went to eat at the mess hall, they had for families, and we went there that night to eat and come back, and we was really surprised. But it didn’t take long for Carroll to get it figured out.

Cress: It’s a good thing you knew how to fix things.
Norma: Yeah. You do. You know, you could. I think of…. Sometimes my granddaughters tell me that, you know, they’ve been places and they can’t imagine how people don’t know nothing about country, you know. Allie worked one time at Myrtle Beach, and she said, “Grandma, they just don’t know what a combine or a tractor is, or what a farm is.” And said, “I don’t know how to explain it to them, but”, she said, “I’m glad I know.”

Carroll: Well, she wanted to get some pictures.

Norma: Yeah, she did. I think Joe sent them some pictures. And then they’d say, “Well, what do you call that, Allison?” again, you know, and stuff. And Amber’s the same way. She worked at a beach, I guess it was in Maine. And she said, “Boy, some of them…” So, you know, you have to be thankful that you… I told her… I wrote back. I said, Allie, yeah, you’ve had the best of two worlds. You know, the country, and now you know the city.

Cress: Well, you know, that’s one of the reasons that we started this Farm History Center is that there are young people today that don’t know anything about what it was like. And we’re trying to preserve as much of that as we can. Let’s see. There was a program called the Social Security Administration. That was part of the New Deal. Has that had any impact on your lives?

Norma: Yeah, ‘cause we get a social security check every month.

Carroll: Yeah, we are now. We’re thankful.

Norma: And I always think I was thankful my parents had it and your parents had it, Dad.

Carroll: Yeah. They didn’t ever have to go on anything. They had enough saved to last them.

Norma: My grandmother’s the only one in my family that I knew ever had social services of any kind, other than just, you know, like your social security we get now. But I don’t remember my mother and father or…

Cress: Now, did you... is your social security based on the work you did off the farm? Or did you pay...

Carroll: No, it was the farm.

Cress: When you were farming, you would also pay.

Carroll: I paid every year if I made enough. I had… I was along towards the end, I was wanting to… I thought if I paid in maybe a little more, make your social security a little more. And so, had a flood or something, you know, and come to zero, and I had to take…
I took that alternate tax some way, paid an alternate tax, so I didn’t have a zero on it. I didn’t have much, but I didn’t have a zero. Because you had to have so many quarters or halves or something, you know, to draw it. And I paid sometimes it was more than I wanted to pay, but most times I didn’t mind it too bad, you know.

_Cress: And now that you’re retired, you’re glad you have it._

Carroll: And the same way with my dad. He died… I mean, he got in the social security right when first come on.

Norma: He did. Your dad got it first. My parents got it, and, you know, they always could about live on their social security. There’s no way we could live on ours. But they could. Both of them could have. I don’t know that they always did, but they could have.

_Cress: So you think that was probably one of the better things come out of the New Deal?_

Carroll: Yeah. And just kept… a lot of people wouldn’t have saved any money if they hadn’t done it, you know, or maybe they would have, but that was one way they could save a little. But if you was drawing $70,000 or $80,000, or $100,000, you might have thought it was more than you wanted to pay, more than you needed. But you know, that’s not proved. I know people that’s settled on… they have $100,000 or something, think it had to be all right. But it wouldn’t work. It ain’t enough, you know.

Norma: Not if you had somebody… I already know a couple that’s younger than us, and she had to go to the Alzheimer’s Unit at Pittsburg. And she wasn’t there two years and they spent $100,000, you know. She’s back home, but she’s not that much better, but she’s better than she was when they took her. She’s got some medicine that… you know.

_Cress: Yeah. I think that was the idea to, you know, give people a safety net._

Norma: I’ll tell you it’s probably the best thing that’s happened to the whole country, my idea, was that… there’s some people that’s not going to save if they had it to save. And that protects them a little bit. But I know sometimes it’s hard to pay those taxes, too, on that.

_Cress: Well, of course, you know, people who work outside, or off the farm, a lot of times those taxes get taken out of your paycheck before you ever even see it._

Norma: And that’s probably a good thing, too, because they wouldn’t get it, would they. Although it seems like a lot of your paycheck, especially when you’re paying that and health insurance and stuff.

Carroll: When I first come back here, from the service, why I worked over here a couple of different times, and I worked down in Arkansas one time. And then I quit the… that was in the wintertime… I quit that and just went to farming. I don’t know what I was going to say.
Norma: Well, I know what you were going to say. You were going to say a lot of times they took the money out of that, and that paid a lot of that.

Carroll: Well, yeah. That’s the only time I ever worked off the farm, though, for any amount of…

Norma: Yeah. You’ve never… You’ve did custom work from the farm.

Carroll: Yeah. Two or three times. See that smokestack over there? Can you see that? I used to build them.

Norma: He used to build them.

Carroll: I went with an outfit for a couple of years. We built them from due east to… Let’s see… the first one was in Detroit. That wasn’t the first one, but from Detroit to California.

Norma: I think you went to Salt Lake City once, too, didn’t you?

Carroll: Probably, Utah. Lincoln, Nebraska. Two or three other places.

_Cress:_ Boy, you got... Between that and your service time in Alaska, you’ve seen a lot of the world.

Norma: I wasn’t with him when he built stacks. When he built this up here when they worked on that, I was.

Carroll: That was just (inaudible) I didn’t…. I had a little job, though, worked on tearing that (inaudible) down over there at Neodesha.

Norma: Well, that was at Neodesha. You know, they’re having trouble over at Neodesha with that, they say, contamination.

Carroll: That’s about where we cleaned up that smokestack business. We went in there and fell them, chopped them down, like you would a tree.

Norma: Carroll had two brothers that worked on the stacks. And I had two uncles that had did that for years before they went to work for them, so they all learned that when they went with them to work.

_Cress:_ OK. Well, I’ve got one other question for you, which is just to kind of wrap up your overall feelings about the New Deal. Do you feel it was the right course of action for the nation at that time, to bring about some of these new programs?
Carroll: You know, that’s just a little before my time, when I know about it anyhow, you know. And I think it was, ‘cause I know… I know the boys always (inaudible). I knew a few boys was in it. But I was too young, I guess. And I don’t know… they all had a little money. And I think their folks appreciated it, ‘cause they sent home some of it or something. And it done… It was a thing, like you say, they built several things around that we know of that’s still there, you know. I don’t know. If you… if it hadn’t have been for that, you probably wouldn’t have built them, or some of them, you know, or they wouldn’t be…

Norma: Well, it give people work, and… that couldn’t get work. And it helped other people get things going that couldn’t have done without them. So, you know, looks like it was a helpful thing.

Carroll: Oh, we didn’t think… I never did really pay much attention to it, but I never did think about it very much, but, it seemed like it was… I like most of it. The farm program was always a thing, because, you know, when you had 26 landlords, 26 different farms, you had to go out… We had a wheel we measured with. And we’d have to measure that. And you didn’t want to be too much over, or you’d have to tear it up, you know, when they come around and measured it.

Norma: To measure…we had… It was my job to hold… I called it the idiot stick. You know, you had a little wheel you measured it by and different things. We had some things you finally got so you’d just look and measure it. But we used that little reel for a long time, didn’t we, Dad? You know, you’d have to leave so much out, so you had to measure that off. But I expect it was a good deal. I wouldn’t say it was wonderful, but it was probably a good deal.

Carroll: We farmed most of this up and down this road at some time or another. Some of them… this next farm down here on this side of the road, we farmed it for several years. And then the folks passed away, and one of the daughters inherited it, and they wanted to farm it, you know. So you lose some and then you gain some. That’s what we’ve done all this time. Still, I don’t know how… exactly figure what they’re farming today. It must be still about the same amount.

Norma: I think it is.

Cress: Yeah. Your family definitely has some roots right here in this area.

Norma: Yeah. We do. You know, we do. And friends. We have friends. I mean, I went to school at Altamont. Carroll went to school at Altamont. One of our granddaughters graduated from Oswego. The other three graduated from Altamont. We’re close to Parsons. We have friends in all areas, you know. It’s nice. And we don’t any more socialize, but we did, you know. Our kids went… we went to school over there. Our kids went to school over there, and our grandkids went to school over there. And we’ve always been in the Oswego district for grade school stuff, so…
Cress: You have a sense of community.

Norma: Yeah. And you know we knew everybody up and down this road, but now there’s… Carroll and I are the oldest ones left. I have a sister-in-law lives in Oswego. She married my brother, Marvin Czapansky. And then Margaret Cook down the road. And Carroll just passed away in July. The rest of them’s all somebody different. It’s the first time I ever know a Cook not to live along the road. Margaret’s still down there, but not a real Cook. That’s an in-law. You know, there’s always been a Cook here. I’ve never lived here without a Cook.

Cress: I know the Cook family has been in this area for a long time. Well, I really appreciate the fact that you let us talk about these things. And I’ve really enjoyed hearing about your memories.